WOMEN MINISTERS’ EXPERIENCES OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS.

by

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I, Ursula Monica Froschauer, declare that this research report is my own original work. Secondary material has been carefully acknowledged and referenced in accordance with departmental requirements.
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Abstract

The aim of this psychological study was to uncover women minister’s experiences of gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church by using a discourse analysis. Three female participants, who are involved in ministry in the Lutheran Church, were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions of gender discrimination. The resultant texts were analysed using Parker’s (2005) steps to discourse analytic reading. The discourses that were discovered indicate that power struggles are prevalent in the context of gender discrimination. The extent to which an individual opposes gender discrimination is informed by contextual, educational and historical factors. In addition to this, gender discrimination within the church is easily legitimised – to a large extent by women – through discourses, such as Biblical texts.
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1 Preface

Subtle forms of gender discrimination seem to have become the norm in South African society. It is often observed that such gender discrimination is especially prevalent in religious or church contexts, where androcentric norms and patriarchal hierarchies are present (Emmett, 2000). In this research study the literature review elaborates on how gender discrimination is constructed and reproduced in various facets of society. In addition to this, the existence of gender discrimination in Christianity, and especially Lutheranism, is described.

By incorporating a discourse analytic reading technique, this qualitative research study focuses on identifying discourses that are related to the experiences of gender discrimination by women who are involved in ministry in the Lutheran Church. It also incorporates these women's perceptions of gender discrimination, since perceptions are likely to influence experiences. These experiences and perceptions are compared and contrasted, and the resultant discourses are discussed. After this, limitations and recommendations with regard to this study are noted. In conclusion I reflect on my own experience of conducting this research, and subsequently I summarise the findings of this study.

Although a multi-disciplinary approach, which incorporates psychology, sociology and theology, could be used to comprehensively investigate and analyse gender discrimination, I have undertaken this study from a psychological perspective. Subsequently, the literature cited predominantly reviews work from the field of psychology.
2 Reflexive Preface

By locating myself in this research, I intend to elaborate on how reflexivity has contributed to this study. I am a heterosexual, Caucasian female, who has been engrossed by the works of Judith Butler, Sue Racokzy and Simone de Beauvoir. Being exposed to secular and theological feminist literature has helped me develop a critical stance towards gender roles and norms.

In terms of the religious aspects of this study, I affiliate myself with Christianity. I was involved in ministry at a Lutheran Church for a number of years, but withdrew from these responsibilities to focus my attention on academics. By removing myself from the church context I became aware of the manner in which people in the congregation treated individuals differently based on their gender. I found it particularly interesting observing how people, seemingly without objections, conformed to spoken or unspoken rules of behaviour. For example, I fail to think of a time when a man in the church served me tea or coffee and rarely saw men wash dishes.

Through my critical observations I became interested in how other women in ministry, especially in the Lutheran Church, experience and reinforce these inequalities. This research is consequently focused on how such women create meanings around gender discrimination.

* None of the research participants are from this congregation.
3 Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

Prejudicial attitudes, power differentials and gender discrimination against women and men are prevalent in patriarchal and matriarchal societies (Rakoczy, 2004). Patriarchy encourages the notion that women are secondary to men. This is imposed by women and men within the South African context and allows for gender discrimination within societal structures (Chodorow, 1989; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Kang, 2005). Gender discrimination is often covert, because it is socially accepted and justified. Since gender discrimination is prevalent in social institutions it has a unique way of playing itself out within religious institutions, where social, cultural, political, psychological, economic, physical and historical factors contribute to normalising gender discrimination through the practices that people conform to and the discourses that they use (Atkins, 2005; Chodorow, 1989; Jantzen, 1998).

Gender discrimination occurs for both women and men; however, this literature review will focus on discrimination against women, because patriarchy is predominant in the South African context. Moreover, Biblical texts are used in Christian religious settings to emphasise differences between men and women, which in turn oppresses and discriminates against women (Emmett, 2000).

3.2 Gender Discrimination

3.2.1 What is gender discrimination?

Gender discrimination against women implies that women are being disadvantaged within social institutions and relations based solely on their gender. Loewenstein (1976) argues that the relationship between women and men is an illustration of “unequal power relations in society” (p. 92). In an
androcentric society the male is the norm (Stefano, 1990; Rakoczy, 2004). Beauvoir (1972) explains that women’s identity is described in relation to man. Here man is identified as the subject, while woman is the object (Beauvoir, 1972). Similarly, Butler (cited in Atkins, 2005) states that man is the self and woman is the other. Through the application of a critical and radical perspective to gender, woman is seen as the phallus, which signifies sexual difference because it is the “object of desire as it is structured under patriarchy” (Gledhill, 1985, p. 837) and man is seen as controlling the phallus (Butler, 1993). Furthermore, according to Foucault (1980) power is embedded in masculinity.

Gender discrimination easily occurs in institutions where it is accepted that women and men are different and should therefore take on different roles. Gender organises and categorises the self according to past social norms (Salih, 2004). To understand gender discrimination more fully, it is beneficial to look at the reproduction of gender and gender stereotypes from infancy to adulthood and the contexts in which this reproduction occurs.

3.2.2 Socialisation and the social construction of gender

Feminists argue that socialisation, as opposed to biological factors, plays a dominant role in the construction and reproduction of gender inequalities existing in society (Farrell, 2005; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Shefer, 2004; Vianello, Siemien ska, Damian, Lupri, Coppi, D’Arcangelo & Bolasco, 1990). Sex, not gender, provides a biological distinction between women and men; therefore gender is understood as a social construction – a product of socialisation – related to masculinity and femininity (Butler, 1990; Kaplan & Sadock, 1998; Salih, 2004).

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir, 1972, p. 295). The process of ‘becoming’ is assumed to be a passive and an active process. It is passive in that culture and society contribute to one’s socialisation. This process
of socialisation begins as soon as a child is born and is encouraged by key role-players, such as parents and teachers as well as social, psychological, historical, political, economic and cultural norms (Atkins, 2005; Chodorow, 1989; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Shefer, 2004; Stanworth, 1983). Through these multi-dimensional influences, perceived differences reproduce sexual inequality (Chodorow, 1989; Hoosen & Collins, 2004). The process of ‘becoming’ can also be viewed as active, since we contribute to constructing ourselves. This is, however, problematic since we are using culturally constructed tools to do this and are therefore already ‘acting’ from a passive vantage point (Salih, 2004). In addition to this, we are gendered from the moment that our biological sex is discovered and therefore cannot construct ourselves (Butler, 1993).

Gender ‘is’ because it is performed. When these roles are not performed by the suitable or acceptable gender then that person is viewed as deviant or even psychologically disturbed (Kang, 2005; Shefer, 2004). Butler (1990) refers to this ascription of gender onto a person as “gender performance” and through this, highlights the significant role of social constructions of gender. Having identity as being performative means that “subjectivities are formed through the submission of bodies to discursive practices” (Atkins, 2005, p. 252). This suggests that how we speak about gender and how people perform their gendered roles – which is understood as largely involuntary – creates gendered identities and in turn unequal structures (Atkins, 2005; Butler, 1988). Nancy Chodorow (1978) considers and recognises the social construction and reproduction of gender and encourages people to question the so easily accepted social structures. By repeating these performances, which is done through the replication of thoughts, words and actions, structures and systems are maintained (Atkins, 2005). Gender identities are prescribed and the limitations of how gender is defined in language mean that people are subjected to a gender (Salih, 2004). The construction and reproduction of gender begins at birth and continues until death (Shefer, 2004). By observing this process subtleties of socialisation become more obvious.
3.2.3 The construction of gender in infancy

“We are not born with perceptions of gender differences; these emerge developmentally” (Chodorow, 1989, p. 108). In conjunction with this statement Butler (1993) maintains that from the moment that one discovers the sex of a foetus a stencil of gender is placed upon that individual, who is subtly coerced into performing the particular role that has been socially constructed for them. “It’s a girl!” (p. 232) is an exclamation that is not only descriptive, but also imposes a template of how to behave and think onto an individual which will make them socially acceptable and even desirable (Butler, 1993, Salih, 2004). Butler illustrates how ridiculous such a statement is when she contrasts it with the statement “it’s a lesbian!” (Salih, 2004, p. 89). To say this is by no means neutral, but ascribes a performative action onto this individual. It is expected that this ‘lesbian’ individual behaves in a certain prescribed manner. Moreover, this highlights the significance of discourse and language in reproducing gender and therefore also gender inequalities (Rakoczy, 2004). The public language that is used in these instances in turn influences people’s private language, whereby roles and values are internalised (Rakoczy, 2004). This eventually sets the foundation for the infants’ cognitions and behaviour in the formative years before the child enters school.

3.2.4 The reproduction of gender in schooling and childhood

Women and men have been ascribed particular traditional roles that are reproduced in various ways and by various institutions, such as the education system (Arnot, 2002; Stanworth, 1983). This becomes particularly noticeable through viewing the interaction between teachers and pupils. For example, male students are encouraged to choose more analytical subjects, whereas female students are encouraged to choose subjects that correspond with nurturance,
such as home economics (Stanworth, 1983). Even the texts (i.e. language and discourses) that are used in the education process reinforce gender stereotypes (Arnot, 2002). Girls are associated with being passive, emotional and dependent (Shefer, 2004) and are encouraged to engage in domesticated play, whereby they “must perform tasks that require reliability, responsibility and nurturance” (Chodorow, 1989, p. 29). In contrast to this boys are associated with vigorous, competitive and aggressive play and are perceived as more independent, active and rational (Shefer, 2004). This presents a more favourable representation of boys, especially in individualistic cultures, in comparison to girls.

Since the education system equips pupils for future employment, the manner in which pupils are encouraged to choose specific subjects will in turn affect their workplace and the level of employment that women and men choose (Arnot, 2002). This is often noticeable through the system that the school itself implements, whereby a largely female teaching staff is managed by a male headmaster (Arnot, 2002). Pupils are familiarised with a structure in which male dominance is prevalent and this consequently prepares children for and normalises the gender inequalities that will be experienced in the workforce. Overall education for boys receives priority to that of girls, especially in the South African context (Shefer, 2004).

Haralambos and Holborn (2004) state that differences between girls and boys are encouraged and emphasised through the

…provision of toys for girls which encourage them to rehearse their expected adult roles as mothers and housewives. Girls are given dolls, soft toys and miniature domestic objects and appliances to play with. Boys on the other hand, are given toys which encourage more practical, logical and aggressive behaviour, for example bricks and guns (p. 100).
Beauvoir (1972) states that in “accepting her passive role, the girl also agrees to submit unresistingly to a destiny that is going to be imposed upon her from without” (p. 325). The idea of socialisation as an imposition can be viewed as abrasive. However, Beauvoir brings to the fore the subjective, passive, powerless and phallic role that the girl plays in this situation. By being ascribed a submissive role in childhood (Hoosen & Collins, 2004) the girl is prepared for similar inequalities in the workplace.

3.2.5 The reproduction of gender in the workplace

Within the workplace women are expected to have “stereotypically feminine occupations” (Arnot, 2002, p. 26; Eveline, 1998). These occupations are characterised by providing domestic and personal services (Arnot, 2002), which illustrates how socialisation in domesticated play prepares girls for future activities. These careers are associated with a lower status, more part-time employment and lower salaries (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). Moreover, women are encouraged to take fewer risks, and when this is practiced in the workplace it is a contributor to earning a lower salary (Farrell, 2005). In contrast to men, fewer women work within leadership positions (Rojo & Esteban, 2003; Vianello et al, 1990). This again means that women are earning less than men (Blaine, 2007; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). There are various reasons for this. Some people are of the opinion that women do not want these positions, due to the manner in which they have been socialised, while others view women as being less reliable, because they can fall pregnant and are therefore absent from work (Vianello et al, 1990). In addition to this women in leadership positions are perceived as less favourable by men and women (Rojo & Esteban, 2003; Vianello et al, 1990).

Women have been entering careers at an increased rate; however their (unpaid) household responsibilities seldom decrease (Baxter, 1998). Furthermore, women are often paid less than their male counterparts and are more likely to hold
insecure employment (Blaine, 2007; Day, 1992; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). Ellen T. Armour (1999) asserts that women are recognised by their deficiencies and “desire for plenitude and fullness” (p. 165). This points towards women’s perceived inferiority and an assumed longing to be like ‘man’.

Through this it is observable that a hierarchy exists with regards to the labour force; whereby men occupy the higher strata and women occupy the lower strata (Arnot, 2002). This hierarchical structure of the sexual division of labour is predetermined and reinforced through the reproduction of the education system (as well as the family system – discussed shortly), in which children are socialised, encouraged and familiarised to partake in gender-specific activities.

3.2.6 The reproduction of gender in the family

The family system is a vital tool for socialisation and many societal norms are reproduced in this context. In the family, women are encouraged to associate themselves with tasks that are related to nurturing and domestic responsibilities, while more professional activities are pursued by men (Fraser & Nicholson, 1994; Vianello et al, 1990). For example, as mentioned above “doing housework […] is a means of producing gender” (Baxter, 1998, p. 65). Housework is related to particular stereotypes of women and by engaging in such stereotypical roles women are producing and reproducing their gender and the roles that are ascribed to their gender.

Since women are more likely to be oppressed within society and are socialised into behaviour where seeking help is acceptable, they are more likely to seek assistance from welfare (Day, 1992). Some women feel exploited and oppressed by the roles that they are coerced into, such as taking on responsibilities as child rearing, household chores and paid employment (Day, 1992). Due to the nature of these tasks women are often obliged or may even choose to place the needs of others above their own needs (Lawrence, 1992). This self-sacrifice is
reproduced and reinforced by women and men who consider such acts as ‘noble’ and consequently women are encouraged not to ponder their own needs. Women may even be told and encouraged to believe that their only purpose is procreation (Rakoczy, 2004). Similarly, women are discouraged from expressing anger (Lawrence, 1992) and this anger turned inward may be a large contributor to depression (Kronenberger & Meyer, 2001). This may therefore play a role in explaining why more women are diagnosed with depression than men (Stark, Sander, Hauser, Simpson, Schneebelen, Glenn & Molnar, 2006).

Since gender and gender inequalities are reproduced in the workplace women are more likely to be dependent on their husbands or partners for financial resources (Hoosen & Collins, 2004). This consequently means that women may feel obliged to be the housewife and submit to their husbands or partners, because they are dependent on them. Such ideas and constructions spill over into the couple’s sex life. Although men are perceived as being more powerful, they are viewed as more passive with regards to contraceptive use (Hoosen & Collins, 2004). Some women believe that men should take responsibility for contraceptive use; however, they doubt that they have a voice powerful enough to make and implement such decisions (Hoosen & Collins, 2004).

3.2.7 Gender reproduction in the media

The influence of the media in reproducing gender is mentioned here, because the media infiltrates our personal and public lives and makes use of stereotypes related to gender. Some authors believe in the value of media, such as television, the internet, magazines and newspapers, in combating gender stereotypes, by facilitating understanding and interaction (Hirabayashi & Xing, 2003). However, the stereotyped manner in which women and men are represented in the media may also contribute to the reproduction of gender. In patriarchal societies women are exposed to oppressive discourses through the media, which prescribes what type of behaviour and appearance is acceptable or
favoured (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Women in cinema are represented and viewed as submissive and voiceless and in the rare instances where they do have a voice it ‘speaks’ a male and therefore dominant discourse (Geldhill, 1978). Women are represented within the limits of certain roles and these roles in turn limit women by prescribing stereotypical behaviour, which is resistant to change. It therefore seems that we are “stuck in a vicious discursive cycle” (Stefano, 1990). Media is seen as an ally with the education and family systems that overtly and covertly encourage gender stereotypes and so assist in the reproduction of discriminatory behaviour (Arnot, 2002; Goldenberg, 1998). Furthermore, individuals of all ages are exposed to these influences, which make its effects so much more powerful.

3.2.8 Hope for change

On the same token, one cannot deny the progress that has been made with the advent of critical feminism to reach gender egalitarianism (Kiguwa, 2004; Shefer, 2004). Women have been able to achieve more “independence and autonomy” (Baxter, 1998, p. 59) through their participation in paid labour. Institutions have promoted women’s employment through the assistance of certain demands (Baxter, 1998). For example, crèches and child care facilities allow women to enter the labour market, while still having children. Furthermore, one must acknowledge that even in patriarchal society men have been and are subjected to gender discrimination through the explicit and dangerously implicit reinforcement and reproduction of the social construction of masculinity (Lindegger & Quayle, in press). Men, like women, have been assigned particular social roles, such as men having to be the breadwinners. When these roles are not performed (correctly) men are judged to be deviant and are susceptible to discrimination.

Psychologists who critically analyse the constructions of gender also provide some suggestions for dealing with these gender inequalities (Kiguwa, 2004). For
effective changes to be made one cannot just construct gender differently, since people are gendered from the moment of birth (Butler, 1993). Instead it is necessary to deconstruct and reconstruct ideas and constructs related to gender. These critical and revised discourses can then be used to bring about social change, by educating and empowering the oppressed (Kiguwa, 2004).

### 3.3 Lutheranism

Lutheranism is a Christian denomination. The Lutheran Church began through the opposition of Catholicism (König, 1978). Martin Luther, who was a Catholic monk at the time, initiated a reformation which eventually resulted in a split from the Catholic Church (Kirby, 1988). Luther questioned the authority of certain Scriptures and believed that humankind is redeemed through grace (i.e. God’s mercy) and faith, and not by anything that they themselves do, like paying penance in the form of money (Hart, 2004; Rhodes, 2005). The Lutheran Church focuses on the ‘theology of the cross’, which concentrates on the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ (Nürnberger, 2005).

It is believed that Luther was the first theologian who agreed that there were major discrepancies between society and the concept of a loving God (Nürnberger, 2005). Luther’s theology was revolutionary for his time, since it “based Christian judgment in earthly matters on observation and reason” (Nürnberger, 2005, p. 31). This empirical approach was contrasted to Catholicism, whereby people were encouraged to have faith and not question the divinity of God or the Church (Hutchinson, 1991; O’Connor & Drury, 1999). Luther aimed to make theology and church relevant and contextual for the people, by using the tunes played in pubs at the time for hymns that were sung in the church. Furthermore, Luther translated the Bible from the Latin, which was used by the educated clergy, into German, which could be understood by the populace (Nürnberger, 2005). This helped people to know and understand God’s truth, which was found in the Scriptures (Nürnberger, 2005).
3.3.1 Lutheranism and Women

Being able to know and understand the Word of God brings with it its own problems. Luther recommended that people familiarise themselves with Paul’s letters (Nürnberger, 2005), of which some, such as the first letter to the Church in Corinth, are especially outspoken and prescriptive about the roles of women in their families and in the Church. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 women are told to “…remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says”. This stencil of patriarchy that has been used to write the Bible is problematic, in that through the reproduction of religious norms, which carry with them divine authority, gender inequalities are also reproduced (Butler, 1990).

The Lutheran Church, in correspondence with the Catholic Church, identified the Church as ‘mother’ (Nürnberger, 2005). This presents a stereotypical, albeit nurturing and positive picture of women. Klaus Nürnberger (2005) identifies that from a Lutheran perspective, men, as well as women, are called into ministry. The ordination of women is a recent phenomenon and it is still observable that women in the Lutheran Church, especially the pastor’s wife, are expected to perform certain activities and conform to specific roles (Nürnberger, 2005).

By observing women’s rights within the historical context of Lutheranism, it is noticeable that the Lutheran Church is not as conservative as the Catholic Church, because they believe in and encourage women ordination. However, the Lutheran Church is not as liberal as many Charismatic churches. Lutheranism therefore lies on a continuum between conservative and liberal Christianity. In this context it may be expected that women are able to freely engage in ministry in the church; however, it is possible, due to patriarchal influences from society and specifically and historically defined gender roles within the church, that the church restricts and prescribes the types of ministry that women may be involved
in (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). The discourses incorporated by the church, especially those influenced by the Bible, around genders and gender roles, shed light on how gender inequalities are understood and to a large extent accepted.

3.4 Gender and Religion

Throughout history women have been viewed as secondary within many religions (Beattie, 2006; Emmett, 2000; O’Connor & Drury, 1999), yet they constitute more than half of church attendees (Kang, 2005; King, 2004). The social roles produced by patriarchal oppression which are assigned to women and men are accepted and in turn performed by them (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). As it has been mentioned above, patriarchy, and hence gender discrimination, is reinforced and justified in institutions by women and men and consequently encourages them to behave and think in ways that reproduce gender inequalities characterised by patriarchy (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). For example, it is widely accepted in religious institutions that leadership positions should be held by men and not women (Kang, 2005; Rakoczy, 2004). This means that full participation, even if desired by women, is not possible (Emmett, 2000; Kang, 2005). Therefore, it is helpful to understand how women involved in such religious institutions construct their (possibly subjective) roles and create meaning, through an analysis and a deconstruction of their discourses. In certain instances women are aware of being disadvantaged within institutions (Vianello et al, 1990). In other circumstances women are unaware that they are being oppressed or that they themselves are reinforcing oppression against themselves and other women (O’Conner & Drury, 1999).

Frances B. O’Connor and Becky S. Drury (1999) view patriarchal influences on women in the church as particularly problematic:

For women to exist in this suffocating atmosphere in the patriarchal church is analogous to struggling to survive in a house where
carbon monoxide is spreading through every room. Patriarchy, like carbon monoxide, is insidious because it is colourless, odourless, and invisible. The human body does not detect the presence of carbon monoxide: it interprets the gas as oxygen. Likewise, women are not even aware they are absorbing patriarchy into their systems. As with the air they breathe, they take the patriarchal system for granted, rarely think of it at all – yet its effects are deadly (p. 6).

If the effects of patriarchy are so “deadly”, then why are women still involved in religious institutions? Naomi Goldenberg (1998) believes that this involvement “reflects a wish to be within institutions that are relevant and socially significant” (p. 205). This in itself is problematic, because for their wishes or desire for acceptance to be fulfilled women need to ascribe and conform to the norms of these religious institutions by being submissive to the dominant or patriarchal discourses.

The passive and submissive nature in which women respond to patriarchy and oppression within the church allows other women and men to believe in the normality of such behaviour (Sölle, 1995). To ensure that they are not seen as deviant or psychologically disturbed and to be accepted by the church, women will incorporate oppressive thoughts and prescribe to discriminatory behaviour (O’Connor & Drury, 1999; Shefer, 2004). This submissive role may well be observed as an active embrace of patriarchy. The need for stability and security that is found within the boundaries of a religious institution, are factors which encourage submissive roles (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). In addition to women’s submissiveness, they are relied upon to conform and fulfill those tasks that are subordinate (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). The subordination, it is argued, is often disguised through the wording that women have ‘different’ roles to play and activities to do in the church setting (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). It is needless to say that many women do not realise, or choose not to realise, that their ‘different’
role has less status or fewer rewards attached to it than a man’s role. While women are performing their second-class duties men are involved in decision-making and activities that are related to leadership (Kang, 2005; O’Connor & Drury, 1999). This reflects that “…positions of power are gendered positions…” (Jantzen, 1998, p. 74).

Since power is established and operates through discourse, which is productive, in that it produces the binary construction of woman and man with regards to gender, it is clear that power differentials in the church are supported by discourses, such as Biblical texts (Butler, 2004; Emmett, 2000). Once certain roles and power differentials have been repeated and reproduced through performative actions, they become more resilient and regulated and are therefore more difficult to change (Butler, 2004). Consequently, Butler (cited in Salih, 2004) aims to go beyond the construction of binaries towards a deconstruction and eventually a reconstruction of norms related to gender. This is however problematic, since the literature in the church, such as Biblical texts, has been written by men, which has in turn created unequal power relations (Butler, 1990; Emmett, 2000).

The authoritative nature of Biblical texts and religious teachings, as forms of discourse, reproduces gender (Hart, 2004). Women are expected to relate to a male God. This contributes to women questioning whether or not they are created in the image of God (Rakoczy, 2004). Although there are beliefs that God can also be seen as female, this is definitely not the dominant view (Rakoczy, 2004). To add to this, women were seen to be the cause of sin by the early Church Fathers, because sin entered the world through them in the form of Eve (Rakoczy, 2004). Furthermore, women are judged to be sinful and deviant if their behaviour differs from that prescribed by the church. Being submissive, as the Bible instructs, places women at greater risk for being emotionally and physically abused (Emmett, 2000).
In Jewish tradition, from which Christianity originated, only men were in full covenant with God through their circumcision (Rakoczy, 2004). Biblical texts are predominantly addressed to men, and where women are included their roles are often prescriptive and contradictory (e.g. 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Timothy 2:9-15 and Proverbs 31) (Rakoczy, 2004). Moreover, women are conditioned to believe that (only) men are created in the image of God and are called into the ministry (O’Connor & Drury, 1999; Rakoczy, 2004). This is seen, for example, in the Catholic Church, where women are not permitted to be ordained. This is consequently a clear reflection of the belief that women do not have power or as valuable a contribution to make as a male priest (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). Even when women are able to be in ministry in the church they operate within a “hierarchical structure where women are perceived to be inferior and are marginalised” (O’Connor & Drury, 1999, p. 26).

The paradox is frightening. This is where women are aware of gender inequalities and use their power to duplicate the “behaviour of their male counterparts, resulting in the oppression of other women” (O’Connor & Drury, 1999, p. 25). This illustrates that women are not only reproducing patriarchy, and hence gender inequalities, through their submission, but also through their domination and collusion with the dominant discourse (Emmett, 2000). Women become the very force that they despise.

To further confuse matters, a picture of Jesus, the Messiah, on whom Christianity is founded, is portrayed where he is seen interacting with women in completely atypical ways for the Jewish people in that context at that time (Lieu, 1998; Rakoczy, 2004). Jesus is seen talking to women, even a prostitute, an adulterer and a Samaritan (who was frowned upon by Jewish people) in public. In addition to this, Jesus spoke to them respectfully, which was out of the ordinary for that culture at that specific time (Rakoczy, 2004). The contradictions that become evident are that Jesus acted in a particular manner which affirmed women, yet
the church that ‘follows’ Jesus is founded on androcentrism and in many churches the treatment of women is a far cry from affirmative.

Even women who do not affiliate themselves to a particular religion may be prone to gender discrimination from a religious orientation (Jantzen, 1998). Religion affects others, because systems have diffuse boundaries. The church and society have been referred to as separate systems, yet they are interrelated. The influence of these systems is often greater than expected. Since patriarchy in religious institutions affects secular institutions and vice versa, patriarchy is reproduced in various contexts, such as the church (Jantzen, 1998). Therefore it can also be said, that if discourses and consequently constructions of gender are changed within society, they are likely to influence the understandings of gender in the church (Knödel, 1997). However, it should also be noted that since the church is largely informed by the Bible, society may not be as influential in religious contexts as expected (Knödel, 1997).

From the various gender inequalities and male-dominated discourses that have operated in the church, feminist theology has been born (Kang, 2005). Feminist theology is a form of liberation theology, which combined with feminism, has allowed women to gain a voice within the patriarchal structure of the church (Beattie, 2006; Klonis, Endo, Crosby & Worell, 1997; Knödel, 1997; O’Connor & Drury, 1999; Rakoczy, 2004). Feminist theory, originating from psychology, is joined with theology to understand and critique the unequal power relations that are reproduced in the church (Beattie, 2006). Psychology and theology differ greatly, but the androcentric foundations on which they have been built allow these two disciplines to meet in an attempt address the effects of patriarchy (Hinksman, 2001; Kang, 2005). The domain of feminist theology – in the instances where women are allowed to obtain a higher theological education – is in itself a stride towards empowering women, in that women become aware of inequalities, are given a voice, are able to question unjust situations, are educated about oppression and are equipped with tools that are useful in
countering gender inequalities (Klonis et al, 1997; O'Connor & Drury, 1999). Similarly Gender Critique, which is a field that has recently emerged in academia, is concerned with critically deconstructing and reconstructing male-dominated discourses and paradigms (Ellison, 2007). This awareness and education when translated into action can assist in bringing about gender equality.

A prior study, which addresses similar concerns to those mentioned here, identified the reluctance of Christian women to incorporate feminist understandings (Lyall, 1996). It is possible that women believe that feminism contradicts the beliefs that women have about the Bible and Christianity. This hints at the discrepancies that are present between women’s experiences and their spiritual beliefs (Ewing & Allen, 2008). Consequently, a gap in the literature is presented, which can be explored further.

3.5 Conclusion

The presence of gender inequalities and gender discrimination cannot be denied. The construction of gender begins before birth and continues in a regulated and accepted process until death. The binary construction of genders, which reinforce hierarchies, is reproduced and reinforced through social, psychological, historical, political, economic and cultural influences (Atkins, 2005; Chodorow, 1989; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Shefer, 2004; Stanworth, 1983). An awareness of this should lead to a positive reshaping of gender roles, through a deconstruction and reconstruction of gender, and in turn result in gender egalitarianism and justice (Kang, 2005). To date much progress has been made to educate people about gender inequalities and to reach this goal. However, there is still work to be done to address implicit stereotypes and the manner in which people act upon these stereotypes.

It is possible, that through understanding women's constructions of gender discrimination in the church, questioning these unjust situations and the
limitations that patriarchy imposes on them, better awareness will be raised and this may lead to changed attitudes, such as overcoming gender bias and ensuring gender equality (Brew & Kottler, 2008; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Lawrence, 1992). However, for this to be done the dominant discourses in religious institutions, such as Biblical texts and regulated practices, need to be critically analysed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Ultimately, such a process will lead to emancipating women, by giving them a voice and therefore empowering them (Rakoczy, 2004).
4 Aim and Rationale

The aim of this research is to identify how women ministers in the Lutheran Church experience gender discrimination, through the manner in which they speak about their experiences. It is assumed that through their discourses it is possible to recognise how they construct and create their social realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). In addition to this, it may be likely that gender discrimination in a church context would be justified by female ministers (O'Connor & Drury, 1999), and the way in which this is done is of interest to the study.

The rationale for this study is to educate and raise awareness and consciousness of inequalities, by exposing gender discrimination and the manner in which this is reinforced in the church. The research also provides one with the opportunity to address and question the unjust nature of oppression, discrimination and inequalities. By giving the participants an opportunity to voice their experiences and perceptions, they are being empowered to change implicit rules of religious institutions or their behaviour towards these rules.
5 Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The qualitative research design for this study is based on discourse analysis and this combined with the research question determines how the gathering of participants, the data collection and analysis processes and the ethical procedures of the study are conducted. Interviews have been used to collect data. Since the research aims to understand the subjective meanings that women in ministry award to their experiences, a discourse analysis is appropriate (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Willig, 1995). Through the use of in-depth interviews the essence of the participants’ discourses are captured and then analysed (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). By analysing the participants’ discourses an attempt is made to understand how they construct their realities (Murphy, 1989; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Discourse analysis is a postmodern analytic approach used to study how language and words perform certain actions. Discourse analysis aids in understanding how the participants create meaning and construct their realities through the discourses that they are exposed to in their unique contexts (Murphy, 1989; Schiffrin, 1987; van den Hoven, 1994). From this approach it is understood that discourses construct, represent and reflect individuals and social realities (Fairclough, 2007; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Woods, 2006). Discourse (e.g. language and Biblical texts) and social structures (e.g. the Lutheran church) influence each other (Fairclough, 2007). This relationship is vital in understanding the active and passive role that the participants have in creating and submitting to their realities, their relationships, their actions and the constructions of themselves. This construction of social and psychological realities illustrates that the ability to act upon one’s social environment is limited to the discourses that are available (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Discourse analysis
focuses on subjective experiences and therefore provides one with the ability to increase and challenge theory, concepts and ideas.

By using discourse analysis in this study one is able to discover the meaning that the social world creates and the roles that are ascribed to the participants, as well as the meaning that these women create about their social worlds (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Therefore, the diffuse nature and the influential ability of societal structures are studied through discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). This hints at the constructive properties that language has to create meaning, which is also dependent on a specific context (van den Hoven, 1994). In addition to this, because discourse analysis is a postmodern analytic approach focused on the construction and meaning of language, it is relevant to the current Zeitgeist, which is largely informed by social constructionism (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

5.2 Participants

The participants that were used for the research consisted of three heterosexual, married, Caucasian women who have been involved in ministry in the Lutheran church between 20 and 30 years. The roles and title of each of the women varies somewhat, which illustrates the heterogeneity of the participants. The first research participant is an ordained Lutheran pastor, the second participant is a secretary at her church and is simultaneously the leader of the children’s ministry, and the third participant is an unordained children’s pastor. Further information of each of the participants if found in the analysis under the section “Subjects of the Text”. The participants, who participated voluntarily, were obtained via word-of-mouth. This was done by obtaining the contact details of five women who were identified as possible candidates from a Lutheran pastor that the researcher knew personally. They were then contacted, informed about the research and requested to participate. Three of the five women agreed to participate in the study. The small number of participants allowed for in-depth
interviewing and therefore a more in-depth analysis and discussion is possible (Babbie & Mouton, 2005).

5.3 Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was used to collect data. Before the interview was conducted the participants were informed about confidentiality and provided consent. The one hour long interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. A set of questions (found in appendix B) guided the interview process. The interview questions provided a form of reliability within the study. The questions are oriented to discovering more about: firstly, how these women experience being a woman in their church, secondly, how they view God and, thirdly, how they understand the Bible and interpret certain Biblical texts. The focus of these questions is on how the women’s discourses about their experiences of gender discrimination are influenced or prescribed by power relations and the dominant discourse, and how their discourses in turn influence societal structures, or their churches (Fairclough, 2007).

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and then used as the texts that were analysed. The interview with Helga, the first research participant, is included as in appendix C as an example of the raw data that was used. The various sections that specifically address gender and gender discrimination were analysed using the steps mentioned under “Data Analysis” below. This is italicised in the transcribed interview text. However, the analysis was not limited to these sections, since the objects, subjects and patterns of the text (see 5.4. data analysis) were derived from the whole text. The objects in the text (see 5.4. data analysis) are indicated in bold in the transcribed text.

Although the participants mentioned their interpretations of Biblical texts which relate to the roles of women, these texts were not incorporated in the analysis, because such an analysis would fall outside the scope of psychology and the
expertise of the researcher. Therefore, the analysis of Biblical texts was used as a platform from which the participants could express their views of gender discrimination.

5.4 Data Analysis

Since “…our language, our concepts and even our longings are shaped by the master discourse” (Jantzen, 1998, p. 73), it seems that an analysis of such discourses would assist us in understanding people’s behaviour, how they construct themselves and their worlds (Murphy, 1989). Therefore, discourse analysis was used as an analytic approach. The words that we use in language are important (Rakoczy, 2004) and construct our social realities and identities (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In addition to this, discourse also creates meaning and this meaning is discovered through discourse analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Ian Parker’s (2005) 12 steps of discourse-analytic reading were applied as a guideline to analyse the texts produced by the interviews and consequently discover the discourses within the texts. This process entails understanding the text in its context and how it applied to the speaker, after which significant objects are elaborated on through a process of free association (Parker, 2005). The subjects of the text and the relationships between them are then identified (Parker, 2005). Certain objections that outsiders would make are then mentioned in relation to the subjects (Parker, 2005). Consequently, patterns and contradictions are sought (Fairclough, 2007; Parker, 2005). The discursive object is then explained and audiences that may be interested in the text are discussed (Parker, 2005). Lastly, the discourses in the text are identified (Fairclough, 2007; Parker, 2005).

It is noteworthy that Parker’s (2005) 12 steps of discourse analytic reading have been amended slightly to be relevant for this research. For example, Parker’s (2005) first step of turning the text into words was already completed through the
transcription and therefore this is not mentioned in the analysis. Furthermore, Parker’s (2005) second, third and fourth steps of free associating around the text, identifying the significance of the objects and focusing on the object have been combined under the step “Free Association: Significance of Objects”. This was done to diminish repetition in the analysis, since the steps are similarly focused on analysing the objects. Likewise, Parker’s (2005) fifth, sixth and seventh steps of naming the subjects, their discourses and their relationships are combined under the step “Subjects of the Text”. As a result the following steps are used in the analysis:

1. **Free Association: Significance of Objects**
   This process necessitates identifying objects (words or phrases) that are considered to be “socially shared material connected to the text” (Parker, 2005, p. 93). Nouns, such as “Germany”, carry meaning and are subjectively understood by different individuals or groups of people. These meanings and their relevance are explored during this step. By doing this, the effects and implications of the text, as well as the positioning of the participant towards the object, are grasped.

2. **Subjects of the Text**
   The subjects of the text are the participant and the characters or categories of people that she interacts with. In considering the subjects, their subjective positions and locations are identified (Willig, 2003). The influence that the subjects have and the relationships that they share provide a backdrop from which the meanings of the text become more apparent.

3. **Objections**
   The objections of the text are critiques and oppositions that the participant may encounter from various perspectives, such as a feminist or psychological perspective. This is done to critically reflect on the text and to not assume a taken-for-granted position towards what the participant says.
4. Patterns in the Text
The patterns in the text are the participant’s ideas and paradigms that are repeated throughout the text. Through this the participant’s stance and positioning becomes evident. The participant’s response to the subjects of the text is used to identify conflict or contrasts that assist in identifying patterns.

5. The Discursive Object
The discursive object is the theme on which the text is centered. Questions that assist in identifying the discursive object are: What is being referred to in the text? What is the pattern in the text showing? What are the objections concerned with? What is the participant’s stance towards the objects? In identifying the discursive object information from the previous steps is incorporated.

6. Audiences
The audience of the text considers those individuals, groups of people of fields in academia who might be interested in the text. This hints at how the text may have originated and the text is given support and a stronger voice by its association with established perspectives, such as feminism or psychology.

7. Discourses
Identifying the discourses is the last step used in the analysis of the texts. Here, a limited number (about three in this instance) of themes in the text are identified. These themes are different to the patterns in the text and the discursive object in that the discourses question how the patterns and the discursive object are spoken about. By identifying social bonds that are created through the discourses in the text, a discourse can be recognised (e.g. a discourse on feminism).
The discourses that emerge by using the abovementioned steps in analysing the texts are elaborated on, compared and contrasted in the discussion.

5.5 Ethics

Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the participants. The participants where informed about confidentiality and about the purpose of the research. The recorded interviews and transcripts are kept confidential to the extent that names of places and people in the interview found in appendix C have been omitted. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the participants in the analysis and discussion of the results to ensure confidentiality. Participation in the research resulted in time costs for the participants. However, participation may have benefited participants in that they were able to obtain a greater awareness of themselves and the role that they play in their churches. The consent form and the participant’s information sheet are found in appendix A. Ethical clearance was granted by the Higher Degrees Committee of the University of Johannesburg.

No minors or vulnerable populations were used as participants. Consent forms ensured confidentiality and anonymity (Emanuel, Wendler & Grady, 2000) (see appendix A). The interview was neither traumatic nor stressful, and used no unpleasant procedures or deception. Therefore, there is a favourable risk-benefit ratio (Emanuel, Wendler & Grady, 2000). By increasing relevant information in the fields of psychology and theology, the research is valuable.

It should be noted that the researcher’s influence has possibly biased the study somewhat. This reflexivity, which is elaborated in the reflexive preface and the reflexive epilogue, illustrates that in a qualitative study the researcher’s discourses and the way in which the participant’s discourses are analysed and discussed are subjective to the extent that the researcher uses discourses and interpretive methods that are available and accessible (Fairclough, 2007; Phillips
& Hardy, 2002; Schiffrin, 1987). Therefore, there are various ways in which texts can be interpreted and given meaning. In addition to this, during the interviews participants were required to discuss their actions in response to questions, which may have contributed to defensiveness during the interviews (Woods, 2006). The discourses that have been collected and analysed are heterogeneous and are considered according to the contexts in which they exist.
6 Analysis†

The research question seeks to analyse women minister’s experiences of gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church, by using a discourse analysis, which is guided by Parker’s (2005) steps in analysing discourses. The manner in which these steps have been used in the analysis is mapped out in the methodology section under 5.4. Data Analysis. The discourse analysis is divided according to the three research participants‡. The results of the analysis are then combined in the discussion section. Although the research question focuses on the experiences that the participants have, in the case of the second research participant, Melanie, the analysis includes her perceptions of gender discrimination and not necessarily her experiences, because Melanie was more resistant when speaking about experiences and therefore articulated more of her perceptions.

6.1 Helga§

Since being a female pastor is not a common profession, Helga’s experiences are of particular note because they present a contrast to the experience of male pastors. In addition to this, Helga’s firm and outspoken opinions, which are in some cases contradictory to the Bible and Lutheran Church tradition, are often unexpected. Helga’s perceptions are informed by her feminist theology training and consequently stand in opposition to patriarchy.

† Words in double quotation marks (e.g. “visible”) are directly from the participant; while words in single quotation marks (e.g. ‘normal’) are interpretations by the author.
‡ Names have been changed.
§ The transcribed interview is found in appendix C.
6.1.1 Free Association: Significance of Objects

Helga speaks about her studies in Germany. She uses the word “Germany” to suggest a superior form of education. It is associated with precision, accuracy and perfection. Its current negative population growth rate is partly attributed to the high levels of education. On the other hand, considering Germany’s involvement in WWII, it is also associated with bias, the holocaust, discrimination and Nazism. Through the mention of “Germany” Helga is referring to the former, more positive, association.

To contrast her German experiences Helga speaks about South Africa. The word “South Africa” brings to mind the concepts of rainbow nation (diversity), uBuntu and unity (Broodryk, 2007) as more favourable concepts, and Apartheid, discrimination, inequality and poverty as more negative associations. Helga considers how South Africa is more conservative in comparison to Germany, with regards to gender roles. Helga states that South Africa has a “more hierarchical system”. This illustrates that in comparison to Helga’s discourse about Germany, her discourse about South Africa is slightly more critical or even negative.

The words “South Africa” and “Germany” are both connected to the word “culture”. In this case, citizens of their country feel a certain sense of patriotism, belonging and acceptance. On the other hand, there is a sense of animosity towards foreigners. This comes to the fore when Helga mentions that a congregant told her: “You don’t understand me, it’s culture.” Perhaps this animosity and the emphasis on differences indicate a mild form of xenophobia.

Helga obtained her “qualification” at a German University, which is connected with higher education, intelligence, privilege, authority and power. The word “qualification” is used in connection with the word “Germany” and gives validity to what Helga says.
Helga refers to herself as a “female pastor”. In a sense these words can be seen as an oxymoron. Not many women become pastors. Being “female” in relation to a religious context is associated with the weaker sex, being submissive, being a temptress and having less power (Butler, 1993; Racokzy, 2004). The word “pastor” is associated with being spiritual, providing guidance, being pure and holy and living a righteous life. Being a “female pastor” would be associated with submissive, powerless, righteous and holy living. This would be an inferior position if one would not consider the stature that comes with being a pastor. Helga also mentions that people “open up more or in a different way with a female pastor”. Helga’s qualification of being a pastor is related to her studies at a German University, which consequently gives her more credibility.

Helga mentions the words “insecurity” and “security”. She says: “[there is] a lot of insecurity and you have to provide security”. This refers to trust and having the ability to provide reassurance when there are doubts. As a female pastor, Helga understands that she has the responsibility to provide security for her congregants.

Helga states that she needs to make herself more “visible”. Visibility is associated with perception, recognition, power and status. It is the extent to which one is known. The opposite of this would be being ‘invisible’. This presents a constant tension, whereby Helga struggles against being invisible. Helga does this, for example, by not washing dishes at men’s meetings “just for the purpose to make them understand, I’m here not the cleaner, but the pastor”.

6.1.2 Subjects of the Text

The identified subjects are Helga and her congregation. Helga is a 40-something year old pastor in the Lutheran Church. She grew up in Germany where she lived with her family. Helga’s family of origin affiliated themselves with Christianity; however, they only attended church on special occasions. In her adolescence
she started attending church on a regular basis. The church environment was liberating for Helga, because she was able to develop paradigms that were contrasted to those of her family system. Helga was actively involved in her church as a Sunday school teacher, youth leader and confirmation leader and moved on to study theology for seven years. During this time Helga was exposed to feminist theology and began advocating for the rights of women. In her 30s Helga moved to South Africa and became the pastor of a church. At the age of 39 Helga married a male Lutheran pastor. Helga chose not to change her surname when she married, because she considered her maiden name to be part of her identity.

Helga openly speaks about how she experiences gender discrimination. At times she is “relaxed” about it, while at other times she becomes “defensive”. She seems to experience a constant struggle to make herself known. At the same time she also experiences pressure to achieve more than her male counterparts: “as a female […] you are double-checked all the time: ‘how is she doing it?’ And I always still sometimes feel that you have to perform better to be acknowledged”.

The type of influence of the congregation varies. Sometimes, the congregation supports Helga and relies on her for guidance and support. At other times, the congregation dismisses Helga and her ideas and challenges her by using insulting arguments such as “you don’t understand me, it’s culture”. This shows that the congregation, as a subject, often speaks from a patriarchal viewpoint and a power struggle comes into play. Helga gains her power from her educational qualifications in Germany, as well as her title as pastor, while the congregation gains its power from the dominant discourse of patriarchy and thereby enforces the submission of women.

6.1.3 Objections
Helga would be critiqued from a patriarchal perspective, which enforces male dominance. This perspective may resort to an evolutionary understanding, that biological differences between females and males account for the differences in roles that exist between the genders, and therefore it is necessary for women to be subordinate.

From a psychodynamic psychological perspective one could argue that, due to an inferiority complex, Helga goes against the norm. The compensating behaviour that Helga exhibits in her speech, which would be referred to as ‘feminism’, serves to assist Helga in achieving authority. The causes of this could be attributed to feelings of discrimination based on her gender.

The congregants, who oppose Helga, could in turn be critiqued from a feminist perspective. Feminists would object to the gender discrimination that some of the congregants bring into their relationship with Helga. These congregants may become defensive towards such objections.

6.1.4 Patterns in the Text

A significant pattern in the text is the stance that Helga takes, which stands in opposition to societal norms. Most of Helga’s ideas and understandings are unconventional and this pattern runs throughout the text. This pattern includes questioning taken-for-granted ways of thinking and behaving. Helga’s response towards her congregants varies, sometimes she becomes “defensive” and at other times she is “relaxed”.

6.1.5 The Discursive Object

The discursive object is related to the research question of how women ministers experience gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church. Therefore, the
discursive object is gender discrimination. This is what the text is centered around. The focus here is on how Helga experiences gender discrimination in her unique context. The areas of investigation are behaviours in the Lutheran Church and the behaviours exhibited towards Helga and how she speaks about this. The behaviours in Helga’s congregation seem more patriarchal and, as mentioned above, her responses towards this behaviour vary.

6.1.6 Audiences

The audiences that may be interested in this text would be found in the fields of psychology and theology. From a psychological perspective, Helga could be understood as a ‘Butlerian feminist’, whereby she is aware of overt and covert forms of gender discrimination and consequently attempts to challenge these. She says: “you have to unpack it all the time […] I try to deconstruct and overcome stereotypes”. This postmodern perspective is empowering for women and is therefore relevant for their life situations. Much of the discourse is grounded in a critique of stereotypes and traditional gender roles.

From a theological perspective, the text would speak to more liberal theologians who adopt a contextual understanding of Biblical texts and acknowledge that Christianity contributes to gender discrimination. This audience would also most likely agree with Helga’s understanding that God is genderless.

6.1.7 Discourses

A patriotic discourse serves to illustrate the differences between the German and South African cultures. This discourse, which illustrates a social bond, can on the one hand be alienating (Parker, 2005). For example, Helga is told by an abusive husband in her congregation: “you don’t understand me, it’s culture”. Here it seems that Helga narrows gender discrimination down to a South African
context. Elsewhere, Helga mentions that Germany is more liberal with regards to gender roles and she therefore believes there is less gender discrimination in Germany. On the other hand, having a different cultural background to her congregants can also be beneficial for Helga, in that congregants will say to Helga (referring to her abilities): “[you] can do it because [you] are German”.

Through the insecurity vs. security tension a trust discourse becomes evident. Helga mentions that as a female pastor she is required to provide a sense of security for her congregants, which she believes male pastors do not feel pressurised to do. This insecurity places pressure on Helga to perform and achieve, with the intention of eventually providing a sense of security, which can lead to a trusting relationship.

Helga states that she makes herself visible. This also presents a tension between being visible and invisible. This visibility discourse is connected to how well one is known as the pastor by the congregation. It is therefore associated with status, power, recognition and how Helga is perceived by others. This discourse assumes that because Helga is a woman she is required to exert more effort, in comparison to her male counterparts, in order to be acknowledged.
6.2 Melanie

In the text Melanie does not speak about her experiences of gender discrimination in the church, but instead justifies the discursive object, by explaining away the inequalities. She does, however, speak about her perceptions of gender discrimination. Melanie acknowledges an instance in which a friend of hers was discriminated against, in the church context, based on her gender. Melanie also considers how women have been discriminated against throughout history and how this still occurs in some cultures. Throughout the text it becomes apparent, that Melanie and her husband conform to strict gender roles in their household. In contrast to the other research participants, Melanie has a more narrow focus, since her experience has been limited to one congregation. In addition to this, she elaborates more on her experience of gender differences than gender discrimination. This text is included in the analysis to give a contrasting perspective, to the experiences of the other two participants, which also indicated that the absence of a particular discourse is significant.

6.2.1 Free Association: Significance of Objects

Melanie is a secretary. The word “secretary” shows that her position is specific to her gender (Rojo & Esteban, 2003). It is associated with words such as administration and organisation. Melanie also notes that the roles that the congregants take on in her congregation are gendered roles. For example, more women are found in the children ministries and men are responsible for the maintenance of the property. Overall, there are more men than women in leadership positions in Melanie’s church, with a ratio of five to two respectively. Melanie attributes this to the unsuitability and unavailability of candidates in the congregation. Melanie acknowledges that gender roles have changed somewhat:
“when I first started work, a woman was just a…you could just be a secretary basically”.

Melanie says: “very often the guys will relate better to guys and the girls better to women”. This sentence emphasises that there is a vital distinction between the genders and for the purpose of order and productivity these distinctions are maintained. Melanie critiques women who take on too many responsibilities by saying “[women] are not leaving anything for the man to do. [They are] taking on all the roles and he’s not feeling that he’s worthy or significant”. Melanie’s acknowledgment of gender differences is noted when she speaks about how a female friend wanted to be a lay preacher, but “there was a man in the congregation who objected to that”. In addition to this, Melanie says: “my father was extremely strict with my brothers, […] but he wasn’t so bad with me”.

Melanie mentions “Muslims”, which is associated with strict religious beliefs, following the Koran and having clearly defined gender roles. With reference to Muslims, Melanie says: “the women are very submissive and basically slaves to their husbands”. Melanie also says: “I think we are fortunate here in South Africa, because women are regarded…well, in most cases as equal”. Melanie mentions this with reference to how women are treated in other cultures. According to Melanie, women have basic human rights, which are generally maintained in South African society. The differences that Melanie identifies in various cultures arise when she interprets certain Biblical texts; she states that they are cultural and do not apply to her in her present context.

6.2.2 Subjects of the Text

Melanie is in her mid-50s and started attending the Lutheran Church when she was 13 years old. She was confirmed at her church and started teaching Sunday school shortly after her confirmation. She has been the secretary, a Sunday school teacher and the kids’ club leader at her church since 2003, which is the
same church she joined at the age of 13. Melanie is married and has two adult daughters. Melanie’s husband does not profess to be a Christian and although he is not engaged in any activities in her congregation, Melanie states that he supports her.

Since Melanie does not overtly speak about her experiences of gender discrimination, but rather about her perceptions, she is identified as the only relevant subject in the text. Melanie does emphasise gender difference and this distinction is imperative, because such distinctions consequently lead to gender discrimination.

6.2.3 Objections

Strong objections would crop up from a feminist perspective. It could be argued that the text supports gender roles, which may lead to gender discrimination. It could also be argued that by not overtly acknowledging gender inequalities and discrimination, Melanie is in fact reinforcing these (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). Even in the abovementioned instances, where Melanie acknowledges gender discrimination, she does not oppose it or object to it. The type of feminist to critique this text would influence the severity of the critique (Kiguwa, 2004).

6.2.4 Patterns in the Text

The pattern that is seen in the text is one that, through all its arguments, denies the oppression of women in the Lutheran Church and supports gender roles. The small amount of women who are involved in leadership positions in the church, compared to men, is justified through the explanation that there are more men who are willing to do those tasks. Melanie seems to frown upon those women who take on too many responsibilities, where men consequently feel that they are not worthy or significant.
6.2.5 The Discursive Object

The text is centered around Melanie’s opinions on how individuals should conduct themselves according to their genders, as well as her perceptions of gender discrimination. Therefore the discursive object is gender roles. Since the research question is centered on gender discrimination, this should in fact be the discursive object. However, Melanie justifies gender discrimination and hence the discursive object is shifted to gender differences and roles.

6.2.6 Audiences

Conservative Christian women and men and stay-at-home mothers who conform to gender roles would probably agree with most of the text. They would agree with the acceptance of conservative gender roles and it is likely that they would not choose to provoke norms. The mere thought of wanting to change norms would be considered nonsensical and deviant.

6.2.7 Discourses

A conversation on differences, whereby patriarchy is emphasised, is used to create a comparison between two groups of people. This illustrates a patriarchal discourse. The one group is identified as “Muslim”; the more oppressive and conservative group. With reference to culture Melanie says: “I think we are fortunate here in South Africa, because women are regarded...well, in most cases as equal”. Melanie identifies South Africa as the other group and considers South Africa to have a liberal stance on gender roles. According to P. Moodley** (personal communication, August 19, 2010) Melanie places cultural groups on a

** Dr. Prevan Moodley is a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at the University of Johannesburg.
continuum ranging from liberal to conservative and she believes that South Africa promotes equality with regards to human rights and she therefore considers South Africa as less patriarchal.

How Melanie speaks about culture simultaneously brings about a patriotic discourse. She identifies with a cultural and religious group that, she says, does not promote gender discrimination. This illustrates the categorisation of two groups, whereby Melanie classifies herself as part of the group that she considers more favourable.
6.3 Lizanne

Lizanne has not studied theology, but works as a pastor in the Lutheran Church. In certain contexts, Lizanne’s arguments are evaluated against the backdrop of her not being a theologian, whereby Lizanne experiences discrimination. Lizanne also agrees with clearly demarcated gender roles, which is often informed by Biblical texts that emphasise traditional gender roles. Overall, the text conforms to patriarchal societal norms.

6.3.1 Free Association: Significance of Objects

Lizanne speaks about her title as “pastor”; however, she states that theologians “wouldn’t regard me as a pastor”. Since Lizanne has not studied theology, she experiences discrimination with regards to a lack of qualifications, because it is believed that her theological arguments do not hold merit. Pastors are seen as spiritual leaders and guiders, but it seems that Lizanne is unable to fully perform this role, because she does not have the required educational background. The effect that this has is that Lizanne will choose to remain silent in the “bigger church meetings”; however, Lizanne also attributes this silence to being a women and she therefore believes that “it wouldn’t be the right thing at the time to speak”.

Lizanne acknowledges that she has not “studied” theology. Studying is associated with education, qualification, power, authority, validity of arguments and status. Lizanne uses this in the context of her theological arguments and that they lack validity, since she has not studied theology. Lizanne therefore perceives, that she is at an immediate disadvantage, when she enters into a discussion or argument with a theologian.
Lizanne mentions the “bigger church meetings”. This is when the governing body of the Lutheran Church meets to discuss pertinent issues. In these meetings Lizanne, as a woman, is part of the minority group. The meetings are associated with hierarchy and authority. In this context, Lizanne tends not to speak up, but instead submits to what she believes the norms of the meetings are. Lizanne is covertly silenced in these situations. Therefore, it seems that patriarchal norms are accepted in these meetings.

6.3.2 Subjects of the Text

Lizanne and the group of people who stand in opposition to her are identified as the two subject groups. Lizanne, who is in her late 30s, is responsible for the spiritual development for children under the age of 12 in her congregation. She is referred to as the children’s pastor, although she did not study theology. Lizanne is simultaneously the principal of a Christian primary and nursery school, which is affiliated to her congregation. She is the leader of the children’s ministry in her congregation; this includes Sunday school and kids’ club. Lizanne is married and has two young children.

The other subject group consists of those people, who stand in opposition to Lizanne. In some instances, it would be the theologians who disregard her arguments; because they emphasise that she does not have educational qualifications in theology. In other instances, it would be individuals at the “bigger church meetings”, who enforce patriarchal norms, where it is not appropriate for a woman to speak or voice her opinion.

The relationships between Lizanne and these two groups (the theologians and the individuals at the “bigger church meetings”) are clearly characterised by power. In both instances Lizanne is somewhat powerless and voiceless, while the people in opposition are powerful and authoritarian. The power that is held by the opposition seems to encourage Lizanne to remain silent.
6.3.3 Objections

Objections may come from a feminist perspective, which would disagree with the silent stance that Lizanne takes at the bigger church meetings. Lizanne does not challenge the status quo (O’Conner & Drury, 1999). A feminist perspective would also stand in opposition to the patriarchal norms that Lizanne conforms to at the larger church meetings. In conjunction with the theologians, some people, possibly other theologians, would argue that Lizanne does not have credible arguments, because they are not supported by a theological qualification.

6.3.4 Patterns in the Text

A distinct pattern that is identified in the text is that Lizanne places men and women in a hierarchy, with men being at the top. For example, Lizanne chooses not to speak in the “bigger church meetings”, because “it wouldn’t be the right thing, at that time, as a female, to speak”. These patterns are embedded in Lizanne’s understanding of Christianity and how Christian men and women should conduct themselves. This pattern is also found in Lizanne’s discourse about marriage and how men should be the “head” of the wife. Although Lizanne identifies some oppression towards women and herself, she conforms to this pattern by justifying the discrimination. Hence, Lizanne possibly empowers males, by not voicing her opinions in the “bigger church meetings”.

6.3.5 The Discursive Object

The discursive object is gender discrimination. To some extent Lizanne justifies the gender discrimination, by mentioning what would be the “right” manner for conducting oneself in certain situations. In relation to gender discrimination as a
discursive object, Lizanne elaborates that she experiences discrimination based on her lack of theological education.

6.3.6 Audiences

Lizanne’s opinions would generally be approved of by a traditional, more ‘archaic’ Christian perspective. For example, Lizanne understands that husbands should be the head of the wife, which would be considered Biblical. In addition to this, Lizanne’s submissive attitude in the “bigger church meetings”, would be considered correct, since 1 Timothy 2:11 states that women should remain silent in the church and should not have authority over men.

6.3.7 Discourses

Through the above analysis various discourses begin to emerge, which are related to Lizanne’s experience of gender discrimination. A patriarchal discourse on hierarchies is present in which men are placed above women. The use of these hierarchies is present when Lizanne speaks about families, marital relationships and acceptable behaviour in church, especially behaviour at the “bigger church meetings”. Lizanne submits to the patriarchal norms of the “bigger church meetings”. Lizanne states that she does not have a problem with this, because “it wouldn’t be the right thing, at that time, as a female, to speak”.

Some of Lizanne’s discourse revolves around silence. Since Lizanne (the one who is discriminated against) is remaining silent, the discrimination is possibly not perceived as threatening. The behaviour exhibited against Lizanne is understood as ‘normal’ and is consequently accepted. This acceptance and conformity to norms could reinforce gender differences and discrimination. Lizanne seems to phrase silence and submissiveness in such a way that it may benefit women if they conform to this way of behaving. To further normalise
submissive and silent behaviour, Lizanne suggests a benefit of this behaviour would be that “[women] can be protected in such a way that [they] can flower to the full potential.”
7 Discussion††

Through the above analysis, the discourses inherent in the text are brought to light in the last step of the discourse analysis. These discourses are relevant to how women ministers experience gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church. By identifying the discourses, it becomes observable how these women give meaning to their experiences (Willig, 1995). The understanding of these experiences may help to further understand why women ministers behave the way they do, when faced with gender discrimination, whereby they either challenge or accept the gender discrimination. In this discussion the discourses identified above are elaborated on and understood in light of relevant literature.

Consequently, it becomes clear that to a greater or lesser degree the discourses are related to power (O’Connor & Payne, 2006). Power makes distinctions and illustrates differences (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). The power struggles and relations emerge from the positioning of the participants as located within hierarchies, which generally serves to separate and therefore fails to bring about unity (Emmett, 2000).

7.1 Patriotic Discourse

The patriotic discourse, in relation to power, emphasises the superiority of one culture or nation in comparison to another. Patriotism is the love and devotion that one has towards a country, which is generally the country of origin. The patriotic discourse gives merit and validity to Helga and Melanie’s actions and discourses, through their association to the supremacy of the homeland. This discourse can also be experienced as disadvantageous, since differences between people of various cultures and the categorisation of these differences

†† Words in double quotation marks (e.g. “visible”) are directly from the participant; while words in single quotation marks (e.g. ‘normal’) are interpretations by the author.
become pronounced when patriotism is accentuated (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This has the capacity to promote alienation (Parker, 2005). By repeatedly speaking about a culture in a certain way the cultural identity is maintained (Billig, 1995). According to Butler (1993), this maintenance of cultural identities is recognised as “regulatory frameworks” for how women should conduct themselves.

Since the patriotic discourse is also associated with calling attention to the differences between cultures with an emphasis on the supremacy of one’s own culture, attention is drawn to how one’s own culture succeeds in not submitting to the discursive object of gender discrimination. This was seen when two of the research participants, Melanie and Helga, made use of this discourse to elevate their own culture. The contrast between the participants arose in the culture or nationality that they ascribed themselves to and consequently felt patriotic towards. Helga stated that Germany is more ‘liberal’ in contrast to South Africa with regards to gender roles, and therefore Germany has less gender discrimination; while Melanie contrasted the ‘liberal’ South African culture to an ‘oppressive’ Muslim culture.

This emphasises the contextual perspectives that the women have incorporated in creating meaningful experiences through their discourses (Schiffrin, 1987); which consequently necessitates a contextual and cultural reading of the text (Wolff, 1990). The language that they use is seen to be indexical, since the meanings of words and phrases that the participants use are contextual (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For example, both Helga and Melanie mention “South Africa”; however, Melanie gives it a positive and liberal connotation; while Helga, who uses a patriotic discourse, gives it a negative and conservative connotation. This in turn illustrates that language serves a purpose by the user, which would in this case be to exalt one’s homeland.
By exalting one’s homeland the participants are to an extent exalting or granting validity to themselves, since their identity is attached to their culture, citizenship and nationality. Therefore, the participants are constructing their own identities through the language and discourses that they are using (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The implications that this patriotic discourse may have on gender discrimination are vital in understanding how discourses contribute to the maintenance of discursive objects, such as gender discrimination. By stating that gender discrimination is occurring in cultures and societies outside of their own, the participants are shifting the responsibility for change in the form of creating gender equality, towards others. Hence, the participant’s responsibility towards the problem is defused when the problem is relocated. Such discourses, which to some extent deny the existence of gender discrimination in one’s own culture, reinforce hierarchies and the existence of patriarchy.

The participants that use a patriotic discourse agree that gender discrimination is occurring. However, they locate the gender discrimination in a culture and context that is distant from themselves. This illustrates that, through their agreement, Helga and Melanie are possibly colluding with the researcher and are reconstructing the researcher’s perceptions, constructs and ideas, which come to the fore through the interview questions (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Therefore the interview process itself is a construction of discourses. This brings to the fore a sense of moral obligation or social bond (Parker, 2005) that the participants may have, to defend their culture or homeland. This moral obligation or social bond is consequently related to their identity.

7.2 Patriarchal Discourse

The existence of discourses which incorporate hierarchical structures within specific cultures and contexts brings about a patriarchal discourse. The
patriarchal discourse includes perceptions of human rights, especially in the South African context, where equal human rights for all citizens are ensured by the constitution. However, patriarchal rule conflicts with such human rights. In a patriarchal society men implicitly or explicitly have a higher ranking and consequently have more authority (Haralambos & Holborn, 2004). Therefore, in patriarchal societies gender discrimination towards women is easily legitimised, since the ideological framework, which exists through patriarchy, gives men and women the license to act the way that they do (Emmett, 2000).

The patriarchal discourse is used by Melanie and Lizanne. They both explicitly agree with patriarchy and consider hierarchies in which males are placed above females to be ‘positive’, ‘functional’ and ‘constructive’. However, the extent to which each participant conforms to patriarchy differs. The one text, which seems to largely deny the discursive object, identifies degrees of patriarchy. For example, Melanie states that in the Muslim culture patriarchy functions to the extent that it is ‘oppressive’ towards women, because “women are very submissive and basically slaves to their husbands”; however, in the participant’s own cultural context the degree to which patriarchy operates is considered ‘beneficial’, since this allows men and women to have unique and distinct roles in society. From this perspective Melanie identifies submissiveness, in a woman, as ‘acceptable’ and ‘normal’.

The patriarchal discourse, when used by Lizanne, presents slightly differently. By speaking about appropriate and acceptable familial, marital and church behaviour, patriarchy is legitimised by the participant. In the familial and marital context she identifies the man as the head. Here, public ideologies and discourses of patriarchy, such as Biblical texts, are seen to influence and manifest in private life, such as the family environment (Coyle, 2007). This illustrates that gender roles may continue in private contexts, due to the discourse of public, patriarchal contexts, such as religion or society, in which they are embedded (Emmett, 2000). The distinction between gender roles becomes
evident when this participant speaks about “male energy”. This “male energy” is able to handle “heavy duties”, which is a perception that reinforces the notion of the female being the weaker sex. Consequently, it is noted that the distinction and acknowledgement of gender differences are important, because this may be a precipitator to gender discrimination.

Thus, it is seen that in contexts and cultures where patriarchy is accepted, it is easier to normalise and legitimise oppression and discrimination. Here, rules for behaviour exist within the “regulated framework” of patriarchy and are seldom questioned (Butler, 1993). In this context, women are regarded as secondary (Beauvoir, 1972); however, the lack of challenge towards this construct encourages the maintenance of patriarchy. In relation to this O’Connor and Drury (1999) state that women “take the patriarchal system for granted, rarely think of it at all – yet its effects are deadly” (p. 6).

It seems that if one has been socialised in a patriarchal society according to patriarchal norms, as is the case with Melanie and Lizanne, oppression towards women could easily be justified, by relating back to the norms of one’s culture (Farrell, 2005; Haralambos & Holborn, 2004; Shefer, 2004; Sölle & Kirchberger, 2001). In this instance, individuals who do not conform to this “regulated framework” are instead considered deviant (Butler, 1993).

The patriarchal discourse serves to justify certain hierarchies (Foster, 2004). By conforming to this discourse, as well as reproducing it, women ensure that they remain the object on the periphery and men remain the subject (Beauvoir, 1972; Sölle & Kirchberger, 2001). Perhaps, conforming to patriarchal hierarchies, especially in the religious contexts of the participants, is esteemed, since through this act order is maintained (Foster, 2004).
7.3 Silence & Visibility Discourse

The discourses of silence and visibility stand in stark contrast to one another. With the discourse on silence there is a submission to the norms in that context, while the visibility discourse challenges the status quo and strives to make previously invisible opinions and people known. The tension between these discourses stresses the varying stances that the different participants, namely Lizanne and Helga, incorporate towards similar experiences of gender discrimination.

The church, as an institution, has been pivotal in reproducing the silent discourse, through the importance it has placed on Biblical texts such as 1 Corinthians 14:34, saying that women should remain silent in the church. This illustrates the patriarchal nature of Scripture (Emmett, 2000), which normalises a patriarchal discourse. Butler (1990) argues, that women have not been fully recognised in cultural histories, because men have dominated the production of literature, which is also true for the Bible. In a sense the silence is alienating and prescriptive for women (Emmett, 2000) and legitimises oppression through the way in which women perform the role which has been prescribed to them by Biblical texts (Butler, 1993; Parker, 2005; Racokzy, 2004). This illustrates that this discourse is embedded in historical discursive practices found in Biblical texts and is conflicted with many present-day discursive practices.

Lizanne is constructing herself as a silent woman, through the identification with various discourses such as the abovementioned Biblical text (Willig, 1995; Wolff, 1990). A result of this may be that fewer leadership positions in the church would be held by women (Kang, 2005; Rakoczy, 2004). This is because the characteristics of leaders, such as being outspoken and charismatic, would perhaps be disapproved of as characteristics of women, especially in this context. In addition to this, this participant may more likely be found in subordinate and submissive roles (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). Even if this is not
necessarily the case, it could be expected, as it is with Lizanne, that her role would be supervised by a man (O’Connor & Drury, 1999).

The silent discourse, like the patriotic discourse, introduces the understanding of a moral obligation to conduct oneself in a particular way by conforming to the implicit and explicit norms of a religious institution. The benefits of silence and submission are phrased by Lizanne as being “protected” and “flowering to the full potential”. This gives a positive connotation to silence and submission. Other rewards of such conformity include recognition and the possibility of being esteemed as a humble and gentle Christian woman. Such rewards would far outweigh the negative consequences of being ostracised and labeled as deviant if one were to go against the norm. This illustrates that the silence discourse is related to the existence of social bonds, which represents the inclusion or exclusion of people (Parker, 2005). By participating in this discourse, women are ensured that they are included in the church, which can be identified as socially bound behaviour.

It seems that in the silence the dominant voices are heard even louder. By remaining silent, passive and submissive and failing to oppose the dominant male voices, Lizanne is colluding with the patriarchal system and is therefore maintaining its potency (O’Connor & Drury, 1999). This collusion in turn results in the “oppression of other women” (O’Connor & Drury, 1999, p. 25). Nevertheless, the participant seems to be unaware of this potency and instead regards her silence as the appropriate and “right” manner for a woman to conduct herself in a specific context.

The visibility discourse can be viewed as a polarity, when compared to the silent discourse. Through the visibility discourse Helga strives to make herself known. For example, the participant states that when there are meetings with only males she purposefully does not clean and serve tea or coffee. She states her intention behind this is “just to make sure I’m visible, because otherwise they don’t see
that you are the pastor”. The visibility discourse defies the taken-for-granted ways of behaving and consequently breaks down social bonds (Parker, 2005). This is done by not subscribing to socially and religiously accepted gender roles.

By ensuring her visibility, Helga, like Lizanne with her silence, is performing a role (Butler, 1990). Although this role is not specific to the participant’s gender, she is performing this role, which opposes stereotypical gender roles. It seems that this oppositional role is liberating for Helga. With regard to going against the norm, the participant relates her experiences to Jesus’ behaviour, whereby he went against the norm by associating on relatively equal terms with women (Racokzy, 2004).

The use of Biblical texts to explain and justify one’s behaviour is a commonality between the silence and visibility discourses. However, by drawing on a visibility discourse the participant is not applying the teachings of prescriptive texts, but is rather contextually assessing and interpreting behaviour of characters within Biblical texts and is mirroring that behaviour. In a sense the interpretation and not only the application of Biblical texts and characters may have a liberating effect on the individual who does the interpretation.

The instance of interpretation may also be linked to educational qualifications. The participant who conducts more in-depth and contextual studies of Biblical texts has a theological education and is qualified as a pastor. Exposure to feminist theology has possibly assisted Helga in developing a more critical stance towards gender roles and gender discrimination. This is contrasted to Melanie and Lizanne who do not have a theological education, which may be the reason for their more superficial and prescriptive applications of Biblical texts which are related to gender roles. This is substantiated by Rom Harré and Grant Gillett (1994) who state that depending on a person’s competence, limits will be imposed on how one acts and performs. Therefore, it could also be deduced that observing how people act, perform and talk would hint at their social
competence. This illustrates that the production of discourses are context dependent (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

The resistance that comes to the fore, when the visibility discourse is utilised, challenges those people who hold more power and are therefore more dominant. This discourse is empowering for those people who have been previously bound by social bonds, because becoming visible can be liberating. On the other hand, by being visible and known, scrutiny is more likely, since publicity and popularity can be negative or positive. However, the objective that Helga aims to achieve through the visibility discourse is intended to have positive effects for her.

These competing discourses of silence and visibility have differing implications for women in the Lutheran Church, which is also observed in how the participants’ behaviour is maintained by these discourses. The silent discourse serves to reinforce submissive and gendered roles for women, while the visibility discourse provides the opportunity for women to perform roles that are not stereotypically confined to their gender (Butler, 1993). By using these discourses there may also be implications for reading, studying and interpreting Biblical texts.

### 7.4 Trust Discourse

The trust discourse emerges as the tension between the polarities of security and insecurity arises. The congregants feel insecure, because they have a female pastor. Since female pastors are not the norm, this situation is unfamiliar and the congregants seem to experience a sense of distrust towards Helga. As more security is provided by the female pastor the congregation is able to trust more. And conversely, having insecurities would lead to distrust.

In this case Helga is faced with the pressure exerted by the congregation of transforming an insecure situation, which primarily exists due to her gender, into
a secure situation. She says “you are double-checked all the time…and [I] feel that you have to perform better in order to be acknowledged”. It seems that for the participant this comes across as a form of scrutiny or interrogation. The result of this double-checking is that pressure to perform is experienced. Helga consequently understands that she needs to endeavor to achieve beyond the achievements and duties of her male counterparts.

This introduces Butler’s (1990) term of “gender performance”. Helga is working and performing duties and roles outside the scope of her gender. This deviance is not only challenging for the congregation, who need to monitor the female pastor’s performance, but it is also challenging for the participant, who needs to prove herself through her performance as female pastor in an androcentric environment.

In this instance, contrary to previous discourses that Helga has used, she is practicing a form of submission to the church and by doing this the participant is submitting to the patriarchal discourse, since the church conforms to a patriarchal framework. The church needs security and the female pastor responds by providing security and fostering trust. She does this by working harder than her male colleagues. From this angle, it may be understood that Helga is being dominated and oppressed by the church, with some awareness of this, but is submitting to this domination by providing the congregation with what they want (Coyle, 2007).

Submitting to the congregation produces rewards for Helga in the form of providing a collaborative working relationship between her and the congregation. Here submission may not be completely voluntary, but she chooses to conform and consequently submit, because it seems she understands that this is necessary when working with a congregation. A moral obligation towards the congregation and possibly even towards God, to care for this congregation, may also be present.
Since this form of gender discrimination exists within the context of a religious institution and the majority (congregation) is ‘oppressing’ and ‘discriminating’ against the minority (Helga), it seems that such gender discrimination is easily justified (Kiguwa, 2004). This is similar to the patriarchal discourse, whereby society subscribes to patriarchy and therefore viewing women as the secondary or weaker sex (Beauvoir, 1972) is considered the norm.

This again illustrates the interconnectedness of the discourses. At times, the discourses seem to fuse. For example, a silent discourse may easily be found to exist within a patriarchal discourse, because women are often required to remain silent in patriarchal society. At other times, the discourses are contrasted to each other. This is clearly seen with the discourses on silence and visibility. In conclusion, the use of these discourses influences how the participants have constructed their realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987).
8 Limitations and Recommendations

When conducting a discourse analysis it is often assumed that the discourses exist within the text and may surface through analysis; however, the discourses are rather created through analysis (Parker, 1994). This indicates a limitation of discourse analysis, which is, that meanings that are assumed and interpreted are subjective and based on the researcher’s understandings (Schiffrin, 1987). It should also be noted that “language may have consequences that the speaker did not intend” (Coyle, 2007) and therefore discourse analysis should be used with caution.

During the interview process the research seemed to lose its focus. At this stage the data had been collected and transcribed; however, overall the data was not answering the research question. Sifting through the data to discover the accounts and experiences of gender discrimination was tedious, but necessary. This is seen in the italicised sections of the interview with Helga in appendix C. Ultimately this process was not problematic, because it allowed the analysis to be concentrated on fewer experiences of gender discrimination and resulted in a more intense and in-depth discussion.

Therefore a recommendation for future studies would be to constantly reevaluate if the direction that the researcher is heading towards is in line with the research question. In addition to this, if the data is not as rich as the researcher had hoped, it may be sensible to conduct further interviews until the data that that is collected answers the research question.

Using a framework such as Parker’s (2005) steps to analysing discourses is helpful. This outline provided a structure for conducting the analysis, which thus meant that the discourses of the three participants were analysed in a similar and somewhat reliable fashion. By having uniformity in the analysis, writing up the discussion is less problematic.
As mentioned in the preface, this study was focused on the domain of psychology. Although applying a psychological perspective to the experience of gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church is limiting in that the relevant disciplines of sociology and theology are neglected, the research study needed to be succinct to qualify as a minor dissertation in the field of psychology.
9 Reflexive Epilogue

Within qualitative studies subjectivity and reflexivity are part of the research. I acknowledge that the interviews were to some extent biased, because I had a particular agenda which I wanted to achieve through the questions I asked (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This bias and my subjective experience of the research are considered here. Because of my own experience of being discriminated against I developed particular stances towards each of my research participants. In light of the influence that this research has had on me I consider my positioning towards each of the participants:

Helga intrigued me immensely. I considered her to be the embodiment of a Christian Judith Butler and she has consequently become a role model for me. Previously, I found myself struggling with the idea that Christianity and feminism could be merged; however, Helga provided evidence that this is indeed possible.

Melanie was reluctant and resistant during the interview process, which frustrated me. She conforms to and performs stereotypical gender roles. At any mention of gender discrimination Melanie became defensive and used an explanation to justify any existence of inequalities in her culture or congregation. Her experiences do not include a tertiary education and are limited to one congregation, which suggests to me that broadening one’s horizons through education and experiences may assist people in challenging the taken-for-granted perspective of looking at gender, as well as conducting contextual interpretations of Biblical texts.

Lizanne was aware of gender discrimination, but particularly cautious of insulting the church. During the interview, when I became aware of this caution, I felt deviant to be researching such a controversial matter, especially since I call myself a Christian. Again, the divide between Christianity and feminism was highlighted and it seemed that they were mutually exclusive.
To an extent, I was active in constructing who I considered my participants to be. The various stances I developed towards the participants have assisted me in reconstructing my own positioning with regards to feminism, Christianity and gender discrimination. However, I am aware that this process is dynamic and I will continuously reassess my understandings and beliefs in light of new experiences that I make and new literature that I am exposed to.
10 Conclusion

Gender discrimination, in its diverse forms, is prevalent in South Africa, as well as the Lutheran Church in South Africa. Gender discrimination is experienced differently by various women, which is identified through the discourses they use. These experiences are in turn influenced by the discourses that women encounter. Through these discourses it becomes apparent that the Lutheran Church has in the past struggled and is presently still struggling with the issue of gender discrimination. Progress in achieving equality has been made by implementing changes on a structural level, such as promoting the ordination of women. However, through the identified discourses it is seen that structural changes have not completely eradicated gender discrimination in the Lutheran Church.

In this study, the identification that two of the participants had with a culture that they classify as less discriminatory towards women is viewed as a patriotic discourse. One of the participants who used a patriotic discourse was also educated in discourses related to feminist theology. It seems that this education has contributed to her being more aware of gender discrimination in the church. In response to this, she makes her opinions known and actively vocalises her opposition, which has been identified as the visibility discourse.

The participant who uses the visibility discourse to perhaps empower herself is contrasted to the other two participants, who do not have a theological education and perhaps do not have a position in the church that is ranked as high, as the former research participant. These participants seem to be largely unaware of gender discrimination and consequently have a more passive response to such matters. A passive response brings the silent discourse to the fore. The acceptance of such androcentric norms emerges from a patriarchal discourse. Since this patriarchal discourse exists, it is necessary to perform certain actions as a woman in order to establish a trusting and reliable reputation, which
illustrates the trust discourse. Through the abovementioned discourses it is observable that gender discrimination and the manner in which individuals respond to this is embedded in discourse.

Although my research is limited, the findings strengthen the view that people, especially women in the Church, need to reevaluate their awareness and understanding of gender discrimination. If this is not done women (ministers) will continue in their collusion with patriarchy and subsequently render themselves voiceless and enslaved. A critical stance towards gender discrimination, which requires an examination of patriarchal society and gender performativity, is needed to emancipate women, especially those women working in the Church.

In conclusion I suggest that if, as the findings suggest, gender discrimination is rooted in the discourses that we are exposed to and the discourses that we use, then the solution to overcoming gender discrimination also lies in discourse. Therefore, for social change to take place it is necessary to deconstruct and reconstruct discursive practices (Fairclough, 2007; Lemke, 2003). This in turn necessitates that a critical view is applied to accepted and taken-for-granted language (Billig, 2003).
11 References


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Participant’s Information Sheet
Previous research has shown that societal structures influence the nature of women’s roles in institutions. This study investigates how women experience their unique roles within the Lutheran Church.

If you are willing to participate in this study you will need to answer questions about your involvement in ministry and your subjective experience thereof. This will take about 60 minutes. There are no right or wrong responses to the questions asked in this interview.

You are not required to give your name or any unnecessary personal details. It will not be possible to identify who you are from the interview. The interview is considered highly confidential. Please ask for assistance should you not understand a question.

Consent
I accept to voluntarily participate in this research concerning my experiences of being actively involved ministry. I am aware that the information I provide will be kept confidential. I am at liberty to withdraw from the research study with no consequences for doing so.

Sign………………………………………  Date…………………………….
Ursula Froschauer     Supervised by: Prof. C. R. Stones
13 Appendix B
Interview Questions

Responsibilities

- What are some of the responsibilities that you take on at work?
- How did you get involved in ministry? How long have you been in ministry?
- Do your responsibilities differ from the responsibilities that men have?
- How many women are pastors in your circuit? How many men? Why do you think there is this large difference?
- Are there areas in your church that women are only involved in or are not involved in?
- Have there been times when you felt or thought that you received preferential treatment, because you are a woman?
- Are there ways that the church values you or devalues you as a woman?
- Are men and women treated differently in your church?
- Has the ordination of women made any differences in your church? If yes, what differences?

God

- How do you view God? Explain to me who God is. Where did this image originate from?
- When you pray what names do you use for God?
- How does your church influence the image of God that you have?

The Bible

- What does the Bible mean to you?
- How do you interpret the following Biblical texts?
  - Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:9-15
14 Appendix C

Transcribed Interview 1 – Helga (H), Interviewer (U)

U: How did you start off in ministry? Can you tell me a bit about that?
H: Yes, I started off when I was quite young. I come from a very un-churched family. They were just members in the church, but not very participating in the church. Typical German set-up. So, we would go for Easter and Christmas and all those things, but not much more. And then in confirmation classes I got a bit closer connected to the church and got very interested in the bible stories and in church and I started to become part of the youth group and I became a Sunday school teacher and a youth leader and all this. So, I started very young.
U: And then eventually you moved on to study theology?
H: Ja, then with 16 I decided that I’m going to be a pastor. It was a very early decision and even then I started taking Latin in school, because I had to prepare for my studies and ja, then I went to University and did my internship as required in Germany. It’s very long, it’s seven years university, two and a half years internship, so all together it’s nine years or more studying to be a pastor. It’s long.
U: So, how long have you been in ministry for?
H: If you count it from the internship on, that’s after the first theological exam, that was in ’89, so now it’s 21 years. That’s the official one, not the youth ministry that I did before.
U: And, since you’ve been a pastor in the church, what are some of the responsibilities that you’ve taken on?
H: It’s good to mention that my experience is partly in Germany. I am now since eight years in South Africa and seven years in the South African ministry. So, I have been a congregational pastor, where I am leading the congregations. Then I have been a student chaplain, I think that’s how you call it, so, the student ministry. I have also been in the church leadership as a dean and a member of the church council. And obviously within the congregational ministry – that is very broad – I also had the function of serving the South African partnership in
Germany and such things. So, I always had various positions in the church, not only the pastor of a local congregation. Like also for that church in Germany I was for a couple of years the leader of the youth committee of the entire church.

U: It sounds to me like you’ve had a broad range of responsibilities. Do you think that your responsibilities have in any way differed from the responsibilities that men would take on?

H: I think so. I think not from the position and fortunately not from the salary that I receive; that is within the Lutheran Church the same. If you are female or if you are male you receive the same salary and you have the right to the same title, so there is no differentiation. But I think first of all how the congregants react to a female pastor that is different. I think for example that since many, many members are females they find it to a certain extent easier to talk to a woman pastor. And they also – I have often experienced – that female congregants say I would not be able to talk about this matter to a male pastor. So, I think the content of the conversation if it is in counseling it’s different than with a male pastor. They would…obviously…like sexuality, relationships even sometimes parenting. In some ways they open up more or in a different way with a female pastor. Then what I have well experienced, ok, 20 years ago it was not so usual that there are female pastors, so I’m still in a way part of the first and second generation of female pastors. So you come and are totally new. On the one hand it makes it easy, because there is not so much expectations, because there is no role model for you. You don’t have the history of ten male pastors having been there. And the people think if they think “pastor: male”, so if you come as a female you have the chance of doing it different without them knowing you differ, because it’s just that you are a different person, so that makes it easier. But on the other hand you are double-checked all the time: “how is she doing it” and I always still sometimes feel that you have to perform better in order to be acknowledged. After a while it relaxes also. I was always the first female pastor in a congregation when I came there, so they have never had the experience with that. Then after five years or so they relax a lot. “That’s fine!” then you have proven that you can do it and the church is just not going to be destroyed by a
female pastor. When people relax it becomes easier. But at the beginning it is like you are totally observed and “how is she doing that and is it still right?”. So, a lot of insecurity and you have to provide security in the sense that “we will make it and the church will still exist after all”. That I have well experienced. And then a few times – but that is sort of individuals – like there was a woman in my congregation, my second, I don't know, she said that “you cannot bury my husband, my husband would not be happy to be buried by a female pastor”. So, such things, but it was not like very, very often. And then I always deal relaxed with it, a colleague can do it, I don't mind. I mean, I don't fight then and say that it's my member and I will do that. I must be relaxed.

U: So, if I'm hearing correctly you do feel a certain amount of pressure to perform better than your male colleagues?

H: Yes. I think so, because each and every time I mean you hear it from the comments also when you forecome a leadership committee of the whole church: “Oh ja, it's a woman now”. So it's still something special. Or last year when I was a candidate for the bishop's position: “Wow, but a female and we have a female candidate!” It was not about who am I or what I stand for, but it was all about me being a female and then also in the result “we never thought that a female candidate would get so far”. And on the one hand I identify with that, I play a role in bringing the women forward in the church, I do that. Sometimes it's also a bit disturbing, because I am more than just a woman, or how can I say, I stand for things and not only because I am a woman. So, if you are always reduced with whatever you say as if that is my only qualification, being a female, then it's a bit disturbing.

U: How do you experience that? How do you feel when you feel like you are being reduced to only being a woman?

H: Then I feel it's a bit unjust to women, it's as if we have not leant to go beyond the sexes. That a woman is often, first of all it is a woman, it's not about what qualifications do I bring or what experience do I bring. And depending on my mood, ok, sometimes it's disturbing and I get angry, sometimes I just smile. I mean there are various ways of dealing with it, but you have to deal with it. If you
don’t deal with it, I mean, one cannot ignore it. And then perhaps in South Africa it’s by far a more hierarchical system and that is also, I think because I am a foreigner to the system, it is also easier for the male to accept me as a German female pastor. But I wonder how they would react to a South African female pastor. Because men also sometimes approach me and say I must help them with their situation at home and the situation is that they think that the wife is not obedient enough. Obviously they expect from their background a pastor will support them, because that is what the church requests: women to be obedient. /but with me that doesn’t fit very nicely, so I would explore the whole situation with them and try also to challenge them in that role. That is probably unexpected. Like I had once a guy that came and I thought he might be even abusive and he wanted me – he was not a church member, but the wife attended church at that time with a handicapped child – and he wanted me to tell the wife how she must behave at home. And then I had a meeting with him and he was a businessman, quite well off, and then he came, and when I said I will not accept it if you hit your wife, it is not tolerable at all, he said “you don’t understand me it’s culture”. And then I told him “look, you drink Coca-cola, that’s American, you drive a BMW that’s German, you wear an Italian suit, you love Pizza and Chinese food and now you come with culture when you beat-up your wife, it’s not culture. Don’t tell me such nonsense”. So what is culture? But, you have to unpack it all the time and obviously sometimes you will be successful and other times the male might perhaps say, ach, ja, she doesn’t know. And by that not being challenged in the way I would like to be challenged.

U: So, in those situations it sounds like you basically help whoever comes to you unpack what it is that they have been taught?

H: Yes, that’s what I try, I try to deconstruct and overcome stereotypes. That’s what I did a lot. And I think that is a bit because I with my role of female pastor break the stereotype already. So, that is something I can do. And then those that don’t want to break the stereotype can just say, ach, it’s just because she is a female. And others can go with in it and say “it is a good opportunity to let us unpack a bit and let us see what is behind that”.
U: Are there any other female pastors in your circuit?
H: Not anymore. There have been. G was there for a while in [place name], but at least that’s half a pastor and then there was some youth pastors L and L, but L is no longer anymore, because she took a different responsibility in her congregation and L is back in Germany. And I don’t have a assistant pastor currently, so currently I am again alone. Only me. Within the whole church currently it’s, now E is in [place name], she took the congregation now fortunately and then A since last year she is another female pastor in [place name]. So, we are only three out of, I think, 32 or 33. And two years ago it was only me. And there are others like P, V’s wife, but she is only 25% in the congregation and then she works as a nursery school teacher and then C, a full trained pastor, but she moved to Germany, so she also stopped. So, it’s still from a broader perspective as if it’s difficult for female pastors to manage both working and family and most particularly here in South Africa when they sort of have children or so they stop being a pastor. So, I think the church has a challenge there also, how to structure the work of a pastor in such a way that a female can also can do that work. It’s still very, very normal that you study and do all of this and are trained, but then whatever your husband does you go along with that.
U: You said that there are three female pastors at the moment out of 33, what are your ideas on that? Would you like to see that change?
H: Yes, it would be great if it could change. I think for a church in 2010 it would be good if at least 50/50. 50% female pastors would be good. In the leadership of the church council now it’s only two women, it’s one lay member and also one [inaudible], she is a member now since three years. So, it’s still a very new concept, and, I am the only female theologian there. So, the leadership, I can see it in the [place name] Congregation there even in the council there is not one female member. And I think we will find that often, that still in the leadership it is predominantly male.
U: Why do think it’s necessary for this to change?
H: First of all the church represents lots of women and the members are predominantly women and that doesn’t give a good reflection of what is going on
local ground. Because then you have the females running the local congregation and are participating, but when it comes to leading they are not there. So in a way it should be perhaps even, so if like 70% are female members then 70% of the council should be female members. It is just a thought, I am not so opinionated about it. But I think it is important that the members are represented also in the leadership. Then I wouldn’t say, I try to avoid to say that male are like this and female are like this. I don’t like the stereotypes in that either. And yet there is usually a tendency that females bring a different aspect in than males. And I think that the voice or the picture is just more complex and fuller and richer if you have them also on board.

U: From what you maybe gather from you congregants and there experiences or from what you observe do you see that women and men are treated quite differently by each other and by themselves?

H: I would say from the history of the church, the church has contributed tremendously in oppressing the women and we can see that in how the bible came into existence and all the female literature that we know, like Mary wrote a Gospel and it’s not part of the bible and there are other female disciples that also wrote something and they were excluded when the canon was made, when the bible was compiled. So, we find only the male writers, it started there and because it was male people who said that they are the apostles then an apostle can only be a male. I mean that is where it started. Although around Jesus there were female disciples, like it says in Luke 8. And we have other historical witnesses for that. So, from the beginning those in power and those that were men excluded the women and also portrayed then Christianity in a certain way that was oppressive and since it went along with the times it was not questioned very much. It’s just the role that male and female would have played sort of, anyhow and I think the church has fed into that a lot. And now since also society has moved on a bit and the feministic movement has helped us to overcome that, there is also more awareness in the church. But particularly here in South Africa I can still see it that the role of the woman was portrayed as you have to be in the house and you have to be obedient and you look nicely after your husband and
after your family. And that is in the church generally accepted, so in that the church although from the theology they are liberating has often a very conservative factor and stabilising factor in society. And I think females, not all females, but some females, female pastors or feminist theologians try to overcome that and say that “we are part of this church and we want to overcome also that type of conservatism”. I think that is good. When you look from the theological stand point you can see that there are role models like Mary, is the good one and Eve is the bad one. And women for a long time have been sort of stereotyped and labeled by either “you are Mary”, the good one, the one that looks…the mother-role, or “you are Eve”, that is the vamp, that sort of brings the Mary into temptation. And for a long time churches portrayed “don’t be like Eve” and the female is sort of the one who brings all of the evil into the world. On the other hand be like Mary, there is also something like you must be so holy. So it’s the two extremes: the very good one and the very evil one and you have only as a woman the choice to be either or and I think it’s time to overcome all these either ors. And for the male there were by far more role models, you have Moses, Abraham, Jacob and the whole apostles. So, by far more to relate to and then also find your role in church.

U: Do you think that you are overcoming these stereotypes by being a female pastor?

H: I think so. I must tell you a funny story of a Sunday school child. When I’m not here on Sundays I prepare a sermon and give it to one of the elders or one of the members and they read the sermon. And then as the one guy talks the elders were asking him “can you do the sermon next Sunday?” Then he said yes, he is going to do that. And then on that Sunday he told his child, the daughter “M we must hurry up, we must be in time, today I am the pastor. The pastor is not there, I am going to be the pastor.” Then this one smiled and said “It cannot be possible, how can a boy be a pastor?”. And that’s amazing. That’s the first generation, because these kids grow up here they only know a female pastor. And then you can understand how the stereotypes come, because she has only seen this she cannot imagine somebody else being a maruti. Or when we go to
the circuit events, there’s another girl, V, and then A did the service or whatever, and then the mother said “you must be quiet, maruti’s talking”, “no, here is no maruti, maruti is sitting there”. So, for them that’s me. And I’m a woman, so for them it’s very clear that it must be a woman. It’s amazing. Ja, they are small, seven or eight, and they will change obviously and understand that it’s not the case. But there you can see how fast it goes. If you always only see male pastors you think that’s how it is. You cannot imagine it to be different. We laughed when we heard that.

U: How did your family take it that you wanted to be a pastor?

H: My father at first thought that I’m mad, brainwashed (laughs). He couldn’t understand that, but once I went into it he was also actually quite proud of it. But I must say that in Germany it is also a very good, I won’t call it career, but profession. So it’s not like you will struggle your whole life and be always the poor one who cannot look after the family or so. So, from that perspective it is a good profession that you elect. Sort of a bit on the level of a lawyer, doctor or teacher, so, it’s well accepted in society. So, the madness was also that he did not know any other female pastor and he couldn’t understand that I’m so churchy. But my mother liked it a lot and I think the rest of the family accepted it very well they liked it a lot.

U: When you decided to become a pastor, did you know of any other female pastors?

H: Let me think…no. No. I knew about deacons, female deacons that do youth work or youth pastors but no other pastors.

U: Ok, I know that some churches say that women shouldn’t be pastors. What do you think of that…when people come with scripture to you and say “but it says so here”? What do you say?

H: Ja, I think it’s a different way of understanding the scripture that I don’t share and it’s power-play, because as I tried to explain we have witnesses that with Jesus there were females and there were women who played a big role in the first congregation, like Lydia for example, she is mentioned. And when it came to elect elders, the men were obviously dominant and said “we don’t have in normal
life a female in such positions, so we don’t do that in the church”. So, what Jesus
had done, like being more or less equal with females and appreciating them as
much as the other disciples from those around him that was neglected again,
what is a good word, or denied. So, Luke is the only gospel, in Luke 8, where
Luke mentions the names of the female disciples and the others don’t do that.
And now to say “how do we understand scripture?” that is the first thing we have
to ask. We cannot take it one by one. I would challenge such a person and ask
“you don’t do everything that is in the bible, why do you take that example of the
elders?” And that suits that person and that suits that particular church. And we
do it to a certain extent, all of us, we take out of the bible what suits us and we
Lutherans are very open about this, because we say “we take what promotes
Jesus Christ”. But other churches are not so open about what they take. They
take what promotes their church and I think one should be open and say that we
want to be a church where only male are in the leadership they must not say that
is the only way to read the bible. And that is where I disagree and to a certain
extent…let me take an example that is often quoted when it says that the female
must for example take something on the head. You know that in Corinthians?
Where you must wear something. That was from Paul an attempt to grant
equality to all the women, because the prostitutes would have been shaved and
the others not. So, now the female would sit in church and exactly what I said
before it would happen “this is the prostitute, the bad one, and these are the
good ones.” So, Paul says all of them need to be covered. We are all equal
before God. So, something of Paul that had a good intention by saying it is not
important who we are in normal life, because we are in the presence of God and
God loves us all the same way, is now used to again discriminate against
women. So, actually the opposite of what was intended is done by just quoting
that verse and I think that often happens: you just quote a verse out of the
context without going into what was the original meaning or what was the
situation in history and to unfold this a bit to understand what we can do. But it’s
a different kind of scripture understanding. We as Lutherans understand that…let
me put it this way, other churches they…the bible is God’s word and we say
God’s word is in the bible. If you say the bible is God’s word it means that each and every thing is literally as you mean it, as it is written there and it cannot be possible. And then you come into trouble with evolution and with all these problems. But if you say you find God’s word in the bible, that means you make the text start talking to you and you find God’s voice within the text. That is the function of a good theologian and of anybody else then also, but you need certain amount of knowledge around the things to make it better to understand it.

U: I’m busy reading this book called “Velvet Elvis” by Rob Bell and he speaks about how Luther used the word reforming and it wasn’t reformed, it was reforming, because it is a constant process. It sounds like…maybe…where the church is at, at the moment that it is a process of being reformed where people have just stopped. What are your opinions on that? Do you think the church is still reforming or reforming their ideas on the bible?

H: I think it is happening all the time that the church is reforming, but the church leadership doesn’t acknowledge it always or doesn’t accept that so well. So, instead of being more proactive in supporting reforming the church at all time, people sometimes fight and feel defensive because they are afraid that they will loose something. And I think that’s where things break, because you hold on and holding on is usually not a good thing. Because then you also create the “either or”, either as we have done it always, or as you want to do it now and to my mind, as you put it nicely, in the reforming process, that is actually another word for living. And a living person, I mean there is no way that you could for example say “I’m stop from aging” and that is in a way a reforming process and that is what makes you a live person. That every day something is changing in your body and not so visible, but after 10 years then you know it. So, and if we stop that all the processes of saying I don’t want to do that, I don’t want to change or my body to change and all this means I stop living, I get a break, I get a psychological problems, I cannot deal. So, as unhealthy as it is for an individual it’s unhealthy for a church. The church needs to be reforming all the time, because it is alive, it’s a natural process. And I think that the more natural one would take it the easier also I think the church. Ok, I’m in an advanced position...
here in [place name], because it’s a very young congregation that started ’94, so everybody who wants to be here wanted to be here and not somewhere else and that means we don’t have very old traditions. We don’t have anybody saying “but we always did it like that”. We don’t have this always. And we all come from different points and appreciate that here things will be different, because we are coming from other points and I think that is a good concept if you can keep on doing this. Appreciating with each and every person that is new, something must change within the whole church. And inviting everybody to raise your voice and it changes and with us it’s natural. For example with us the building was too small now you can say we don’t invite anybody anymore, but it would be stupid. So, we have to do something and extend the building. So, if you don’t react to the life you break or you stop the process. And people are too afraid of that process. And too focused on what they loose and not on what they gain. And I think, I mean you can also see Martin Luther, he was in a way a polarizing person, so he was very rude with those that didn’t agree. And I think sometimes people that stand in for progress or change are also very rude with those that don’t want that kind of change. Sometimes it’s necessary, like in apartheid, if people were not being very rude, we would still have apartheid. So, it’s very difficult to say what is the appropriate action to promote that kind of change or progress, but there need to be progress and change and transformation all the time. That I believe surely.

U: You also mentioned how people become quite defensive when they try to hold onto certain things. Have there been times when you felt you were being quite defensive over being a woman and trying to hold on to certain things being a woman?

H: Yes, I’m sure, I’m looking for an example. Ja, I would for example check all the time, ok I try not to be too powerful, like always saying because I’m the pastor it needs to be done my way. But I would also not let others overtake and I become quite defensive…I don’t have a good example, it doesn’t happen so often…but for example it is taken for me as a female pastor that I do a lot of cleaning and providing tea and coffee and such things and help in the kitchen. And naturally I do that, not because I’m a female, but because I think we are all
equal. But when there is a male meeting I sometimes don’t do it. Just for the purpose to make them understand, I’m here not the cleaner, but the pastor. But it’s not very defensive, just to make sure I’m visible, because otherwise they don’t see that you are the pastor. So, in such situations I might do that or...I don’t have a good example.

U: What are people’s reactions towards that, when you maybe don’t clean or when you don’t do what is expected of a woman?

H: It’s interesting. For the female it is again easier. They say “ja, but you are murutii”. And for the male I think they are sometimes a bit sort of “oh, ja, I forgot”. Here since it’s all young people or lots of young people it’s not much of a conflict or a difficult situation. But it could come at times I think so. Ja, I understand your question, I would immediately say yes, but it’s difficult to find examples.

U: Do you think that because women are ordained in your church it has made a difference to how people relate to women?

H: That’s difficult to measure, but I would think so. At least is makes a difference...what I heard yesterday evening for example that I as a woman and a pastor here give lots of confidence to other women for other professions. And one of my elders in [place name], I talked to him yesterday night, and he said he can see particularly in the young adult female of the congregation my influence. And he is a male, so I found that interesting, he says he sees that young women get more confident and sort of relate to me and by this also take ownership of the church in a visible way more than he has seen before. And I think I have seen that we have a fellowship group, which is usually females and sometimes we have a male guest or so, but it’s the females of the congregation. And they observe me, so I become a role model for them. And they observe me also a lot, how do I react to stuff. Now for them here it’s often I think that it’s when it comes to close to them that they could do the same like challenging male they say “ach, she can do it because she is German”. So it always gives a door open, like in that group we have a lot or many families where the husband is abusive. It’s a terrible situation, where they say, but don’t take the role of the victim, how can you overcome that if you try. Some would say at some point we cannot do it, it’s
culture. So then they wouldn’t say that because pastor can do it I can do it, but then they say pastor is German, I can not do it. But others who see that as a possibility and have learnt from that say “I can do it, pastor is a female and I’m a female”. So it is encouraging particularly for the female members to see that, particularly in South Africa, where the roles are still very stereotyped. You can see it when we’re as a congregation together on a Sunday for example, all the men are around the braai-stand and all the women are somewhere and the women don’t come to talk to the men, but I always make a point to also stand with them. I would not be just in the female corner. And I think they see that. It’s slow, slow, slow…it’s very difficult to measure, but I think it has an impact.

U: Would you say that…you just said that the roles in South Africa are very stereotyped…would you say that it’s very different to Germany?

H: The tendency, yes, it is different. In my generation and in your generation even more there is a bit further, I wouldn’t say that you won’t find it anymore, but it’s already accepted for a man to take paternity leave, it happens much more often, such things, or that both are working or that the husband cooks or such things on the practical level. You find it more often in Germany than here.

U: Are there certain areas in ministry that only men are involved in or that only women are involved in?

H: Despite the braaing the vleis. Ja, it’s not true the Sunday school teachers are all female and we have invited, it’s not that we don’t want a male Sunday school teacher, we cannot find a male Sunday school teacher. So, that’s the only one and the fellowship group is open for both but is mainly, mainly female, with sometimes a visitor, but it’s not intended to be like that. So, we don't have a women’s league or something like that or a men’s league, but it happened that the fellowship group is more female and Sunday school is female.

U: What are your thoughts on that, that Sunday school and the fellowship group are more female?

H: The fellowship group is seen as a tea club, so it's not seen as important, so it's obviously something that is good for the women, but not for the men. That's their perception. We sometimes have [inaudible]…and that's interesting, because
it is a perception, we started for example announcing beforehand what we do like 
we read certain parts of the bible or we study the understanding of scripture in 
the Lutheran church or such things and then all of a sudden some male would 
come, because now they can see it’s not just a club where you share, then they 
would come. And the Sunday school, that also, I think some of the men think that 
they cannot do it, they don’t know how to relate to the children and although we 
offer training we would help them. It’s a way of saying, ach, I cannot do it and 
then they say the females are better, ach, let them do it. And then by that it is just 
how people are used to it. Many teachers are female, so the Sunday school 
teachers are also female. That’s why. And it’s a pity, because we encourage the 
men to say you also play a role if you don’t have role models in the Sunday 
school how do boys understand it’s important for them to come. But we still have 
not managed to get 2 or 3 on board.

U: Can you tell me a bit about how you view God. If you can just explain to me 
who God is for you.

H: God is in his or her essence relationship and that is something that you pick 
up from the trinity, that you have a being that is always more then what you 
explain with one side. It’s more than the Father, it’s more than the Spirit, it’s more 
than the Son. It’s all together, but it’s also not a conglomerate or synthesis of all 
of this and all those are related. It’s the description of the Father, the Son and the 
Spirit of the Father and the Son. So, the relationship is very important. So, in a 
way it’s the source of relationship, which is the source of life. There would be no 
life without relationship. You cannot give on or proceed with life without 
relationship. So, that is I think essential to God then I regard God, I would say the 
source of living, not in the sense that He has thought out to make this plant like 
this and then He made it, but the source of the living and also the source of love; 
that I think are sort of the essentials of God. And I would say the stories with God 
that people experience those I prefer and sort of choose for my faith are the 
stories of liberation. The whole liberation of the people of Israel and then in the 
New Testament the liberation to live without sin. So, for me it is always a 
liberating character. And that is also my own story. The church was the first
I sort of where I could differ from my family. They were unchurchy. So, that was a field where none of my family members would interfere. So, it gave me a place where I could sort of be who I am in a different way. So, that was liberating from the beginning. And I can say it’s totally different from people who have been forced to go to church as children. They need to liberate from their parents in a different way and the say you have to go out of the church for a while. For me coming in the church was exactly that experience to be different.

U: I picked up that when you started off you said I think his or her. And then you spoke about God being the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Do you see God as having a gender?

H: No, God doesn’t have a gender. If, then I would say female and the Spirit for example in Hebrew is female..."ruach"...that’s a female word, but we don’t reflect that in German or English. And I find it very different... I had phases where I would refuse to say God “his”, but then sometimes it becomes also from the point of language very difficult to talk and then I go back to that. And then sometimes, ja, perhaps even to little. But for a long time I would nor even say “Father our in heaven”, but “Parent our in heaven”. It’s just to make people aware that we describe something, that the gender is not the important thing. But then the gender all of a sudden becomes so important. Ja, I don’t think that God has a gender.

U: You also said, “If anything, God would be a woman”, why did you say that?

H: Ach, obviously provoking on the one hand, but also I mean Isaiah speaks about God in a motherly way. You have some verses that refer like a mother God would do this and that and the following. All this caring, liberating, providing it’s actually all female attributes given to God. I mean there’s the whole other side of God being angry. So, God in Him/Her self has all the aspects and you find that full picture in the bible and it is very reduced. And the female part is a bit too neglected, so I would like to strengthen that a bit.

U: How has the church influenced the picture of God that you have?

H: I would say that it’s mainly influenced by individuals, but obviously it was for me also a process when I was younger I thought God has a gender and it’s male.
I didn’t come with that when I was smaller and that is how God is portrayed in the church as male, He’s dominant as you need to be obedient, negative father figure in a certain way. And then through my studies, so for me also I have experienced so many aspects of different churches, I have never been like just in one place or one church or congregation and then I did sort of understand that it is sort of much bigger the picture than I thought. And then reading feminist theology, which I did a lot, all of a sudden it opens up a whole new mindset. So, I can say the negative and the positive comes all out of the church. So, my positive, or as you call it reforming stuff comes also within the church. So, the church had a negative influence in sort of neglecting lots of sides of God, but then within the church there were others that sort of made me understand the fuller picture. Then I think it is important sometimes to speak to those that are outside the church, how they perceive what we do within the church, like a mirror, then you only get aware how people perceive it and that has helped me also a lot. I am not only a person that operates within the church. I always also try to be outside, either with friends or with groups to partnership and partner and work together it helps you also to reflect a bit from a distance on the stuff that we do.

U: So, basically having a critical perspective?

H: Yes, like when I was a student I was for 1 or 2 years involved in the project theology and natural science. And then you need to understand first the point of departure from a natural science. You need to know what you want to do to communicate. Or then in my first congregation I started a group together with a doctor and a psychologist, a support group for cancer patients and then we sort of discussed what is it that we want to achieve and how do you react to somebody having cancer. And with their approach towards it and my approach towards it you always grow by having a sort of an outside perspective towards it, on things.

U: What would you say the bible is?

H: I would say it’s guidance, guidance for life, guidance to live a meaningful life. And guidance to live a fulfilled life and guidance to live a ethical life. And it's sort of the motivation for justice and peace, very strongly my interest in that comes
from the bible. So, for me the bible is the foundation of my values. And my values I pick up from the bible.

U: So, you probably wouldn’t say that it’s directly the word of God?
H: No.

U: Then this probably won’t be so helpful, but could I still ask you a few questions on the bible?
H: Of course. I’m sure it will be helpful.

U: I’d like to start with 1 Corinthians 14:34, where it says “women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to enquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.” What are your opinions on this?
H: My opinion? It is a good reflection of how society was structured. We can pick it up. That’s how people lived together and I wouldn’t say it is now necessary for us to live accordingly. So, what I would do, I would interpret the bible with the bible. Like by saying, Jesus sort of went to females and talked to them, how can this be now an interpretation, how can you relate the text? What would that say about Lydia, who provided all the necessary stuff for the first congregation? So, interpret the bible with the bible. And then, that one I would say is not a direction from God to us, but it’s part of Paul reflecting on this whole congregation and what is his intention? His intention is always to create a loving environment and how does that support this? Or how does that promote modern days, because we as Lutherans say that what do we do, we promote Christ. So, I measure the bible with the bible. And then I can say that is how it was structured, is that now helpful for us, do we continue with this or do we have other ideas?

U: Then there’s the passage in Ephesians 5:22, where it says “Wives submit to your husbands, as to the LORD. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” How do you understand that?
H: Ok, that one I think is one of the most abused texts of the bible. So, therefore I find it difficult to use it, because it was so often abused. But if one want to take something positive then it is again the relationship. It speaks about a body and there is only life if that body functions together. Now what has been made out of it is that the head is more important than all the others. And that’s absolutely contrary to what it says. The one cannot function without the other. So, if one wants to then accept certain roles within the body, then it might be okay to say that the head has a different function to the legs, a different function to the arms. But it is not the conclusion that the head is the better one. And it would be very clear if you cut off the head, it’s nothing. So, I would use the picture of the body and would accept…and then one can again also in different societies and different times that female and male had different roles to play and a healthy environment, a healthy society always play in such a way that it’s life-giving. And not cutting off the head, and not cutting off the arm, or not cutting off anything, but living as an organic body together, that needs to be defined by each society. And it’s absolutely frightening what then people make out of it, because a life-giving example becomes something that is threatening to a female and achieves totally the opposite of what is meant.

U: You are married to a pastor. Do you find that preconceived roles or scripture influences how you relate to each other? Or like determine certain roles that you have?

H: I think we are both very aware that we want to overcome such roles. For example, he would be the ’real’ pastor and me the assistant pastor. It is very easy, because we don’t work in the same congregation. I think it could easily happen if we are two in one congregation. And he would be regarded as a first pastor and me as a second, and not from him, but just how people operate, but we try to overcome that and rather live on that we think we are equal. Particularly Jesus stands for the equality of people and that we are equal in the presence of God. Not saying that we don’t have different gifts and then to see where the gifts come from there are things I cannot do, that he can do. But not saying that the one is better than the other.
U: When you say that Christ is the head of the church, aren’t we in a way exalting Christ?

H: Yes, but I would also say that is only one picture of Christ. We have others, we also say He is a brother to us. That’s for example one way we don’t do it. Why do we need the different functions? Because we say Christ is always more than just a brother, or we couldn’t just make Him just a brother. But we also want to bring out how we admire and adore him. So, that in a way also occurs in relationships. A person never has only one role. You might for example admire your husband, but that doesn’t mean that the husband becomes then better or in a hierarchy. So, on other levels there is a different relationship. And I think all these texts speak actually about certain love to Christ and a certain relationship to Christ and then the second thing is how it has been used. This was obviously mean to honour Christ, but if you make that the only picture then you can come into the relationship, okay if one is saying He is the head and we regard the head as the best, because we think hierarchically forgetting that the head is nothing without the others. Then you need to obey Jesus in all the situations, Jesus will find a way for you and Jesus thinks for you and Jesus knows all things, but you forget all the others, like where he was the brother and where he was asking for advice and where he was also the one who learnt from the disciples. So, it’s always dangerous to take only the one picture. But for a certain moment it might be good to just adore or admire or worship Jesus also.

U: I have one more passage and that’s 1 Timothy 11… “A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man. She must be silent. For Adam was formed first and not Eve and Adam was not the one who was deceived, it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing, if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” I know that you mentioned before that there is a distinction between Eve and Mary and here Paul seems to be going along with the picture of a woman being like Eve. But if someone in your congregation were to bring this to you, since you are a woman who speaks in church and you are a pastor, how do you respond to this?
H: There I would say this one is not, as you say before, as everything is binding to me. That one I would just say “he can say so, so what?”. Men have said lots of things. So, that would be a bit of a relaxed approach to that. And obviously you will find a lot of people who will fight with that and say, but then you are not a Christian if you don’t take the bible. So, all the matters, whenever people come up with the bible, it goes back to how do we understand the bible? How do we approach the bible and then I would say it doesn’t promote Christ and it’s not binding for me. But, I would then also when people come up with something like this ask…or try to find out what is actually the problem. Because usually when people come with a bible verse there is a bigger story to this, to find out “what are you going to tell me? Where do you see this as a conflict? Why do bring this up?” and then to unpack it a bit. And obviously if you have lots of time then one can speak about “how do I understand the bible?” and none of the people that come up with this…I always ask: “who is quoting which verse, to whom and what time?”…who is quoting which verse to whom and at what time? So, in a situation I might even go with that and say “yes”, but always find out why. And if you have people that come really just to sort of…I don’t know…saying “we know it all and you are against the bible”. Then I would again challenge them with the bible. And bring them places or verses from the Old Testament, where it for example says if you wear wool and cotton together you must be stoned. So, I say “must I stone you now or are you…” To try to make them understand it’s absurd what they are doing, because nobody is taking all of the bible. Nobody does that. There is things where you can sell your daughter for certain reasons, I mean… And people won’t sell their daughter and it is for them very clear that it is unethical to sell your daughter. And then I say “this one seems not be unethical, why are you so liberal with that one and not with this one.” So, perhaps I’m liberal with this one and not with that one. So, try to involve people in a discussion that it’s also actually an experience of “aha”. To make them understand what they are actually doing. And then some might just tell you “I don’t want you as a female to be there”, then I say “then say it”. You don’t need the bible to say it. Make it your point. And that for example…then one can fight about it “why not?”. But it’s
usually not a very strong argument to say “God says so”. It’s a few people I think who really mean it like that and I think usually it’s more the females that struggle with this and want to take God so serious that they say “I might not become a pastor, or I might not say something in the congregation, because the bible does not want me to”. And then for them obviously the liberation process is also needed. Usually the more you get into the bible and into understanding the bible it liberates you to understand that. Does it make sense to you?
U: Yes. I think that’s about all I wanted to ask you. Is there anything that you might still want to add?
H: I think it’s wonderful that you do the research. I think too little research has been done and the role that the church can play for females is a very strengthening role, and a role where you get a feel of getting confident and finding your feet and being accepted. And all this positive messages and it’s actually a bit frightening how often people experience the opposite of that.