

Chapter 1: Research Framework and Methodology

1.1 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This research interweaves *theological*, *educational* and *ethical* concerns in my exploration of ways of preparing women for their ministry of care in the church. Before providing an explanation of the research methodology and processes employed, I need to set out the parameters of the thesis within my chosen research fields, its focus on women, and my own situatedness within the research.

1.1.1 Research fields

As suggested above, the research is interdisciplinary including the fields of theological ethics, feminist theology and feminist pedagogy, and so the literature that I have surveyed and the specific questions that I have pursued in my research reflect this three-way dialogue. This work is located primarily within the discipline of theological ethics which is concerned with moral vision and the values that underpin it; about moral character and virtues; about right and wrong, or good and bad decisions and actions; and about how these impact on the formation of women for pastoral practice.

The thesis engages in the ethical debate in two ways, viz. in its reflection on what constitutes a ‘critical ethic of care’ for women in ministry; and in its concern that the theological training that we provide women is consistent with such an ethic. It is important to stipulate that my aim is not to develop the details of a different curriculum for the various subjects in the traditional theological programme, but instead to investigate how the insertion of a critical ethic of care will impact on epistemological, pedagogical and curriculum aspects of theological education of women.

As theological ethics is an interdisciplinary field (Kretzschmar 1994, 2004a), this work also draws on feminist theology, and theories from the field of critical feminist pedagogy in order to develop an ethic of care that is liberatory for women. An exploration of the theory which underpins this research is provided in chapter 2.

1.1.2 Positionality

Recognising that there is no neutral research (Hall in Lather 1991:50), my own interest in this research must also be declared. As a Roman Catholic woman I am excluded from the ordained ministry in my own church.¹ I believe there are different and overlapping responses to this situation – one is to actively engage in the international movement for the ordination of women in the Catholic Church; another is to disobey canonical proscriptions and seek ordination outside of the orthodox structures;² and yet another response, my own, is to find ways to prepare some of the ground for a future in which women will be ordained in a renewed church, deriving what we can learn from the experiences of women from other denominations where ordination is already allowed. This strategy has led me more and more into work at an ecumenical level and from which I have received substantial support and inspiration. With this goal in mind, as a feminist, an educationist and a Christian theologian I am committed to the utilization of my skills in the task of preparing women for the ministry within a transformative framework.

As a white, middle class, middle aged, female, married, South African woman I do not easily position myself in any one location as a feminist theologian but have drawn deeply from the rich contributions and reflections of many first world feminists, African women, post colonial and other feminist scholars. I also locate myself within the community of theological educators although I do not hold a permanent teaching post at an academic institution. However, my work as a contract lecturer at two institutions, and in counselling and supporting women in different aspects of their ministry, keeps me connected to the realities that face women who are engaged in ministry.

My positionality has also been shaped by a ten-year involvement in the Grail Christian Women's Movement in which a feminist pedagogy was operational. Thus, I

¹ For a discussion on the theological reasons for excluding women from the ordained ministry in the Catholic Church see Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004) pp.238-244; and on the ethical implications of excluding women from ordination see Mary Ralphs, *The ethical consequences of women's exclusion from the ordained ministry in the Johannesburg diocese of the Catholic Church*. Unpublished thesis. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1999).

² In 2002, seven Catholic women were ordained as priests by two Catholic bishops, and two of the women were ordained bishops in 2003. Both of these events took place in Europe. All of the women have been excommunicated from the Catholic Church. See Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004) p.244. Since 2002, Patricia Fresen of South Africa was ordained a priest in 2003 and is now a bishop. In July 2005, nine women were ordained deacons and priests on the St Lawrence River in Canada and one woman was ordained on the Sasone River in France (<http://www.Womensordination.org>).

include my reflections from an experiential perspective of the movement and its pedagogy in the case study in chapter 6 (6.3).

1.1.3 Focus on women

At this point it is important to qualify my focus on women as carers, and thus seemingly giving grist to the essentialist perspective's mill. There are many men who care – in my household I have lived with five, and have taught and worked with others. Also, as we know, not all women are carers. However, because women's caring role has been a deep part of the socialisation of most women, and is embedded within the patriarchal mindset, particularly of the church, I have chosen to place women as central to my problematisation of caring within ministry.

But my intuition takes me beyond the problem of how caring has been used to oppress or marginalise women, to what I see as God's purpose for 'redeeming the dream'.³ For, in calling forth women's experience and knowledge about caring, in a world that cries out for greater caring, women are being challenged to exercise new leadership and direction, to share their hidden wisdom and insights, and teach others about what it means to care. Thus God's engagement in our suffering world, and women's caring gifts and commitment, are drawn together in a common transformative project.

Although women are not innately good or superior in goodness to men, I do believe that because women have been marginalised within the patriarchal church their experiences present a case for exclusive attention and study. As church doors are increasingly opened to women, their incorporation into the ordained ministry has been hailed by many as a sign of transformation and more egalitarian church polity. However, previous research has pointed to the limitations of this perspective, and illustrated the way that women's incorporation has effectively extended their domestic roles in the home to the church.⁴ For this reason I chose to work only with women in this research, although I recognise that men as carers in the ministry confront a range of other stresses

³ This is the title of Mary Grey's book *Redeeming the Dream: Feminism, Redemption and Christian Tradition* (London: SPCK, 1989).

⁴ See for example Heather Elaine Venables, *Women and Empowerment: Strategies to achieve the liberation of women from oppression*. Unpublished thesis. (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1999).

and demands which need to be examined in relation to the adequacy of the training they receive.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

Each researcher brings only partial knowledge and insights to her research. Thus in exploring this theme, other voices have been critical in balancing and challenging my own perceptions. This research has drawn substantially from the literature in the fields of theological ethics, feminist theology and feminist pedagogy. A detailed theoretical framework is provided in chapter 2 (ethical), chapter 3 (theological) and chapter 5 (educational). A small empirical research project based on a case study was mounted to study the implementation of feminist pedagogy in two theological institutions – College of the Transfiguration (COT) and the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC). This case study research is described in section 1.3 of this chapter.

1.2.1 Feminist emancipatory research

Feminist researcher, Patti Lather (1988:571) describes feminist research as research where the social construction of gender is placed at the centre of inquiry. Its goal is ‘to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women’s unequal position’. Likewise, my approach in this research is an enquiry into gendered notions of care in the church and a search for ways that women’s theological formation can articulate and challenge this, and develop a critical ethic of care. Thus it is appropriate that a research approach that foregrounds gender and power is utilised.

Elements of feminist research methodologies that receive attention in this work are set out below.

1.2.1.1 The importance of agency and subjectivity in transformation

In chapters 2 and 3, I develop a theoretical base for understanding women’s moral agency. In chapter 4, I look at how women see themselves as carers, and how they are treated as carers by the church. In chapter 5, drawing on the framework contained in *Women’s Ways of Knowing*, I investigate how feminist pedagogy can support the

development of women's voices and subjectivity. In chapter 6, I evaluate how women describe the impact of the Women's Studies course on their development as moral agents.

1.2.1.2 It is praxis-oriented

My intention in this research as outlined above was to explore manifestations of patriarchy in the church (see chapter 4), with specific reference to the ethic of care and the theological training of women. It was also aimed at the search for ways to transform current practices, and to articulate the principles for a different model of theological education for women in the church.

For Lather an important criterion for emancipatory research is that which empowers the subjects of the research to change, as well as understand the world (1991:3). My intention is that this research will impact on the reflection and practice of educators of women in training for ministry. While it may be too late to make a difference to those women who formed part of this research, hopefully it will impact in some way on women in the future.

1.2.2 Story as an aspect of methodology

Throughout this work I intersperse the theoretical reflection with aspects of the women's personal stories. In attempting to gather their stories, experiences and opinions, I was trying to honour the feminist principle of making women the subjects of their knowledge and not mere objects of my research.

As Phiri suggests (2002:10), using stories as a methodology is distinctly different from methodologies used by male academics. Oduyoye speaks about story as:

a traditional source of theology, which seems to have been superseded by analytical and deductive forms. It has taken the feminist movement to bring back the personal into academic studies and thereby revive the importance of story (in Phiri 2002:120).

Consistent with feminist research practice, which challenges the notion of totally objective research, I have also included my own voice as the researcher into the text. These are indicated in places where I identify with the respondents as women in the church who have been affected by patriarchy, or where I make reference to the community of theological educators, with whom I am associated. I also insert a piece of

my own story when I discuss my involvement in the Grail Women's Movement (section 6.3.2).

Through the qualitative nature of this research I tried to capture something of the texture of the stories of a number of women who are involved in ministry in the church across South Africa. Aspects of their stories are woven into the different chapters. And references are made to the stories of other women in the church that have been told elsewhere.⁵

1.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The aim of this research was to ground some of the theoretical claims about an ethic of care, experiences of patriarchy, and ministerial formation in the lived experiences of a number of women who are in training for ministry. In this way the theory could be verified or qualified for its application within the context of a group of women's lives in the South African church context. By establishing a measure of reflexivity between the formal theory contained in the literature, the practice of these women in ministry, and their theological formation, I hoped that some insights helpful for reviewing and transforming theological education for other women would be generated.

This empirical research is qualitative and descriptive which is consistent with most educational research (Cohen and Manion 1989:70). It describes 'what is' or has already occurred, and interprets entities with a view to 'establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs' (:125). The qualitative approach, with its aims of description and exploration of phenomena (Dreyer [*s.a.*]:220), seemed to be appropriate to the kind of information that I sought which was descriptive of women's

⁵ There is an expanding body of 'story' and reflection being gathered in South Africa and further afield in Africa which is documenting the commitment and work of women, from different Christian denominations, in ministry. To name a few - Denise Ackermann *et al* (eds). *Women Hold Up Half the Sky: Women in the Church in Southern Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991); Christina Landman, *Digging up our Foremothers: Stories of Women in Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1997); Nyambura J Njoroge *et al* (eds). *Talitha cum! Theologies of African Women* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1991); Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Musimbi Kanyoro (eds). *The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition and the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2000); Isabel Apawo Phiri *et al* (eds). *Her-Stories: Hidden Histories of Women of Faith in Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2002); Susan Rakoczy IHM, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2004); Annalet Van Schalkwyk, *Sister, we bleed and we sing: Women's stories, Christian mission and shalom in South Africa*, (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1999).

lives and their experience of training for ministry, as well as their experiences in the church. It is also consistent with feminist research where methods like in-depth interviews contribute to connected, as opposed to separate, knowing (see discussion of Belenky in chapter 5, 5.2.1). Such methods also help to create a more dialogical relationship between the researcher and the researched, and ground knowledge in concrete social contexts and experiences (Oakley 2000:47).

I adopted the *case studies approach* which by nature is limited in its scope, and observes and studies the characteristics of an individual unit rather than large samples (:124). The case studies focus on the application of a feminist pedagogy in theological education in two colleges, with the intention of making some general observations about feminist pedagogy in the training of women in ministry. In addition, a case study of the Grail Christian Women's Movement is provided as an example of a different model of formation of women (section 6.3).

1.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the case study was to investigate the impact of a Women's Studies course in theological education on a group of women students from two theological institutions – College of Transfiguration (COT), an Anglican (CPSA) residential college in Grahamstown and the Theological Education by Extension College (TEEC), an ecumenical distance education college based in Johannesburg. I chose these two sites because they share some commonalities – both offer a Women's Studies course at the Diploma in Theology level, and both have ministerial formation as their primary objective. Further information about these institutions is provided in chapter 6.

In general, the case studies aimed to describe information about students' background and experiences in ministry, and their theological formation. Specifically they aimed to examine the way the women participants described the impact of the Women's Studies course on:

- their levels of consciousness about patriarchy in the church and how they experienced it in their ministry;
- changes in their ability and confidence to take responsibility for actions to change it, i.e. to transform their practice.

1.3.2 Principles

During the research, I tried to honour the following principles, particularly when conducting the focus group interviews (to be discussed in 1.4.3).

1.3.2.1 Establishing reciprocity

Establishing mutual give and take between both researcher and researched is about developing a dialogical relationship so that there is a two-way sharing (Lather 1991:57).

In the research process I attempted to do the following:

- Conduct the interviews in a friendly and conversational way, in the spirit of dialogue, attempting to treat the respondents as ‘active agents’ rather than as ‘objects of research’ (:62);
- Be open to self-disclosure of my own interest and experiences, to balance the disclosure of my respondents.

1.3.2.2 Paying attention to language in research

De Vault (1999:61), in discussing feminist strategies for interviewing and analysing data, draws attention to the way that women may display difficulty in expressing their thoughts about their everyday lives – what she terms ‘linguistic incongruence’ where there is a ‘lack of fit between women’s lives and the words available for talking about experience’. If words do not quite fit, then women who want to talk of their experiences must ‘translate’, either saying things that are not quite right, or working at using the language in nonstandard ways’.

To counter some of the difficulties with language, de Vault (:65-71) suggests a number of approaches including dealing with incompletely articulated aspects of women’s experiences in an exploratory way, developing methods for listening ‘around and beyond words’, listening to ‘the everyday processes of “translation” that are part of women’s speech’, e.g. where they may grope for words, speak in disjunctures, experience difficulty in expressing themselves, or speak in halting speech, or leave things unsaid – all of which she suggests are clues to women’s experiences.

Although all the 19 participants were tertiary level students, nine of them spoke English as a second or even a third language. However, they all managed to fill in their responses in their questionnaires in a way that was clear enough to interpret. During the

interviews I was very conscious of a degree of 'linguistic incongruence' especially when several of the second-language English speakers spoke about their experiences that carried a lot of emotional content. They dealt with this difficulty in two ways, either by speaking in their mother-tongue and then getting another woman to translate what they had said, or interspersing their speech in English with their mother tongue. Both strategies seemed to work but I believe that discussion in their own language would have been ideal.

1.3.3 Methods

My stance in relation to the case study was both as a participant observer and non-participant observer. *Participant observation* includes the researcher in the activities that she is observing; and *non-participant observation* – where the researcher observes from outside of the activity (Cohen & Manion 1989:125). In the initial stages of the research I participated as both the 'teacher' and researcher as I was employed as the subject co-ordinator and marker for the Women's Studies course by one of the colleges targeted for the research (TEE College). However, my status changed when I left TEEC at the end of 2002. Thus I became a non-participant observer. I was a non-participant observer throughout the process in relation to COT.

I used both *structured questionnaires* and *focus group interviews* to gather my data. While the questionnaires provided very useful and detailed information about the participants, the *focus group interviews* helped me to engage more personally with the participants in or close to their home environments. It seemed to provide the best opportunity for 'an interpersonal encounter' where the women would be more likely to disclose aspects of themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, and values (Cohen 1989:319).

The interviews took place in homes, a church, a convent parlour, and a coffee shop where the more informal atmosphere of these venues lent itself to a more relaxed and richer exchange. I also believe that the women received something back from the research through their meeting with myself and other women. This is a principle that I was anxious to build into the research, so that I, as researcher, did not simply exploit others as objects of my research. After the visits I wrote to each of the participants to

thank them and to respond to some of the questions they had raised about further resources and ongoing study.

1.3.4 Process

The empirical research process, conducted over a two-year period with a number of women who had completed the Women's Studies course, is described below.

1.3.4.1 Research sample

Between 1998–2003 a total of 36 women had completed the course at the two colleges and were invited by letter to participate in this research. 23 of the women agreed and 19 of them completed and returned their questionnaires and one returned an incomplete questionnaire which I did not use in the research. Where women did not return their questionnaires I followed up with correspondence but this was not successful. From the respondents, I invited 12 of them to participate in small focus group interviews. I deliberately narrowed the focus group interviews as some of the women were scattered in different parts of the country and it was not possible to access them; two had left the country for further studies; and a few were not available because of other commitments at the last minute. (See Table 1 below for a detailed list of the respondents.)

1.3.4.2 Data collection

Techniques for data collection included individually answered questionnaires with the following types of questions: fixed-alternative items where respondents chose from two or more alternatives; open-ended items; questions which elicited a combination of factual information and opinion; and checklist responses (Cohen 1989:317).

(a) Questionnaires

I tested the questionnaire with a group of three women students registered for a course in Ethics and Gender in the Department of Theology at the University of the Western Cape. I modified the final questionnaire on the basis of their responses. I also adapted the questionnaires to accommodate the two colleges. Also, students who had already completed the course received the 'alumni' questionnaire (Appendix A), and students

who were about to embark on the course received an initial exploratory questionnaire ‘pre-course’ (Appendix B), and then a follow-up questionnaire at the end of their course ‘post course’ (Appendix C).

(b) Interviews

In setting up the focus group interviews I used the purposive sampling method⁶ to select 12 of the women for the interviews, trying to ensure a mix of denominations, race, geographical locations, and rural and urban women. At the last minute one of the women from the Johannesburg group cancelled, thus 11 of the 19 women who had submitted their questionnaires (E, G, H, I, M, N, O P, Q, R, S) finally participated in a focus group interview. In addition three other participants (T-V) who had not submitted their questionnaires, but were keen to participate, were invited. Attempts to encourage them to submit their questionnaires post-interviewing were not successful. However, I do not believe this has affected my findings substantially.

Interviews were held in 5 places: Hawston, Western Cape (2); Johannesburg (4); Vereeniging (3), Polokwane, Limpopo (2); Estcourt, Kwa Zulu Natal (2), Grahamstown, Eastern Cape (1). The purpose of the interviews was to follow up on some of the information gathered in the questionnaires, but more importantly *to listen* to what the women had to say. Consistent with feminist research methodologies which concentrate on women’s relation to speech and to talking and listening (De Vault 1999:60), I wanted gather more detailed information orally. In the interviews five broad questions were discussed:

- How they defined and spoke about themselves and their ministry;
- How they experienced the church – authority and structures;
- What kinds of issues women in their church and communities experienced;
- How they dealt with issues that they felt to be harmful to themselves and other women;
- In what ways the Women’s Studies course and their theological training had supported them and what more could have been done.

⁶ The purposive sampling method is used when the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of her judgment of their typicality. In this way she builds up a sample that is satisfactory to her specific needs. See Cohen and Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 1989) p.103.

Table 1: Participants by race, age, location, marital status, family situation, denomination and institution

Code	Race	Age	Geographical Location	Marital status and family	Denomination	College	Position in church
A	Black	50-59	Giyani	Married with 5 children	Evangelical Lutheran	TEEC	Training for ordination
B	Black	50-59	Johannesburg	Married with 4 children	CPSA	TEEC	Deaconess
C	White	40-49	Durban	Married with 2 children	Methodist	TEEC	Church secretary Facilitator
D	White	Over 60	Merrivale, KZN	Widow with 2 children	CPSA	TEEC	Bible study facilitator
E	Coloured	40-49	Vanderbijlpark	Single	Roman Catholic	TEEC	Novice ⁷
F	White	50-59	Cape Town	Married with 2 children	CPSA	COT	Assistant priest
G	Coloured	50-59	Hawston, Western Cape	Single	CPSA	COT	Parish Rector
H	Black	20-29	Soweto	Single	CPSA	COT	Training for ordination
I	Black	40-49	Nongoma	Single	CPSA	COT	Parish Rector
J	Black	40-49	Eastern Cape	Single	CPSA	COT	Deacon
K	Black	50-59	Kokstad	Married with 3 children	CPSA	COT	Deacon
L	White	50-59	East London	Married with 3 children	Methodist	TEEC	Local preacher
M	Black	40-49	Polokwane, Limpopo	Single with 3 children	Evangelical Lutheran	TEEC	Pastor
N	Coloured	30-39	Vanderbijlpark	Single	RC	TEEC	Novice
O	White	50-59	Sasolburg	Married with 3 children	Methodist	TEEC	Deaconess
P	White	50-59	Empangeni	Married with 2 children	CPSA	TEEC	Lay minister ⁸
Q	Black	Over 60	Soweto	Married with 4 children	Methodist	TEEC	Training for ordination
R	White	50-59	Johannesburg	Married with 3 children	CPSA	TEEC	Lay minister
S	White	30-39	Grahamstown	Divorced with 1 child	CPSA	TEEC	Ordained priest
T	Black	40-49	Polokwane	Unknown	ELCSA	TEEC	Lay
U	White	50-59	Cape Town	Unknown	CPSA	TEEC	Lay
V	Black	30-39	Johannesburg	Unknown	CPSA	TEEC	Deacon

⁷ A novice is a woman who is in training to become a professed sister in one of the Roman Catholic congregations.

⁸ A lay minister in the Anglican church is someone who is not going to be ordained but who carries out certain functions, e.g. pastoral work, certain tasks during the liturgy/worship e.g. welcoming people, teaching, sometimes preaching

Having introduced the purpose and themes for discussion, I encouraged the discussion to proceed as the participants felt comfortable – in four of the interviews there was a comfortable balance of personal responses to questions, listening to one another and dialogue (Johannesburg, Vanderbijlpark, Western Cape, Polokwane); the Estcourt interview was initially far more directed by the researcher – the two participants took time to become comfortable with me and one another, but after having discovered common ground (both ministered in the Anglican church and had church connections in common), they were able to discuss in a more relaxed way. At the Grahamstown interview there was only one participant and so it became a dialogue between myself and the participant.

During the interviews there were frequent digressions and where I judged these to be gossipy and at times defamatory of other people, or total digressions, I did not include them in the transcripts. Also there were several cases where women shared about their personal experiences of abuse either in their families or in the church and specifically asked that these not be recorded.

1.3.5 Interpretation of data

1.3.5.1 Coding questionnaires

To ensure anonymity, questionnaire respondents were allocated a letter of the alphabet (A-S) and these were also used to code the interview participants. Letters (T-V) were allocated to the three women who did not submit questionnaires but participated in the interviews. Data from the questionnaires was then coded (see Appendix A) according to the following coding system:

1. Background information about:
 - 1.1 The women's lives – personally and as learners
 - 1.2 About the church and their roles within it
 - 1.3 Their theological studies and the institution

2. Information about themselves as women
 - 2.1 Their issues and struggles
 - 2.2 How they and other women experienced being in the church
 - 2.3 Specific theological issues about women
 - 2.4 Views on leadership and authority in the church

3. The women's studies course

3.1 What they gained from this course

3.2 How they saw themselves changing as a result of the course

4. Other information

1.3.5.2 Extracting and interpreting themes from the interviews

The interviews were transcribed and read many times to gather a general overview of major themes. They were then coded according to the above categories used in the questionnaires. Thus congruence with questionnaire data, and any new emergent themes were noted. I felt that I needed to get to know these women through their questionnaires and interviews and so re-read them on different occasions during my write-up.

The contributions of the empirical research have been inserted at appropriate places in chapters 4-6.

1.3.5.3 Establishing validity

This research aims to make a difference to the theological formation of women. Lather (1991:52) warns of the difficulty in praxis-orientated research of trying to find ways to balance the subjectivity and engagement of the researcher, and of establishing the trustworthiness of data. In grounded theory-building, theory is developed from an examination of the data which helps to minimise the researcher's imposed definitions of the situation (Cohen & Manion 1989:141).⁹ However, in praxis-orientated research the researcher comes to the data with presuppositions and positionality.

Another tension that Lather (1988:55) raises is the relationship between the theory and the lived experiences of the social actors and how to avoid imposing one's own perceptions, analysis and conclusions on the ideas of those in one's research. This raises the question of whether the theory helps to illuminate the lived experience and struggles of the women in their contexts and, when it doesn't, how prepared the researcher is to question the theory and its appropriateness, without simply resorting to a charge of false consciousness.¹⁰ As she suggests:

⁹ Cohen & Manion cite the work of BG Glaser & AL Strauss *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967).

¹⁰ False consciousness is the denial of how our common sense ways of looking at the world are permeated with meanings that sustain our disempowerment. See Gramsci in Lather (New York, 1991) p.59.

Theory adequate to the task of changing the world must be open-ended, nondogmatic, speaking to and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life. It must, moreover, be premised on a deep respect for the intellectual and political capacities of the dispossessed.

Cohen & Manion (1989:129) discuss the question of the *external* and *internal* validity of case study findings. On the one hand, how the findings of one unit or piece of research can be generalized to other situations; and with regard to the latter, how the researcher's observations can be considered useful if she has been so closely a part of the study.

With regard to the *internal validity*, my initial involvement and interest with the Women's studies course at TEEC was a concern of mine at the outset. It is what prompted me to find another college where the Women's Studies course was being taught, viz. the College of Transfiguration. I believe this helped to provide a balancing perspective. Also, when I left TEEC at the end of 2002, this gave me more distance in the research process.

With regard to the concern about *external validity*, Dreyer (*s.a.*:250-252) describes the strategy of 'analytical induction'¹¹ for ensuring the external validity of participant observation material. It is a set of procedures based on reviewing a number of cases and redefining the phenomenon, and reformulating the hypothesis on the basis of exceptional or negative cases until a general or universal relationship is established.¹² I believe that the findings of this empirical research will have specific value for the two colleges under review, but that further investigation of other cases of feminist pedagogies in theological institutions would be necessary before these findings could be generalized to all South African institutions that are training women for ministry.

1.3.6 Evaluation of research process

Most of the women expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to share their experiences about church and ministry with others. It was also an opportunity for the students from the two colleges to meet one another. The students in Polokwane and Kwa

¹¹ This strategy was formulated in 1934 by Polish sociologist and philosopher Znaniecki and has subsequently been refined. In Dreyer (Pretoria: University of South Africa, *s.a.*), pp.251-252.

¹² See also Cohen & Manion, *Research Methods in Education* (London: Routledge, 1989) p.129.

Zulu-Natal, three of whom were TEEC students, were especially grateful for a visit from a 'staff member' from the college, although at that time I was serving only as a marker and was not part of the full time staff at the college.

Limitations of the research process included the difficulties of retrieving all the questionnaires. Also the interviews were difficult to organise as students were scattered in different parts of the country which made the research costly and mitigated against follow-up interviews. In some cases it was difficult to arrange venues in which to meet.

1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

Despite these constraints and other limitations that may be present, I believe that this research, which draws together the experiences and reflections of women in ministry and the writings and reflections of others in the various theoretical fields, has produced useful insights. These can be drawn into the construction of effective training programmes for supporting a more critical ethic of care among women in ministry.

Ultimately this research aims to contribute to the field of theological training for women by promoting dialogue between women in the church and their theological educators within the discourse of feminist pedagogy, in order to transform the ways that women care for themselves and others. This study illustrates some of the common experiences of women in ministry and the way that an ethic of care has been distorted. But it also shows that an exposure to feminist pedagogy can help to articulate these contradictions, make women more aware of their own needs for self-care, and help them develop their confidence to name and challenge those contexts which are not caring of women. They can also be enabled to see their role as agents of change and the need to take responsibility for this. This study also demonstrates the apprehensiveness that women may feel about how to sustain this new knowledge and confidence in an environment that is often dismissive of women who assert themselves.

In addition, the research points to some of the key elements in a liberatory feminist pedagogy that can be applied in theological institutions which will be more caring and supportive of women. This research aims to support the important work of

those who are developing a detailed feminist theological curriculum.¹³ Hopefully, by situating my argument within a theological discussion of women and care, I have contributed to this project in some way.

1.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

To make something available for discussion is to make of it an object. This suspicion of the intellectual who both objectifies and speaks for others inveighs us to develop a kind of self-reflexivity that will enable us to look closely at our own practice in terms of how we contribute to dominance in spite of our liberatory intentions (Lather 1991:ix).

Lather's challenge to scholars engaged in a self-reflexive research approach has been an important reminder for me in this research process. The ethical responsibility of the researcher to care, calls for self-critique to counter the possibility that I too am contributing to the dominance which it has been my intention to resist. In drawing a group of women into this research I was aware of the danger of disclosure of significant information. Before each interview I requested permission to use participants' information in a confidential manner. Where they did not wish anything recorded, I have complied. To honour this confidentiality, the questionnaires and interview transcripts have not been included in the research, and references to people have been removed to ensure their anonymity. In the text I have referred to participants by code, and then only in two places. For the rest, their comments appear anonymously. If any additional data is required, it is available on request, and with the permission of the interviewees.

A further ethical concern relates to the use and abuse of feminist intellectual property. Hunt (1994:106) draws attention to the way academics borrow from other academics (with/without acknowledgment), and also where first-world or privileged researchers use the experiences of women from 'third world' (*sic*) or subjugated contexts to advance their work. She suggests that there are ways to borrow that are respectful and ethical and which I have tried to bear in mind in doing this research, viz:

The image that comes to my mind is the many women who have borrowed a cup of flour from the neighbors. The ground rules for borrowing give us some clues

¹³ See curriculum produced by Isabel Phiri under the auspices of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians and due to be published in 2006.

about how to appropriate and act with reciprocity with each other. I offer some common customs as a next step toward dealing with these matters.

First, we borrow only what we need. If I have what I need there is no need to borrow. But the question that shapes the exchange is do I need it or simply want it? A second dimension of borrowing is the need to ask permission, to explain why I need to borrow, why what I have won't do. In most communities it is customary to repay the borrowed item with a little interest, giving back more than one took as a sign of goodwill and thanks. Further, borrowing is not the norm but the exception, what one does in a pinch, not something that is programmatic.

With regard to this research, concerns about the accumulation of books and articles has been a question which I have not been able to resolve – to what extent have I sought carefully for those sources that I needed, and to what extent have I photocopied wastefully or downloaded greedily in a thoughtless way? Where possible available sources have been acknowledged and permission to use the data from the questionnaires and interviews sought from the women. Where they specifically asked that their words not be recorded, this has been respected. What remains is to ensure that both the research community and the women receive back something from this work, and appropriate ways of doing so will need to be devised, for example through seminars and presentations and written summaries and articles.

Research aimed at consciousness-raising is also critiqued for its arrogant assumptions that the researcher has superior knowledge that other women need to know. Heron makes the point that the researched have the moral right to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them - this protects them from being managed and manipulated (in Lather 1988:55-56). The ultimate ethical responsibility of researchers is to respect the right of the researched and 'to provide conditions under which subjects can enhance their capacity for self-determination in acquiring knowledge about the human condition'. These ethical concerns are of importance in this research because they point to a further ethical dimension – that of the researcher. However, I am not able to envisage the outcome of this research and success in raising consciousness, nor how the academic community will receive it. All that is possible is to commit myself to the ongoing pursuance of its goals, through my teaching and learning with other women in shared communities of practice as this thesis enters the public domain and the debates in feminist theological education.