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**Challenges to and Innovations in State Feminism in a Post-Colonial Society**  

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**A Study of South Africa**

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## **ETHICS STATEMENT**

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this dissertation, has obtained, for the research described in this work, the applicable research ethics approval. The author declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in terms of the University of Pretoria's Code of ethics for researchers and the Policy guidelines for responsible research.

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## ABSTRACT

The South African National Gender Machinery (NGM) is proclaimed to be more advanced than many of its counterparts across developing and post-industrial contexts. However, while the state has enacted various legislative and policy interventions to redress sexism, women's subjective constitutions have not substantially transformed. Inspired by an interest in exploring the micro-level factors that either reinforce and reproduce, or challenge and transform systems of gender oppression in South Africa, this research study asks: How is the South African NGM discursively positioned in contemporary gender politics? The key theoretical assumptions guiding the study draw from social constructionist traditions, which suggest that NGM challenges are not static, but reinforced and reproduced through constant practices of conscious and unconscious compliance with patriarchal power systems. The study builds upon a contextual definition of gender transformation that recognises the historical complexities of South African women's diverse subject formations, and by means of a discourse analysis, demonstrates the usefulness of observing the role of language in either sustaining or transforming gender relations. This is conducted through an adapted research method of Discourse Analysis, which provides useful tools for assessing how NGM practitioners conceive of and interpret their role. Although the general interest of the project is the NGM as a "package" of structures, it pays attention to interactions between the Department in the Presidency Responsible for Women, and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency. Crucially, the study finds that the NGM can be transformed into a viable machinery through which the aspirations of South African women can be articulated and realised. Consequently, this discourse analysis contributes an optimistic view to global and local debates on state feminism.

**Key Terms:** Feminism, National Gender Machinery, State Feminism, Transformative State Feminism, Gender Transformation, Department of Women, Poststructuralist Feminism, Discourse Analysis

...evil has vivid speech, but goodness bites its tongue...

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## CHAPTER I: ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

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### 1.1. Introduction

In concluding that the National Gender Machinery (NGM) has been ineffective in advancing the institutional gains of women's historical struggles, scholars and activists observing the South African state feminist project often point to persistent gaps between policy ideals and the lived realities of the majority of women. Less than a decade after its establishment, Gay Seidman (2003, p. 542), a prominent voice in scholarly debates on this subject, asked:

*...What had undermined the feminist possibility...? Why did a project so full of promise – with energetic feminists, new institutional structures, strong political support from the new government, and generous financial support from international donors – lose steam so quickly? ... Does South Africa represent just another case of a nationalist movement subsuming feminist goals to a nation-building project, ... Does feminist rhetoric simply mask patriarchal intent?*

This research project constitutes a rejoinder to Seidman, fifteen years later, by turning to the “micrological textures of power” (Spivak, 1988) to explore whether South Africa does indeed represent “just another” post-independence case where “feminist rhetoric simply mask[s] patriarchal intent”.

Although the general interest of this project is the NGM as a “package” of structures, it pays particular attention to interactions between the Department in the Presidency Responsible for Women (Department of Women), and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency (Portfolio Committee). Drawing on social constructionist theoretical and methodological traditions, the study examines how the department is discursively positioned, and explores the extent to which this information can advance state feminist theory and practice in South Africa.

## **1.2. Contextual Background**

The South African post-apartheid government has accomplished substantial success in both the structural establishment of women's institutions across all state functions, and in inserting gender equality principles into legislation.

Upon assuming power in 1994, the post-apartheid government communicated a message of hope about the nature of gender relations in the new era. Whereas women in the previous apartheid government had constituted 2.8% of parliamentary representatives (Myakayaka-Manzini, 2002, p. 1), the figures had risen to 27.7% in 1994 (Hassim, 2003, p. 506). South Africa subsequently dramatically moved to 7th position, from 141st in the list of global representations of women in national parliaments (Britton, 2002, p. 33).

Women's increased representation in state bodies and the numbers of women elected to the post-apartheid parliament spurred optimism about the capacity of the new democratic state to advance the interests of women, and was widely seen as part of a broader agenda of distributing social and economic power. According to Hassim (2003, p. 509), the dramatic environment and manner with which the restructuring of the South African state took shape was conducive for the proposal for the NGM by women's movement activists.

In addition to increased numbers of women representation in leadership roles, legal protections were established, and the state made various social welfare provisions available across race groups. The democratic government has promulgated myriad legislative instruments and policy interventions to address gendered inequalities. These include the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998; Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000; Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998; and the Sexual Offences Act 3 of 2006; amongst others.

In what is considered a landmark intervention in the lives of parents and children, particularly single mothers, on 9 September 2015 the Maintenance Amendment Act (9 of 2015) was signed into law. Amongst other functions, the Act legislates the blacklisting of parents who default on child maintenance payments. In July 2018, and for the first time since the legislation was promulgated, a long-term prison sentence of

four and a half years was handed down by a Magistrates Court to a maintenance defaulter (Times Live, 31 July 2018).

In addition to legal protections, across race groups the state makes available various social welfare provisions such as the child support grant, the foster care grant, the care dependency grant, old-age pensions, and disability grants. Illustrations of other state provisions include: more affordable, usable and responsive finance to women; development programmes to prepare women for positions on the boards of public and private entities; mobilization strategies for women farmers into agricultural cooperatives; and increased access by girls and women to basic and tertiary education.

Government successes have also materialised in areas where policy addresses women as a biological category, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights. According to its Annual Report for 2016/2017, the Department of Women was developing a framework for the distribution of free sanitary pads to girls and women in the lower social strata.

These advances confirm Magubane's observation, that "there is no denying that women in South Africa emerged from their democratic transition having inserted gender equality "into the heart of democratic debates". The new government created a range of institutions to present and defend women's interests and, in doing so, extended women's political participation" (2013, p. 1132). The South African process of negotiating the NGM into the state has also been globally well-appraised and its model emulated in multiple countries, including Northern Ireland (Waylen, 2014, p. 497).

### **1.3. Establishment of the NGM: United Women's Movement**

The multiplicity of oppressions during the colonial and apartheid eras differently constructed women's identities, and their subsequent subjective experiences with patriarchal domination. In turn, these differences have established and sustained the persistent incongruities in women's interests and claims to citizenship, and destabilised efforts to sustain women's movement unity.

Whereas white women's early achievements during the apartheid era were "a feminist one by a racist movement, which ignored three-quarters of the women in the country"

(Manjoo, 2005, p. 245), in struggles against apartheid, the “hierarchy of oppression(s)” that positioned race at its apex (Gqola, 2001, p. 134) was a point of major weakness for both the liberation and the women’s movements. Moreover, intra-race, inter-party, class, and ethnic differences sought to further threaten women’s movement solidarity.

Yet in spite of the ideological differences, heightened tensions, and violence of the political history of South Africa, there existed moments in history where women defied their subjective differences, and fought together towards common interests at a national level, such as within the Women’s National Coalition (WNC).

The WNC was a “triple alliance” of women academics, politicians, and activists, acting “strategically to articulate gender issues at a crucial point during the transition” (Waylen, 2007, p. 524). While women academics and activists were situated mainly in autonomous NGOs, grassroots and community groups, and in academia, the politicians represented women in political parties such as the African National Congress (ANC), the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), and the National Party (NP), amongst other parties (Waylen, 2007, p. 524).

The primary project of the WNC was to organise a Charter Campaign in order to consult with women throughout South Africa about their problems, needs and hopes for the new democratic dispensation (Meintjes, 1996, p. 59; Magubane, 2013, p. 1167, Seidman, 1999). Through the Charter Campaign the WNC would draft and present the Women’s Charter for Effective Equality for inclusion in the Bill of Rights (Hassim & Gouws, 1998, p. 64).

The Charter Campaign followed a dual process of action research and campaigning (Cock & Bernstein, 2001, p. 138). The Campaign is estimated to have reached more than two million participants (Meintjes, 1996) all over the country over a period of three months (Govender, 1993, p. 43). The Campaign identified two main conditions for the inclusion of women’s equality concerns in the new state, namely the increased presence of women in decision-making bodies and positions, as well as the establishment of state structures to monitor the gendered impact of public policies (Seidman, 1999, p. 300).

While initial debates about the form of structures that would advance the interests of women in democratic South Africa had focused on the feasibility of a Women's Ministry, final consensus was reached on the establishment of a package of structures at all levels of government and civil society (Albertyn, 1995, p. 2).

It was agreed and envisaged that the distribution of the package of institutions across the bureaucracy, the legislature, independent bodies, and civil society would result in multiple nodes of engagement, and subsequently reduce "dependence on political will for the advancement of women's interests" (Vetten, 2013, p. 126). Once wider consensus was reached on the establishment of various interlinked structures within government and civil society, the recommendations from these deliberations were submitted to the ANC policy conference in December 1993.

However, by December 1993 it was evident that the "temporary unity" of the WNC was fractured. In July 1993 at the second WNC National Council, Frene Ginwala, the Head of the WNC, had warned that the diversity of the Coalition, particularly the political differences, posed difficulty for the achievement of consensus, and strained interpersonal relationships within the Coalition (Maritz, 2011, p. 115).

The unresolved historical differences and tensions inhibited the ability of the WNC to sustain itself beyond the Charter Campaign (Meintjes, 1996, p. 61). In the absence of a common identity and project after the presentation of the Charter and the adoption of recommendations for a national gender machinery, WNC members reverted back to their organisations (Hassim & Gouws, 1998, p. 66). To sustain unity beyond the Charter Campaign required the ability to "simultaneously straddle recognition of diversity and an appeal to unity" while at the same time avoiding the degeneration of differences into unresolvable divisions (Cock & Bernstein, 2001, p. 139). In light of the historical tensions that differentiated women in South Africa, this proved to be a difficult task.

Yet despite persistent tensions and differences, the formation of the WNC in 1992 *did* bring together women from across different parties, religions, social classes and racial categories – as temporary as it may have been. It revealed that it was possible to create a political community built on unity and solidarity that recognises diversity and celebrates solidarity as a basis for political action (Hassim & Gouws, 1998, p. 64).

Within the WNC, and towards the 1994 elections, women transitioned to “a force of considerable political power and public influence” (Britton, 2002, p. 36). The power of women’s united voices, in turn, influenced the insertion of gender equality principles into democratic South Africa’s Constitutional framework, and led the establishment of institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the form of a National Gender Machinery.

These achievements suggest, as argued by Britton, that the significance of the WNC should be weighed less against its institutional longevity, and rather against the process it fostered, and the foundation it created for strategic collective action and networking amongst women’s organisations (2002, p. 44). Hassim and Gouws add that the WNC experience suggests two critical elements for the development of an identity for the women’s movement in South Africa, namely (1) “intense debate about the meanings of gender in a society dominated by racial divisions”; and (2) “the will of a politically committed and experienced core of women leaders” (1998, p. 64). Moreover, both elements were tied to “the successful identification of issues which cut across a wide set of differences and gave a common basis for solidarity” (Hassim & Gouws, 1998, p. 64).

#### **1.4. Structure of the National Gender Machinery**

In June 1996, Cabinet approved the establishment of the NGM in the form of an Office on the Status of Women (OSW) to be located in the Office of the Deputy President, and later moved to the Office of the President after the 1999 national elections (Manjoo, 2005, p. 253). Cabinet also approved the establishment of Gender Focal points in all government departments at the national level, and gender desks in some government departments at provincial levels. The role of the OSW was to develop and implement a national gender policy, and to mainstream gender perspectives into government through coordination with focal points (Waylen, 2007, p. 535).

Upon its establishment, the OSW subsequently consolidated the range of documents produced by the women’s movement, including and particularly the Women’s Charter (1994), the Draft National Women’s Empowerment Policy (1995) produced by the RDP Women’s Desk, and other post-apartheid legislative and policy instruments that had

already been created (Gender Policy Framework, 2000, p. 8). This process produced the South Africa's National Framework on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (Gender Policy Framework) in 2000. The Gender Policy Framework identifies the following institutions as components of the NGM:

Government	Parliament
The Presidency Office of the Status of Women Provincial Offices of the Status of Women Gender Units in Line Departments Gender Units in Local Government Structures	Portfolio Committees (Including the Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and Status of Women Parliamentary Women's Caucus Steering Committee to Women's Caucus Provincial Women's Caucus Group Women's Empowerment Unit Cabinet Government Departments
Independent Bodies	Civil Society
Constitutional Court and Other Courts Commission on Gender Equality Public Service Commission Human Rights Commission SA Law Commission Public Protector Land Commission, Truth Commission, Youth Commission, and Independent Electoral Commission	Non-Governmental Organisations Religious Bodies Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) The South African Local Government Association (Salga)

The NGM was designed to increase women's participation in decision making positions as well as ensure the accountability of the state to women's issues and interests (Hassim, 2003, p. 508). The structural design of the machinery was created to ensure integrated interaction between the state and women's interests. All the structures of the machinery were tasked with the goal of facilitating greater representivity of women in state structures and to serve as the structural mechanism through which gender equality is achieved (Gouws, 2006, p. 143).

On 20 December 2007, and in light of mounting challenges faced by the NGM, the 52nd National Conference of the ANC considered the establishment of a Women's Ministry. The rationale for a Women's Ministry was to address women's poverty and to correct

the deficiencies of the OSW (Vetten, 2013, p. 143).

However, according to Gouws, feminist scholars and activists feared that the establishment of the Ministry would lead to the dismantling of the entire NGM, as there had been no clear mandate with its establishment, nor a statement on its relationship with other structures of the NGM (2010, p. 8). There were also no references made to how concerns raised at the conceptual stages of the NGM against a Ministry would be resolved.

Gouws warned that experiences of ministries of women in various contexts in both the global North and South have shown that because political leaders in power appoint their Cabinets, “all ministers are dependent on the good will of political leaders and the extent to which they are in favour of having a Ministry of women’s Affairs or not” (2010, p. 4).

Notwithstanding, in May 2009, the OSW and other “national multi-agency structures in the Presidency” which “lacked sufficient financial and human resources and the necessary authority to co-ordinate and oversee their mandates” were replaced by the establishment of the National Department for Women, Children and People with Disabilities (DWCPD), whose purpose was to assume the role of driving the Government’s equity, equality and empowerment agenda (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2013).

When it was established, Gouws argued that the Ministry should have vertical links with the President and the Presidency for access; with the women’s movement in civil society for influence; as well as horizontal links with the Portfolio and Select Committees, the Gender Focal Points, and the CGE (2010, p. 9). Importantly, she commented that “the ministry will only be successful if it can influence important government structures and officers on gender issues, and if it provides the necessary access for civil society” (Gouws, 2010, p. 10).

By the end of 2012, the DWCPD was identified by the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation as the second-worst performing national department, meeting only 14% of its performance targets (Vetten, 2013, p. 145). Subsequently, in



May 2014, the President announced that the functions relating to support for children and people with disabilities would be transferred to the Department of Social Development. The DWCPD was re-established as the Department in the Presidency Responsible for Women (DoW).

### **1.5. Problem Statement**

While the national machinery for women in South Africa is proclaimed to be more advanced than many in both industrial and post-industrial societies (Gouws, 2005, p. 72; 2006 p. 143; Waylen, 2007), and while the state has enacted various legislative and policy interventions to redress sexism, women's subjective constitutions have not substantially transformed.

Various scholars have questioned whether the reforms have transformed women's subject formations in relation to male domination. Many, like Seidman (2003), have concluded that the post-apartheid government, led by the NGM, has addressed women only as a biological category, while aspects of policy which address social gender hierarchies and land ownership have been negated (Albertyn and Hassim, 2003). This argument is supported by a large body of empirical evidence, including the Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Women published by the Department of Women in 2015, which demonstrates that the post-apartheid era has ushered in extensive political rights without creating the necessary environmental contexts that will assist poor women to lay claim to their rights.

By 1994, the women's movement that had previously advocated for state reforms from outside state structures had retreated, due mainly to the historical tensions that threatened women's movement solidarity, as well as the diversion of attention by women's movement leaders from gender politics to national politics and policy-making structures after the establishment of government structures for gender equality (Meer, 2005, p. 49; Hassim and Gouws, 1998, p. 54; Beall, 2001, p. 141; Mannell, 2012, p. 423).

As early as the year 2000, many of the feminists who helped conceptualise and construct the NGM had become pessimistic, unclear about the priorities, and

immobilised by internal dissent (Seidman, 2003, p. 541). According to Seidman, the reach of the internal tension extended to the national media, where activists hurled accusations at each other.

Hassim (2003) attributes some of the early challenges of the NGM to its architects' underestimation of the rigidity of sexism within the state bureaucracy. By establishing gender units in several institutions and levels of the state, the architects of the national machinery assumed that women activists in these positions would work together within the state bureaucratic system, and in parliament, to advance women's interests and to hold the state accountable for its policy on gender (Hassim, 2003, p. 510). However, women civil servants, particular those in Gender Focal positions, have had to face the battle of legitimating themselves within the masculinist and militaristic environments in their departments, as well as implementing gender equality policies in their portfolios. As a result, NGM bureaucrats are caught between internal patriarchal structural limitations and the expectations by women's organisations outside the government (Hassim, 2003, p. 514).

Some studies have identified the challenges of NGM bureaucrats as stemming from a persistent lack of disciplined commitment to gender training programs, particularly regarding the notion of gender mainstreaming. For example, a study of perceptions by NGM bureaucrats towards gender mainstreaming found that due to conceptual misconceptions, the majority of practitioners viewed gender mainstreaming as ineffective in addressing the gendered hierarchies of workplace environments, and the gender relations in the societies within which they operate (Mannell, 2012, p. 425). Some practitioners reported that the technical nature of the mainstreaming approach contributed significantly to the perpetuation of gender inequalities within organisations,

Attempts were made in 2003 to ensure greater accountability by the state feminist institutions to women's political and civil society organisations. This was done through the establishment of a National Gender Forum, to be co-ordinated by the Office of the Status of Women, and with the aim of arranging meetings between structures of the NGM and women's organisations once a quarter (Gouws, 2006, p. 158).

Furthermore, in 2006, and to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1956 Women's

March, the Progressive Women's Movement of South Africa (PWM) was established, and tasked with six objectives, namely "creating networks and solidarity between diverse groupings of women across race and class; combating poverty and supporting job creation, as well as meeting women's various needs; and deepening democracy by combating patriarchy in all its manifestations, as well as defending the gains women had made" (Vetten, 2013, p. 148).

However, observing the 2013 Women's Parliament, an annual sitting of women from across public, private and civil sectors, Makhunga (2014) found gross monopoly of PMW structures by members of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL), the ruling party in government. According to Makhunga's report, not only was there an absence of opposition party representatives in planning meetings for NGM events in Parliament, but approval for programmes was attained from the ANCWL (2014, p. 35). At such platforms, the presence of ANCWL-affiliated women's organisations posing as autonomous bodies – such as the Progressive Women's Movement (PWM) – serves to further dominate state-women's movement engagements, and to effectively legitimise the exclusion of autonomous women's civil society organisations by allowing the processes to appear more inclusive than they are (Makhunga, 2014, p. 36).

Within this climate, in 2014 the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) held a National Gender Summit to review the gains and challenges facing the gender equality project in South Africa, twenty years into democracy. The report of the Summit, which was presented to Parliament in 2015, identified the following challenges facing the NGM: failure to assert gendered discourse into key development and policy frameworks; conservative attitudes to gender equality held by human resources practitioners; insufficient senior management commitment to redress gender imbalances; the reduction of gender equality interventions to mere "events"; inadequate funding for gender equality structures; civil society "weakened" by lack of funding; civil society often not consulted and their recommendations not taken seriously by the state; institutional cultures continue to be male dominated, and women in management positions are isolated; unclear role of some gender machinery structures, like the National Council on Gender Based Violence; depoliticised feminist activism; and technocratic uses of

the gender mainstreaming paradigm, which robs the approach of its transformative potential (Commission on Gender Equality, 2015).

As a consequence of the above persistent challenges, the agenda for gender transformation been lost in favour of the institutional integration of women's issues through technocratic measurements (Meintjes, 2009, p. 90), but women's political action has been limited to formal, policy engagements within the NGM (Hassim and Gouws, 1998, p. 69; Hassim, 2003).

In light of its challenges, to what extent can the South African NGM continue to be viewed as representing the interests of women?

This study suggest that previous assessments of the South African NGM have successfully identified the challenges inhibiting its effectiveness to be the conduit for gender equality. However, little attention has been afforded to understanding how the incumbents of NGM structures conceive of, interpret, and articulate their roles – and effectively, how it represents women's interests. This requires an analysis of the discourse advanced in accounting for the strategic vision for gender equality.

This suggests a shift from macro-level analyses of the structure and functioning of the NGM, to a micro-level investigation of its discursive positioning. Seeking to understand how the vision for gender equality is conceived assists in exploring how gender transformation is conceptualised, and is useful for discovering whether “feminist rhetoric simply mask[s] patriarchal intent” (Seidman, 2003).

## **1.6. Study Goals and Rationale**

The key aim of this study is to explore whether a micro-level analysis can provide useful information to advance the institutional gains acquired through the establishment of the NGM. This is conducted by assessing how the incumbents of NGM structures conceive of and interpret their roles. The focus is the discourse relied on to account for the strategic planning and execution of the functions and role/s of the NGM. Towards this, the discourse analysis methodology presents opportune research tools for research exploration.

Discourse analysis, as both theory and method, offers an opportunity to contribute to the development of new knowledge and expertise in state feminism. Often, in sociological studies of gender relations and politics, the common, primary research methods are social surveys and experiments, structured and unstructured interviews, ethnographic, and participant observations methods. These methods, while useful for gaining knowledge of the social world, do not offer the study a context that is able to demonstrate the complexity of speakers' multiple subject positions, and the co-evolutionary manner that competing discourses continuously shift speakers between positions of powerfulness and powerlessness.

This study is able to reveal how the Minister in the Presidency disperses her power as both Minister and as a senior official of the African National Congress. Importantly, the discourse analysis also shows how Members of the Portfolio Committee shift between positions of powerfulness and powerlessness in demanding accountability from the Department.

### **1.7. Research Question**

The primary research question guiding this study is:

*How is the South African National Gender Machinery discursively positioned in contemporary South African gender politics, and how can this information advance the theory and practice of South African state feminism?*

The sub-questions accompanying the research question are:

- What interests and claims does the NGM make and prioritise on behalf of women?
- What information can be extrapolated from the micro-analysis of discursivity that can innovate the theory and practice of the NGM?

### **1.8. Key Theoretical Assumptions**

The present study relies on social constructionist theoretical traditions to explain how subjects form identities, and how they act in groups. Social constructionist theorists often agree that in order to understand group dynamics and action, as well as possible

consequent social change, social action should be investigated with an understanding of the participation and contribution to it by individuals – singularly and collectively (Joas, 1997; Blumer, 1969). This tradition is useful for theoretically justifying the research choice to focus on discursivity in making conclusions about the South African NGM.

Social constructionist theoretic traditions help this study to conceptually explain the cocreational relationship between discourses, individual and group identity, social action, and social order. Critically, a poststructuralist feminist orientation exposes the gendered nature of discourse, and the manner/s through which discourse/s reproduce patriarchal social orders.

By shifting the analytical gaze from macro- to micro-analysis, the research study allows itself to not study the subject, but to learn from the subject how women's interests are conceptualised, re-presented and articulated - and what meanings are ascribed to the amalgam of issues facing women.

In light of the focus of this study on National Gender Machineryes, a critical reading of scholarly debates on similar institutions in various contexts assists in conceptualising a theoretical framework for examining the South African NGM. This process is guided by a contextual definition of transformative state feminism. Finally, this exercise primarily follows on a complexity approach to conceptually explain the complexities of women's diverse subject formations and interests, and to usher in a theoretical justification for an analysis of discourse in action.

### **1.9. Key Methodology**

In investigating how the incumbents of the NGM conceive of and interpret their roles, the study relies on poststructuralist analytical traditions to explain the role of discourse in either re-inscribing or challenging certain ideologies and systems of power. This is conducted through an adapted research method of Discourse Analysis, which provides useful tools for assessing how the leadership of the NGM conceive of and interpret its role.

The primary source of data are transcripts of recorded interactive engagements

between the Department of Women and the Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency. Secondary reference is made to the strategic documents of the Department of Women (i.e. Annual Performance Plans, Annual Reports). The discourse analysis draws meaning of the discursive positioning of the NGM through the accounts of the Minister of Women -in her capacity as the political principal and Executive Authority- of the impact of the annual performance of the department on the lives of women.

### **1.10. Researcher Reflexivity**

By consequence of its poststructuralist orientation, this study is “perspectival”, “context-specific”, and the product of subjective sets of discursive relations (Baxter, 2003, p. 59), which include my own, as the researcher. Furthermore, the multiple subject positions that I occupy define me within Spivak’s framework of the dislocated subject, who is neither individual nor collective agent, but is constantly changing according to historical and political contexts and changing interests (1988, p. 72).

When I began this research study in 2015, I was a full-time student. However, during the data collection period in June 2017, I joined the Ministry of Women as a Researcher and Speechwriter. This unexpected shift in subjective position located me physically at the site of the research setting. A key question of concern regarding researcher reflexivity is the extent to which prepared speeches form part of the accounting and reporting processes of the NGM.

The occasions of government’s presentation of its audited annual reports to Parliament are interactive contexts where each Executive authority accounts for the performance of their portfolio against the targeted outcomes. For this occasion, the response of the parliamentary committee to the Annual Report may not be pre-empted nor prepared by the Speechwriter. Moreover, this study examines the annual reporting processes for three consecutive years (2014/2015; 2015/2016; 2016/2017). I occupied the position of Researcher and Speechwriter for the last annual period under review.

In light of this research context, in this study I neither analyse my own ideas about the discursive positioning of the Department, nor assess speeches written by myself.

Instead, I draw on audio recordings of engagements between the Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency and the Department of Women. By employing a discourse analysis to the audio recordings, I am able to be completely removed from the data source, yet able to observe multiple and competing voices and accounts, which is, according to Baxter, a powerful form of data collection (2003, p. 67).

Yet notwithstanding, I am aware of the subjectivities and limitations that may arise as a result of my positioning in this study. To address this, I am conscious to position myself 'outside' the study subject throughout the research process by applying a critical approach to the investigation.

### **1.11. Outline of the Mini-Dissertation**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II presents a Literature Review, which locates the South African NGM within scholarly debates and builds upon a conceptual definition of transformative state feminism in South Africa. Chapter III discusses the Theoretical Framework that justifies the micro-analytical approach of this study, followed by the Methodological approach in Chapter IV. Chapter V presents the data findings and the analysis thereof. The last Chapter discusses the implications of this study for further scholarship and practice of state feminism.



## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

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### **2.1. Introduction**

National Gender Machineryes (NGM) are the subjects of multiple studies concerned with the extent to which they can be the conduits for gender transformation. Scholars frequently use the notion of state feminism to refer to the phenomenon of NGMs.

Although the concept of state feminism developed mainly from scholarly work focussing on Nordic countries (Adams, 2007), there are as many state feminist theories as there are gender machineryes: with distinct claims about the relationship between states and feminist knowledge about each context. Amongst these variations, there are conflicting perceptions about the capacity of NGMs to be the conduits for gender equality. Some analysts argue that the co-option of women activists into the state weakens the mobilization power of women's movements, while others view NGMs as "instrumental in bringing about change at an institutional level" (Gouws, 1996, p. 33).

This chapter captures these scholarly debates in order to establish a framework for examining the capacity of the South African NGM to be the conduit for gender equality.

Due to the global spread of NGMs, and the dominance of western voices in scholarly debates on state feminism, a critical approach is employed in assessing the suitability of international concepts for the South African context. The targeted outcome is a conceptual framework for understanding how NGMs can be effective conduits for gender transformation.

### **2.2. Leading Debates on State Feminism**

Leading global debates on state feminism in post-industrial democracies is a study conducted by the Research Network on Gender and the State (RNGS) (Lovenduski, 2008; Kantola and Squires; 2012, Baldez, 2001). The RNGS championed an empirical study on fourteen post-industrial countries that had created NGMs (McBride and Mazur, 2007; 2011; 2012). More than forty experts within the RNGS conducted feminist research over a timeframe exceeding thirty years. These studies looked at issues such as policy debates on abortion, job training, political representation, prostitution, and

other emerging policy issues between the 1960s to the 2000s.

The conceptual framework that emerged out of this work to define state feminism focuses not on the countries, but on the impact of social movements on states and the policy-making processes. The focus on impact as opposed to the specific countries allows for “a critical approach, to the analytical concepts and measures being used, particularly with regards to any built-in bias or power balance that comes from using indicators established by international agencies and other powerful political players” (McBride and Mazur, 2011, p. 26).

The RINGS suggests the primary conditions for effective state feminism to be (1) a rights-based approach to policy; (2) an increased representation of women in decision-making bodies (Stetson and Mazur, 1995; Lovenduski, 2008; McBride and Mazur, 2012), and; (3) “widely supported feminist organisations that challenge sex hierarchies through both radical politics from outside (the state), and reform politics in unions and parties” (Stetson and Mazur, 1995, p. 290).

Within this framework, a distinction is made between two forms of state feminisms:

Movement State Feminism: Occurs when alliances between NGMs and women’s movements lead to the adoption of women’s movement goals in state policy (substantive outcomes), and/or the co-option of women’s movement actors into the subsystem of state processes regarding the issue they were influencing (procedural outcomes) (McBride and Mazur, 2012, p. 657).

Transformative State Feminism: Occurs when the substantive and procedural outcomes advance a feminist, transformative agenda (McBride and Mazur, 2012, p. 662). Transformation, from this perspective, “is more than the representation of women’s interests or even demands of women’s movement groups; it is the representation of feminist interests and actors making feminist claims to produce feminist outcomes” (Mazur and McBride, 2007, p. 508).

A feminist, transformative agenda may also be understood to have “a direct political dimension being not only aware of women's oppression, but prepared actively to confront patriarchal power in all its manifestations” (Hassim, 1991, p. 72). This definition

suggests that the focus of patriarchy is what distinguishes women's movements from feminist movements, or movement state feminism from transformative state feminism: "Feminist movements share a gendered power analysis of women's subordination and contest political, social, and other power arrangements of domination and subordination on the basis of gender" (Beckwith, 2000, p. 437).

Similarly to the RNGS findings - in a different report, published on behalf of the United Nations (UN), scholar Shirin Rai concludes that although "all national machineries are embedded in specific socio-economic and political contexts," and although it may therefore not be useful to compare between them, it might nonetheless be helpful to draw from the five factors identified by the Beijing PfA, namely: (1) location at the highest level of government; (2) clarity of mandate; (3) links to and relations with women's movement actors outside the state; (4) human and financial resources; and (5) accountability (2003, p. 26). Rai's conclusions draw on findings from a collection of studies of NGMs in diverse political systems, socio-economic contexts and geographic regions – amongst them being the Latin Americas, Nordic countries, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Oceanian regions (Rai, 2003).

This chapter engages these theoretical claims by positioning the stated conditions for state feminism within dominant debates on NGMs.

### **2.3. Representation of Women in Decision-Making Positions**

One of the primary gains for the South African women's movement in the democratic era was women's increased representation in key decision-making structures - from 2.8% during the apartheid era, to 27.7% in 1994 – and from 141<sup>st</sup> position to 7<sup>th</sup> in the list of global representations of women in national parliaments. According to the website of the People's Assembly, in 2018, women represented 42% of members of Parliament.

According to the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, which measures the relative gaps between women and men across the four key areas of health, education, economy and politics, South Africa enjoys an overall ranking of 19<sup>th</sup> out of 144 countries globally, and third in the Continent after Rwanda and Namibia, who rank fourth and thirteenth in the world respectively (2017, p. 17). The report also notes that South Africa recorded an

increase in the share of female legislators, senior officials and managers (2017, p. 23). Moreover, South Africa is the only African country among the G20 group of countries with the highest progress towards gender parity, ranking fourth in the world after France, Germany the United Kingdom, and Canada (2017, p. 24).

Yet without substantive transformation of women's lives, these quotas are meaningless for the idea of transformative state feminism. A key question to ask is what calibre of worker is required for the task of transforming the patriarchal nature of the state and society? Asking this question is helpful for locating this study's interest of examining how NGM practitioners conceive of and articulate their roles.

Furthermore, Gouws suggests that what must be asked of NGM bureaucrats to ascertain this information is whether they (1) "view themselves self-consciously as feminists (in the broad sense of the term as women concerned with gender equality)"; and (2) "whether they prioritise the state structures they work for or the agenda of the women's movement" (1996, p. 33).

According to Gouws, policy commitments to gender equality are insufficient "when women, who are incumbents of gender structures themselves, do not have a feminist consciousness or a clear understanding of theoretical issues involved in gender equality" (Gouws, 1996, p. 33). Furthermore, Gouws (1996, p. 35) warns of

*a certain danger in a gender discourse in South Africa that denies the expression of feminism, as such, as an awareness of women's inequality which demands political action. What is certain is that women who are appointed or elected to gender units have to have a feminist consciousness and have to understand the difference between strategic and practical gender interests. They also have to understand that both types of interests have to be addressed at the same time.*

A feminist consciousness may be understood in light of Maxine Molyneux's notions of strategic and practical gender interests. Molyneux suggests that since women's interests are bifurcated along the various subjective positions they occupy, and thus have different priorities, it is important to consider that their interests will also differ.

Practical gender interests refer to the material consequences of the division of labour and gendered social structures. Strategies to end women's domination from a practical interests perspective often address women as a biological category, emphasising menstrual and sexual health, reproductive rights, and maternal care issues (Molyneux, 1985, p. 231).

Strategic interests, on the other hand, refer to those interests that challenge the systematic subordination of women, such as the gendered division of labour. Strategic gender interests also pay attention to the gendered nature of social perceptions, relations, and institutions, and how these sustain sexist oppression (Molyneux, 1985, p. 231). A feminist consciousness, in this regard, refers to an awareness of, and activism from a strategic interests perspective.

A feminist consciousness alone, however, is not enough to withstand the power of the bureaucracy to co-opt femocrats. Goetz' study suggests that an important requirement is for women representatives to understand the political nature of their work. In the section below I discuss this further by exploring the human resources as a critical condition for transformative state feminism.

#### **2.4. Human and Financial Resources in State Feminism**

In as far as a distinction can be made between movement and transformative state feminisms, or practical and strategic gender interests, so should NGM bureaucrats be set apart from femocrats. Conceptually, any bureaucrat, situated in any institution of the state, who approaches their work from a feminist perspective can be defined as a femocrat. However, with the rise of the NGM phenomenon across the world, the term is often used to identify bureaucrats who work in state feminist institutions. It must be noted still, that it cannot be assumed that NGM bureaucrats and politicians act as advocates for strategic women's interests.

In the South African context, the work of NGM bureaucrats and femocrats alike is often ambiguous, as they find themselves caught between serving the patriarchal state and serving women's movements (Hassim, 2003). Gouws adds that femocrats often "find themselves having to adopt policies that may be to the disadvantage of certain groups

of women. They also have to respond to conflicting demands from politicians and bureaucrats and may have to work within budgetary constraints” (Gouws, 1996, p. 32).

Likewise, in her comparative study on South Africa and Uganda, Goetz maintains that while access might indicate political will from the state to address gendered imbalances, it is not sufficient “for seeking institutional changes” (1998, p. 257). Despite the co-option of women into policy discourses, women’s economic interests in Uganda and South Africa remain less prioritised than men’s, particularly in contexts that are important for enabling women to strengthen their market position. What is required is attention to masculinity of/in party politics, the degree to which social equality policies are implemented, and the degree of the legitimacy of the NGM (Goetz, 1998, p. 258).

Furthermore, in her study Goetz finds that often-times, the class status of NGM bureaucrats and femocrats distances them from grassroots issues. At the same time, “the few women who do gain access to administrative or political positions tend to be isolated from other women and are under powerful pressures to conform to the dominant orientations of their institutions, the work patterns, and concerns of their male colleagues. These pressures limit possibilities for developing sensitivity to, and acting in, women’s interests” (Goetz, 2003, p. 84).

Goetz found that there were instances where an NGM structure or a femocrat may want to “rightly illuminate deficiencies in the government’s accountability to women”, but such action might be viewed by the state as providing outside constituencies with “ammunition” to lobby for change (2003, p. 89). Furthermore, “too much interaction with outside constituencies can be seen as a violation of professionalism to the extent that it is regarded as politicizing the administration and eroding its integrity” (Goetz, 2003, p. 89).

As a result, of these dynamics, in various contexts NGM bureaucrats and femocrats are viewed by many as co-opted and having sold out the feminist cause. These perceptions “stem from women’s resistance to discuss their work, their high salaries, the pressure on them, which often prevents them from functioning as feminists, and their relative distance from the organic women’s movement” (Gouws, 1996, p. 32). In Chile, these factors about the femocrat phenomenon fostered resentment amongst

women, and created an unproductive “outsider”/“insider” dynamic, (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002).

Drawing on her study of the emergence of the femocrat phenomenon in Nigeria, Amina Mama is more explicit, and concludes that the notion of “femocracy” was practiced in an elitist manner, led mainly by the First Ladies and the wives of national leaders. This First Lady phenomenon, argues Mama (1995, p. 41), is

*an anti-democratic female power structure which claims to exist for the advancement of ordinary women, but is unable to do so because it is dominated by a small clique of women whose authority derives from their being married to powerful men, rather than from any actions or ideas of their own. Femocracies exploit the commitments of the international movement for greater gender equality while actually only advancing the interests of a small female elite, and in the long-term undermining women's interests by upholding the patriarchal status quo. In short, femocracy is a feminine autocracy running in parallel to the patriarchal oligarchy upon which it relies for its authority, and which it supports completely.*

These challenges further demonstrate that alone, women’s access to decision-making platforms is insufficient. What is required beyond formal access through quotas, as suggested by the transformative state feminist framework, is a women’s movements outside the state that also secures access to policy-making platforms. This is because the ways that women’s movements gain access to state platforms “is tied to the kinds of agendas that are set and the nature of the accountability relationship between representatives and constituencies” (Hassim & Gouws, 2011, p. 3). Importantly, links with women’s movement can help women within state institutions to ensure greater accountability of the state to feminist interests.

## **2.5. Accountability: Links with Women’s Movement**

According to Hassim and Gouws, for transformative state feminism, accountability should operate at both the level of state-citizen/elected official-constituency level, as well as at the level of “formal checks on executive authority through the separation of

powers and adequately capacitated, independent and strong institutions such as constitutional courts” (2011, p. 8). Moreover, an independent media and a civil society inclusive of NGOs, trade unions, and community organisations that are situated outside the formal political system are also crucial avenues for keeping the state and elected officials accountable (Hassim & Gouws, 2011, p. 8). This suggests that conceptually, NGM structures have a dual role.

On the one hand, they have an administrative function as an agent of the state bureaucracy, while on the other hand they represent the transposition of feminism from outside, to inside the state.

The Turkish experience, according to Kardam and Acuner, demonstrates that although there is often ambiguity regarding the role of NGMs, their central mandate should be “in line with the demands of civil society” (2003, p. 107). Cohering with this view, the Australian experience, according to Sawyer, suggests that for femocrats, bureaucratic and formal accountability through performance agreements between chief executive officers and ministers, without an external element, is unlikely to result in gender transformation (2003, p. 250). Rai adds that the relationship between mandate and accountability could be strengthened by, amongst other ideas, “stronger consultative mechanisms” between NGM structures and women’s movement organisations (2003, p. 273).

In turn, strong allies with women’s movement will ensure greater state accountability to women’s interests, and effectively give power and legitimacy to the NGM. As Goetz notes, without “anything to fear from women, many governments can make important political gains at the international and domestic levels by espousing gender equality, without serious risk of being held accountable and having to operationalize the promises made in top-level rhetoric” (2003, p. 271).

In her study on the effectiveness of NGMs in Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Morocco and Vietnam, Goetz concluded that since it is often the pressure of women’s movement activists that lead to the establishment of NGMs, NGMs become representatives of the culmination of women’s claims – and thus the relationship between those in the state and those in women’s organisations must be seen as mutually constituting (2003, p.



87). Moreover, the political pressure of the constituency of women's groups outside the state can help to "demonstrate the legitimacy and urgency of the policy reforms they are promoting" (Goetz, 2003, p. 87).

Other scholarly voices are more prescriptive. Rai, for example, warns that "if national machineries are unable to generate a dialogue with civil society because they are perceived as unaccountable, arrogant and removed from concerns of women's groups organizing in the field, the purpose for which national machineries have been created would not be achieved" (2003, p. 267).

In their study of Turkish state feminism, Kardam and Acuner concluded that without collaboration with women's NGOs, NGMs cannot be effective and legitimate (2003, p. 107). Furthermore, NGMs have to build networks and "will need consciously to find and cultivate groups in society who are allies, to whom they can provide resources and who are able to pressure the government" - including the media and the private sector (Kardam & Acuner, 2003, p. 107).

In the following Section I explore critiques of State Feminism by asking the extent to which the Western origins of the concept may find resonance in the South African context.

## **2.6. Critiques of State Feminism**

A leading voice in critical approaches to state feminism as defined by the RNGS is Celia Valiente, who argues that "few agencies could ever reach state feminist status" if the RNGS definition remained, because it relies on incomplete analyses of the factors that influence the policy effectiveness of women's agencies, and incorrect assumptions for the study of the relationship between NGMs and women's movements (2007, p. 531).

Valiente proposes the replacement of the dichotomous relationship between NGMs and women's movements in RNGS concepts by "the notion of a continuum of women's activism" (2007, p. 532). This is mainly because scholarship on developing countries and new democracies:

*has highlighted the blurred boundary that often separates women's policy machineries from women's movements. This fuzzy frontier between states and movements is the result of several processes. In many developing countries and new democracies, because women's policy agencies are often understaffed and underfunded (as mentioned), they regularly subcontract many tasks to women's groups that in post-industrial countries are usually performed by the agencies themselves. These groups often adopt the formal structure of a nongovernmental organization. In numerous countries, state feminist institutions have been set up and dismantled in a short time span. Some of these institutions are in part staffed by women formerly active in the women's movement. When women's policy agencies are demoted or closed down, a section of their staff is employed in or collaborates with NGOs that work on women's projects (2007, p. 537).*

Following this critique, Valiente suggests that definitions of state feminism should account for the critical role played by political in/stability in a given context in both the capacity of the state to develop and implement public policy, and in the policy influence of NGMs. Frequent changes in government, for example, will result in unstable leadership structures of NGM institutions, and in-turn destabilise long-term policy goals and legacies (2007, p. 536). These dynamics affect the human and material resources available to engage with both transnational structures and with constituents at national and local levels of society. This, in turn, suggests the need to look beyond NGM "friendly" democracies and women's access to previously male-dominated sectors, and towards the resources needed once access is gained.

#### *2.6.1. 'It Has to do With Politics': Power and/or State Feminism*

Indeed, Goetz' comparative study of the effectiveness of NGMs in Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Morocco and Vietnam demonstrates that location at the highest level of government; clarity of mandate; links to and relations with women's movement actors outside the state; human and financial resources; and accountability – may not be sufficient variables for NGM success.

Although the NGMs in these countries differ due to degrees of economic development

and political histories, they nonetheless shared a reasonable degree of political stability – and yet in all countries, gender relations had not been transformed to a substantive degree (Goetz, 2003, p. 92). Concluding her study, and wondering why governments have committed to women’s rights and set up NGMs when no substantive change has occurred, Goetz remarks that

*The reason has to do with politics. No government or bureaucracy feels it has anything to fear from women. In civil society they rarely represent a highly mobilized constituency, at the domestic level their interests are often closely bound in with those of men in the family, and in politics and public administration they are under-represented and have rarely acted to entrench a new feminist corporatism. As such, the chance of fundamental changes towards gender equality actually being realized is negligible, given the relative absence of forceful and demanding constituencies within and outside of the state. As a result, far from having anything to fear from women, many governments can make important political gains at the international and domestic levels by espousing gender equality, without serious risk of being held accountable and having to operationalize the promises made in top-level rhetoric (2003, p. 91).*

Various other studies on women’s movements and NGMs in transitional democracies posit similar arguments to Goetz. In their comparative analysis of Nigerian and Chilean state feminism, for example, Okeke-Ihejirika and Franceschet conclude that the backdrop of nationalism and ethnic tensions in Nigeria “significantly complicates projects of democratization and women’s expanded roles within the new democracy”, which explains the differences in successes between itself and Chile (2002, p. 441).

In Chile, the emergence of state feminism was partly facilitated by a political environment that allowed feminist access to positions within government, while on the other hand, in Nigeria state feminism found difficulty in emerging because of the denial of feminist access to the state, and the existence of patronage networks and clientelism (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002, p. 459). These differences between the two countries show that democratisation and representation alone may not be sufficient conditions for effective state feminism. Rather, and as suggested by Valiente, the

political histories also have a critical role to play.

The comparative study shows that despite the establishment of processes of democratization, where there are deep seated ethnic divisions, broad-based movements might find difficulty in emerging. Therefore, what is important is the emergence of a unified women's movement with feminist goals, and the importance of feminist access to formal politics (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002, p. 461).

Furthermore, and as the South African and Chilean cases separately demonstrate, sustaining a united women's movement with cross-class linkages and solidarity beyond the transitional period may be difficult. In tandem with South Africa, in Chile the disunity arose from the professional and middle-class segments of the women's movement migrating to the NGM to supply technical expertise (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002, p. 462). Yet in Chile, which might also be an impending outcome for South African politics post the 2019 elections, a further political condition that plays a factor is the role of coalition party politics.

Turning to coalition theory, Baldez argues that the level of commitment to feminist policy within NGMs differs according to whether the state is controlled by a single party or multi-party coalition (2001, p. 3). Baldez suggests that feminists might face great obstacles in enacting their desired policy goals in coalition governments than in single party governments. This is because unlike in a single party government, where the relationship between party position and government policy on feminism might be easier to ascertain – in a coalition government, with diverse sets of views on gender and the state, the agenda of a particular ministry depends on the party affiliation of the executive head of that agency (Baldez, 2001, p. 23). Goetz adds that coalition politics in Chile resulted in the limited impact of the NGM on cross-ministerial decision-making, and its relegation to public awareness and pilot programmes funded by donors and executed mainly by NGOs (2003, p. 73).

Considering Chile, Baldez therefore suggests that an efficient definition of state feminism must account first for the gendered nature of institutions, particularly the persistent levels of machismo, because this is what justifies “why government ministries for women tend to be weak relative to other ministries, in terms of their budget and their

ability to implement policy” (2001, p. 5).

The focus on the gendered nature of institutions shows that granting women access to decision-making bodies, and feminist discourse in policy are not enough to transform women’s actual, everyday lived experiences within and around sexism. For this, what is required is a theory of power and legitimacy. A similar conclusion is reached by Goetz in her comparative study of Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Morocco and Vietnam demonstrates, which finds that the numeral increases in women’s representation do not necessarily translate to the representation of women’s interests in public policy platforms. The turn, again, to masculinist cultures, suggests that what is required is an account that distinguishes between participation, representation and influence, because opportunities for consultation alone do not mean actual influence and power to transform attitudes (Goetz, 2003, p. 92).

Hassim and Gouws emphasise this point by adding that the extent to which political access can be obtained by women “is largely influenced by a society’s political culture, cultural attitudes, identity politics as well as the economic barriers that accompany gender roles” (2011, p. 5).

In the section below I turn to the socio-political environmental contexts within which NGMs operate, but reviewing critiques of the manner through which the global political economy has enforces a professionalisation of women’s movement activism.

### *2.6.2. Professionalisation of Women’s Movement Activism*

There are many factors that have led to the professionalisation of women’s movement activism through NGMs. Chief amongst these are: the global political economy and its increased reliance of technocratic instruments in processes of democracy; the subsequent technocratisation of gender mainstreaming; and the depoliticisation of the feminist movement outside the state through co-option into the state – resulting in weakening of the mobilising power and claim-making agency of women’s movement actors.

At the level of the political economy, professionalisation occurs when states, as a result of global market reconfiguration, increasingly outsource and delegate government

functions to civil society actors and other women's movement actors (Kantola & Outshoorn, 2007, p. 8). A "weakening" occurs during this process, specifically as women's movement organizations are simultaneously "financially empowered" through consultancy contracts, and 'controlled' through service-level agreements (Kantola & Squires, 2012, p. 387) – and performance agreements for NGM bureaucrats.

Importantly, and because the research capacity required to produce "expert" policy proposals relies on funding and organisational stability, women's movements increasingly focus on marketing themselves as consultancy specialists, which can shift them towards a more professional, managerialist orientation (Kantola & Squires, 2012).

In national politics the professionalization of women's movement activism and the NGM in South Africa can be linked to the "juniorisation and weakening" of parliament between 1999 and 2009, because

*the 'second generation' of women who entered South Africa's parliament in 1999 were less likely to come from an activism background, more steeped in party ideology and less likely to be independent in their views... this 'professionalisation' of MPs would lead to party loyalty trumping women's coalitions, slowing down many of the early moves towards greater equality (Gouws & Hassim, 2011, p. 22).*

It is the consequential effect of the combination of professionalisation at global level, depoliticisation and juniorisation at national and local levels for the capacity of the NGM to be the conduit for gender transformation that must inform conceptual notions of state feminism in South Africa. In the next section I explore the implications of this dynamic for the positioning of the NGM in both global and local contexts.

### *2.6.3. Pressures or Opportunities? – International Feminist Networks*

The continuum of transnational interconnectedness developed between South African women's activists and the international development community, from the 1970s to present, and the subsequent channels of accountability currently in place between the South African NGM and the United Nations, would suggest that the NGM is, in fact, an (Inter)National Gender Machinery.

These relations have been perceived with ambiguity. While some scholars view NGMs as the result of “pressures” exerted either by foreign donors or the international feminist movement through the United Nations (UN) system (Goetz, 2003, p. 70; Mama, 1995; 2004), others see opportunities for new forms of feminist alliances (Kantola & Squires, 2012, Walby, 2004; 2005).

Mama, referencing the unequal relations of economic and political power and authority between Western nations and post-independence/colonial countries, concludes that the relations between international feminist institutions and local forms of feminisms have resulted in a “dynamic of appropriation and incorporation that constantly subverts and depletes transformative feminist agendas” (2004, p. 121).

Her main claim is that the inclination towards international marketization, in global policy processes, fails to account for local forms of feminism, and thus collapses “liberatory feminist agendas” in local contexts (Mama, 2004, p. 122). For example, the African continent’s histories of feminist practice predate the emergence of state feminist theory, yet such histories are gradually complicated by the domineering rise of the developmental agenda in feminist theory – characterised by the “liberal politics of entryism” of gender mainstreaming, i.e. representation of women in institutions previously reserved for men without the transformation of broader social structures (Mama, 2004, p. 123).

Amongst the more optimistic views, Walby suggests that concepts deriving from international feminist networks should be removed from the global and brought to the local historic and political contexts where they are practiced, so that they are not mere transfers of western policy norms from powerful countries to weaker ones, but rather horizontal processes that “hybridise” according to local conditions (2005, p. 339).

Transformative opportunities for transnational relations in state feminism are further presented by the periodic reports that signatory states are bound to submit on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to the CEDAW Committee every four years, or whenever requested by the CEDAW Committee. Importantly, the CEDAW Committee encourages civil society organisations to participate in the reporting process.

Participation can be as observers at CEDAW sessions, to present country-specific information through alternative or shadow reports, or to provide oral presentations during informal consultation meetings with the CEDAW Committee.

South Africa's first country report to the CEDAW Committee was in June 1998. Subsequently, in the same year, Masimanyane International Women's Rights Group submitted South Africa's first Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee.

The Second Country report was presented to the CEDAW Committee in 2011. Likewise, a network of civil society organisations – inclusive of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, People Opposing Women Abuse, and the Western Cape Network on Violence Against Women – submitted South Africa's shadow report to the CEDAW Committee in 2011 (South African Shadow Report, 2011).

In preparation for its fifth CEDAW Report for the period from 2009-2014, the NGM revised its strategy. The Minister of Women issued a gazette notice (Gazette 39131, Govt Notice 761), in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act (2 of 2000), calling for public engagements and comments on the draft Report before it would be submitted to the Committee.

The shadow reports, which offer critiques of government reports, present significant opportunities for women's movement actors outside the state to ensure NGM compliance with international and national instruments, and to ensure that NGM work leads to substantial changes in women's lives.

What complicates shadow reporting, however, is that inasmuch as many NGMs with limited access to the budgets are required to fulfil their functions often turn to the international community for funding, so do civil society organisations. South Africa's 2011 shadow report, for example, "would not have been possible without the generous sponsorship of Oxfam GB, UNIFEM and the Heinrich Boll Foundation who funded the development of the report" (South African Shadow Report, 2011, p. 2).

Rai warns that in such contexts, the international community can become either an important source of strength, or pose major difficulties (2003, p. 271). Related to this is the economic strength of the whole state. According to Rai (2003), where a state has



a strong economy, NGMs are likely to be well-resourced, and less inclined to depend on foreign donors for local social justice. In the next sections I probe the implications of the above critiques for the practice of NGM work.

## **2.7. Gender Mainstreaming**

According to the 1995 Beijing PfA, NGMs “are to function through an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, respectively” (UN Beijing PfA, 1995). Indeed, the South African Gender Policy Framework adopts a mainstreaming approach to state feminism, and translates this to mean “a process that ... recognises that most institutions consciously and unconsciously serve the interests of men and encourages institutions to adopt a gender perspective in transforming themselves” (Department of Women, Strategic Plan, p. xviii).

The focus on consciousness in understanding the gendered nature of institutions, and the commitment to “a gender perspective” implies a feminist orientation to the strategic approach of the NGM. But how this approach is interpreted and implemented by officials in NGM structures depends on the distinctions between the interests they prioritise, and the social, political and economic factors that might influence such decisions.

Conceptually, a “gender perspective” to mainstreaming, as adopted by the South African NGM, implies a strategic interests and agenda-setting approach, from whose view gender mainstreaming should not merely insert women’s issues into existing policy, but rather completely re-orientate policy towards gender equality principles and overhaul social practices and gendered hierarchies (Walby, 2004, p. 4; Walby, 2005, p. 325).

From this perspective, successful gender mainstreaming requires strategic relationships between women’s movement and national gender machineries, as well as strategic alliances between national and international policy actors (Beall, 1998; Rai, 2003; True, 2003; McBride & Mazur, 2006).

Furthermore, a gender perspective assumes that prioritising affirmative action policies for example, cannot be an alternative, singular vision, but rather a complementary model/strategy towards one vision of gender equality – because alone, increasing the presence of women in senior and executive positions cannot transform social practices and gendered hierarchies (Walby, 2004; 2005).

Towards this, the Gender Policy Framework affirms the approach to address practical women's interests "as a necessary precondition towards the identification and attainment of 'strategic needs" (2000, p. ii). This approach is confirmed by Gouws, who participated in the conceptual processes of the NGM. She writes that it was agreed that the NGM should distinguish between gender issues and women's issues:

*On the one hand, it was felt that gender needed to be mainstreamed and on the other, there was a need to establish separate structures and strategies to deal with women's issues. The need was expressed to develop both long-term strategies and short-term interventions (1996, p. 33-4).*

Notwithstanding this theoretical outlook of the South African NGM, scholars and practitioners the world over are conflicted about the extent to which gender mainstreaming can be relied upon to transform gender relations.

#### *2.7.1. Pessimism towards Gender Mainstreaming*

A large body of scholars are pessimistic about the ability of gender mainstreaming to effectively deliver gender transformation. Mary Daly, for example, conducted a cross-national study on the practice of gender mainstreaming, and found evidence that in seven out of the eight participating countries, gender mainstreaming was not practiced as an ethos towards the transformation of gender inequalities, but rather as a technical obligation to suit current neoliberalist international feminist directives (Daly, 2005, p. 440).

To Daly, this contradicts any theoretical claim that the goal of gender mainstreaming is/can be to transform structural inequalities, and any assumption that it incorporates a "gender" as opposed to a "women" perspective (2005, p. 442). Instead, for Daly, it has been highly integrationist, limited and uneven within and across contexts, and has

positioned policy experts as the main actors in the mainstreaming process, effectively excluding feminist organisations and women's movement actors who are situated outside policy-making structures (2005, p. 444).

Concurring with this observation, Kennet and Lendvai (2014) assert that gender mainstreaming as a policy instrument has contributed to the collapse of local social and political concerns, and rather adopted a technical and administrative posture that overlooks the complexities of subjectivities and identities.

In Ghana, and other developing countries, "the optimism surrounding the 1995 UN World Conference in Beijing seems to have been replaced by a widespread scepticism against gender mainstreaming and its abilities to bring about transformation" (Madsen, 2012, p. 583). South Africa practitioners too, as demonstrated in the first chapter, reported that the technical nature of the mainstreaming approach contributed significantly to the perpetuation of gender inequalities within organisations, as opposed to proposing solutions (Mannell, 2012; CGE, 2013).

Notwithstanding these pessimistic views, this study assumes some hope amongst the dissidence. In the following sub-section I explore what a transformative gender mainstreaming approach might look like.

### *2.7.2. The Gender Perspective: Hope for Mainstreaming*

For the South African context, and in light of the historical factors that inform women's various interests, how the gender perspective can be effectively translated in practice is explained by the "complexity approach". Sylvia Walby (2004; 2005), who leads this discussion, observes that in practice, and across different contexts, consensus on the definitions and process of gender mainstreaming has been achieved in periodic 'moments' that often result from negotiations. These moments are generally "fluid", and as a result, the nature of the goals, strategies and subsequent outcomes of NGM practice also continuously changes.

In relation to the historical continuum of women's activism in South Africa, the moments – including but not limited to the enfranchisement campaigns, early achievements against pass laws, the political power of the 1956 Women's March, the establishment

of the WNC, and the subsequent creation of the NGM – together represent the historical complexities of the process of mainstreaming gender. The aim of the complexity approach is to theorise fluidity by capturing the manner in which, during negotiations, ideas and approaches to gender equality and mainstreaming co-evolve across different contexts and landscapes (Walby, 2004; 2005).

This can be achieved by firstly differentiating between short-term goals and longer-term goals – where the latter is gender equality. Across different contexts, the achievement of short-term goals in institutional practices often alters the long-term goals (Walby, 2004, p. 2). For example, a short-term goal such as increasing women’s representation in decision-making structures (and other practical interests), over time alters gender hierarchies, attitudes and relations – thus affecting the longer-term strategic interests of gender transformation.

In relation to the South African constitutional framework in general, and this study in particular, a meaningful way to capture how short-term goals of the NGM relate to the longer-term goal of gender equality, is to identify the vision of the government of the day for addressing gender inequality during its five-year Presidential term, and to observe the co-evolution of short-term, annual targets towards this long-term goal. Therefore, whereas the strategic vision of the NGM for the term is “a society that realizes the socio-economic empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality” (Department of Women, Strategic Plan, 2015-2020), the complexity approach suggests referring to the Annual Performance Plans and Reports of the NGM to examine what interests and claims are prioritised on behalf of women annually.

## **2.8. Conclusion**

The case studies and conceptual frameworks reviewed in this chapter show that effective gender transformation requires more than strong democratic institutions, explicitly stated political will from governments, or women’s access to decision-making positions. Importantly, it is evident from both the national policy framework for gender equality and the cross-context findings that power and autonomy is critical for gender transformation. A feminist consciousness (considering definition of feminist movements and transformative state feminism) within and outside government is critical.

In attempting to position the South African NGM within scholarly debates on state feminism, this chapter argues for a complexity approach to gender transformation. This approach is useful for observing the co-evolution of conceptions and articulations of gender transformation. By focusing on processes of negotiations, the complexity approach to gender transformation lays a foundation from which to conduct a discourse analysis.

Interactions between the Department of Women (within government) and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Women (representing women citizens), present opportune settings for moving beyond theory, to observing how state feminism is practiced. In order to capture how the NGM conceives of its role/ how it articulates women's claims and interests, Bacchi and Eveline (2010) suggest asking the question: "What is the Problem Represented to Be?"

Asking what the problem is represented to be is a useful lens with which to explore what interests and claims does the NGM make and prioritise on behalf of women. In light of this, the primary strategic task for this project becomes to identify and capture what, during presentations of Annual Reports, the problem is represented to be, and to consider how this information can innovate the theory and practice of the NGM.

By adopting a complexity approach, this study maintains that useful knowledge might be gained by observing how parties engage amongst each other during deliberations on gender mainstreaming. The next chapter analytically explains the theoretical framework that justifies the shift from the macro-level of analysis (structural characteristics of the NGM), to the role of subjectivity, as is implied by the idea of negotiations.

## CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter theorises the notion of negotiations, by turning to a discussion of language, from a social constructionist perspective.

The key interests of this theoretical exercise are the micrological factors that either reinforce and reproduce, or challenge and transform systems of oppression. Following the objectives of this study, the main questions asked in this chapter are: can a study of communication and language offer information that can advance the institutional gains acquired through the establishment of the NGM? How can the role of language in promoting or disregarding women's interests be theoretically explained? And how, in that process, are certain ideologies and systems of power either re-inscribed or challenged?

### 3.2 Discourse in Action: Poststructuralism

The reference to negotiations made by the complexity approach lends to this study poststructuralist traditions, according to which language/discourse (with a small d) during communication, re/produces socially acceptable truths within cultural contexts. While theories within poststructuralist traditions vary in their conceptual claims and assumptions, a common claim is that language/discourse, through a range of economic, social and political discursive processes, constructs identities and forms of social organisation (Weedon, 1987, p. 21).

The language used during interactions involves historic conversations “between and amongst Discourse, not just among individual people” (Gee, 1999, p. 34). But importantly, and as argued by Burr (1995, p. 50),

*the things people say and write...these things are ...manifestations of discourses, outcrops of representations of events upon the terrain of social life. They have their origin not in the person's private experience, but in the discursive culture those people inhabit. The things that people say or write, then, can be thought of as instances of discourses, as occasions where*

*particular discourses are given the opportunity to construct an event in this way rather than that.*

The key term in Burr's statement is "opportunity to construct". This suggests that discourses have no power in and of themselves. Instead, they derive their power opportunistically from the meanings given to them by the subjects who act to either reproduce or transform them (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). The meanings, however, are never fixed, but vary according to discursive social and political contexts, and are thus continuously reinterpretable (Weedon, 1987, p. 25, Gee, 1999, p. 43).

This means that in each context that language operates in, it carries with it the potential meanings from the various other contexts upon which it may be applied (Gee, 1999, p. 55). In other words, "the present is, indeed, partly an artefact of a very specific past... [and/or] previous situated meanings and cultural models" (2001, p. 57).

What is perhaps most striking about language within this framework is that it has a dual purpose: it creates while it is being created. Gee calls this the "magical" property of language: that it both creates and reflects, or is created by the contexts in which it is used (2001, p. 11).

This means that in a Portfolio Committee meeting,

*we always actively use spoken and written language to create or build the world of activities (e.g. committee meetings) and institutions (committees) around us. However, thanks to the workings of history and culture, we often do this in more or less routine ways. These routines make activities and institutions, like committees and committee meetings, seem to (and, in that sense, actually) exist apart from language and action in the here and now. None the less, these activities and institutions have to be continuously and actively rebuilt in the here and now. This is what accounts for change, transformation, and the power of language-in-action in the world" (Gee, 1999, p. 11).*

In interactions between the Department of Women and the Portfolio Committee, therefore, how the short-term goals evolve, or what they evolve to, will alter and

determine the extent to which the longer-term goal of gender equality may be reached. What must therefore be asked, complementarily to Bacchi and Eveline's question, and in determining the interests and claims made and prioritised by the NGM on behalf of women, are the following: What is the long-term goal defined to be? What are the short-term goals defined to be? What is the correlation between short-term goals and long-term goal? How does the co-evolution of the short-term goals affect the long-term goal?

The first question leads to the Strategic Plan of the Department of Women for the current term (2015-2020), according to which the "Ultimate Outcome"/long-term goal is "socially and economically empowered women in a transformed society that is gender equal". A key task for this study, in turn, is to assess "what the problem is represented to be" by the short-term goals over the multiple annual reporting periods within the term, to observe how the "problem"/short-term goals evolve over time, and to make conclusions about what this could mean for the "ultimate outcome".

It is very helpful that for each year of the current term, there are audio recordings of the "negotiations"/meetings at which the Portfolio Committee engages the Department of Women on its annual performance. However, to observe how language is dispersed during these engagements, a social theory of language and communication is necessary.

### **3.3 Language as Ideology: Meanings and Cultural Models**

Poststructuralists agree that the meanings that govern individual consciousness are imparted, through language/discourse, by agents of socialisation like schools, the media, religious institutions and family structures (Weedon, 1987, p. 30). Through these agents, language and the narratives it forms, provides frameworks for meaning and identity-formation. Identities are defined by the meanings and expectations associated with the behavioural expectations within each context and across different structures (Callero, 2003, p. 125). This implies that Discourses are mediated by "cultural models", which ascribe identity, and in turn, reproduced as the "taken-for-granted" meanings for a "typical reality" – through discourse (Gee, 1999, p. 60).

Therefore, a key to understanding how we become the self of the stories we tell is to



observe the political nature of the production, distribution, consumption, and exchange of the meanings of stories and texts. Through this, it is clear to see how traditions, popular cultures and interpersonal relationships often mask the hegemonic interests of power structures (Callero, 2003, p. 125). This is the “magic property” of language: that it constructs subjects, who in turn use language to construct society (Gee, 1999).

During these processes, powerful institutions vie for hegemonic control of the systems of meaning in public discourse in order to control subject consciousness. This means that discourse is highly politically contested, where “the site of this battle for power is the subjectivity of the individual and it is a battle in which the individual is an active but not sovereign protagonist” (Weedon, 1987, p. 41). Jorgensen and Phillips (2011, p. 3) add that this battle happens as different discourses, which represent different meanings, struggle to construct social meaning.

Cultural sociologist Pierre Bourdieu argues that systems of domination are thus reinforced and reproduced as people take to structures of domination as normal features of the social world from childhood (Joas & Knobl, 2009). Domination in this regard, is enforced by constant practices of compliance with existing inequalities of power, which is how profoundly stable systems of domination are reproduced and maintained (Joas & Knobl, 2009).

This, however, is not to discount agency. Each individual, because of the multiplicity of other contexts from which they draw meaning from, can influence the power that words can enforce in a given context (Gee, 1999, p. 52). Gee argues that as meanings travel across contexts, “they are negotiated between people in and through communicative social interaction” (2001, p. 52). These traveling meanings can either help to influence meanings in different contexts, or keep the status quo.

### **3.4 Language and Gender: Poststructuralist Feminism**

Poststructuralist feminist theory suggests that society, through language, gives men dominance over women. This occurs as identities like gender are ascribed through language, and to borrow from Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, are continuously and repeatedly performed and through that performance reaffirmed into cultural norms

(Baxter, 2003, p. 31). Importantly, and following Burr's idea of "opportunity to construct", although gender performance is constructed by and through dominant discourse, the multiple subject positions that individuals occupy influence whether they adapt to, negotiate, or resist dominant subject positions; or whether they adopt subject positions within alternative resistant discourses.

Crucially, gender identity is but one of the multiple ways in which individuals form subjective consciousness through discourse. As such, individuals should be seen as positioned in a "nexus of subjectivities" that are constantly shifting in relations of power (Baxter, 2003, p. 28). The same individual, by shifting continuously within discursive contexts, may be powerful within one discursive context or powerless within another.

Moreover, individuals are not passive products of discourses. Instead, the constructing role of language is but a necessary starting point for understanding how gendered discourses may reproduce and structure social relations (Baxter, 2003, p. 30).

In poststructuralist feminist theory and practice, what is necessary is identifying the social and historical constitution of the multiple subject positions available to women, as well as the competing social and political interests that sustain these positions, in order to deconstructively explain where experiences come from, why these are often contradictory or inconsistent, and why and how these can be changed (Baxter, 2003, p. 31).

### **3.5 Language as Power: Meaning and Social Order**

Gee suggests that meaning in language is assembled/built in six sets of clues/cues that each guide the interpreter/receiver of the communication, and are "carried out all at once and all together (2001, p. 85). The six clues/cues include:

1. Semiotic Building: what communicative systems, systems of knowledge, and ways of knowing, are here and now relevant and activated;
2. World Building: what is taken as "reality," what is taken as present and absent, concrete and abstract, "real" and "unreal," probable, possible, and impossible;
3. Activity Building: what activity or activities are going on, composed of what specific actions;

4. Socioculturally-Situated Identity and Relationship Building: what identities and relationships are relevant to the interaction, with their concomitant attitudes, values, ways of feeling, ways of knowing and believing, as well as ways of acting and interacting;
5. Political Building: the nature and relevance of various “social goods” such as status and power, and anything else taken as a “social good”;
6. Connection Building: how the past and future of an interaction, verbally and non-verbally, are connected to the present moment and to each other – after all, interactions always have some degree of continuous coherence.

Importantly, the six clues/cues are carried out in negotiation and collaboration with others in interaction, with due regard for related historical oral and written texts and situations.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

Conceptually understanding the processes through which language and its meanings constructs identities and situations, while at the same time being constructed by subjects and contexts, provides a useful lens with which to understand the discursive factors operating in a room where the Department of Women accounts for its annual performance, and can help to assess how the NGM is discursively positioned in relations to contemporary gender politics.

By shifting the analytical gaze from group consciousness towards individual actors, the research study allows itself to not study the subject, but to learn from the subject how interests are articulated, and what meanings are ascribed to the amalgam of issues facing women. Importantly, the deconstructive process suggested by poststructuralist feminism and outlined by Gee’s six clues/cues present useful analytical tools to hybridise what is effectively a western concept into a local landscape, and thus allows the process of researching to contribute more organically to the study of state feminism.

## CHAPTER IV: METHODOLOGY

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### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I demonstrate the usefulness of the deconstructive processes – suggested by poststructuralist feminism, and outlined by Gee’s six clues/cues – as an analytical tool to assess what the problem is represented to be, and to explore how this information can assist in assessing how the NGM is discursively positioned in relations to contemporary gender politics.

In the same manner that I rely on Paul Gee’s theoretical framework for D/discourse in the previous chapter, I build upon a research method drawing on Gee’s guideline for discourse analysis. I also borrow from Baxter’s Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis (FPDA) framework, and the supplementary research methodologies of Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis.

### 4.2 Research Approach: Rationale for Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis, as both theory and method, offers the opportunity to showcase creative and innovative research methods that contribute to the development of new knowledge and expertise in state feminism. Often, in sociological studies of gender relations and politics, the common, primary research methods are social surveys and experiments, structured and unstructured interviews, ethnographic, and participant observations methods. These methods, while useful for tools for gaining knowledge of the social world, do not offer the researcher a context where they are physically removed from the data source. Being completely removed from the data source, yet able to observe multiple and competing voices and accounts is, according to Baxter, is a powerful form of data collection (2003, p. 67).

A discourse analysis, particularly within the FPDA framework, sets out to demonstrate the complexity of women’s multiple subject positions, and the co-evolutionary manner that competing discourses continuously shift speakers between positions of powerfulness and powerlessness. Importantly, “at this micro-level, FPDA can help analysts to pinpoint an exact moment in discourse when a speaker shifts between states of relative powerfulness and powerlessness. The approach also helps to explain

the complex pattern of discourse relations that produce such sudden and dramatic shifts of power” (Baxter, 2008, p. 247).

The main activity in a discourse analysis involves identifying details of the language that can be deemed as reasonably relevant by both the participants and the theory of the study, and thereafter asking, of each “detail”, questions following the six cues/clues which assemble to form meaning (Gee, 1999, p. 88). I have attached Gee’s full list of questions as Annexure A.

#### *4.2.1 Reflexivity in Discourse Analysis*

Research studies conducted within poststructuralist traditions rely highly on researcher self-reflexivity for reliability and validity. Similarly, the FPDA requires the researcher to acknowledge their own philosophical and ideological constitutions, and to open their analysis to alternative interpretations. Baxter suggests this can be achieved by the method of meta-analysing, which compels the analysis to “also draw attention to the constructedness of its own conceptual framework and foundational rhetoric in relation to the study” (Baxter, 2003, p. 50). This requires consciously avoiding authorial voices over alternative points and resisting, in the research analysis, narrative closure to the research context/field (Baxter, 2003, p. 68).

Meta-analysis is described elsewhere by Carol Bacchi (2005, p. 207) as “reflexive framing”, which requires the researcher to pay attention:

*both to the ways in which we are all in discourses, understood as institutionally supported and culturally influenced interpretive and conceptual schemas and signs, and to the active deployment of language, including concepts and categories, for political purposes.*

While Bacchi would define reflexive framing as being about both “what the subject is able to say”, “what the subject is permitted to say” and ultimately “what the researcher is able to hear” (Bacchi, 2005, p. 207) – Baxter adds that it can be used as a strategy to identify “how discourses compete to fix meaning permanently and irrevocably on behalf of hegemonic interests” (2003, p. 70). This requires that the researcher “exercise a considerable degree of scrutiny about what constitutes a silent or silenced research

subject within a particular location; who decides the identity of the silent or the silenced; and upon the basis of what evidence” (Baxter, 2003, 73). This draws attention to ways through which discourses constitute “institutional practices, power relations and social positions” (Baxter, 2003, 73) in both study subjects and researchers/authors.

Consistently, and throughout the transcript, I apply a “sensitive research methodology”, which according to Katherine Borland requires researcher self-reflexivity during the process of interpretation from the verbal to the textual (1991, p. 65). My role, from the process of transcription to the final analysis, is to recognise that the act of speaking is a fundamental means through which subjects comprehend their subjectivities (Borland, 1991, p. 71). Throughout the process, I am therefore listener and “representative in text” of these subjectivities. This entails being methodologically and analytically sensitive to the constructed senses of self that are embedded in each speaker, and that I “attend to the multiple and sometimes conflicting meanings generated” by the transcript (Borland, 1991, p. 73).

This is achieved through firstly scrutinizing the conceptual bases of the dominant and hegemonic discourses in the research setting, and following that, by addressing how concepts and categories are deliberately deployed “by those with greater and by those with lesser institutional power to advance specific political projects” (Bacchi, 2005, p. 207). This approach is particularly useful for the Portfolio Committee meeting because of the complex ways in which power is distributed between the Minister/Department and members of the Committee.

### **4.3 Rationale for Research Setting**

At the beginning of this study, it was clear that I wanted the NGM to “speak for itself” in justifying the incongruities between its well-established structural characteristic and the despairing subject formations of the majority of South African women. The main intention was to explore “challenges from the inside” and to assess the extent to which this information could inform innovations in the theory and practice of the NGM.

Interactions between the Department of Women and the Portfolio Committee on Women are unequivocally a suitable setting for a study of this nature. Theoretically,

meetings between the two groups provide an interactive context from which to identify a diverse range of competing discourses, and to capture the multiple ways “in which such discourses structure speakers’ experiences of power relations” (Baxter, 2003, p. 46).

Legislatively, the Minister of Women accounts to the Portfolio Committee for its performance. The Portfolio Committee also enjoys the power to draft legislation that informs policy. Yet the executive position occupied by the Ministry of Women within Cabinet apports considerable economic and political power in the Department’s executive.

#### *4.3.1 In the Presidency: The Department of Women*

The Department is currently the principal coordinating structure of the NGM within government, and is mandated by the President to “champion” the achievement of women’s socio-economic empowerment and women’s rights (GCIS Media Statement, 25 May 2014). The Department also provides an oversight and monitoring role to other institutions within the NGM on the achievement of women’s socio-economic empowerment and women’s rights.

Like all public service entities, the Executive Authority of the Department of Women is a Cabinet member, and is responsible for “the efficient management and administration of his or her department, including the effective utilisation and training of staff, the maintenance of discipline, the promotion of sound labour relations and the proper use and care of State property, and he or she shall perform the functions that may be prescribed” (Act 103, 1994, s.7.3.b).

The Head of Department must submit within five months of the end of a financial year to the treasury and the executive authority, an annual report on the activities of that department (Act 1, 1999, s. 40-1-d-i). Through annual reports, the department accounts for the exercise of its functions and budget in “bringing government closer to the people”. The executive authority, in turn, submits the report to parliament, through the Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency.

### *4.3.2 Accountability Mechanisms: The Portfolio Committee on Women*

Parliamentary Portfolio Committees are established in terms of Chapter 4 of the South African Constitution, which gives powers to the National Assembly to establish committees with assigned powers and functions. According to the National Assembly 'Guide to Procedure', Portfolio Committees are appointed to help Parliament perform its constitutional functions, and their composition reflects, "as far as is practicable", the numerical strengths of the parties represented in the Assembly (2004, p. 239).

The current Portfolio Committee on Women comprises of thirteen members. The African National Congress (ANC) is represented by the Chairperson of the portfolio Committee and six other members; the Democratic Alliance (DA) is represented by three members, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the IFP, and the Congress of the People (COPE) are each represented by one member.

The main functions of the Committees include the provision of an oversight of the Executive, including monitoring of government departments and statutory bodies, considering and drafting legislation, and considering international treaties and agreements, amongst others (2004, p. 249). Parliament views the Committees as one of the mechanisms required by the Constitution to ensure effect to the constitutional concept of participatory democracy by holding public hearings and affording the public the opportunity to contribute to their deliberations. The department reports to the Portfolio Committee on Women in the Presidency in line with Parliamentary regulations.

It is for their important position and role in the ongoing project to constitutionalise the South African democracy that the process of annual reporting by the Department of Women becomes key for a study of the NGM. The section below attempts to locate the South African NGM within global debates.

## **4.4 Data Source**

The primary source of data for observing interactions and negotiations are audio recordings of the presentations by the Minister of Women, of the Annual Reports of the Department for the periods 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017. Complementary sources are the Strategic Plan of the Department of Women: 2015-2020; the Annual



Performance Plans and Annual Reports for each year under review; and the complementary oversight documents, including Auditor-General and Parliamentary analysis reports.

I obtained audio recordings of the Portfolio Committee meetings from the website of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group, an independent NGO established to provide recordings and documents of Parliamentary committee proceedings. All audio recordings of meetings on the website are accompanied by all Annual Reports and some supplementary documents from the meeting, including reports of the Auditor-General, and the reports of the Parliamentary Researcher and Content Advisor. For the supplementary documents referred to in the audio recordings but unavailable on the website, I contacted, via email, the Parliamentary Researcher and Content Advisor, who willingly provided the missing documents.

Drawing on the results from the 2014/2015 annual report, I set out to listen to, and transcribe in full, the following audio recordings:

Audio 1: 11 October 2016: Presentation of Auditor-General Report on the annual audits of the Department of Women and the Commission for Gender Equality; and analyses from the Parliamentary Researcher and the Content Advisor on the Annual Report of the Department of Women for 2015/2016 – to the Portfolio Committee on Women, (03:11:20);

Audio 2: 11 October 2016: Minister of Women accompanied by the Department, presenting the 2015/2016 Annual Report to the Portfolio Committee on Women, (02:34:05);

Audio 3: 10 October 2017: Presentation of the Parliamentary Researcher and Content Advisor on the 2016/2017 Annual Report of the Department of Women – to the Portfolio Committee on Women, (01:05:38);

Audio 4: 14 November 2017: Presentation by the Minister of Women, accompanied by the Department, on progress following Audit Findings, and the Budget Review Recommendations Report, (03:07:02 and 00:25:30).

The separate audio clips for each year represent two separate meetings. The Minister is only present in the second of each set of annual meetings. At the first meeting, the Researcher and Content Advisor of parliament brief the Portfolio Committee on their analyses of the Annual Reports for Vote 13, which includes the Department of Women and the Commission for Gender Equality. At these meetings, a representative of the Office of the Auditor-General (AG) also presents the findings of the AG on the performance of the institutions for the respective years. This briefing session is a preparatory platform the Portfolio Committee engagements with the Minister in the latter meeting.

At the second meeting, the Minister, accompanied by the Department, and in line with the Public Finance Management Act (1 of 1999), presents the Annual Report of the Department of Women to the Portfolio Committee. This second meeting, in turn, provides the Portfolio Committee the opportunity to deliberate on the performance of the Department of Women, using the first meetings as a reference point for engagements.

Although the two meetings for each year often occur on the same day, during the 2016/2017 period, the second meeting of the reporting process, scheduled with the Minister, was cancelled due to the Minister's attendance of a Cabinet Committee meeting. By the time she arrived for the second meeting on 10 October 2017, the Portfolio Committee had adjourned and resolved to send their questions regarding the findings of the annual report to the Ministry in writing. In addition to the written responses, the meeting on 14 November 2017, scheduled for the presentation by the Minister of Women on progress following Audit Findings, and the Budget Review Recommendations Report, provided an opportunity for the Portfolio Committee to engage on outstanding matters and points of further clarity emerging from the annual reporting process for the year 2016/2017.

#### **4.5 Unveiling the Subjects: 'Research Participants'**

A primary assumption I carried into the audio recordings was an expectation for clear distinctions between the interests and priorities of members of the ANC and those of opposition parties. This bias was informed by the tone that defines party-political

deliberations at the National Assembly, and the general nature of inter-party social dynamics.

Directed by this bias, I had thus initially set out to identify, in the report, the political parties of each speaker. However, upon listening to the audio recordings, a clear sense of solidarity and common oversight responsibility is shared by all members of the Portfolio Committee towards the performance of the Department of Women.

Deducing from this revelation, I thus left out in the analysis the identities of the political parties of the members. Rather, group consciousness is used to identify members of the Portfolio Committee throughout the analysis. Likewise, the Parliamentary Researcher and Content Advisor are identified, because they are not members of the Portfolio Committee and thus do not participate in the deliberations between the Committee and the Minister. Nonetheless, and following the strategy used for the Portfolio Committee, I use group consciousness (Parliamentary Advisor) to identify their common voice, which is to advise the Committee on analytical issues that emerge from the reports of the Department. I also identify the Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee, who is a senior member of the ANC. The identity of the Chairperson serves to showcase the voice and authority of the Portfolio Committee as a collective.

Using group consciousness to identify Portfolio Committee members may also be highly helpful for the reader. Presenting the political subject as anonymous helps to protect the reader from any of their own potential biases and assumptions about possible underlying party-political intentions behind the interests and claims made by members of the Portfolio Committee.

Notwithstanding, it is important to identify and conceptualise the multiple subject positions occupied by the individual who is the Minister of Women and the Executive Authority of the Department during the period under review. Minister Susan Shabangu, who was the Minister of Women from 25 May 2014 to 26 February 2018 (the annual periods covered by this study), is currently the Minister of Social Development.

According to the website of the Department of Social Development, Minister Shabangu was born in 1956, and was previously the Minister of Mineral Resources from 11 May

2009.

Minister Shabangu (The Minister) has been a member of the African National Congress (ANC) National Working Committee since December 2007 and a member of the National Executive Committee of the ANC. Furthermore, she was reportedly one of the leaders of the revival of the Federation of South African (FEDSAW) during 1978. In 1981, she was an active member of the Anti-Republic Campaign Committee and was involved in the formation of the Release Mandela Campaign Committee (RMC) in 1982. She organised the Amalgamated Black Worker's Project in 1984, and also headed the women's desk of the Congress for South African Trade Unions (COSATU).

The People's Assembly website also states that in the mid 1990s she was assigned to assess the future of trade unions, and later became a Member of Parliament, starting with the Deputy Ministry of Minerals and Energy in 1996, and moving on to the Deputy Ministry of Safety and Security in 2004, before her promotion to the Mining Ministry in 2009.

#### **4.6 Research Method: Document Analysis**

To structure the analysis, I commenced with a reading of the Annual Reports and supplementary documents for the years 2014/2015, 2015/2016, and 2016/2017. The 2014/2015 report demonstrated a dismal performance in the core programmes. Out of 11 short-term goals/targets, only one was achieved, which required the Department to conduct two outreach programmes. At the same time, there was a disproportionate allocation of funds between the administrative function of the Department, and its performance function. The majority of the Department's budget was spent on salaries and the procurement of "goods and services".

Upon listening to the audio to assess how the Department accounts for this anomaly, it became clear that much of its poor performance was attributed to the structural changes resulting from the reconfiguration of the state through the establishment of the Department, and the subsequent transfer of the Department's programmes on children and people with disabilities to the Department of Social Development in May 2014. I decided to not include this transcript in the analysis, as it did not provide sufficient data

to observe the contestation of ideas during negotiation. Nonetheless, it was important to note the unachieved short/term goals, and the commitments made to achieve them in the next reporting period. With this background as the primary setting for the following reporting period, I then undertook the research analysis.

The tables below demonstrate the performance of the Department against its set targets for its core programmes in the 2014/2015 cycle:

<b>Programme 2: Social, Political and Economic Participation and Empowerment (SPEPE)</b>			
TARGET	OUTCOME	STATUS	COMMENT
Consultation on GRB Integration Plan	Not Achieved	Draft report	To be finalised 1st Quarter 2015/2016
2 Reports on recruitment and placement of young women in the STEM	Not Achieved	Draft Report	To be finalised 1st Quarter 2015/2016
Report on GFPs	Not Achieved	Draft Report	To be finalised 1st Quarter 2015/2016

<b>Programme 3: Research, Policy Coordination and Knowledge Management (RPC&amp;KM)</b>			
TARGET	OUTCOME	STATUS	COMMENT
Phase I Report on the Status of Women's Socio-Economic Empowerment	Not Achieved	Preliminary Concept document prepared	Insufficient internal capacity. Dept. hired consultant

<b>Programme 4: Monitoring, Evaluation and Outreach (ME&amp;O)</b>			
TARGET	OUTCOME	STATUS	COMMENT
1 set of monitoring and evaluation norms and standards for women's socio-economic empowerment	Not Achieved	Draft norms and standards developed	Indicators and targets to be jointly determined with another Department by first quarter 2015/2016
4 reports on compliance to regional, continental and international commitments	Not Achieved	Draft Report	All reports to be completed 1st Quarter 2015/2016
2 reports on the country's participation in multilateral engagements	Not Achieved	Draft Report	Reports to be considered in 1st Quarter 2015/2016
Consultation on thematic areas for UN-CSW	Not Achieved		Reports to be considered in 1st Quarter 2015/2016
Communication Strategy on GBV	Not Achieved	Draft Communication Plan, not Strategy	Strategy to be considered in 1st quarter 2015/2016
2 Outreach Programmes	Achieved		
2 Corporate Documents finalised and submitted	Not Achieved	Draft Manual developed	Draft manual to be considered in 1st quarter of 2015/2016

#### **4.7 Research Method: Transcription**

The choice to use transcription as the primary research method was inspired by a variety of scholars who support transcription as a form of data presentation, and who argue that transcription should be seen as a theoretic and selective process, because it is both interpretive and representational (Gee, 1999; Baxter, 2003; Davidson, 2009).

Baxter further suggests that transcribing should be viewed as a denotative form of analysis, because it offers “a preliminary order of quiet concrete interpretation which can be readily shared with research participants and theorists alike, but which provides a springboard for more searching” (Baxter, 2003, p. 76).

Throughout the listening process of all audio recordings, I maintained the question “what is the problem represented to be?” by asking the supplementary questions: what is the long-term goal defined to be? What are the short-term goals defined to be? What is the correlation between short-term goals and long-term goal? How does the co-evolution of the short-term goals affect the long-term goal?

Furthermore, the listening process was informed by the sub-questions leading this study, namely:

- What Interests and claims does the NGM make on behalf of women?
- Which/Whose interests are prioritised, and which/whose are ignored?
- What power systems and ideologies are subsequently reinforced through prioritised and ignored interests? and;
- What information can be extrapolated from the micro-analysis of discursivity that can innovate the theory and practice of the NGM?

Equipped with these questions, I then set out to theme the four transcripts according to the issues raised by speakers.

#### **4.8 Research Design and Analysis**

The design of the research analysis employs and adapts Gee’s guideline for “an ideal discourse analysis” (2001) to the themes emerging from the four transcripts. The guideline suggests that for each identified theme, it is necessary to examine how the

six sets of clues/cues are assembled to give meaning to the 'problem'. To recap, the six clues/cues include semiotic building, world building, activity building, socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building, political building and connection building (Gee, 1999, p. 85).

Employing Gee's guideline to the themes emerging from the meetings, the aim of the analysis is to provide an interpretative sociological commentary of extracts of the transcript. Throughout the analysis, I apply two approaches to the sociological commentary: a synchronic, and a diachronic approach. The synchronic approach is a detailed, micro-analysis that is designed to capture, in a single context, short stretches of spoken discourse and the moments at which the subject power of the speaker/s shifts between powerfulness and powerlessness (2003, p. 73). Importantly,

*it can show from the analysis of a series of moments that speakers are constantly negotiating for positions of power according to their shifting subject positions within different discourses. It can potentially show why one speaker is likely to be constructed more routinely as powerful and another more consistently as powerless by their responses within a given moment (Baxter, 2003, p. 74).*

The diachronic approach complements the synchronic. It entails a macro-analytical observation of the longer, historical range of the context in an ethnographic way that records the discursive relationships and moments of shifting subject positions over a historical period (2003, p.74).

When applied in this study, I observe how speakers use language to articulate their interests across the reporting periods. Baxter suggests that this can be achieved by identifying, in discourse, historical moments or interactions, and analysing "moments where change occurs in the form of challenges, contestations, power reversals, perhaps subtle or more direct revisions of the status quo" (Baxter, 2003, p. 74).

#### **4.9 Researcher Subjectivity**

Throughout the process of the finalization of this research project, I was aware of and guarded against my own theoretic and selective biases by avoiding "interpretative

closure” (Lapadat & Lindsay, 1998, p. 12; Baxter, 2003, p. 76; Davidson, 2009). This is described elsewhere through the notion “interpretative repertoires”. Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter suggest, in *Discourse Analysis and the Identification of Interpretative Repertoires*, that one must also acknowledge the variable possible readings of the function, whilst also identifying and analytically comparing the varieties of possible interpretations (Wetherell & Potter, 1988, p. 171).

By adopting this approach, I acknowledge that a transcript of the same audio recording w/could look and read differently depending the subjective formation of the researcher, the study goals, and the research intentions. By presenting this study, therefore, I also open the transcript itself, in addition to the analysis, for critical examination.

Furthermore, throughout this research study, I have been conscious of my own cultural, historical, and political biases, and was careful not to influence the research process with subjective notions of truth and reality. The ongoing process of meta-analysis throughout the process is key. Using this method, I was aware of possible contradictions, as well as both explicit and implicit meanings in discourse – while at the same time reflecting on the moral and political implications of my own choice of words in describing and interpreting observed discourse. As a result, an attitude of openness to different interpretations was maintained throughout the process. Finally, all thoughts and words that are not mine in this report are accordingly attributed.



## CHAPTER V: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

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### 5.1 Introduction

The chapter examines the annual reports of the Department of Women over a three-year period. The programmes the Department prioritises, and the discourse employed in accounting for its targets provide useful data for a micro-analysis of its discursive positioning. Towards this chapter, I undertook three main exercises, namely: locating South African state feminism within global debates on NGMs in general and the notion of transformative state feminism in particular; justifying the relevance and importance of a discourse analysis in studies of state feminism - drawing on the complexity approach and poststructuralist theories; as well as finding the tools for analytical exploration in discourse analysis methods.

The primary strategic task of the discourse analysis to follow is to assess what interests and claims does the NGM make and prioritise on behalf of women, and to explore what information can be extrapolated from the micro-analysis of discursivity to innovate the theory and practice of the NGM.

Towards this, I firstly explore how/whether the achievement of short-term goals alters the long-term goal of “a society that realises the socio-economic empowerment of women and the advancement of gender equality” between 2015-2020. Following that, I assess the human and financial resources of the Department. This is complemented by an analysis of the internal and external accountability mechanisms; the Department’s relations with other structures of the NGM; the Department’s approach to Gender Mainstreaming; and finally, how it constitutes and articulates its women’s interests.

### 5.2 Constitution of the Department: A Synopsis of Critical Challenges

The deliberations between the Portfolio Committee and the Department of Women ‘represent the problem’ facing the Department to be centred on two separate, yet intersecting functional issues, namely (1) administrative challenges that relate to the Department’s legislatively determined, technical institutional functions and responsibilities; as well as (2) performance constraints, in terms of the relationship

between the Department's core programmes and its strategic vision for 2015-2020.

The critical role of political in/stability that Valiente (2007, p. 536) argues accounts for both the capacity of states to develop and implement public policy, and in the policy influence of NGMs, is explicit in these engagements. However, contrary to Valiente's suggestion, that it is frequent changes in government that result in unstable leadership structures of NGM institutions, and the destabilization of long-term policy goals and legacies, the South African experience demonstrates that these dynamics can occur even where the political environment is fairly stable, and where no significant changes occur in government. Over the periods 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, the political climate in South Africa was reasonably stable, with the African National Congress enjoying a ruling majority in national government, and the Department of Women sustaining one Executive Authority over this term, Minister Susan Shabangu.

However, despite a politically stable environment, and whereas at the end of the 2014/2015 financial year, the Department had transferred the deadlines for its unachieved annual targets to the first quarter of 2015/2016, by the end of that year, those initial targets had been changed, and new ones initiated into the Annual Performance Plan (APP) for 2015/2016. Furthermore, in similar fashion to the 2014/2015 year, in 2015/2016 the Department performs well in terms of budgetary spending, but fails to meet its new core performance targets for the year. Programme 2, for example, which is a core performance programme, achieved one out of its 17 core performance programme targets for the year, yet it spent 99.68% of its budget. The complications and implications of the constantly changing targets for oversight functions are expressed by the Parliamentary Advisor during her presentation in 2016/2017:

*... there are a lot of targets that are just discontinued without any real reason ... you have all these targets and you've abandoned most of them which means they are not achieved. And then you introduce new targets which hasn't built on some work that you may have done ... But you didn't achieve those so you're still catching up. Now your targets from last year are coming into 2016/2017... but you already have new targets, now you're not going to achieve those either...is this committee going to be able to track 2015/2016 targets in a 2016/2017 report*

*period? ... So, it does feel a bit like they are making it deliberately confusing for you to be able to see what to ask.*

The Chairperson of the Committee, too, at the same meeting, asserts that “they do not even have the decency to report to this Committee that they’ve changed the APP. So, you can’t follow anything. How do you follow anything that is continuously changing?” Indeed, in relation to both the long-term vision, as well as the oversight functions of the Portfolio Committee and the Auditor-General, the changing targets complicate the extent to which the NGM can lead the journey towards “a society that realises the socio-economic empowerment of women”, which it defines as the long-term goal.

The destabilisation of the long-term goal by the constantly changing short-term goals confirm Valiente’s (2007) assertion that these dynamics affect the human and material resources available to engage with both transnational structures and with constituents at national and local levels of society. In the following section I explore how the department is constituted in order to make sense of its performance.

### **5.3 Human and Financial Resources**

In light of the challenges posed by the constantly changing targets, a productive question to ask becomes the role of the bureaucrats working in the Department. As far as the conceptual assumptions of transformative state feminism defines the femocrat phenomenon, it is not possible, from the audio recordings, to ascertain whether NGM bureaucrats view themselves self-consciously as feminists or “whether they prioritise the state structures they work for or the agenda of the women’s movement” (Gouws, 1996, p. 33). Notwithstanding, instances of discourse during engagements provide useful data for making conceptual conclusions of the notion of the femocrat phenomenon as it pertains to the Department.

For example, in 2014/2015, the Department spent R40 969 000.00 out of a total budget of R77 580 000.00 on the compensation of employees. Likewise, in 2015/2016, the Department spent R48 504 000.00 out of a total budget of R84 902 000.00 on salaries. In 2016/2017, the Department spend R49 028 000.00 of R88 459 000.00 on salaries. These figures amount to 52,8%, 57,1%, and 55,4% respectively. This suggests that

despite achieving none or a few of its annual targets, the Department spends more than half of its annual budget on the compensation of employees. A good place to look for answers to this anomaly is engagements about the skills audit.

Concerns raised by the Portfolio Committee, or the identified problem (Bacchi & Eveline), in relation to the staff of the Department, relate mainly to the notion of the professionalization of state feminism (Hassim & Gouws, 2011; Kantola and Squires, 2012). For example, in explaining the connection between the high salaries of officials, the unachieved targets, and the use of consultants, the Minister in 2016/2017 says that

*...last year we were trying to come up with...financial inclusion. It was tough. Just to develop a draft. Because you must also know it's not all of us who are capable of developing... those concept documents...including the gender responsive budgeting...*

In this instance, again, there is an irreconcilable incongruity between the theory and practice of state feminism. If it was tough just to develop a draft of a policy framework, then the question is what role *do* the staff members play? or rather, what work *is* being done in the practice of state feminism in South Africa? To explore these questions I turn to internal and external accountability mechanisms.

#### **5.4 Accountability: Internal and External Controls**

At the 2016/2017 reporting process, the Chairperson of the Audit Committee is invited to make a presentation at the Minister's meeting with the Portfolio Committee. In summary, the Chairperson of the Audit Committee raises the following critical issues:

- a) **Internal Controls:** *The internal control environment has not changed substantially...particularly the areas of finance and supply chain.*
- b) **Non- Compliance with Legislation:** *We are experiencing non-compliance with legislation as a result of transgressions of the supply chain management policy framework.*
- c) **Turn-Around Times:** *Resolutions are being implemented at a very slow pace. And when implemented they are implemented very late to have the desired impact. And therefore, it creates a situation where the implementation process*

*becomes irrelevant... If a recommendation is made and is implemented 9 months thereafter, it will not have the desired results.*

- d) **2017/2018 AG Audit Report:** *Let me remind the committee that for the first time the Auditor-General will be auditing performance information and they will express an opinion on the performance information, now the challenge that we have is that if we are financially unqualified, and we are qualified in terms of performance information and the aggregate materiality of the qualification is calculated on both, there's a possibility that we might be qualified.*
- e) **Consequence Management:** *One of the last issues that bothers me is acting with impunity within the Department. People are disregarding policies because there are no consequences. ... in many of the instances we have seen, it is repeat transgressions of the policy by more or less the same people. When you see that happening, it simply means those people do not care.*

Embedded within these identified challenges are interconnected consequences of the “unchanged” internal control environment. Without the right people for the job, transgressions of policies continue, and in turn, the recommendations of the Audit Committee are not implemented effectively. The audit of performance information indicated by the Chairperson refers to amendments that were then proposed, and recently passed in parliament in May 2018 on the Public Audit Amendment Bill. The amendment rose from challenges identified by the Office of the Auditor-General, referring to the lack of clarity on the AG’s mandate to conduct performance audits. The Amendment Bill provides for a clearer provision that mandates the AG to both conduct performance audits, as well as to report on them. I discuss the implications of the Amendment Bill further on below. Prior to that, I examine the responses of the Auditor-General to the performance of the Department.

## **5.5 The Auditor-General: ‘We Share the Same Frustrations, But’**

The importance of moving beyond formal accountability through performance agreements between chief executive officers and ministers, to involving civil society (Sawer, 2003, p. 250) in the oversight of the work of the NGM is made explicit in engagements between the Office of the Auditor-General, and the Portfolio Committee. During their engagements, and together with their inquiries about the Audit Committee,

the Portfolio Committee also raises concerns about the role of the Auditor-General. The key interest remains the persistent challenges, particularly the unchanged internal control unit, and the repeated transgressions and non-compliance with legislation. In light of this, the main problem centres on punitive action measures against the Department. This problem becomes apparent during the Committee's 2015/2016 meeting, where the critical lens is turned to the role of the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG). The numbers next to the Portfolio Committee (PC) represent different members, from different political parties.

OAG: ...the problem from where we sit is that we can't dictate how they spend their money or what consequence management to implement. We can only advise ...We identify that an unauthorised expenditure is there, and if the Department then goes and accurately records it and reports on it, then that's where our work ends. We must make sure that what the Department reports is accurate...then that's where our mandate stops.

PC 1: ...I'm just wondering, your role in here, who can take it further? Is that the role of our Committee? Because we have raised these points time and time again. And yet nothing happens. So, what next?

PC 2: ...it seems as if the Department is clever ...us as the Portfolio Committee ...we have done our work... but it seems as if they are clever enough to submit ...those financial statements ...that do not have enough information. Are you doing what you supposed to be doing as the AG to make sure that this Department and the Minister are doing what they are supposed to do? Because to us as the Portfolio Committee ...it seems as if this is not enough.

PC 3: ...Your disclaimer depends if this person doesn't give you the necessary documents that you need. Not that they are doing their job ...so why do we have an AG? ...It seems that we have created structures that are not going to perform. That is why we were saying that everything that the AG says is financially related not performance driven. So, we have created structures that are not able to deliver on the ground.

OAG: ...Too much focus is on the fact that it is a clean audit, but you are disregarding the other factors we are highlighting with regards to non-compliance. And those are the areas where attention is needed ...we are saying that you now have credible information that you can now go and make decisions about. If the entity is saying that it has only achieved 40% of their targets. That is not for the AG to continue, that's for the Minister or the Portfolio Committee who has now reliable information to take forward and make the necessary corrective action, or remedial action or budgetary recommendations.

PC 4: ...We find it very difficult just to tell them what to do because they are able to, by the end of the year, to correct what they are doing.

OAG: ...We share the same frustrations, but we are guided by audit standards, which tells us exactly what we need to do. There is nothing within our work that we can do differently to what we are currently doing ...but we do highlight all the areas that management needs to concentrate on, and that is brought to this portfolio committee.

PC 1: ...If the AG can't take action, and we as the watchdogs are supposed to take action, but we have been asking and asking. And pointing out weaknesses and errors, and yet there is no change...they are monitoring themselves unsuccessfully and probably just covering up inadequately. So, what is the next step?

PC 5: I'm sorry to say this, but in actual fact it is as though we are playing. It is as though we are ploughing a field without progressing. In my opinion, we are wasting time while we are claiming to be working for women ... The Minister does not come to our meetings. ... How do we expect the officials to be competent when the Minister shows no enthusiasm? ... people are reporting that they worked, but we don't know what they were doing, and some of the work was unauthorised. I am pleading for us to write her a letter so that she can see that we did not come here to play. If the job is too difficult for her she must step aside so that others can come in and continue. Or the money must be given to the committee so that the committee goes to the people.

I have included this long extract of conversation to demonstrate the level of responsibility, and position of the oversight institutions regarding the question that prevails throughout the analysis, which is what is to be done about the persistent challenges faced by the Department. Nonetheless, the frustrations and despondency of both the Portfolio Committee and the Auditor-General may potentially be assuaged by the Public Audit Amendment Bill passed in Parliament in May 2018. In addition to auditing performance, the new Bill will give powers to the Auditor-General to refer adverse findings to investigative bodies, as well as to recover funds from accounting officers that were lost due to non-compliance with legislation.

The Public Audit Amendment Bill ushers in new hope for the NGM. The Bill offers the possibility for the issuance of stronger consequences for non-performance by the Department, including referrals to investigative bodies. A discussion on how the Bill may contribute to the innovation of South African State Feminism follows in the next chapter. This is foregrounded by analytical attention to the targets that *were* achieved for each year, and an examination of how these achievements are perceived in relations to gender transformation.

## **5.6 Relations with the Commission for Gender Equality**

The Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) is established by Chapter 9 of the Constitution to strengthen constitutional democracy. The CGE is independent and subject only to the Constitution and the law, and established to “promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality” (Act 108, 1996, s. 187). Furthermore, the CGE is accountable to the National Assembly through the Portfolio Committee.

The legislative relationship between the Department of Women and the CGE is determined by the Commission on Gender Equality Amendment Act (17 of 2013), which substitutes the responsibilities previously allocated to the Minister of Justice to the Minister Responsible for Women, Children and People with Disabilities. The Ministerial Portfolio for Women, Children and people with Disabilities was reconfigured to the Ministry for Women in 2014. The CGE Act instructs the Minister of Women, in recruiting potential members of the Commission, to issue a public notice through the media,



inviting interested parties to propose candidates for membership. The candidates are subsequently nominated by the Portfolio Committee, approved by the National Assembly, and appointed by the President (Act 39, 1996, s.2-3).

In 2015/2016, both the Department and the CGE held outreach programmes in the form of National Dialogues on Violence Against Women and Legal Clinics, respectively. During the 2015/2016 reporting meeting, the chairperson of the Committee asks the Minister whether the National Dialogues would not be a duplication of functions, as the CGE is embarking on a similar process with legal clinics in all provinces, and would be inviting all other Chapter 9 institutions. The Minister responds that:

*There is no duplication...the issue of violence against women, it will never be dealt with by one person, or one Department...It needs all of us that's what we are doing. Our dialogues include Social Development, the Police, Justice, Chapter 9 institutions, which we are going ... to invite. But also, civil society.*

However, and again during the 2016/2017 reporting period, the Parliamentary Advisor raises concern over the National Dialogues, and advises the Committee to engage the Department further. Importantly, the Parliamentary Advisor is concerned about what is being *done* at the National Dialogues of the Department, and the outcomes of the events. This problem is posed to the Minister at the later meeting by a Committee member as such:

*The Commission for Gender Equality is saying that ... your National Dialogues and the legal clinics that they've got, is a duplication of work ... it brings us back to the issue of resources...is it not something we must consider to let them run? I know you said that it's approved at Cabinet level. But in a time when there are no resources for this Department, should we not be more strategic in saying if they are running these legal clinics then we piggy-back on that and we focus on two main areas like the sanitary dignity programme?*

The Minister's interpretation and response, in turn, is as follows:

*You know the CGE, and I want to put it on record, at some point they came to the Portfolio Committee, and they said in Mpumalanga there was female genital*

*mutilation. We made a follow-up, they could not give us evidence. So, I want to put it on record that we hear about them and the clinics, but I've never come across them. We go to provinces, we've told them that we are going...the last time I asked them: 'I didn't see your people'... and she said: 'maybe they were there, they did come'. But I mean, we are reaching out, we don't want to do these things alone. And the sad part is when I go out to various constituencies, which they don't, I get confronted by these issues, by women, because I'm elected by the people, not through a process. It's me talking to the people. The clinics, if they have them, they have never shared the information, and I must also put it on record, the previous chair, he was a gentleman. And he was a real gender activist. I don't want us to go and debate that, or to do a show-off in parliament. We've told them now that we're going to Eastern Cape, they say they will send people...we don't even have their reports...*

This extract reveals multiple areas of tension between the Minister and the CGE. In addition to the doubts cast about the Legal Clinics, the Minister positions herself in a more powerful position than the CGE, by stating that “I'm elected by the people, not through a process”. The hierarchy established by the Minister in relation to the CGE is of the same brand as that which is inhibited also by Portfolio Committee members. At the 2016/2017 meeting, a member of the Portfolio Committee tells the Department:

*We want to know, as the people who are in touch with the people on the ground, we are unlike you, who operate from offices of the Minister. Your report is beautiful, it reads well, and must be commended. But when you go to the grassroots, nothing is happening. I am saying this because it is easy to talk here in the Committee. It's also nice, you would be convinced that the people in the office of the minister are working. But in truth, there is not a single thing that is commendable on the ground. We are happy that you can pay your suppliers on time, that's great. But nothing is changing on the ground.*

What is most important about the juxtaposition of the references to a/the hierarchy is that they portray different forms of power, and different interests. While the Committee members uses the “us-and-them” distinction to *raise* the voices of the plight of women “on the ground”, the Minister uses the distinction to *discredit* the Legal Clinics of the

CGE. These distinctions, in turn, have two significant theoretical implications.

Firstly, they demonstrate *how*, because of the gendered nature of the bureaucracy faced by femocrats in mainstreaming gendered ideologies, aspirations for gender equality are often professionalised. This can be understood in relation to the antagonism in discourse such as “we are unlike you”, which has the consequential effect of further alienating NGM bureaucrats from women politicians in Parliament.

Secondly, the distinctions add to understandings of how in a single context, and through one utterance, a speaker can alleviate or discredit using, and/or compelled by power. The word “compelled” is herein used in relation to the “magic property” of language, which is that it constructs subjects, who in turn use language to construct society.

The third significant meaning concerns a “gentleman” who was the previous Chairperson of the CGE, and who was a “real gender activist”. The introduction of the word “real”, in juxtaposition to the preceding two meanings on the current women leaders sets to further emphasise the aspersions cast on the current leadership. The Minister further evidences that women even in the most executive positions of the state feminist project may repeatedly perform and continuously reproduce cultural norms.

## **5.7 Gender Mainstreaming**

Although it is the responsibility of the Department of Women to develop a mainstreaming policy, from the 2014/2015 to the 2016/2017 periods, a gender mainstreaming policy framework had not been developed. This further complicates the extent to which the NGM can conceptually define its mandate.

It is the Minister’s response to questions regarding the unachieved target of the mainstreaming framework that begins to address this question. The Minister’s response is that the Portfolio Committee should not be doing oversight on the Department of Women alone, but all the different Cabinet departments, to ensure that they mainstream gender in their programmes:

*...The first thing that I want us to understand is that when you do oversight, as the Portfolio Committee, we are not there. But also, you’re not doing oversight on us,*

*you're doing oversight on Agriculture. Not on us. I think these questions should have been asked... or the Minister, or Department of Agriculture should have been called and you ask them "what are you doing for women?" because the money that you are talking about is with them. Their job is that when they give people land, or fences, that's their responsibility ... therefore the issue of women and the money that should be allocated to them for agriculture is not with us...I'm raising that because it's crucial. the committee has to be consistent. We are a department of 200 million [Rands], with a capacity of 103 staff members...and...as we deal with that, you have to look at the capacity. Of what is it that we are capable of doing ...I would also advise the Committee ... to not only expect us, ...because your oversight is also about oversight on all other departments. So, you have the right to summon a department...because that's the role of oversight...*

Multiple issues, with varying assemblies of meanings, are raised by the Minister. In her tone, as shown in discourses such as: "the first thing that I want us to understand", "I would also advise the Committee", and "that's the role of oversight", the Minister is located in a more powerful position to the Committee. She is assuming a teacher-like tone: "guiding", and working *with* the Committee, to solve the problem.

Another situated meaning in this response is the Minister's perception of her department's role in relation to other departments. The Minister's view, that the questions posed to her department should, instead, be posed to the implementing departments, confirms the consequences of, and misdirection caused by the lack of a gender mainstreaming framework. It is, in effect, the framework that would determine how the Department should monitor and evaluate progress on gender politics in the country.

What this instance of discourse shows is the development of a pattern, whereby the Minister relates the Department's challenges to structural impediments, such as the restructuring process, staff capacity, and budget. While these may be accurate analyses of contributing factors to the challenges, they do not paint the full picture. The Portfolio Committee too, is not convinced, and a member of the Committee responds to the Minister by bringing the discussion back to the importance of a gender

mainstreaming framework. Another Portfolio Committee member is less diplomatic, and more explicitly informs the Minister that:

*Minister I don't want to lie to you, your response does not satisfy me. You know why, because this Department should be making sure that all other departments address women's issues. because the reason we are sitting here is for women. If not that then we are just visiting here.*

The shift in powers between the Minister and the Portfolio Committee in this engagement is apparent. It shows that even when the political superiority of the Minister threatens the oversight power of the Committee, the united voice of members from across political parties in turn strengthen their claims against such power.

The significance of this moment for state feminist theory and practice is that whether or not the speakers are aware, in the moment that the Committee member asserted that “your response does not satisfy me”, she subverts the dominatory power of the Minister’s discourses, by not complying with the Department’s continued under-performance. Silence, in this instance, could have made the difference between whether profoundly stable systems of domination are reproduced or transformed (Joas & Knobl, 2009). Moreover, this instance of discourse confirms that individuals are not passive products of discourses, but rather as positioned in a ‘nexus of subjectivities’ that are constantly shifting in relations of power (Gee, 1999; Baxter, 2003).

In the quest to explore how the Department articulates its role, and how it conceives of women’s interests, the next section makes sense of its key achievements.

## **5.8 Articulation of Role: Making Sense of the Key Achievements**

In 2014/2015, the only target achieved in the core performance programmes, in the Department, were two outreach programmes. In 2015/2016, out of twenty-eight targets in the two core performance programmes, only three were achieved. Again, in 2016/2017, out of the twenty-four core performance programmes, only two were achieved, which included “four outreach initiatives on women (including young women) for the empowerment of women and the promotion of human rights conducted per annum”, such as annual women’s Day events, and 16 Days of Activism Campaigns.

Similarly, the second target achieved was community mobilization initiatives including Take a Girl Child to Work, and Nelson Mandela Day initiatives.

This implies that together, the achievements of the Department of Women in the three years of the current term thus far are three reports and outreach programmes, at a total, combined cost of R138 501 000.00. In the sub-sections below I explore how the impact of the achievements is accounted for.

#### *5.8.1 Unveiling Tombstones and Protecting Communities*

In 2015/2016, the Department reports, as a ‘significant achievement’, the unveiling of the “tombstone of a 13-year old girl who was raped and brutally murdered as a result of gang violence” in Virginia, in the Free State (Annual Report, 2015/2016, p. 27). When the Minister is asked to relate the implications of this event for the Department’s strategic direction, she explains that:

*...I must say there are results. There are results because when we went and unveiled a tombstone, cleaned the area, created a park together with the community. When we pulled out, people were saying ‘hey, it’s much better. But part of that, one of the things which we achieved in that area it’s to get ex-offenders who were gangsters, by putting them with the churches, they changed, and they started getting jobs, and being trained and skilled. So, I’m just saying we may not be able to come back to the committee and report, but there is work, there is change. If you go to Virginia today, those gangsters today are the ones who are protecting the communities because of that partnership.*

It is not that the unveiling of a tombstone is reported as a key achievement in the annual report that complicates “what is being done” in the Department. It is how the Minister’s rationale for its impact justifies why it is perceived as such. In this utterance, the Minister identifies the “achievement” of this event as putting “ex-offenders who were gangsters” in churches. Secondly, she connects their attendance at church with transformation. Although she does not clarify how the attendance at church practically resulted in the attainment of training, skills and jobs by the ex-offenders training, it is her rationale for their connection that is theoretically important for understanding how the NGM may be

discursively positioned.

The Minister's rationale crystallises the argument that policy commitments to gender equality are insufficient "when women, who are incumbents of gender structures themselves, do not have a feminist consciousness or a clear understanding of theoretical issues involved in gender equality" (Gouws, 1996, p. 35). It further makes sense of Gouws' warning of "a certain danger in a gender discourse in South Africa that denies the expression of feminism, as such, as an awareness of women's inequality which demands political action" (1996, p. 35).

What are the conceptual implications of the Minister's belief that it is "because of" a visit to a community for an unveiling ceremony that gangsters went to church, received skills and jobs, and protected their communities? It is the Minister's interpretation and articulation of the political and policy position of the government of the day on gender politics that informs the administrative direction of the Department. It is therefore this positioning that determines "what the problem is represented to be" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010) by/in the Department, as well as the strategies to address it.

In the section below I problematise the Minister's conception of the Department's role further by capturing engagements on another key programme and achievement: The National Dialogues against Violence on Women. Using deliberations regarding the Commission for Gender Equality, I demonstrate the intersection of the Minister's positionality with questions about the relationship of the Department with other institutions of the NGM besides the Portfolio Committee.

### *5.8.2 Whose Interests are Prioritised?: Party Politics and the NGM*

In the biggest rape trial in the history of South African politics, Fezekile Ntsukela Kuzwayo accused former President Jacob Zuma of raping her at his Johannesburg home on 2 November 2005. For fear of doing an injustice to the merits of this case, I will not summarise its contents, save the following extracts from the judgement:

*This trial was unfortunate in many respects. It had a damaging effect on both the complainant and the accused. In my view both of them are to be blamed for the fact that it affected them. The accused should not have had sexual intercourse*

*with a person so many years younger than himself and furthermore being the child of an old comrade and a woman plus minus his age. The complainant said that in spite of her own attitude that she would not have unprotected sex, it still remains the choice of a person to have unprotected sex. In my judgment that is exactly what she and the accused did that night of 2 November 2005. Having heard the evidence of Prof Martins it is inexcusable that the accused did so. It is totally unacceptable that a man should have unprotected sex with any person other than his regular partner and definitely not with a person who to his knowledge is HIV positive. I do not even want to comment on the effect of a shower after having had unprotected sex. Had Rudyard Kipling known of this case at the time he wrote his poem "If" he might have added the following: "And if you can control your body and your sexual urges, then you are a man my son."*

What is important to mention is that a central defence used by Jacob Zuma's supporters, both men and women, was that the trial was part of a political conspiracy, as Zuma had recently been removed from his position as the Deputy President of the country due to corruption charges. It is also important to state that the ANCWL had publicly and actively supported Jacob Zuma, including through the use of slurs and derogatory songs and remarks against Kuzwayo throughout the trial.

The environment had become so hostile for Kuzwayo that she and her mother were placed in a witness protection programme throughout the trial, and left South Africa to seek exile in a then-undisclosed destination immediately after the verdict in 2006, only returning in 2011. She died three days before the Portfolio Committee meeting with the Minister for the 2015/2016 meeting. At the meeting, two members ask the Minister to make a comment about Kuzwayo's death. One member asks:

*We've just had the death of Khwezi. And we know that she's just one of many who goes, who are unrequited, who fight for their dignity, but who are hounded, who are vilified, ...When are we as a Department going to put more pressure on the justice system?*

The Minister is silent on this question. The meaning in the Minister's silence can perhaps be best explained by Arundhati Roy's assertion at the Sydney Peace Prize



Lecture in 2004, that “there is no such thing as the ‘voiceless’. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard.” While the Minister is herself silenced by her political proximity to the ANC, by not responding she also symbolically silences Kuzwayo, or “preferably unhears” the question.

This dynamic resurfaces during the 2016/2017 reporting period when the Minister is asked about Mduduzi Manana, the then-Deputy Minister of Higher Education. In September 2017, Manana had been caught on video, with two friends, brutally attacking three women at a nightclub. He pleaded guilty, was sentenced to twelve-months in prison or a R100 000.00 fine, to which he chose the latter. He was also ordered to undergo 500 hours of community service and an anger management programme.

The 2016/2017 Portfolio Committee meeting took place four days after the judgement against Manana was handed down. At this meeting, a Committee member asks the Minister: “the sentence of one year, I don’t see it reviving the dignity of women. Because one year doesn’t send any message...what are you saying about the sentence?” The Minister responds that:

*I think as this country we’ve said there is separation of powers in the constitution, and one of the commitments we have made is that we will respect the judiciary ...Mduduzi’s case ...was heard by a judge ...the judge has ruled. As part of government I must respect their decisions. Unless I can prove that the decision they have made is irregular or there was some underhand in it. But I can’t...so I’m saying we cannot be subjective...*

A member of the Committee then interjects and asks the Minister: “So we will not protest?” To which the Minister says:

*No! I have to respect our judges. Because one day I will need them. If I insult them, that means ...I can’t ...we always, as Members of Parliament, emphasise the issue of separation of powers and respecting our judiciary ...so I don’t have an opinion. I’m just happy they took a decision and sentenced. I’m happy as the Minister responsible for women. I am satisfied ...Khawula, your Chairperson in*

*Northwest hit a person...so let's not defend anyone, even in families. Undermining women is a problem in our country ...so you must protest against your member in North West...*

Amongst the important meanings in this statement is that even though the Minister says she does not have an opinion, she in fact does. The Minister 's opinion is that if she were to offer her true opinion about the judgement, it would "insult" the judges. By this, we can thus infer that she views her own opinion as insulting to the judges. However, she is cautious against this because "one day" she *will* need the judges. She therefore makes no challenges to the judgement.

Furthermore, although the member who had raised the original quoted question belongs to the official opposition, the Democratic Alliance, a member of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) had also risen to support her. The Minister points to the latter speaker and critiques her party's position on a case that had also emerged three days before the Portfolio Committee meeting.

In a matter that is yet unfinalised at the time of the submission of this research project, the EFF Chief Whip for the North-West province, Bunga Ntsangane, was accused of assaulting a junior staff member of the political party, including pushing her against a wall and threatening to cut off the woman's private parts. The EFF representative, like the Minister, also avoids confrontation on this issue.

These instances across political parties confirms that alone, women's access to decision-making platforms is insufficient. As suggested by the transformative state feminist framework, what is required beyond formal access through quotas is a women's movement outside the state that also secures access to policy-making platforms (Hassim & Gouws 2011, p. 10). This is because granting women's movements access to state platforms "is tied to the kinds of agendas that are set and the nature of the accountability relationship between representatives and constituencies" (Hassim & Gouws, 2011, p. 3). Furthermore, and as argued by Goetz (2003), this shows that the numeral increases in women's representation do not necessarily translate to the representation of women's interests in public policy platforms. The problem, as suggested by Goetz, has to do with politics. Inevitably,

without the understanding that gender mainstreaming across the institutions of the NGM is a political exercise that requires an autonomous women's movement, NGM efforts will not contribute the necessary political fear onto government.

Significantly, the engagements raise further concerns about the interests and priorities of the NGM, and the power systems enforced in the process. Likewise, this shows that leaders of the post-apartheid women's movement within political parties have not found ways to transcend their political affiliations in solidarity against gendered abuses.

## **5.9 Conclusion**

This analysis finds that over the periods 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017, the Department transferred most of the deadlines for its unachieved annual targets to the following year. In turn, the constant changes to the short-term, annual goals destabilise possibilities for reaching the long term goal of "a society that realises the socio-economic empowerment of women and gender equality". This complicates the extent to which the NGM can conceptually define its mandate, and subsequently advance towards gender transformation.

A key finding of the study is an absence of a feminist consciousness in the articulation of women's interests by the Executive Authority and highest ranking incumbent of the NGM: the Minister of Women. The Minister's conception and articulation of her role – such in identifying the unveiling of a tombstone as a key achievement - crystallises the argument that policy commitments to gender equality are insufficient "when women, who are incumbents of gender structures themselves, do not have a feminist consciousness or a clear understanding of theoretical issues involved in gender equality" (Gouws, 1996, p. 35).

The discourse analysis also reveals the complexities of how power is discursively distributed between the Minister and the Portfolio Committee of Women. The discourse reveals how the Minister disperses her power as both Minister and as a senior official of the African National Congress – and pin-points moments when members of the Portfolio Committee shift between powerfulness and powerlessness in demanding accountability from the Department.

## CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

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### 6.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore whether a micro-level analysis can provide useful information to advance the institutional gains acquired through the establishment of the South African NGM. This was conducted by assessing how the incumbents of NGM structures conceive of and interpret their roles. The focus was the discourse relied on - by leading NGM Practitioners - to account for the strategic planning and execution of the functions and role/s of the NGM. Critical to this exercise was to capture the extent to which discourse either reinforces and reproduces, or challenges and transforms systems of patriarchal oppression.

A key assumption of the study is that transformative state feminism “is more than the representation of women’s interests or even demands of women’s movement groups; it is the representation of feminist interests and actors making feminist claims to produce feminist outcomes” (Mazur & McBride, 2007, p. 508). Further, a significant theoretical consideration for transformative state feminism is the emergence of a unified women’s movement with feminist goals, which inserts feminist discourses into formal politics (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002; Kardam & Acuner, 2003; Sawer, 2003; Goetz, 2003), and where “stronger consultative mechanisms” are established between NGM structures and women’s movement organisations (Rai, 2003).

The study relies on social constructionist theoretical traditions to explain how individual subjects act in groups. This tradition theoretically justifies the research choice to focus on discursivity in making conclusions about the South African NGM. In light of this, the discourse analysis methodology presented opportune research tools for research exploration.

This concluding chapter discusses the implications of the discursive constitution of the Department for the theory and practice of state feminism. Key to this exercise is to identify how the Minister in the Presidency Responsible for Women articulates her role, and to probe the implications of her discursive positioning for engaging state feminist theoretical debates.

## **6.2 How Women's Interests are Articulated**

The Annual Performance Plans and Annual Reports of the Department of Women are useful sources for ascertaining information about the co-relationship between short-term annual goals and the longer-term five-year strategic vision. A discourse analysis of how the Department accounts for its planning and programming, however, provides the context for understanding the theoretical implications of how NGM practitioners view their roles.

A key finding of the study is an absence of a feminist consciousness in the articulation of women's interests by the Executive Authority of the Department: the Minister of Women. The Minister's conception and articulation of her role – such as identifying the unveiling of a tombstone as a key achievement; prioritising political party over women's interests where her party members have been implicated in gendered crimes; or appointing a man as the Head of Department - crystallises the argument that policy commitments to gender equality are insufficient “when women, who are incumbents of gender structures themselves, do not have a feminist consciousness or a clear understanding of theoretical issues involved in gender equality” (Gouws, 1996, p. 35).

The Minister's lack of feminist consciousness contributed to a weak management and execution of the Department's strategic goals. This compounds and affects the ability of the Department to attract skilled femocrats, to address the persistent non-compliance to legislation, and to effect consequence management measures. This raises critical questions about how the leaders and officials representing the rights of women in the NGM are elected/appointed.

Cabinet members in South Africa are appointed at the discretion of the President, to provide political leadership to their respective portfolios in responding to citizens' interests. However, this study shows that the appointment of Ministers to lead the NGM, by political parties, is an inhibiting factor to advancing the institutional gains of the women's movement, and in responding to women's interests. As demonstrated, the subject positions occupied by the Minister show that her political party allegiance poses difficulty for her commitment to the gender agenda. In examples where the Minister is faced with either supporting the interests of women in cases of Gender-Based Violence against her political party leaders and defending the interests of women, she chooses

the former. This highlights and affirms the requirement of strong accountability mechanisms for effective transformative state feminism practice.

### **6.3 Accountability Mechanisms**

The discourse analysis reveals the complexities of how power is discursively distributed between the Minister and the Portfolio Committee of Women. The discourse shows how the Minister disperses her power as both Minister and as a senior official of the African National Congress. Importantly, it shows how members of the Portfolio Committee shift between powerfulness and powerlessness in demanding accountability from the Department.

The resistance of the Portfolio Committee to the Minister's power dispels Hassim and Gouws' (2011, p. 22) assertion, that in national politics the professionalization of women's movement activism and the NGM in South Africa is linked to the 'juniorisation and weakening' of parliament. While this may have been reflective of the period between 1999 and 2009, the sustained voice of the Portfolio Committee over the three-year period under review suggests that a shift has occurred in the last two decades, in the manner with which women in parliament engage their responsibilities.

Yet notwithstanding, while the work of the Portfolio Committee and the Auditor-General has been effective in advancing state feminism in South Africa, the role of civil society as an avenue for accountability is not well-explored in meeting between the Portfolio Committee and the Department of Women. The silence and/or absence of an independent women's movement voice in the work of the Department poses threats for the extent to which it can be said to be transformative. It further limits alternative sources of power for the existing accountability institutions.

In this regard, the South African experience shows that effective gender transformation requires more than strong democratic institutions, explicitly stated political will from governments, or women's access to decision-making positions. Importantly, it is evident from the challenges faced by the Auditor-General and Portfolio Committee in overseeing the Department that power and autonomy are critical for gender transformation.

Reference to power and autonomy return this study to the claims of organising women within the Women's National Coalition (WNC). The achievements of the WNC in transforming gender politics were due to the coalition's independence from party, religious, class, race, and other differences. Autonomy in organising on the basis of feminist demands gave women activists the power to effect meaningful change through the establishment of a gender machinery.

Since the mass-participation of women within the WNC, and the mobility of women's movement leaders into professionalised NGM positions, South African feminists have not been able to recreate a foundation for strategic collective action and networking amongst women's organisations. In the absence of a strong feminist unity between femocrats and an independent feminist movement/s, the Department may continue to occupy its discursive position in complicity to state patriarchy.

#### **6.4 Contributions of Study and Conclusion**

By shifting the analytical gaze from the group consciousness often assumed in macro-analyses to the individual actors within the NGM, this research project has allowed itself to not study the subject, but rather to learn from the Portfolio Committee and the Department of Women how interests are articulated, and what meanings are ascribed to the amalgam of issues facing women. Conversely, by allowing the leading components of the NGM to "speak for themselves", and listening in on "what the problem is represented to be" (Bacchi & Eveline, 2010) in the claim-making processes and deliberations on contemporary gender politics, this discourse analysis ushers in opportunities for examining how the department's articulation of its role can inform conclusions about state feminism in South Africa.

The attitudes to NGM practice demonstrated during the engagements suggest that what is required of conceptual understandings of state feminism in South Africa is an account that distinguishes between political participation, representation and feminist influence, because political participation and representation alone do not translate into actual influence and power to transform attitudes and gender relations.

In relation to the role of women's movements in state feminism as defined by

conceptual definitions of both movement and transformative state feminisms, this study suggests that in South Africa, such role is played by the Portfolio Committee. Moreover, the microanalysis yielded by the discourse analysis of the NGM presents an argument in contrast to the conclusions of earlier macro analyses, which suggest that the South African state feminist project has failed.

This study, instead, represents the continuum of contestations regarding gender interests at a discursive level, and shows that the post-apartheid gender transformation project is a process that is theoretically guided. Although the annual performance results of the Department of Women are persistently disappointing, and the power of the Portfolio Committee seemingly limited, the legislative framework guiding their engagements as well as the Committee's sense of public duty present opportunities to transform gender relations by altering state feminist practice from within government.

In what is a primary and key discovery of the analysis, the Portfolio Committee demonstrates unassumed cross-party solidarity in their quest for accountability from the Department. The Committee often draws on, and is strengthened by its united voice, which is founded on a common will to work with the Department in advancing towards the long-term strategic goal. It is the power of this unity that leads to the unveiling of information beyond the formalities of what might be presented in an Annual Report. It is from the manner through which the Portfolio Committee and the Department of Women engage about the challenges of the Department that innovations for state feminism emerge. For example, it is from the Chairperson of the Audit Committee that the hope presented by the Public Audit Amendment Bill (2018) is introduced. As discussed, this piece of legislation will address the common frustrations shared between the Auditor-General and the Portfolio Committee regarding performance audits.

The Amendment Bill provides for a clearer provision that mandates the Auditor-General to both conduct performance audits, as well as to report on them. In addition to auditing performance, the new Bill will give powers to the Auditor-General to refer adverse findings to investigative bodies, as well as to recover funds from accounting officers that were lost due to non-compliance with legislation (Act 25 of 2004, s.5. As Amended, 2018).



Importantly, it is not the Bill alone that ushers in a window of optimism. It is the manner through which the recourse to be introduced by the legislation will work with existing interventions introduced by the oversight institutions. Here, the main source of optimism lies in the Portfolio Committee's refusal to accede to the discourses that position the challenges of the Department as a normal feature of South African state feminism. Conceptually, their refusal over the three years to comply with the Department's reliance on structural impediments ensures that the profoundly entrenched patterns of non-achievement are neither maintained nor reproduced.

If the agreement to closely monitor the Department is implemented consistently by the Portfolio Committee, and is complemented by the threat of the exercise of the Auditor-General's new powers allocated by the Public Audit Amendment Bill, then potential exists for a change in the direction of the NGM, towards transformative state feminism.

## **6.5 Key Recommendations**

The experiences of other NGMs, and the theories of state feminism show that a feminist consciousness in public policy discourse alone is insufficient for transforming gender relations. Goetz' (2003) study suggests that an important requirement is for femocrats to understand the political nature of their work.

In light of this, the primary recommendation of this study is for the Minister of Women to ensure that **all staff members in the Department, in both the administrative and core programmes, undergo training** on the history of women's movement activism, and the theory of transformative state feminism. Furthermore, whereas the discourse analysis reveals an outstanding skills audit of the departmental staff, this audit should be prioritised and effective measures to attract skilled femocrats be undertaken.

An independent civil society inclusive of NGOs, trade unions, the media and community organisations that are situated outside the formal political system are also crucial avenues for keeping the state and elected officials accountable (Hassim & Gouws, 2011). It is recommended that the Portfolio Committee should use its parliamentary resources and power to **lobby feminist organisations and individuals outside the state** to advance the project towards gender equality.

In considering the impact of the work of the Department, it is recommended that due consideration and priority be accorded to the **complete and radical transformation of the discourses that define a plethora of phenomena** including: gendered family relations, hierarchies or legends; gendered religious doctrines; gendered discourse amongst peers; gendered traditional laws; gendered patterns of intellectual ownership; gendered jokes; gendered literature in the education sector; and gendered narratives in the media. From this approach, mainstreaming gender into institutional consciousness must primarily focus on the discourses that are taken for granted in every-day institutional practices.

This task cannot be achieved by the Department alone. **Ally networks between femocrats, the Portfolio Committee, and feminists/feminist allies in civil society and the private sector** are critical for realising the social empowerment of women through the radical transformation of institutional discourses and doctrines.

This process should not be limited to inserting women's issues into existing policy. Rather, it should be a collective attempt to completely re-orientate policy towards gender equality principles and, as suggested by the complexity approach, to overhaul social practices and gendered hierarchies (Walby, 2004; Walby, 2005). From the perspective of the complexity approach, the consistent monthly reports that track the achievement of short-term goals will help to ascertain how the longer-term strategic interests of gender transformation will/might be affected.

Finally, the duplication of functions between the Department of Women and the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) compel the need to re-examine the legislative landscape of the NGM. The Commission for Gender Equality is established by Chapter 9 of the Constitution, together with the Public Protector, the South African Human Rights Commission, the Commission for the Promotion and protection of the Rights of Cultural, religious and Linguistic Communities, the Auditor-General and the Electoral Commission. However, unlike legislation establishing other independent institutions, the CGE Act (39 of 1996), does not make provisions for the establishment of a Fund to manage the finances of the Commission. For example, the Audit Act (No.25 of 2004) order the Audit-General to open one or more accounts with an institution registered in terms of the Banks Act (No.94 of 1990), into which "all money received by or on behalf

of the Auditor-General must promptly be deposited” (Act No. 25, 2004, S. 37). In the absence of such provision for the CGE, the annual budget is allocated to the Commission through the budget of the Department of Women. This not only complicates the financial reporting of both institutions, but it begs the question of the independence of the CGE were it to be called to exercise its independent power over the Department.

It is therefore recommended that **Act 39 of 1996 be amended to ensure the budgetary independence of the Commission of Gender Equality from the Department of Women.**

It is further recommended that **South Africa’s National Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (2000) be amended** in line with the strategic and structural advances of the South African state feminist project.

## **6.6 Study Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research**

The textual limitations of a mini-dissertation are the key limiting factors confronted by this project. The Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis Method allows for the process of “metaphorizing” in research, which is to adopt a complexity approach which suggests that social and discursive diversity is fundamental to every research setting and utterance. It also refers to the provision, in the analysis, for the co-existence of plural and diverse voices and the recognition of accounts “which do not fuse into a single consciousness” (Baxter, 2003, p. 68). Baxter suggests three ways for practically achieving a polyphonic approach to data (2003, p. 68):

1. Producing multiple perspectives, in the analysis, of the “single centralized event, text or textual extract”;
2. Showing the different perspectives the analysis could have adopted by producing multiple and “perhaps competing versions of the same act of discourse analysis, so in a sense there would be no “original” or “authorised version”; and
3. Providing a draft of the analysis to the subjects within the research study for their feedback and critique. In this approach the final analysis would be “multi-

authored”, including both the researcher’s analysis and the supplementary comments.

Importantly, the polyphonic strategy requires the researcher to acknowledge their own philosophical and ideological constitutions, and to open their analysis to alternative interpretations. Baxter suggests this can be achieved by being self-reflexive and consciously avoiding authorial voices over alternative points and resisting, in the research analysis, narrative closure to the research context/field (2003, p. 68).

I particularly find the polyphonic approach ideal for this study because it:

*hopes to disrupt the possibility of neatly packaged solutions, instead provoking unusual combinations of ideas and more thought-provoking if more disruptive insights, which of course can lead to (transformative) action...and helps to reveal the gaps, ambiguities and contradictions within and between different accounts that are often ignored, masked or glossed over by the single-authored, monologic analysis (Baxter, 2003, p. 69)*

Were it not for the textual limitations guiding mini-dissertations, adopting all three, or at least the third suggested ways for polyphony would be both viable and valuable for a study of this nature. Not only does the polyphonic strategic approach offer to strengthen the reliability of a study, it also presents itself as a fun, innovative, and radical way of conducting empirical research “which of course can lead to (transformative) action”.

Notwithstanding the limitations, the study addresses the shortcomings by considering literature by and about other institutions of the NGM in Chapter II to form conclusions about the challenges faced by state feminism in South Africa. Despite this attempt, this study does not, and cannot claim to be comprehensively representative of the entire make-up and functioning of the NGM.

In light of these limitations, a key recommendation for future studies would be the exploration of more disruptive research strategies that seek to produce collaborative results with the participants of the study, by adopting all or some of the metaphorisation strategies suggested by Baxter’s Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis. A study of this nature might also gain useful insights into South African state feminism by

expanding the scope of research methods to include interviews, focus groups, and even surveys.

In conclusion, it is up to the Department of Women, the Portfolio Committee, the Auditor-General, feminists outside the state, and sympathisers throughout the country, to ensure that our history charges us into better futures, and our friendships with our transnational neighbours serve to not recolonise us, but as platforms where we can equitably share resources towards the end goal of gender equality.

## ANNEXURE A

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### **Questions Asked in Conducting Discourse Analysis (Gee, 1999, pp.93-4)**

#### **Semiotic building**

1. What sign systems are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation (e.g. speech, writing, images, and gestures)? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?
2. What systems of knowledge and ways of knowing are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?
3. What social languages are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

#### **World building**

4. What are the situated meanings of some of the words and phrases that seem important in the situation?
5. What situated meanings and values seem to be attached to places, times, bodies, objects, artefacts, and institutions relevant in this situation?
6. What cultural models and networks of models (master models) seem to be at play in connecting and integrating these situated meanings to each other?
7. What institutions and/or Discourses are being (re-)produced in this situation and how are they being stabilized or transformed in the act?

#### **Activity building**

8. What is the larger or main activity (or set of activities) going on in the situation?
9. What sub-activities compose this activity (or these activities)?
10. What actions (down to the level of things like “requests for reasons”) compose these sub-activities and activities?

#### **Socioculturally-situated identity and relationship building**

11. What relationships and identities (roles, positions), with their concomitant personal,

social, and cultural knowledge and beliefs (cognition), feelings (affect), and values, seem to be relevant to the situation?

12. How are these relationships and identities stabilized or transformed in the situation?

13. In terms of identities, activities, and relationships, what Discourses are relevant (and irrelevant) in the situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

### **Political building**

14. What social goods (e.g. status, power, aspects of gender, race, and class, or more narrowly defined social networks and identities) are relevant (and irrelevant) in this situation? How are they made relevant (and irrelevant), and in what ways?

15. How are these social goods connected to the cultural models and Discourses operative in the situation?

### **Connection building**

16. What sorts of connections – looking backward and/or forward – are made within and across utterances and large stretches of the interaction?

17. What sorts of connections are made to previous or future interactions, to other people, ideas, texts, things, institutions, and Discourses outside the current situation (this has to do with “intertextuality” and “inter- Discursivity”)?

18. How do connections of both the sort in 16 and 17 help (together with situated meanings and cultural models) to constitute “coherence” – and what sort of “coherence” – in the situation?

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