THE SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE OF GAUTENG

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by

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I DECLARE THAT THIS IS MY OWN UNAIDED WORK, EXCEPT FOR THE ACKNOWLEDGED SUPERVISION AND REFERENCED CITATIONS.

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ABSTRACT

In this study, I examine the substantive representation of women in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. The general perception is that if there is a substantial numerical representation of women in parliaments, then women's concerns will be adequately represented. My purpose was to understand how women perceived political representation. I found that although all the women whom I interviewed were interested in women's matters, they did not wish to be confined to the role of representing women, but wished to involve themselves in a broader spectrum of concerns. Although in South Africa there is an increase in the representation of women in the legislature, this is not necessarily being translated into effective and gender-sensitive policy-making. The party–list system of proportional representation was found to impact negatively upon the ability of women to represent women's concerns as women were constrained by the male dominated party and senior party officials. A legislated quota system would ensure that women from all parties are represented and the inclusion of a constituency-based electoral could counterbalance the control of parties. Female representation is subjected to numerous challenges from men, and from political parties which may not wish to prioritise the concerns of women. The introduction of formal political institutions in parliament would be best placed to monitor the selection process in parliament as well as ensure fair practice. The gender impact of the political and policy process can only be recognised through institutional mechanisms rather than the presence of women alone. Women themselves are by no means unanimous concerning what is best for them as parliamentarians or how they should represent the concerns of women. Channels of communication should be opened for women to understand each others cultural constraints. Although mechanisms, like the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, do exist for women to carry out representation, the effectiveness and status of the Caucus is questionable due its institutional status. Formalising the WPC as a standing committee would create a platform from which women could act to represent the concerns of women.

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Introduction

Today, democracy as a political system has become a goal for many states across the world. Despite this, it is difficult to define a single, clear and inclusive form of democracy which would serve the political needs of all states. Karam contends that democracy falls almost exclusively within the traditional definition of politics which is characterized as male-dominated, specific to the 'public sphere', and therefore not likely to be women-friendly.[1] For these reasons, despite the increasing popularity of the concept and practice of forms of government loosely called democracy, the question as to why democracy and gender should be interlinked continues to be asked and still needs to be answered.[2]

Some of the arguments regarding the link between democracy and gender concern women's political rights. Women's rights are an integral and inseparable part of human rights; and human rights in turn are a fundamental aspect of any democratic framework. A second argument supporting the linking of gender and democracy is that in a democracy, the points of view of the different participating groups must be taken into account in formulating decisions or carrying out any strategy. In other words, democracy must take account of the opinions and perceptions of women as well as men.[3]

A universal franchise and free and fair elections are considered to be minimum requirements for democratic societies. However, in many societies the enfranchisement of women that came with the establishment of democratic systems has not necessarily been accompanied by an increased representation of women in political decision-making positions, or any enhancement of their participation in political life.[4] Perhaps the single most important reason for linking democracy and gender is that women constitute half the world's population, and half of every national population. Population censuses have repeatedly shown that women are at times referred to as a minority; but the label is a misnomer if its accepted interpretation implies that they form a smaller group (presumably with lesser needs) within a greater one. The *intended* meaning of the term 'minority' in this context, is that they are a

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[1] http://www.idea.int/women/parl/ch1a.htm Karam [15/04/03].
[2] ibid
[3] ibid
[4] Albertus et al 2002:23

group whose interests have been neglected – a very different matter. They are, in fact, what is known, in South Africa, as 'a previously disadvantaged group'. To conceptualize issues and develop policies which will directly or indirectly affect the lives of citizens, including those of women, without taking into account their situations, perspectives and realities, is no longer acceptable in today's world.

My research looks specifically at women in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng, and I shall attempt to shift the focus from merely the quantitative aspect of numbers of women Members of Provincial Legislature (MPLs) to an examination of the substantive representation of women in parliament. My analysis of women MPLs perception of their obligation to represent women's interests will form the premise from which I shall attempt to determine the feasibility of women MPLs making changes in the lives of women.

Discussions of political representation in parliament have primarily focused upon the numerical representation of women, that is, the increasing number of women representatives in parliament, as compared with, for example, the situation twenty years ago.[5] I am concerned with investigating whether the number of women in parliament has led to effective political representation of interests of women in the community. Furthermore, I shall ask whether there is a difference between the way a parliament with a large number of women representatives carries out its role, as compared to a parliament consisting entirely or mostly of men. My study will attempt to answer this question by obtaining and analysing the opinions of women MPLs on these matters.

Today, few citizens would oppose the presence of women in parliament, which is in any case ensured by the 1996 South African constitution's provisions concerning gender equality. Democratic participation and representation are now assumed to imply equal power sharing for women. In South Africa the democratization processes have progressively drawn women into national politics and the numbers of women in government have grown between 1994, the date of the first democratic election, and 2006. Moreover, public pronouncements from national and provincial governments have frequently claimed a commitment to the equality of women. Despite these many assurances of support, many women are still experiencing difficulty in claiming their

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[5] Childs 2000a; Eagle and Lovenduski 1998; Stephenson 1997; Norris and Lovenduski 1995 cited in Childs 2001(b):174and Lovenduski and Norris 2003

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rights. Enlightened laws designed to protect women have failed in practice to do so: the Sexual Offences Act 23 of 1957 has not, for example, altered the fact that the rape statistics in South Africa are the highest in the world. Few would claim that the position of poor rural women has been significantly improved by their theoretical equality under the law.

What I am concerned with therefore is not the growing number of women representatives, but the degree of their preoccupation with women's concerns, and the extent to which they are effective in this area. The increase of women's representation in government does not necessarily mean gender-sensitive policy-making. Policies for improving women's lot may not receive greater support, even though the number of women parliamentarians has grown.

0.1 Outline of the study

My research on women parliamentary representatives focuses on the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. I shall try to determine, from the basis of their own statements, whether women parliamentarians actively seek to represent women, what methods they use and what difficulties they experience. I shall examine whether women representatives believe that they make an impact on the lives of women. The following themes are investigated in the study.

Firstly, parliamentary women's conceptions of political representation are explored to determine whether or not this includes a gendered dimension and whether they consider themselves obligated to render their presence as women significant as opposed to their simply forming part of a particular group. This arises from the argument that if women representatives at parliamentary level are substantively to represent women, their knowledge of and identification with women and women's concerns also need to be demonstrated.[6] The substantive representation of women presumes that women parliamentarians possess the capacity to represent the interests of their female constituents through some degree of affinity with women in society.[7] The question regarding the ways in which women parliamentarians conceptualise action on behalf of women as opposed to citizens in general will be looked at. In

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[6] Childs 2001:181
[7] Galligan 2001:3

addition, I will try to determine whether parliamentary women perceive that they articulate women's concerns differently from male parliamentarians.

Secondly, an investigation will be undertaken into the methods through which parliamentary women carry out their representative role and the mechanisms through which they act for women. I shall explore whether women MPLs have felt an obligation to insert matters of gender into their party's agenda and the manner in which they do this. An examination of the context of party politics within the legislature is necessary to establish whether party dynamics impact upon women MPLs ability to act for women.

Thirdly, I shall attempt to ascertain whether parliamentary women perceive their presence in parliament to be effective in matters concerning women, and whether there is any tangible proof of their achievements. One key question in any study of substantive representation is whether or not the representatives perceive that their presence has made a difference[8] ; my study will allow me to throw light on this matter. Another important question, which the limitations of this study prevent me from answering, concerns the ways in which they are seen by those whom they claim to represent.

This thesis then, limits itself to the examination of whether or not women MPLs perceive that they articulate gender issues, and perspectives that are either marginalized or not fully represented in the legislature, and to the determination of whether women's presence offers an additional guarantee of such representation (Philips 1995 cited in Childs 2001:174). It assesses whether there is a difference between their perceptions of making a difference and the examples that they give to prove this. I will also ask whether parliamentary women perceive that their presence has led to changes in the policy agenda and examine the nature of these changes.

The fourth theme that I explore is whether women parliamentarians in this context have experienced any difficulties in or opposition to carrying out this representative role as they have defined it. Some of the challenges experienced by MPLs include the impact of the quota system on MPLs ability to adequately represent women, the inadequate training of MPLs in their representation roles, a failure to understand the institutional position of the WPC, male domination of the political

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[8] Childs 2001:174

arena and racial and cultural conceptions of representation which limit the actions of women. These challenges are explored extensively. Furthermore, I seek to establish their perceptions of the form and level of these difficulties.

Finally, I make recommendations based upon the challenges that women MPLs perceive that they experience. It is recommended that a legislated quota be put in place together with the introduction of a constituency-based electoral system. With regards to the training of MPLs, training modules should be customized and tailor made for the specific needs of MPLs with a focus on skills development. Capacity building in gender awareness should be considered. The status of the WPC should be recognised as a standing committee to be able to be taken seriously by men and women. Men should be trained on professional conduct in the work place. Channels of communication should be created for women MPLs to understand their cultural backgrounds better. A formal political institution should be created in parliament to monitor the selection process for parliamentary committees and ensure that women MPLs are protected from unfair discriminatory practices.

0.2 Key Questions

In this study I am concerned with answering the following key questions.

1. How do women representatives in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng conceptualize political representation and do these conceptualizations include a gendered dimension?

2. If parliamentary women see themselves as representing women, in what ways do they try to carry out this representation role?

3. What other conceptions of political representation influence the ability of parliamentary women to effect a feminised transformation of the political agenda?

4. Do parliamentary women believe that they are effective in making an impact upon women's concerns and, if so, in what ways do they measure their impact?

5. What difficulties are encountered by parliamentary women in their attempts to introduce women's concerns onto the parliamentary agenda?

6. What impact does the party political context within the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng have on women's ability to represent women?

0.3 Political Context

The Province of Gauteng is one of nine provinces within the Republic of South Africa and is densely populated, having a population of almost eight million people. It is also the wealthiest province, due to its industries and infrastructure.

South Africa's interim Constitution, promulgated on the 27th April 1994 and the final Constitution, promulgated on 4th February 1997, provided the foundation and governing principles (including the principle of equality between the gender groups) for South Africa's developing democracy. The nine provinces which make up the Republic of South Africa are managed by their own provincial governments and parliaments, the Provincial Legislatures. The Provincial Legislatures have concurrent powers with the National Assembly. In terms of concurrent spheres, national government overrides the province in areas of conflict. The inauguration of the Members of the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng on 7th May 1994 was in effect a tangible implementation of the new, democratic South Africa.[9].

The Provincial Legislature of Gauteng currently has 73 MPLs, of whom 28 (38%) are women, and is situated in Johannesburg, the Capital of Gauteng. Of the 28 female representatives, there are 20 MPLs, four Members of Executive Council (MECs) and four National Council of Province (NCOP) delegates.

Although the Provincial Legislature is comprised of various political parties, it is dominated by one party, the African National Congress (ANC), which holds the majority of seats. The parties in the Gauteng Legislature are represented as follows: the African National Congress (ANC) holds 50 seats (68.4%), the Democratic Party (DP) holds 13 seats (17.8%), the New National Party (NNP) and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) each hold three seats (4.1% each), the Freedom Front (FF), United Democratic Movement (UDM), African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and Federal Alliance hold one seat (1.4%) each.

The legislature, which is aimed at bringing government closer to the people, differs from the provincial administrator and executive council of the previous unitary system of apartheid in that it is an elected and therefore representative body. The post-apartheid provincial legislatures represent a constitutionally protected sphere of

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[9] http://www.gautengleg.gov.za/about/introduction.asp [11/12/03]

government with powers to pass laws in certain spheres and influence the national legislative process through the National Council of Provinces (NCOP).[10]

The Provincial Legislature has three main activities:

- to make and pass laws for the province,

- to provide oversight of the executive branch of government, including the implementation of legislation. Oversight must be exercised by the provincial legislature over the policies drafted by the executive council and the implementation of policies by the executive, the administration and the other organs of state.[11]

- to facilitate public involvement (to obtain public input on proposed legislation through committees) in the legislative and other processes of the legislature and its committees. Members of the provincial legislature are charged with accepting policies and laws arising from the executive as well as making or initiating policies and laws that are consistent with the interest of the population.[12]

Oversight remains the core function of provincial legislatures. While a wide range of activities undertaken by a legislature can fall under oversight, foremost amongst these is to hold the executive accountable. Executive and administrative accountability to the legislative branch of government is a fundamental condition in a constitutional democracy. Oversight "refers to a large number of activities carried out in relation to the executive...(it) traverses a wide range of activities...(including) monitoring and reviewing the actions of the executive organs of government".[13] It provides for an essential check and balance to the potential abuse of power in the executive branch. Oversight responsibilities require legislatures to assess how policies and legislation have been implemented.

Legislative oversight is recognized and provided for both the National Assembly and Provincial legislatures in the Constitution.[14] With regard to provincial legislatures, Section 114 requires each of the nine legislatures to hold provincial organs of state accountable and to exercise general oversight over the provincial

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[10] Maloka cited in Muthien,khosa,Magubane 2000:107
[11] www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/32/2/2001/dokument_id-4883/index.html. Houston 2001:55 [14/04/05]
[12] Ibid:56
[13] Corder, Jagwanth, Soltoau 1999:1
[14] Section 55, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108:1996

authority and provincial organs of state. This will include oversight programmes contained in national legislation that the provincial executive is expected to implement and for which the province receives national funding.

In exercising its legislative power, a provincial legislature may: consider, pass, amend or reject any Bill before it, and initiate or prepare legislation, except money bills, which are dealt with at national level. A provincial legislature must provide mechanisms to ensure that all provincial executive organs of state in the province are accountable to it. It must also maintain oversight of provincial executive authority in the province, including the implementation of legislation; and any provincial organ of state.[15]

Schedule 4 of the Constitution outlines the functional areas of concurrent national and provincial legislative competence as well as the functional areas of exclusive provincial legislative competence. The broad range of issues for which the provinces are responsible indicates the necessity for different levels of reporting in respect of the different bodies involved. This covers a range of categories from financial management and structural issues to policy development and implementation. Different levels of reporting underscore the importance of communication within and between the national parliament and the provincial legislatures.

In order to give some sense of the enormous range of powers delegated to provincial legislatures – and therefore to suggest the large number of matters in which women have an interest, and where women representatives might intervene – the following list is offered. Within the provincial legislatures' legislative competence are the following: administration of indigenous forests; agriculture; airports other than international and national airports; animal control and diseases; casinos, racing, gambling and wagering, excluding lotteries and sports pools; consumer protection; cultural matters; disaster management; education at all levels, excluding tertiary education, environment, health services, housing, indigenous law and customary law. The promotion of industries, language policy and the regulation of official languages

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[15] http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/32/2/year_2001/dokument_id-4883/index.html, Houston 2001:54 [14/04/05].

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are also matters which are within the jurisdiction of the provincial legislature.[16] Media services are directly controlled or provided by the provincial government. Nature conservation, excluding national parks, national botanical gardens and marine resources, police (to the extent that the provisions of Chapter 11 of the Constitution confer power on them) are all within the provincial legislature's legislative competence. Pollution control; population development, property transfer fees; provincial public enterprises in respect of the functional areas, public transport; public works in respect of the needs of provincial government departments, recreation planning and development; road traffic regulation; soil conservation; tourism; trade; traditional leadership, urban and rural development, vehicle licensing and welfare services.[17]

Schedule 5 of the constitution establishes the powers vested in Parliament whereby it may amend the constitution; pass legislation, including laws where both national and provincial government have responsibility. This could be done in health, education, housing, welfare and transport. It can also delegate its legislative power, except the power to amend the Constitution. Laws can be passed in areas of policy where provinces have exclusive responsibility to maintain national security, economic unity, essential national standards, and to establish minimum standards for the rendering of services. Unreasonable action by a province that prejudices the interests of another province or those of the country as a whole can be prevented.[18] The functional areas of exclusive provincial legislative competence are: abattoirs, ambulance services, archives other than national archives, libraries other than national libraries; liquor licenses; museums other than national museums, provincial planning, provincial cultural matters; provincial recreation amenities, provincial sport, provincial roads and traffic and veterinary services excluding regulation of the profession.[19]

The formulation of policy is still dominated by the executive as opposed to the legislature and its committees. This reflects the asymmetry within the system, since the executive possesses more information, greater expertise and access to resources.

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[16] Schedule 4, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108:1996
[17] ibid

[18] Schedule 5, The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108:1996
[19] ibid

The legislature is responsible for passing legislation, initiating or preparing legislation through policy input where it ensures public participation to inform the process. It ensures accountability and exercises oversight. The oversight responsibilities require the legislature to assess how policies and legislation have been implemented particularly in areas of youth and gender.

The executive is responsible for implementing legislation, developing policy, coordinating government departments and initiating legislation in support of policy.

Members of the provincial executive council are largely drawn from the ranks of the governing party. Oversight can therefore be hampered by reluctance in the assembly to call to account Ministers who come from the same political party as the voting members. Furthermore, although the proportional representation system[20] can be used in an effective manner in ensuring party discipline, it may also be ineffective, in that members of the majority party may be unwilling to subject the government to scrutiny. The oversight role of the legislature is also constrained by imperatives of party politics, as party members are likely to protect their fellow members of the executive when under attack from the opposition.[21] Thus there are potential pitfalls in this regard.

Members of the provincial legislature must therefore understand the constitutional justifications and rationale behind accountable government and the purpose it serves for effective oversight to take place.[22] Accordingly, oversight should not be seen as merely the role of opposition parties. "Oversight and accountability help ensure that the executive implements laws in a way required by the legislature and the dictates of the Constitution".[23] The oversight function is an integral part of the overall process of ensuring the effective implementation of laws and policies.

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[20] In the Party List System of Proportional Representation voters select a political party rather than a candidate Political parties then receive their number of seats in proportion to their overall share of the total votes cast. This system is employed in separate elections at the national and provincial levels of government in South Africa.
[21] Maloka cited in Muthien,khosa,Magubane 2000 :117
[22] Maloka (2000:5)
[23] ibid (2000:5)

0.4 Chapter Outline

I will explore whether women representatives in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng seek substantively to represent women and whether in doing so they believe that they make an impact. The following chapters examines amongst other themes, whether MPLs experience difficulties in carrying out substantive representation.

In chapter one I set out the theoretical framework of the study through a review of the key literature that has guided this study. This chapter reviews the literature on the role of women in parliament in South Africa and internationally. The chapter outlines concepts and theories which can be used to explain the role of women in politics and also explores the various themes that will be used in the analysis of the study. An overview of the political context of the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng as well as the political dynamics of South Africa will be explored. The overarching hypothesis in this chapter is that women parliamentarians have the opportunity to represent the interests of women, and may follow any one of three courses: 1) they may represent women and their interests to the best of their ability; 2) they may represent women and their interests occasionally and partially; 3) they may maintain that they have no special obligation to or interest in women's concerns. This hypothesis provides the conceptual framework. Theoretical approaches and related research demonstrate that women's representation in the public sphere or more precisely in national parliaments is related to their structural situation in society, and it must be acknowledged that in South African society they have been, and despite constitutional provisions remain, a disadvantaged group. Moreover, their disadvantaged position has an attendant effect on the manner and extent to which they feel they can use their political clout to secure changes pertaining to women's concerns.

The literature suggests that needs and interests specific to women are better represented by women as opposed to men.[24] The assumption is that women can approach concerns from a female perspective based on their experiences in society.[25] The absence of women from the public sphere undermines democratic legitimacy and public confidence in public institutions, and it follows that the election of more women to public office is likely to result in gender-sensitive public policy.

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[24] Squires 2000:205

[25] Belenky et al, 1987; Galligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1998 cited in Bystydzienski 1992:15

In chapter two I explore the conceptualisations of political representation by parliamentary women in order to determine whether or not they include a gender dimension, and if so, whether or not this includes substantive as opposed to numerical representation. If women representatives at parliamentary level are to represent women substantively, their identification with women and women's concerns needs to be demonstrated.[26] The substantive representation of women presumes that women parliamentarians are willing and able to represent women through an innate ability to identify with the concerns of women. There must also exist in the legislative assembly as a whole a sense that they have a right to do so. The manner in which women legislators conceptualize acting for women as opposed to acting for citizens will be explored in addition to whether parliamentary women perceive that they articulate women's concerns differently from male parliamentarians. Also, the methods by which parliamentary women carry out their representation will be discussed.

In chapter three I examine whether parliamentary women perceive that their presence in parliament is effective and whether examples of their success can provide proof of this. The assumption is that women, by virtue of their gender and presence in considerable numbers, bring about a qualitative effect on legislation which may affect the livelihoods of women in civil society. This chapter attempts to establish whether or not parliamentary women perceive that they have the power to articulate issues and perspectives that may otherwise be marginalized or not fully represented, and whether they perceive that their presence has in fact led to changes in the policy agenda. The disjuncture between their claims of whom and how they represent and what they actually do in practice will be looked at.

Chapter four will be comprised of an outline of challenges and recommendations facing women MPLs in their role of representation. The challenges outlined are drawn from the interviews with women MPLs. The recommendations include implementing a legislated quota system to ensure that women remain in government. A constituency-based electoral system is advised to offset the control of parties in parliament. In the area of training, it is recommended that training modules be tailor made for specific needs of individuals. There should be capacity building in gender awareness on an on going process with specialized training for female parliamentarians. To ensure that women have a forum through which they could

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[26] Childs 2001:181

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engage in more critical acts would require that the institutional position of the WPC be recognised as a standing committee. Since it was evident that women perceived their male counterparts as unsupportive, it is important that a training program be introduced for men to sensitize them on gender concerns. Further training should be implemented to enable all MPLs to identify social, psychological and economic hindrances to the representation process. Channels of communication should be established so women can learn more about each other's cultures and the possible constraints. It is also recommended that formal political institutions be introduced in parliament to monitor the selection process and also ensure that women are not unfairly discriminated.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter the conceptual framework that underpins this study is explored. Firstly, a brief outline of the South African political context is provided, followed by an elaboration of the key concepts used in this study. Secondly, a literature review provides a background of the research that has been done in the area of political representation of women and their self-perceptions as to their effectiveness in changing the lives of women in society. Thirdly, this chapter outlines the methodology used in the research.

1.1 Political Context

During colonial rule in Africa, many women were active in independence struggles. However, they were and still are poorly represented in formal national politics, specifically, in decision-making positions in government, ministries and in parliaments. Women accounted for only 7.8 per cent of cabinet positions in the whole of Africa in 1998. According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, women occupied 10.9 per cent of lower or single house seats in sub-Saharan Africa in December 1999, the third lowest regional rate of representation in the world after the Arab (3.8 per cent) and Pacific (8.7 per cent).[27]

The history of parliamentary representation in South Africa is different: although the social climate of the (white) governing class was equally unfavourable to women in public life and very few were elected to parliament, this fact tended to be obscured by the fact that all black women and men were disenfranchised under the apartheid system. The colonial society in South Africa was always segregationist. Apartheid officially became law after the National Party won the white minority elections on 28 May 1948. Voting and participating in political parties was only allowed to the so called 'white citizens' of South Africa. Black South Africans were forbidden to participate in the elections and voting.[28]

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[27] Yoon 2001: 170

[28] http://www.rebirth.co.za / apartheid history 1.htm [12/18/03]

Apartheid legislation divided the races and demoralized black South Africans and those of Indian descent or mixed race.[29] Apartheid, an Afrikaans word for 'separation', was the term that South Africa's white government applied to its policy of racial, political and economic discrimination against the country's non- white majority in the second half of the 20th century. From the 1960's the government often referred to apartheid as 'separate development'. But what is equally as important as the apartheid laws is the fact that the post-1996 women who were elected to national and provincial parliaments inherited no tradition of women's representation – nor were men in South Africa accustomed to their presence in public life.

Patriarchal practices, present in all South Africa's racial groups, were worsened by colonialism[30] and apartheid. The religious and cultural climate of beliefs of colonialism was allowed to alter the position of women in indigenous law and traditional culture. Apartheid further heightened gender discrimination: the psychological, cultural, economic and political effects of this ideology led to an entrenchment of male power and domination that extended the colonial legacy.

One of the first groups to oppose apartheid was the ANC. Members of the ANC, organized by civil rights leaders, such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, fought white supremacy by challenging apartheid laws. For more than 40 years the ANC organized protests and strikes to draw attention to the injustices caused by apartheid and thousands of blacks were killed in the violence that ensued. As more blacks joined the ANC the organization's power grew. In 1960 the government banned the ANC and other protest groups in order to curb their influence. In the 1990s the ban on the ANC and other oppositional political parties was revoked by the then South African President, FW de Klerk. Gradually the segregationist laws were repealed or were struck down by the interim constitution of 1994, the year when all South Africans were finally allowed to vote. This election brought to power a black political majority led by Mandela.[31]

The National Party Government, which had been in power between 1948 and 1994, had paid scant attention to gender issues. For the other banned and opposition parties in this era the struggle against racial discrimination was considered paramount,

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[29] McGill 2002:8
[30] Jana cited in Britton 2002:55
[31] McGill 2002:8

while attention to women's subordination was deemed a diversion from the main thrust of the national democratic struggle.[32]

The unbanning of the ANC and other political organisations in 1990 resulted in the re-establishment of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL).[33] This opened the way for a series of conferences held from 1992 onwards that debated how gender issues might be tackled in post-apartheid South Africa. Although there was strongly influence by the ANCWL, they drew on a wide range of women's organisations and international expertise. The process of consensus building was facilitated by the emergence of the Women's National Coalition (WNC)[34] who managed to position itself strategically as the voice of organised women and was critical in winning a place for women at the negotiating table. Consensus was built proactively across divisions of race, class, language and culture.[35] The new Constitution of 1996 provided a basis for the establishment of a society in which equality was a primary and non-negotiable principle. It specifically outlawed discrimination based on gender and provided for affirmative action policies to rectify racial and gender-based imbalances of the past.[36]

South Africa's negotiated transition promised significant gains for gender equality as women acquired one third of the seats in the national parliament, secured constitutional protection and began a process of legislative and institutional reform.[37] The increase in the number of seats occupied by women was as a direct consequence of women in the ANC negotiating with their party leadership culminating in the

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[32] Bealle 1998:524

[33] Women in the ANC Women's League played an important role in the liberation struggle as members of the ANC and allied organisations and as trade unionists. They were involved in militant campaigns against the pass laws. Recognising their role, the ANC formed the Women's League in 1943. The Federation of South African Women (FSAW), a multi-racial body was established on 17 April 1954 with the ANC Women's League as its largest component to organise a united struggle against apartheid.

[34] The WNC was a broad federation that provided a forum for the articulation of non-partisan gender interests. Despite internal problems of building an alliance of women's organisations across a racially and politically divided South Africa, the WNC managed to position itself strategically as the voice of organised women.

[35] Bealle 2001:140

[36] Bealle 1998 ; 524

[37] South Africa's constitution has one of the broadest and most inclusive anti discrimination clauses internationally. The equality clause establishes that neither the state nor a person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996: Chapter 2, Section 9 cited in Britton 2002:63)

introduction of a quota system in which one in every three seats on the parliamentary list must be occupied by a woman. However, women in the national parliament continue to face numerous gendered obstacles that block unfettered participation.[38]

There was a long battle[39] on the part of women in the ANC and other political parties and women's organisations to obtain a commitment from the party leadership for a 30% quota for women in the composition of party lists.[40] Nevertheless in the new, democratic South Africa, women have to continue their struggle for power over themselves and the conditions within which they live; only this time some of them are doing so from within government institutions.[41]

The representation of women has significantly increased since the first free elections were held in 1994. Today, South Africa ranks tenth in the world according to the number of women in the national parliament. The party list system of proportional representation has bolstered women's political participation. The ANC's commitment to having one third of its seats filled by women has accomplished two notable objectives. Firstly it has greatly increased women's numerical representation in the national and provincial governments. The second and more lasting impact of the quota system is that it has successfully pressurized other political parties to increase the numbers of women on their party lists.[42]

The party list system of proportional representation was adopted in South Africa in 1994 as the country changed from a system of authoritarian rule to a multi-party democracy. This opened the stage to various political movements and gave rise to the significant increase of women in politics.[43]

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[38] Britton 2002:43

[39] As early as 1913 women worked side by side with men in resistance campaigns and fought for legislative and institutional changes that would remove racial and gender discrimination. By the 1980s new ideas generated by the United Nations Decade of Women culminated in the 1985 Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya, Here the focus of women's activism grew to include the demand for equal representation in decision-making structures. In 1992,the South African Women's National Coalition, which brought together representatives of all political affiliations, issued the Women's Charter for Effective Equality. It called for equality political structures, and was instrumental in putting women's concerns on the agenda during the subsequent negotiations for a democratic South Africa. Both the Women's League of the ANC and the coalition lobbied parties to include women in their delegations to the talks. During this period, the ANC set a precedent by agreeing to reserve 30 percent of its parliamentary seats for women (Jacobson.R and Mathye.M 2001) Http:// www.wedo.org/5050/sweden 2.htm [12/12/03]

[40] Jacobson.R and Mathye.M 2001 Http:// www.wedo.org/5050/sweden 2.htm[12/12/03]

[41] Britton 2002:46

[42] Britton 2002:46

[43] Reyes.S and Villaluz.S 2000

Women's organizations may play an active role towards the inclusion of more women in politics. They not only encourage women candidates to stand for legislative seats, but also pressurize political parties to place more women on their lists. More than 250 women contested civic and parliamentary seats in Kenya's 1992 elections due to the efforts of women's organizations, although as a consequence of the simple plurality electoral system and voter prejudice abilities[44] only six of them were elected to the legislature[45]. Therefore, although women's organizations can be instrumental in including women in politics, it may not be the only strongly motivating criteria.

In South Africa, on the other hand, the Women's National Coalition (WNC), an umbrella organization of women's movements, made a significant contribution towards the ANC's decision to nominate women for 30 per cent of its lists for the 1994 elections.[46] Another factor is that the political party that sets the quotas of women candidates is a majority party. The fact that the ANC is the only party in South Africa to adopt a quota system further suggests that this party is capable of attracting a large number of female candidates.

In many ways, women's activism within the ANC party structure and the WNC parallels a model developed by Lovenduski based on case studies of western European Nations.[47] Women have fostered changes in parliament at national level to increase women's visibility, voice and power. Firstly, women placed gender issues on the party agenda, securing only a formal, rhetorical commitment from the party leadership. Secondly women eased the integration of women's issues into party politics by emphasizing the universal nature of their demands. Thirdly, women worked within the ANC and within external networks of the WNC simultaneously to demonstrate to their party that gender was a national issue and a growing source of power.[48] This was done at the national level of government whereby the WNC's Women's Charter ensured that women's concerns were recognised in the constitution.[49]

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[44] Ibid 173
[45] House-Midamba, cited in Yoon 2001:173
[46] Humaru cited in Yoon 2001:173
[47] Lovenduski 1993:1-15
[48] Britton 2002:63-64
[49] Britton 2002:63

Women's continued involvement in constitutional negotiations ensured that the new South Africa would have a constitution that was gender sensitive and provided a legal framework for genuine and effective equality.[50] The formal commitment to equality in the Constitution has been used by gender activists to argue that the under-representation of women in Parliament is undesirable.[51]

Besides the increase in numerical representation, the results have been dramatic at national and provincial level, as female parliamentarians have altered the political process, changed the face of government and put their stamp on a wide range of new policies. Women parliamentarians have already successfully advocated for the ratification of The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and established structures to promote and protect gender equality such as the Parliamentary Women's Caucus. The lobbying also ensured a passage for the key laws such as The Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act, The Maintenance Act and the Domestic Violence Act.[52]

Women have seen improvements in political institutions, elections and policy-making and continue to foster both cultural and structural changes in parliament in order to increase women's visibility, power and voice. Firstly, women have attempted to alter the institutional culture so that parliament becomes more accommodating of women's needs and responsibilities. Secondly, women have started to incorporate gender issues into the legislative process. Thirdly, women have institutionalized structures throughout government, civil society and parliament that focus expressly on the needs and interests of women.[53] The Commission on Gender Equality on the other hand, is a constitutionally mandated institution and is seen as the country's primary watchdog for gender equality and has the responsibility of keeping a check on the laws passed by parliament. It is an independent body but its members are appointed by the National Assembly.[54]

Women still maintain that as a group and as individuals they face oppression in office and most directly in their private lives. The causes of this continued oppression

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[50] http://www.idea.int/women/parl/foreward.htm [04/09/03]
[51] Hassim 1999:204
[52] Http:// www.wedo.org/5050/sweden 2.htm Jacobson.R and Mathye.M (2001) [12/12/03]
[53] Britton 2002:55

[54] National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, December 1998:45
http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/safrica1.htm [Accesses: 15/11/05]

come from South Africans themselves, with the obstacles to gender equality being linked to the inherited and lingering patriarchal nature of South African society.[55]

1.2 Key Concepts of this Study

Conceptual clarification is required at this point and a discussion follows on the definitions that I use in this study.

The concept of political representation has many definitions and takes many forms. Lovenduski uses two meanings for the term: descriptive representation which refers to the presence of women in parliamentary institutions; and substantive representation which is the inclusion of women's preferences in the policy-making process.[56]

Pitkin (1967) distinguishes between two types of representation, namely 'standing for' and 'acting for'. 'Standing for' can be translated into descriptive or symbolic representation where the composition of the representative assembly reflects popular opinion. Descriptive representation is understood as a mirror, where representing entails being like or reflecting the represented as opposed to acting on behalf of them. The representative assembly should present or reflect popular opinion.[57] Symbolic representation indicates that a person symbolizes the identity or qualities of a class of persons. This type of representation does not require shared experiences between the represented and representatives.[58]

To 'act for' is defined as substantive representation, as in acting in the interests of the represented in a manner responsive to them. Thus representation cannot be guaranteed in advance, but is achieved in a more continuous process which depends on a level of responsiveness to the electorate.[59]

In 'acting for' women, Berry distinguishes between two types of substantive representation. They are, firstly, the act of re-presenting concerns as they might be presented by women constituents. The second form of substantive representation is

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[55] Britton 2002:55

[56] Lovenduski 2002:210

[57] Pitkin 1967 cited in Mokre 2002:7
[58] Squires 2000:203

[59] Pitkin 1967 cited in Mokre 2002:7

the act, by representatives, of defining the interests of women.[60]The presumption that women legislators represent women's interests and perspectives, or 'act for' women is an inextricable part of arguments for parity between women and men in democratic institutions and within the legislature in particular. A woman legislator, it is presumed, has an awareness of what it is to be a woman politician (and indeed a woman citizen), as distinct from what it means to be a politician.[61] Here the significant issue is not just equal numbers, but a gendered awareness of the world and a capacity to represent multiple gendered interests through being close to women in society or by simply being a women.[62]

Furthermore, descriptive representation can be contrasted with substantive representation. In terms of the latter, the realizations of preferred policy outcomes are facilitated by having political interests and preferences in common with one's representative. Theories that descriptive representation can enhance substantive representation are based on the notion that shared experiences result in common interests. Most people believe that others 'like them' will have similar interests and thus behave in accordance with their interests.[63]

An equal numerical presence in parliament is seen as an important sign of gender equality, because women and men have different socialization experiences, different educational and employment opportunities, different priorities on policy issues and different experiences of the state.[64] Incorporating these differing perspectives into policy-making is regarded as important today for many reasons, including those of justice, equality and democracy. On a more practical level it makes for more efficient and accountable government, as legislative deliberations reflect women's and men's differing needs, perspectives and interests.[65] Women's equal parliamentary presence with that of men serves as a goal to which a range of 'hard' and 'soft' political strategies can be directed.[66]

With reference to the concept of feminised political transformation, Phillips argues that women's presence in politics offers an additional guarantee for the

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[60] Berry 2005

[61] Galligan 2001:3
[62] Galligan 2001:3

[63] Vagle 2
[64] Vagle 2
[65] Galligan 2001:2
[66] Galligan 2001:2

political representation of women, namely the possibility that women representatives will articulate women's interests and effect a feminized 'politics of transformation'.[67] Parliament is not only an institution of representation; it is also a training ground for the executive. The presence of a fair proportion of women in successive intakes of MPs is an important element in ensuring that future executives are representative of both gender groups. The successive increase in the number of women MPs forms a basis for the remarkable feminization of government.[68]

If women are to make this kind of difference, they must also demonstrate a feminist commitment, a necessary prerequisite for them in order to seek to 'act for' women.[69] Women's representation is important for diluting the previous male dominance of the public realm. One way in which women can do this is to intervene to shape the agenda to reflect those political issues which are of significance to women.[70]

Whereas traditionally the concept and practice of political representation was not considered to have a gendered dimension, there is an emerging trend in academic literature that contends that when the representative is a woman she will seek, in addition to other dimensions of representation, substantially to represent women[71] Many contemporary feminist theorists claim that a link exists between the presence of women in parliament and the potential for a feminized transformation of politics.[72]

The next concept that will be elaborated upon is that of a feminised agenda. In the context of this research, a feminized agenda implies a real attempt to incorporate women's concerns into political debates, into legislation and into policy. Furthermore, for the agenda to be feminised, MPLs must be in a position to represent women's concerns in the legislature.

Women's political presence offers the potential for a more adequate substantive representation of women than may exist when there are only male representatives. Also women occupy a distinct position in society and share common

[67] Phillips 1995 cited in Childs 2001(b:174

[68] Lovenduski 2001:754
[69] Lovenduski 1990 cited in Childs 2001:178
[70] Fick 2000:44

[71] Birsch 1993, Pitkin 1967 cited in Childs 2001:177
[72] Berry 2005 Childs 2001:177

experiences that give them specific needs and interests which will be better represented by other women.[73]

Women constituents are perceived as identifying with their women MP's and accessing them more frequently.[74] Yet it is not women's presence alone, but the decisions made and policies formulated by them that matter. As Phillips notes, 'in the absence of mechanisms to establish accountability, the equation of more women with more adequate representation of women's interests looks suspiciously undemocratic'.[75]

The concepts of women's perspectives, concerns and issues will now be explored. According to Lovenduski, women's issues are those that mainly affect women, either for biological or social reasons. 'Women's perspectives' are women's views on all political matters. Women's issues can also be explained as those matters that are not taken into consideration unless they directly or indirectly impact upon the female sector of the electorate. Whilst opinion and attitude data suggest that men and women agree that the same issues are significant, women still perceive those issues differently from men and are more energetic in their pursuit of them. When parties canvass women's votes they have to take both women's issues and women's perspectives into account.[76]

In this study I have chosen to use the term 'women's concerns'. Public representatives must be able to represent concerns that are expressed by broad groups of women. Women's concerns are different from women's issues as they entail a broad spectrum of problems that impact on women, for example, social grants, health care facilities, domestic violence, and abortion laws. It might not be a specific problem, such as poor health, that affects a woman directly, but she may suffer instead from the absence of adequate child grants. Women's concerns point to issues that bear on women, without in anyway presupposing what position any given group of women would take on them.[77]. Women speak 'in a different voice' whether because of biological, psychological or social or political differences. These

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[73] Squires 2000:205

[74] Childs 2001:180
[75] Phillips 1998:235

[76] Lovenduski 2001:745

[77] Cockburn 1996 cited in Childs 2001:189; Berry:2005

differences will lead to a distinctive women's perspective on many issues facing society.[78] Proponents of women's culture tell us that women can approach issues from their experiences as women living in contemporary society.[79]

Women politicians have the power to bring a different perspective to their politics both in the way they approach parliamentary politics, including their style and their political priorities.[80] The absence of women, who constitute a major sector of society, would undermine democratic legitimacy and public confidence in institutions. These arguments become more compelling if, in addition, women bring important perspectives and priorities which are currently underrepresented into the policy-making process.[81] .If women are in key policy-making positions in large enough numbers; they can exert influence to ensure the repeal of discriminatory laws against women.[82]

The next concept that I would like to introduce is that of 'critical mass'. Feminist political scientists have used the concept of 'critical mass' as a shorthand term to describe how the effect of increasing the numbers of women in parliament makes further increases inevitable and at an accelerated rate. This suggests that once women have entered parliament in substantial numbers, a precedent is set which is likely to be followed. Generally the figure set for a critical mass of women is about 30% of a legislature. The United Nations in 1995 set a figure of 30% as the necessary minimum for women representatives to ensure their fair representation.[83] Critical mass is based on the belief that the form of a public body will shape the processes and policies of that organization.[84]

Political science literature suggests that the election of an adequate number of female politicians will result in governance which is more responsive to women. This is further agreed upon by Ross who states that women believe that when there is a genuine critical mass of women in their respective parliaments, the way in which business is conducted will be different, accommodating the different working styles of

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[78] Norris 1996:90

[79] Belenky et al, 1987; Gilligan, 1982; Ruddick, 1988 cited in Bystydzienski 1992:15

[80] Ross 2002:190
[81] Norris 1996:89
[82] Yoon 2001:83

[83] Lovenduski 2001:744
[84] Grey 2002:19

women and men, and that a more women-friendly approach to the political process would actually benefit both women and men.[85]

It is difficult to assess at what stage a large number of women in public office will enable women to substantively represent women.[86] In Bystydzienski's study of women in politics in Norway, she found that in the early 1970's when women's representation passed the 15% mark, women's concerns began to gain increasing legitimacy at all government levels. Both female and male Norwegian politicians agree that since more women found their way into political office, female incumbents have felt freer to address women's concerns. Matters of special interest to women such as family policies, education and welfare, childcare legislation or anti-pornography laws have been debated and legislated more frequently.[87] The larger number of women representatives may thus facilitate the expression of women's concerns. Numbers alone may not be enough to translate into representation of women's concerns. Even with substantial numerical representation women need to be conscious of and articulate their particular needs and wishes.[88] As Bystydzienski argues, the mere placing of women in decision-making positions does not guarantee that political and policy changes will take place[89]

It is important to bear in mind that an increase of women in government does not necessarily mean gender sensitivity in policy-making. According to Solo and Lewis, in South Africa and Uganda for example, women's representation in parliament has rapidly increased over the past few years and yet the policies for improving women's rights are by no means commensurate with the growth in the number of women parliamentarians. Furthermore, women politicians frequently struggle against challenges that constrain their participation, even where they do have a high degree of political visibility[90]

A handful of women in a predominantly male congress, parliament or council need make little difference in policy-making priorities. Caroll states that under such

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[85] Ross 2002:192

[86] Bystydzienski 1992:14
[87] Bystydzienski 1992:9

[88] Bystydzienski 1992:22
[89] Bystydzienski 1992:14
[90] Solo and Lewis 2000

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conditions either women 'succeed' in obtaining public positions because they act like male politicians, or if they express views reflecting women's interests, they find little support among their male colleagues.[91]

However, once women in such institutions achieve a significant percentage of the total membership, they may begin to have an impact on the policy process and outcomes.[92]

According to Karram, while the presence of even one woman can make a difference, long term significant change will largely be realized when there is a sufficient number of women in parliament who are motivated to represent women's concerns. Dahlerup, cited in Karram, states that the test to ascertain whether a critical mass of women is present is the acceleration of the development of women's representation through acts that improve the situation for themselves and for women in general. These actions are critical acts of empowerment. In her studies of women MPs in Scandinavia, Dahlerup found that women politicians worked to recruit other women and developed new legislation and institutions to benefit women. As their numbers grew it became easier to be a woman politician and public perceptions of women politicians changed.[93]

There is hope that when a sufficient number of women is elected, their 'critical mass' will produce a qualitative change in political life. Women will no longer be forced to "adapt to their surroundings conforming to the predominant rules of the game"[94] and may bring a more sceptical viewpoint to the assessment of our political institutions and practices. The adoption of quotas by political parties can provide an institutional mechanism for the future mobilization of women who will no longer be required to struggle for political representation.[95]

The evidence that quotas work is overwhelming. They were in use in fifty-six West European political parties by 1998. Parties in these three countries with the highest levels of women's representation – Norway, Sweden and Denmark – have all

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[91] Caroll cited in Bystydzienski 1992 : 14

[92] Caroll cited in Bystydzienski 1992 : 14

[93] Dahlerup,D cited in Karram http://www.idea.int/women/parl/ch1a.htm [15/04/03]

[94] Lawrence 2000:2

[95] Lovenduski 2001:757

used quotas of some kind. In elections for the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly in 1999, parties operated quotas.[96]

In countries where parties have failed to improve women's position, pressure has built up to make quotas compulsory. Although controversial and sometimes divisive, the quota is the device most likely to bring about equality of women's numerical representation. However, supporters of increasing the numerical representation of women have only reluctantly come to accept that a system of quotas is essential to shift the balance between women and men in parliament.[97]

Many feminists have claimed that only when the number of women present in decision-making is proportional to their membership of the population are they adequately represented. This claim has at its heart the notion that women should be represented by women.[98] Beyond the quota system, women's representation is a complex matter, according to Hassim who states that it is not self-evident that only women can represent women's interests.[99]

Nevertheless women's representation is important in shaping the agenda which reflects women's concerns significant to women.

Feminizing politics is about more than increasing the number of women in political institutions. It is about how institutions, processes and procedures are affected by changing the number of women, and about what else happens when the numbers of women change.[100]

1.3 Themes of this Study

The question of substantive representation of women remains by and large under researched in South Africa. Most studies of substantive representation explore this in a European context where countries have long been democratically consolidated. Only two studies exist that touch upon substantive representation in South Africa. One is a comparative study of British and South African national parliaments by Ross,[101] where substantive representation is not the main theme of study. The other

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[96]Lovenduski 2002:211
[97] Lovenduski 2002:212

[98] Lovenduski 2002:208
[99] Hassim cited in Fick 2000:43-46
[100] Lovenduski 2002:208
[101] Ross 2002

study, conducted by Berry,(2005) explores the substantive representation of women in the Kwa-Zulu Natal Provincial Legislature in the context of acute party competition, where such competition was found significantly to limit women parliamentarians acting for women.[102]

I have chosen the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng because the provincial level is one of the key areas in which policy is constructed and implemented. Acute competition between parties is not a key factor in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. The leading party by a large majority is the ANC. The main opposition to the ANC is the DA. Other parties are relatively small and although there is much criticism and objection from smaller parties, they make no radical difference. These smaller parties may articulate concerns but their influence is insignificant compared with that of the majority party. Thus the dynamics of politics, a key factor in cross-party policy formulation in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng, is very different from that in the Provincial Legislature of Kwa-Zulu Natal, where two major parties confront each other.

The theme of *conceptualization of political representation* by parliamentary women is outlined below. When women legislators represent women's concerns, it presumes that they have an awareness of what it is to be a woman politician as distinct from what it means to be a politician.[103] It raises the issue of whether women politicians have some sense of a gendered or even feminist consciousness that leads them to raise and espouse political concerns that are marginal or excluded in legislatures dominated by men.[104] The theme of political representation is used to establish what MPLs perceive their roles in parliament to be. Its use is important in ascertaining whether MPLs have a special interest to represent women's concerns exclusively or as part of a set of broader concerns.

The political representation of women has been the subject of much debate and many publications, which approach the matter both theoretically and empirically. One general observation to emerge from empirical studies, which were conducted at different times and different places, is that female politicians do tend to feel they have a responsibility to represent women. This gender-based mandate, as it were, is

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[102] Berry 2005
[103] Galligan 2001:3
[104] Galligan 2001:3

manifested in different ways.[105] For example, in comparison with their male counterparts, female legislators are more likely to consider women as an important constituency group with specific concerns (Reginold 1992); they may make feminist speeches on the floor or sponsor and co-sponsor feminist legislation.[106] Female politicians are by and large open to the idea of a link between descriptive and substantive representation; their presence on the political scene could change and improve the collective experience of women in the political community.[107] For example, in a survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 65 countries 89% of the 200 women members of parliament (MPs) believed that they had a special mandate to represent the needs, demands and interests of women.[108]

In Child's study, conducted in Britain, on whether the new Labour women MPs continue to seek to act for women, she suggests that Labour women MPs have articulated women's concerns. They have done this in debates in select committees and in Parliamentary Labour Party's Women's Group. In the constituencies, their presence has allowed greater access to women constituents, women's organizations and their representatives and the articulation of a feminized agenda.[109]

Hence this is relevant in this study where the MPLs interaction with the constituents through the hosting of workshops and meetings has contributed to feminizing the agenda. MPLs were able to obtain input from constituents on their concerns and this is an essential element which assists the government in obtaining information for policy proposal. This link between public representatives and citizens is the essence of representative democracy.[110]

Another theme explored in this dissertation is that of the identification of *women's needs and concerns*. This suggests that women MPLs are able to understand and empathize from a female or women's perspective with those they are representing. Furthermore, concerns affecting women are better represented by women who have similar experiences. The feminist research that has emerged within political science during recent years has actualized issues of social representation.

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[105] Skjeie 1991 cited in Tremblay 2003:215

[106] Caroll 2001; Saint-Germain 1989; Tamerius 1995; Tremblay1998; Vega and Firestone 1995 cited in Tremblay 2003:215

[107] Tremblay 2003:215-216

[108] Waring, Greenwood and Pintat 2000, 133-41 cited in Tremblay 2003: 216

[109] Childs 2002:143-144

[110] http://www.geda.co.za/default.asp?index -Cachalia 2006 [10/08/06]

Today there is a wide range of literature highlighting the fact that a male-dominated parliament does not give equal consideration to the interests of male and female citizens.[111] Phillips, for example, formulates the following critique:

> There are particular needs, interests and concerns that arise from
> women's experience and these will be inadequately addressed in
> a politics that is dominated by men. Equal rights to vote have not
> proved strong enough to deal with this problem; there must also
> be equality among those elected to office.[112]

"Women's equal participation in decision-making is not only a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account".[113] In addition, Ginwala states that while the debate about enfranchisement of women and participation of women in decision-making often focuses on issues of justice, equity and human rights, the representation of women and the inclusion of their perspective and experience into the decision-making process will inevitably lead to solutions that are more viable and satisfy a broader range of society.[114]

A study conducted by Childs showed that women parliamentarians tended to identify with women's needs, and that some women constituents felt that they had gender specific experiences about which they were unable to approach their previous male representatives. As a result of women's political presence, an initial politics of transformation is occurring within the MP constituency relationship.[115] Furthermore, a positive relationship exists between women's political presence in parliament and a re-gendering of the political agenda; and therefore their presence enables the articulation of women's concerns. Future debates will be well informed and a new type of agenda will be set, with different priorities which will encompass women's

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[111] Phillips (1995) cited in Lena 2000:1

[112] Phillips 1995 cited in Lena 2000:1

[113] The Beijing Platform for Action 1995 cited in Sawer 2002:8
[114] http://idea.int/women/parl/foreward.htm [04/09/03]

[115] Childs 2001:179

concerns, women's issues, women's experiences and the cluster of problems facing women.[116]

In Childs's study, of those MPs who defined this new agenda, a few focused on violence against women, childcare, education, equal opportunities and employment. The basis upon which women representatives will re-gender the agenda will be based on experiential differences between women and men in a gendered society.[117]

Furthermore, women's historical and continuing subordination gives them 'privileged access to the truth'.[118] Therefore, many women want more female MPs because they expect them to be more understanding of the problems they face. They also believe that they have the potential to bring new qualities to the political scene. They believe they will 'not only add to the dramatis personae but of necessity alter the play'.[119]

In society as a whole, women's and men's lives differ structurally from the cradle to the grave. Women's upbringing, education, their primary role as care givers within the family, their marginalisation and occupational segregation within the paid labour force, lead to distinctive women's perspectives on major issues facing society.[120] Electorates expect greater responsiveness from those who share their social characteristics, and women and women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) tend to look primarily to women MPLs for support Such contacts may in themselves have consciousness-raising effects: it is likely to be women politicians who belong or have belonged to women's organizations who are more aware of gender and gender-related issues.[121] Similarly in this study MPLs felt that they raised concerns about women. Women MPLs also perceived that they were able to identify with the concerns of their communities by virtue of their gender. This study also illustrates through claims of women MPLs that male constituents felt comfortable approaching them as they felt that women MPLs would better understand them then men would.

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[116] Childs 2001: 180

[117] Childs 2001 : 181

[118] Lawrence 2000

[119] http://www.australianpolitics.com/parliament Lawrence 2000 [21/02/03]

[120] Norris 1996:91

[121] Sawer 2002:8

The next theme to be explained is *the effect of the presence of women in parliament*. The actual impact women parliamentarians can make will depend on a number of variables, including the political context in which the assembly functions, the type and number of women who are in parliament and the rules of the parliamentary system. In this study, this theme is used to understand what difference women make in their representation roles in the PLG. Although the quota system has contributed to an increase in the number of women in parliament, this has not necessarily given women more power. Therefore, the perceptions of the effect of women's presence are explored to determine whether women perceive that they contribute in any significant way to change the status quo.

According to Karram, the extent of women's impact will depend very much on the number of women in parliament who are motivated to represent women's concerns. Karram doubts the argument of feminists, that pioneer women parliamentarians became surrogate men, were socialized into the legislature and became indistinguishable from the men they replaced.[122] Men are known to behave differently when women are absent. The presence of even one woman will alter men's behaviour, and the presence of several will alter it further.[123] This is also asserted by Karram, who states that it upsets gender boundaries. West European experience demonstrates that where women MPs have a mission to effect change, even small numbers can produce significant results.[124]

Evidence from other European systems offers a promise of change. The work of Scandinavian scholars shows how over time in the Scandinavian states the increased presence of women has altered styles of campaigning, bringing in expressions of warmth and compassion as well as family references.[125] The latest evidence from the Westminister parliament also promises change. Research by Childs and the report produced by Fiona MacTaggart, MP and member of the Fabian Society, offer qualitative evidence that women MPs accept the additional responsibility of being women's representatives and work well on behalf of women.[126]

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[122] Karram, A http:// www.idea.int/women/parl/ch5a.htm. [04/09/03]
[123] Lovenduski 2002:217
[124] Karram,A http:// www.idea.int/women/parl/ch5a.htm. [04/09/03]
[125] Lovenduski 2002:217
[126] Childs cited in Lovenduski 2002 : 217-218

The discomfort some men feel in a situation where women are present in parliament is well illustrated by one of Dahlerup's anecdotes about the Danish Parliament. Here she describes how, prior to the entry of significant numbers of women in legislatures in Denmark, most politicians did not have the vocabulary to speak about women's social position, sex discrimination, sexual harassment or sexual violence. Most had problems even using the word 'woman' and preferred euphemisms of various kinds, including the equivalent of the 'fair sex' or 'ladies' or 'mothers'. Now Danish politicians know how to say the word 'woman'.[127]

To increase the number of women in parliament or even to increase the number of feminists in parliament is insufficient to ensure that 'women' are better represented.[128] If public decision-making is to become more women-friendly, structures are needed that demand focus on the gender impact of policy and facilitate the representation of women's concerns in the policy process. Therefore it is important to institutionalize considerations of gender impact at all levels of the policy process rather than rely on the presence of women alone. All politicians should be held accountable for their contribution to improving gender equity, and just as gender equity in government cannot be made the responsibility of women's units alone, so the responsibility for representing women's interests in parliament cannot be borne solely by women.[129]

It is important to appreciate that, according to Ginwala, the issue is not about numbers. If policy decisions and laws are to be made for the benefit of all members of society, then the extent to which the decision-making body is able to take into account the experience of as broad a spectrum of that society as possible, will be the gauge of the degree to which its decisions will be appropriate and meet the needs of the entire society rather than those of a particular group or groups.[130]

In South African politics, numbers alone are not sufficient to improve the cause of women. The male-dominated environment of the legislature, the sexism

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[127] Dahlerups cited in Lovenduski 2002:217
[128] Sawer 2002:17
[129] Sawer 2002:17
[130] http://www.idea. int/women/parl/foreward.htm. [04/09/03]

among legislators and party discipline make it difficult for women legislators to vote or press for women's concerns.[131]

Despite these difficulties, female legislators in South Africa have made an impact on passing laws relevant to women.[132] Discriminatory laws against women have been repealed and replaced with laws and policies that promote gender equality as a result of the efforts of female legislators. These include, for example the Domestic Violence Act passed in 1998 which provides an extensive definition of domestic violence, the Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1997, the Film and Publications Act in 1996, and the introduction of separate taxation of married men and women.[133] To assess the potential impact of female legislators on public policy-making, some analysts have explored the attitudes of female politicians towards various concerns. Referring to the United States legislature, Darcy, Welch and Clark state that female legislators are more likely to give priority to the issues concerning women. This tendency, they add, is even stronger when women make up a larger proportion of the legislature.[134] Swers, who examined whether gender affects voting for women's concerns, found that congresswomen are more likely to vote for women's issue bills than their male colleagues.[135] If so, under-representation of women in parliament as Munachonga states restricts 'their capacity to affect legislative change'.[136]

Empirical research also demonstrates that female legislators introduce different types of legislation from their male counterparts and have different perspectives on general issues. In this regard, Patterson illustrates how in American state legislatures female Republicans in office express more conservative views than do male Democrats on issues such as taxes and business matters. However, female Republicans are still more likely to introduce legislation in so-called women's policy areas, such as affordable health insurance, long term care for the elderly, and divorce and spouse-abuse laws, than are male Democrats. The more females there are in office; therefore, the more likely it is that policies will reflect women's interests. For

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[131]McGregor 2001 cited in Yoon 2001: 182
[132] McGregor cited in Yoon 2001:183
[133] Yoon 2001:184

[134] Darcy, Welch and Clark cited in Yoon 2001:183
[135] Swers cited in Yoon 2001:183
[136] Munachonga cited in Yoon, 2001:183

example, in Sweden, where 43% of the national legislature is composed of women, there are laws enabling long periods of maternity leave for new mothers, ensuring access to child care in the workplace and preventing sexual harassment.[137]

In this study, the impact of the quota system in enabling women to act is explored. Women MPLs face numerous challenges which can constrain the ability of MPLs to truly act. While Karram states that the impact of women will depend on the extent to which MPLs are motivated to represent women's concerns, this is not always the case.

1.4. Research Methodology

The dominant methodology employed in this study is that of qualitative data collection. In order to explore ways in which women MPLs conceptualize women's political representation, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used. This enabled me to gather perceptions and probe respondents to elaborate on aspects of their representation that could not be discovered through other sources. The open nature of the interviews allowed informants to enter into frank discussions about the topic. Furthermore, ongoing dialogue between the researcher and the interviewees, through emails and telephone discussions, provided the opportunity for follow-up questions to be posed.

The interview sample consisted of nine women parliamentarians and one gender researcher, currently located in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. The information pertaining to the background of the women's caucus was obtained from the gender researcher who has been in the research unit for six years. As my case study focuses upon the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng, these interviews are the most important source of information for this study. Each interview, which was approximately one hour, was tape recorded and the anonymity of each respondent was guaranteed.

The transcripts of the interviews constitute the data of this research. The transcribed responses of MPLs are presented in quotation marks. My analysis of the data is presented in accordance with the themes of my dissertation

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[137] Patterson 2000:15

Table One: Respondents by party

Party	Respondents	Percentage
ANC	6	60
NNP	1	10
DA	1	10
IFP	1	10
Other	1	10
Total	10	100
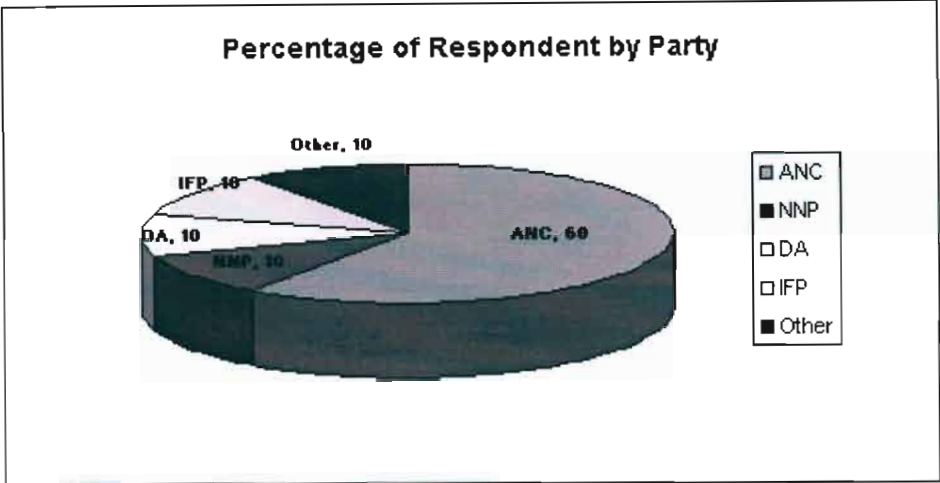
As shown in the table and chart, the majority of women in this sample are ANC MPLs. The dominance of the ANC MPLs in the sample is due to the ANC being the majority party in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. Hence, more ANC MPLs were included. Through the proportional representation method of elections, most MPLs were deployed rather than directly elected.

Table Two: Respondents by Race

Race categories	Respondents	Percentage
black	8	80
white	2	20
coloured	0	0
asian	0	0
Total	10	100

Percentage Respondents by Race

	Black	White	Coloured	Asian
Percentage	80	20	0	0
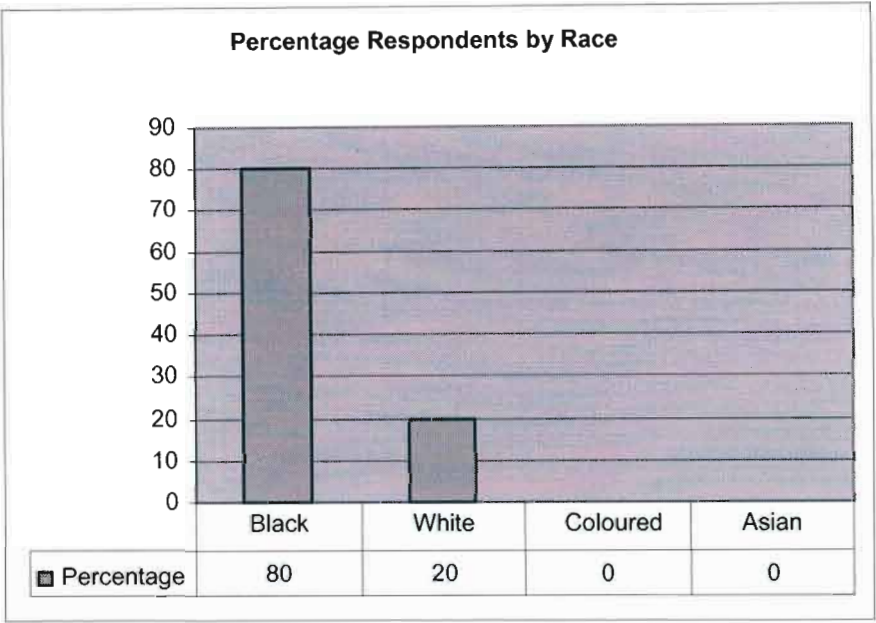
The majority of interviewees were black. This racially skewed sample can be explained by the fact that in the Province of Gauteng the ANC is the dominant party, which has a strong following in black communities, as opposed to communities in which other groups are in the majority. Since legislatures represent people, they are likely in a democracy to reflect the make-up of the population at large.

1.5 Limitations

Although twelve women parliamentarians were approached for interviews, one said she was unavailable due to the high demands of constituency work and pre-scheduled meetings. Two MPLs however, made appointments but did not keep them. Furthermore, some interviewees did not respond adequately to the questions pertaining to the topic during the interviews. Some respondents did not elaborate thoroughly when questioned further and in some instances provided monosyllabic answers.

In addition, there was no primary documentation available on the precise formation of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus. Although minutes were taken at a few meetings of the WPC, I was unable to access these. As a result, I had to rely upon a parliamentary researcher's understanding of the WPC for basic information.

My findings on the matter of male support for female MPLs and their interests are limited because I confined myself in this study to the exploration of the attitudes of women MPLs. The data therefore shows the opinions of women MPLs regarding the attitude of male MPLs.

My research was further limited by the small number of participants in total, and the fact that there was only one each from the NNP, DA and IFP. As a result of this I had no way of verifying whether the perceptions expressed by the interviewees from each of these three parties were widely held among other members of their parties. In addition, as the dominant group of interviewees, the perceptions of the ANC MPLs are predominant in this study. The conclusions that I have drawn in this study must therefore be viewed in light of these limitations.

In the next chapter I explore parliamentary women's conceptualization of political representation. Interview data is analysed to establish how women conceptualise acting for women. The concerns upon which women MPLs seek to have an impact are examined together with the ways in which they seek to carry out their role of representation. In addition, I explore how parliamentary women articulate concerns differently from male parliamentarians.

Chapter Two

Parliamentary Women's Conceptualizations of Political Representation

In this chapter I analyse parliamentary women's conceptualizations of political representation. I explore, through interview data, the ways in which these women conceptualise acting for women as opposed to acting for citizens or constituents. I further explore the concerns upon which they seek to have an impact and the ways in which they seek to carry out their role. In addition, the perceptions of parliamentary women in terms of how they articulate concerns differently from male parliamentarians is examined.

2.1 Parliamentary women's conceptualizations of representation

The responses received varied in terms of the manner in which MPLs perceived representation. In South Africa proportional representation is used which allows parties with even a small-scale presence amongst electorates to find a voice in the legislature. The electoral system is not based on constituencies, but on party lists.[138] Despite this, political parties informally allocate a broad constituency to MPLs following the election.

Of the respondents interviewed, many conceptualized political representation as representing a constituency or party. They felt that having a constituency allocated by a party creates a responsibility towards the people and their problems in that constituency. Respondents indicated that the problems with the proportional representation system and being allocated a constituency is that one loses contact with voters as a member is not answerable to a constituency which has elected her. They also suggested that unless public representatives realize that they have a responsibility towards a specific body of people, they are not effective enough.

The importance of constituency work was stressed by many women. It was apparent that constituency work was a place where many women found their strength. In this study 3 MPLs indicated that their constituencies are areas where they gather information about women's concerns that they then bring forward into parliament. They indicated that women in their constituencies approach them in great numbers approach them to bring forward concerns that affect them.

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[138] www.parliament.gov.za/eupsp/newsletters/building-democracy - chapter 2 [07/01/05]

Many developed policy concerns through their attempts to intervene in constituency based cases and working with local organizations and groups. My interviews reveal instances where MPLs were using their power to access resources for their constituencies. For example, respondent 8 of the ANC explains that she obtained satellite offices for her constituency of Katlehong to assist the local population more effectively. She says: "we went to the Department of Home Affairs to try and get Home Affairs to some areas where there was nothing….Home Affairs told us that if people live beyond a 5km radius they can get offices closer to their areas".

Some respondents indicated that they represent constituencies which comprise individuals from various sectors, such as domestic workers or labourers in hostels. However, they claimed that the women comprised a major group in these constituencies. It would appear that concerns that affect women are not taken lightly by MPLs, who suggested that although they come in as 'people representatives', being women themselves allows them to identify with problems specifically associated with women.

Although the PR system ensures the inclusion of diverse opinions and communities in national and provincial legislatures together with the contribution to the growing number of women representatives, its inherent weakness is the diminished contact with citizens and the inaccessibility and ineffectiveness of MPLs. This could undermine political accountability and effective representation of constituents. This is well illustrated in the complaint of MPLs, who indicated that being deployed as opposed to being elected in certain areas does pose a problem for them in terms of their representation. Although they say they represent people at a grassroots level, this usually does not manifest itself in the desired degree of support from constituencies. For instance, one of the respondents 5 of the ANC indicated that although she saw herself as being elected by the people of Thembisa, she was eventually deployed to another area called Bryanston. According to the respondent, the two areas are extremely different in terms of their social and racial composition. While Bryanston is inhabited by middle and upper-middle income groups in which whites predominate, Thembisa is a low income township inhabited by black people. This makes representation difficult.

Mayo defines representation as "acting for" or in the interest of the represented in the manner responsive to them.[139] This concept would be extremely difficult to apply to the experience of the aforementioned MPL. Not only is it difficult to access constituents, but the representative finds difficulty in identifying the concerns of constituents.

The aforementioned respondent 5 of the ANC, states that *"In this area of Bryanston there are mostly whites and therefore it is not easy to meet with them because you can't just knock on their doors. In black townships there is not a problem. You just call people into the church and meet with them there."* Many reasons could be attributed to the fact that the MPL cannot knock on doors. It is possible that the MPL lacks the confidence in approaching the constituents of that area due her own racial perceptions of the constituents in that area. Another possible reason could be that she does not have the time and would therefore prefer constituents to meet her in one place. If this is the case then the MPLs ability to represent would be difficult. Furthermore, the MPLs ability to represent would be constrained by her lack of knowledge on the community in order to identify where policy gaps are and what needs to be done.

The perspectives women would have on policy-making are the result of their social, psychological, educational and employment background and experience. In this regard as Ross shows, women politicians bring a different perspective to their politics both in the way they approach parliamentary politics, including their style, and political priorities.[140] An example of this in this study is that of a DA MPL who says that:

> Since I am the official spokesperson for gender in the Gauteng
> province, it adds another dimension to my duties, whereby I am
> now particularly concerned about issues affecting women and
> children. Furthermore, being a lawyer by profession influences
> my attitude towards issues of gender violence, domestic violence
> and violence against children in my constituency.

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[139] Mayo 2002:7
[140] Ross 2000:190

Saying that being a gender spokesperson adds to her duties, suggests that extra work is imposed on her for which she must carry out. This therefore raises doubts as to whether the MPL would have ordinarily represented the concerns of women specifically, had she not been the spokesperson for gender. Also her interest in violence on women and children seems to be the result of her profession. Although her profession would bring expertise which is needed in the policy formulation arena, it is once again questionable whether she would have been influenced to represent these concerns.

The NNP respondent 4 suggested that since her party has more conservative values, they get more support from women. In this instance, this does not necessarily mean that the representative represents women, but since her party receives greater support from women then she believes that she must be sensitive to the concerns of women. Furthermore since MPLs are mandated as constituency representatives, this automatically translates into some representation of women's concerns. Pitkins's (1967) definition of substantive representation as acting in the interest of the represented in a manner responsive to them would clearly not apply to the experience of the ANC MPL who was allocated the constituency of Bryanston. On the other hand, one of the two definitions of substantive representation defined by Berry (2005), that of the act of representing concerns as they might be presented by women constituents can be applied to the experience of the NNP MPL.[141]

The 'safe spaces' theory coined by Childs suggests that the substantive representation of women by women representatives depends partly on the establishment of spaces in which feminised analysis can be freely articulated.[142] The lack of such safe spaces is clearly evident in this study and is illustrated by the experience of a NNP MPL. The NNP respondent 4 indicated that because a woman has to fight for survival amongst men, she dare not really represent women. As far as the NNP is concerned, community issues rather than women's concerns are represented. According to NNP respondent 4: *"within the community I would focus on women but I don't stand up and only voice issues that only affect women as such"*. In this instance there is clearly a tension between a woman MPLs parliamentary career

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[141] Berry 2005
[142] Childs 2001:178-185

and her wish to act for women. This leads to the assumption that if a MPL desires promotion she cannot only act for women, but she must act for other constituencies too. It is also possible that she won't act for women, or be persuaded not to be seen doing so. This supports Phillip's contention that the substantive representation of women by women representatives is not guaranteed.

While some women did recognise an obligation to act in the interest of women, others preferred to act for communities as a whole and not women specifically, thereby safeguarding their positions as MPLs. While Squires, for example, states that women need to enter formal politics to work for women's interests,[143] acting for women has not always been the motivating factor for their entry into politics. The responses received by MPLs indicate that politics is also about gaining and maintaining popularity in a party as opposed to being instrumental in making changes. It seems that some MPLs would rather act according to their party's mandate (whatever that may be) and thereby ensure that they are placed on the party list for the next election.

Other respondents from the ANC indicated that they did not necessarily see themselves as representing women but rather a much broader spectrum of people. However, MPLs emphasised that the advantages of having women representatives in parliament is that they are able to put forward issues that affect women specifically. It can nevertheless not be assumed that women legislators have a shared experience that unites them because of their gender. Respondent 4 of the NNP, and respondents 7 and 9 of the ANC deny that gender influences their political behaviour and they argued that they are politicians first and that gender does not shape their political priorities or their representation of constituents. The ANC respondent 9 says: "I would normally perform as a politician because I don't look at myself as doing a man's job or a women's job."

Respondent 4 of the NNP states: "your problem as a female politician is that at the end you don't really represent women because you have to fight for survival amongst the men and where I am concerned I am representing community issues rather than women issues." In this regard, while the critical mass theory assumes that the entry of more women in the political sphere will make a difference to the policy

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[143] Squires 2000:204

process; this can be challenged through the safe spaces theory. In this instance women do not necessarily possess a safe space from which they may freely articulate women's concerns.

The argument that women politicians who belong to women's organizations are more aware of gender-related issues[144] is found to be supported in this study. Some representatives who are members of the ANC Women's League, an integral part of the ANC structures, suggested that they feel a sense of commitment to representing women's concerns. Respondent 6 of the ANC explained that her background in women's organizations influences her representation role and she states that: "I am also part of the women's league, the women's structure of the ANC. This constituency is surrounded by informal settlements and the majority of the occupants are women who don't have IDs and I am trying everyday to go to the department of home affairs to try and get that sorted out for them."

Also, their background and involvement in trade union structures like COSATU further influence their responsibility towards women. Two respondents, 6 and 8 of the ANC, claimed that since they had been investigating women's concerns in the labour movement of COSATU, they were seconded by COSATU to the legislature in 1994. Therefore, they had to continue to represent women.

Three women representatives, two from the ANC and one IFP derive from the history of South Africa and the fact that women have been oppressed to a greater degree than men, a common willingness to support women. In addition, women share an affinity with women based on their traditionally designated roles in the family. Furthermore, historical events continue to influence their conceptions of representation in that they see themselves as instrumental in bringing about changes for women. Women's historical and continuing subordination gives them 'privileged access to the truth' [145]

As respondent 8 of the ANC stated, "*I believe I am representing women, in particular the poor because for quite a long time they have not had a voice and especially with the previous dispensation the rights of black women were not there nor included"*

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[144] Sawer 2002:8
[145] Lawrence 2000

This MPL perceives that women from non-black communities do not have concerns about rights. In this regard, it is possible that the concerns of other communities of women could be excluded.

There are general expectations that women politicians will share the concerns of women in their constituency. It also appears that women politicians who belong or have belonged to women's organizations and union structures are more aware of gender related concerns. Furthermore, there is the impression that the women do subscribe to a general understanding of political representation as having a feminized dimension.

2.2. How do they Represent their Constituency?

Most respondents from the ANC indicated that they represent their constituents via their offices in certain constituencies. At these offices they have somebody deployed to record problems experienced by the constituents. They also have a petition system that is taken to the legislature and through interaction with the MECs, MPLs are able to take issues directly to the MECs' office where they are dealt with. A petition refers to a request or complaint from a member of the public and allows individuals or groups to raise issues in a formal way without having to go through a particular member of the legislature.[146] When a petition is received, it is forwarded to the Petitions and Public Participation Committee. The Public Participation and Petitions Office is a formal mechanism set up for citizens or members of organisations to participate in the law making and governing process of their province. It is through this petition system allows concerns of individuals to be taken to parliament directly or via the constituency offices. For example ANC respondent 8 claimed:

> Since I am on the committee for social services, I would check
> on grants, and bring issues of children needing wheel chairs to
> the fore. At one stage I've had to approach the MEC for Health
> to ask her to offer some assistance to the disabled school. As it is
> now, [the] MEC ... is still busy with the issue of the wheel

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[146] Houston 2001:56

chairs and when she tabled her budget vote in the chamber she believed that by the end of July she would be through with the issues of the chairs and other areas she was approached to assist in. And with the MEC for Social Services, even if I don't necessarily bring the issues up on paper, I am able to talk to her at the caucus meetings or whenever I need to, to get a response.

Respondent 3 of the ANC indicated that they get the media involved in writing and publishing articles on problems experienced in constituencies. In this instance although the MPL would be deliberately exposing herself to unnecessary scrutiny by involving the media, it is also possible on the other hand that she uses the media to try to obtain a platform to expose the fact that women representatives are constrained. After all, women are new in the political arena and the architects of party policies are men. The extent to which a woman is able to make an impact is based upon the political context within which she works. In the context of this study there is evidence to suggest that obstacles to women's participation and effective representation include party bosses and male colleagues.

MPLs claimed to have held training workshops to advise people on the most recent legislation such as that concerned with the rights of The Domestic Workers Act, and also inform communities on how the legislature works. Respondents claimed that these workshops encourage women to bring their problems to the fore and discuss them. Since MPLs are representatives of the electorate they are responsible for making and initiating policies and laws that are consistent with the interests of the people. Therefore, the responsibility of the legislature is to obtain as much public input on proposed legislation. Public input also allows for a diversity of viewpoints to be heard.[147] It is through these forms of interaction with the public that the legislature can obtain information on what the electorate expects of government.

Respondent 3 of the ANC indicated that they have a monitoring system whereby they keep a record of the number of women that have applied for social grants, for housing and also those dismissed from work. According to respondent 3 of the ANC, her monitoring system reflected that her constituency was comprised of

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[147] Houston 2001:56

more women than men. Respondents claimed that this monitoring assists them in determining the extent of the problems that are experienced and accordingly has also helped in getting the problems resolved. A checklist has been in place each month which is included in reports and it has become policy to include women's concerns in reports, monthly and annually.

Respondent 8 of the ANC also indicated that the means by which they represent their constituents is through holding meetings and inviting people to attend these meetings. It is here that they engage the constituents in discussions to establish what problems they are experiencing. Based on the severity of the problem, the MPL in question discusses it directly with the MEC on an informal basis to resolve the problem as quickly as possible.

Although constituency offices are allocated to parties in certain areas, one ANC respondent 8 claimed to represent their constituents by assisting with their concerns directly, and not only via the party offices or through parliament. This is done, for example, by visiting the Department of Home Affairs and requesting satellite offices for remote places, visiting clinics to check on the conditions there and if they are user- friendly for the constituents.

Norris states that women's upbringing and education, their primary role as caregivers within the family, marginalization and occupational segregation in the paid labour force leads to distinctive perspectives on major issues facing society.[148] Respondents claimed that they felt that it was important to know the plight of people, especially women who headed the families. They claimed that the manner in which they try to understand the difficulties of women in the constituencies is to get closer to them and get feedback on the efficacy of basic service delivery to all families in these areas. It would certainly appear that with reference to the concept of identification with women's needs and concerns, women MPLs appear to understand and empathize with whom they are representing.

According to Respondent 9 (IFP), her constituency is broad and includes people from all races. She states that the constituency offices are paid for by the legislature, and the set constituency day is Wednesday. However, constituency work is done everyday and meetings are held with constituents. The IFP has an open-door policy, it is claimed, whereby people can call the office whenever they need. The IFP

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[148] Norris 1996:91

has offices for MPs and MPLs who can be seen by appointment. The respondent indicated that based on the request by the members of her constituency, certain subjects are addressed. The respondent indicated that *"tomorrow we are going to look at issues surrounding HIV/AIDS and AIDS Orphans. It will be here at my constituency in Soweto that I will be addressing this type of subject that has been requested".* In this instance the MPL is 'acting for' her constituents in a manner responsive to them which translates into substantive representation whereby the MPL acts in the interest of the represented.[149] Similarly, Berry identifies one method of 'acting for' as the act of re-presenting concerns as they might be presented by constituents.[150]

It is evident here that in their attempts to understand the plight of their constituents, feminizing of the political agenda is taking place. Furthermore, MPLs are not only attending to the queries of women of the constituency, but to those of a broad spectrum of individuals. This goes back to the earlier discussion on the MPLs concept of political representation where many mentioned that they did not only represent women but also represent the communities. It seems that women's concerns are not disregarded, but considered alongside other types of concerns.

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[149] Pitkin cited in Mokre 2002:7
[150] Berry 2005:34

2.3 The Concerns upon which the MPLs seek to have an Impact

Table 3: Respondents, categorised by the concerns upon which they seek to have an impact.

Concerns	Number of Representatives	Party
1. Social concerns		
Social services	1	ANC
Poverty	1	IFP
Gendered violence	3	DA,ANC
2. Children		
Violence against children	3	ANC,DA
Youth	1	ANC
AIDS mother to child	2	IFP
Girl child	2	ANC, NNP
Crime	1	IFP
Rape	1	ANC
3. Rights based concerns		
Abortion	1	ANC
Education	2	NNP, ANC
Affirmative Action	1	ANC
Domestic workers	6	ANC
Housing	2	ANC
Disability grants	1	ANC
Disabled children	1	ANC
4. Empowerment of women		
Political development of women	1	IFP
Gender mainstreaming	2	ANC
Representation of women in parties	1	ANC
5. Other		
Budgets	1	ANC,NNP
Liquor bill	1	ANC
Justice system	1	ANC

At least 70% of respondents indicated that they had articulated women's concerns. Five women had a common interest, across party lines, in social issues affecting women. MPLs indicated that the concerns often brought up by women were, violence, unemployment, child abuse, women abuse and crime as these problems are deemed to be rife in many constituencies.

There is a general expectation that women politicians will share the concerns of women in the community and electorates expect greater responsiveness from those who share their social characteristics.[151] Six respondents indicated that the Domestic workers Act is one area of concern for many women in their constituencies and therefore information on the Act and educating women on it was important. In this regard MPL claimed that they assisted through conducting workshops. Respondent 9 of the ANC said: *"we have training workshops where we explain latest legislation such as domestic workers act".*

In this study although women constituents are shown as willing to talk to their MPLs, the MPLs have indicated that men from constituencies are also accessing them and feel comfortable talking to them. According to the MPLs there are numerous reasons for this. Constituents find female MPLs more approachable and therefore are able to express themselves freely on any concerns affecting them. It seems that most women constituents who access their MPLs want to voice women's concerns. Thus it can be argued that the women constituents are articulating a feminized agenda when they contact the women MPLs.

Respondent 4 of the NNP, however, elaborated predominantly on budgets and education and how they affect women. She also discussed her interest in other areas where she was interested in conducting an assessment of schools to determine how female educators fare in terms of promotions. She claimed that : *" there is not enough data from departments and as different departments fail to submit analyses, the information given is not accurate and this makes work impossible".* The lack of data and information from departments would result in insufficient information to identify what needs to be done, thus rendering the MPLs monitoring and oversight role as devoid of substance. For MPLs in such circumstances it is difficult for them to then identify policy gaps to further engender policy.

Respondent 9 of the IFP stated that their party manifesto covers numerous concerns such as those on development and self-help and self-reliance. Her party, she claims, encourages people to empower themselves while using available resources. She claimed that they are critical about anti-crime policies and take a firm stand on the death penalty. She also claimed that the IFP has a firm stance on poverty-related issues, as her party has a big following in communities that are poverty stricken. Her

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[151] Sawer 2002:8

claims indicate that as a representative she puts forward her party manifesto as opposed to representing the concerns of women specifically and separately. This suggests that the MPL does not separate out women's concerns as it is possible that she sees it as part of the party policy. The MPL does not see women's concerns as separate from other policies.

Respondent 9 of the IFP advocates training women as leaders and empowering them in positions but disapproves of tokenism. Both the IFP MPL and the NNP MPL mentioned the issue of tokenism, inferring that the calibre of placements of MPLs in the Provincial Legislature that are currently made in terms of group-representation is not at an adequate level of competence. This suggests that these parties might not be keen on the use of voluntary quotas as used by the ANC and are critical of the manner in which women are placed, and chosen to be placed, even though this results in increased numbers of women representatives. The emphasis on the statement, "empowering women without tokenizing" by the IFP respondent 9 suggests clearly that other parties do not have confidence in the competency of the ANC placements and the capacity of ANC women to carry out their parliamentary role.

> In accordance with this view the IFP states "with the IFP women's concerns and bringing up women as leaders and not as tokens is something that we've always been very critical about. We don't tokenize, we actually empower so all our women that are in positions are women that can stand their ground and are women that know what they are talking about..."

This suggests that if women don't have the capacity then they won't be able to act for women. The mere placing of women in positions of power will not translate into effective policy changes for women. In order for critical acts to take place, political parties and institutions have to change, says Lovenduski.[152] The adoption of quotas by political parties provides an institutional guarantee for the numerical representation of women who will no longer be required to struggle over and over again for political representation.[153] Therefore, there is validity in this for women in parties to realise that once they have the opportunity to get into power they must maximize their

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[152] Lovenduski 2001:757
[153] Lovenduski 2001:757

position in obtaining as much benefits they can to capacitate themselves to be effective representatives.

2.4 Ways in which MPLs seek to act for women

The extent of each political party's commitment to gender equality directly influences the success of the political system in making provision for women's concerns to be addressed. Although all political parties have made a formal commitment to gender equality, and most include a gender dimension in their party manifestos, the ANC is the only party that is prepared to use a quota. No other party guarantees an institutional provision to promote the numerical representation of women.[154] Without such a commitment from their parties, women remain underrepresented in parliament for these political parties. As such, MPLs may find it difficult to develop and implement engendered programmes.

Within political institutions, structures have been put in place to facilitate women's participation. The National Assembly (the first house in South Africa's bicameral parliamentary structure at the national level) and all nine provincial legislatures have established the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC). In provincial legislatures other than Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, the (WPC) is effectively an ANC Women's Caucus, as no women representatives from other political parties are involved. In Gauteng the Women's Parliamentary Caucus is made up of women from several political parties. The WPC according to respondents is a means for women from across party lines to put forward concerns that affect them as parliamentarians within the legislature and as women from outside the legislature. The intended role of the caucus is to monitor and shape the agenda and ensure that the concerns of women are addressed in all public policy areas. The WPC is also supposed to critically evaluate what is being done in provincial departments in terms of its gendered impact.

A brief outline is provided below of the background of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus. Included is a discussion on how the caucus was formed, together with the scope and functions of the caucus.

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[154] Matlosa cited in Kalley; Matlosa and Kadima 2004:1

2.4.1   The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC)

During the year 2000 a committee called the Legislative Services Board (LSB) was chaired by the speaker, Firoz Cachalia. This committee was not a standing or portfolio committee but was the highest decision-making structure in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng. The LSB at the time requested the research unit of the legislature to conduct research within the legislature on gender mainstreaming, youth concerns and disability. However, there was a request that emphasis be placed on gender and youth and how to incorporate them into the work of the legislature. The research was eventually carried out by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) and it was completed in 2001. In the light the outcomes of the research, the speaker Firoz Cachalia decided that a structure was needed in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng for women's concerns. This was called the WPC and formed in 2001. In 2001 the constitution of the caucus was established.

1. Interested members on a voluntary basis from all parties were represented, and a convenor was appointed. The parties involved included the ANC, DP, NNP, FF;,FA, IFP, ACDP and UDM. The convenor of the caucus was to define the agenda of meetings in consultation with members.

2. The WPC had no definite mandate and did not have the powers of a regular standing or portfolio committee.

3. All proposals from the Women's Parliamentary Caucus were to be referred to the Legislature Process Transformation Group (LPTG)

The scope and function of the caucus was as follows. They were to:

1. make policy proposals to the LPTG on gender and youth;

2. develop processes through the LPTG to ensure that gender and youth concerns are incorporated as one of the priorities of the legislature;

3. identify training needs and arrange training for MPLs on gender and youth issues;

4. integrate gender concerns within the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng.

According to the researcher, the Speaker of the House was prominent in establishing the functions of the WPC. In 2002, a workshop called the Joint Workshop for Office Bearers was held. It was comprised of the Chief Whip, the Chair of Chairs (in charge of the functioning of all standing committees), the Speaker, the

Leader of the Opposition; the Provincial Secretary and the Deputy Speaker. The workshop was held in order to ascertain ways and means of taking the caucus further and to discuss its role and status. It was at this workshop that the Speaker proposed an Executive Standing Committee (ESC) of the WPC which would allow recommendations to go forward from the WPC. This effectively established two structures, the WPC and the ESC. The ESC was to be a standing committee. It had the power to call on all other departments for information. Standing Committees and Portfolio Committees are established by the legislature. Appointees to the committees are dependent upon the party share of seats in the legislature. The parties decide who sits on what committees in accordance with the proportion of seats on a committee they receive. The Speaker sets the legislative agenda in consultation with the Whips of the political parties.

The ESC derived its mandate from the WPC which advises the ESC on which issues to take up. Members of the ESC are also members of the WPC. The WPC serves as a plenary structure to mandate the ESC.

The mandate of the WPC was as follows:

1. to serve as a plenary[155] assembly;
2. to be primarily female, but if males wanted to join they could;
3. to meet once every quarter;
4. to be chaired not by the convenor, but the chair of the ESC.
5. to make policy proposals on Gender and Youth

The powers and functions of the ESC are listed below:

1. to scrutinise and comment on the activities of government;
2. to act as a conduit for expressions of opinion such as petitions, and generally to encourage public participation in government;
3. to comment on and prepare legislation;
4. to engage with women's interests in constituencies;
5. to table reports from the ESC in the house.

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[155] Through the plenary, legislative and policy initiatives are presented to the public. The plenary session ultimately accepts or rejects legislation although most of the detailed analysis of issues may have taken place in committees. Debates in the plenary can bring together different policy areas and perspectives and catch the attention of the press and public. Thus, the main role of the plenary is to provide a forum for public debate and decision making.

The name 'ESC' was changed to the 'Gender Committee' in the period between the end of the second legislature in October 2003 and the beginning of the third legislature in January 2004. The researcher who was interviewed on this matter said, *"this is not even documented anywhere and no one knows why the name has changed. The change of name is information that is lacking but there is no idea how the new name came about. However the power and function has not changed"*. MPLs who were interviewed did not know this either.

In 2004, during the third term of the legislature, the annual report on gender was tabled in the house for the first time. In 2003, as the researcher informed me, the Gender Committee had expressed an intention to adopt, from 2005 onwards, the method used by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) to conduct their meetings, that is, to investigate all departments and their budgets in the same manner as that of SCOPA regarding finances of different departments. This was intended to ensure that consideration was made for the inclusion and provision of women in the budgets and how the budgets affect them. The establishment of these structures suggests that the WPC itself is not given power and it derives its power from the other sub committees that are created to act for it. This also suggests that the WPC has not received that status of a standing committee.

2.4.2 The Achievements of the WPC

Respondents were divided on the subject of achievements of the WPC. Respondents from the ANC believed that the WPC had been instrumental in bringing about changes within the legislature. These changes, they claimed have favourably affected the work environment of the MPLs. The WPC is used to question the government as to gender mainstreaming, affirmative action and empowerment of women. The ANC being the dominant party clearly has a biased perception of the achievements of the WPC, although MPLs of the IFP, NNP and some ANC MPLs believed otherwise.

It was claimed that in the past the Chairperson of the WPC had not been a member of the Legislature Process Transformation Group (LPTG), a sub-committee headed by the speaker to transform the Legislature. Women up to this point were not represented on that committee and the fact that the chairperson of the WPC is now

sitting on it, respondents believed it is a new achievement for women. According to respondent 7 of the ANC:

> Thus far we have achieved a mechanism where we are going to do quite a lot of oversight, referring to actually evaluating what is being done in departments provincially on women's concerns. Even nationally there is the office of the status of women and the women's caucus who more or less function the same way we do.

MPLs claimed that the WPC has also gained the status of a committee. However, during further interviewing it was evident that most respondents were divided in opinion on the status of the caucus. Their perceptions were also not in line with what the actual status of caucus was at the time of the study. The researcher who was interviewed on this matter also confirmed that the caucus was not given the status of a committee. MPLs have misunderstood that the facilities given to them are simply to assist in their work rather than representing any official recognition that the WPC could be an institutionalised mechanism for women. Most respondents agreed that the facilities provided offer a great achievement as it translates into privileges to the caucus that it did not enjoy in the past.

Respondents indicated that in the past the caucus could not hold meetings in committee rooms like other committees, nor did it have the assistance of researchers and coordinators. They claimed that the committee status of the caucus has benefited the MPLs in terms of the facilities available to them, which make their work much easier. It was mentioned that the WPC has secretaries now, which relieves the MPLs of minute-taking in meetings, further assisting them with their work. MPLs seem to believe that the few privileges they are given means that the status of the caucus has been upgraded to a committee, which is not the case. Although the WPC is only an ad hoc committee, it has nevertheless achieved and pushed for changes that benefit women as mentioned above. However, the status of the caucus still lies in balance and many MPLs have no clarity on whether it is a committee or not. In line with Berry's study, it would appear that the women in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng recognise that the institutional position of the caucus impacts upon their ability to engender the agenda. The question is whether they now recognise that if the status of

the committee has not been institutionalised, this will impact upon their ability to engender the agenda. It would appear, in this case, that they do not recognise this.

Respondent 9 of the ANC claimed that the caucus obtains a good response from members. Barring in mind here that the respondent is ANC and that majority members of the WPC belong to the ANC, it would explain the positive impression of caucus attendance. It would seem that that the presence of the ANC majority clouds the absence of the small minority who do not attend, as will be discussed later.

The respondent also believed that the WPC is good in dealing with matters affecting women and youth. She explained:

> It is now a year that we have come up with the WPC and what we have managed to do is look at the issues of youth in parliament which as mothers we felt was important. You do find that amongst the youth the majority are girls. We had a number of workshops where women from different sectors were explained how the legislature works, how we draft the laws, how we come up with bills. We have had a number of petition workshops where we taught people how to draft a petition.

MPLs, through the WPC are attempting to feminise the agenda. They are actively engaging their constituents, especially through explaining the drafting of petitions. Through this process the potential exists for a new agenda to be set. In terms of her response regarding caucus meetings, respondent 9 of the ANC claimed:

> Amazingly, the response is good because when you have a multiparty workshop all women from various party affiliations will be present, and the way they respond to concerns are quite common. Even at those forums we don't use our party but we have a common vision as women. In fact when parties campaign they don't put women's concerns at the fore, but when we are in our workshops as women we talk about women generally and not our parties.

The WPC serves as a 'safe space' with the potential to produce more critical acts.[156] With reference to the comment of respondent 9 above, attention must be drawn to the claim that when parties are campaigning they do not put "women's concerns at the fore". This suggests that although the caucus seems to be a 'safe space' for such discussions to take place in the general parliamentary environment women's concerns are rarely mentioned. In this environment, women do not necessarily substantively represent women's concerns. Furthermore, during election campaigning, women's concerns are less likely to be expressed by parties, as claimed by the respondent, which suggests that women MPLs represent a view of their party's interests which is less sensitive to gendered matters.

The assertion was made that in acting as overseers, the WPC has noted the postings and promotions that are made and how they affect women. Parliamentary session times have changed as a result of the efforts of the caucus, from 14h00 till late at night, to 10h00 until 16h00. Some respondents claimed that they can now take concerns, like the lack of facilities for female MPLs, to the WPC. They could not do this when they entered the legislature in 1994. While four MPLs of the ANC, one NNP MPL and one DP MPL felt that things were difficult in the beginning, they were however positive that their presence in increasing numbers has contributed to a change in the political environment in which they work.

A further achievement of the caucus is that business is now viewed through a gendered lens. Respondents indicated that bills and budgets are looked at critically in terms of how they affect women and women's development, and programmes for women. Respondent 2 of the ANC put it as follows:

> As a result of our voice, all departments now comply after each and every budget that is being allocated and even after each and every vote it must be indicated what has been done for women. In Gauteng we have made sure that women's caucus not only focus on women parliamentarians but also the broader constituencies. It is now policy that each and every department must reflect

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[156] Berry 2005

in their budgets what they have done for women and this
is something that we have pushed at the women's caucus

The requirements of reporting upon gender forces government to consider it in their policy-making and thus in this regard women MPLs have secured substantial substantive representation by both men and women.

The ANC MPLs claimed that they have managed to work together with members of other parties in the WPC. Although they claimed that their party differences are clear-cut in the caucus, the concerns of women seem to elicit a similarity of attitude across the board. Mention was made of the style of seating in caucus meetings, with one respondent stating, "*usually in meetings at the head of the table is the chair with the majority party to its right and the official opposition on the left of the chair. In the women's caucus all parties sit wherever they please without adhering to that system*". This in itself suggests that at the caucus meetings all women come together with a common goal, irrespective of party. Their common interest is in being a support group which provides a safe platform for them to express their concerns. What is questionable here is the degree of effectiveness of these sessions.

The effectiveness of the caucus is further emphasised by the following claim, made by another respondent, who says: "*other parties don't entertain problems of women, but when all women from the different parties sit together at the caucus they manage to bring their problems to the fore*". Many respondents indicated their pride in achieving the changes that have taken place with the help of the caucus. Men had to be encouraged to look at things through a gendered lens. The Speaker has been very supportive: as one respondent put it: "*We often take things to the Speaker and the Speaker will simply issue a memorandum to staff*". The term 'supportive' in referring to the Speaker, may suggest that women MPLs cannot truly take action without outside support. If the caucus had real power, it may be argued, it would not need to have recourse to the Speaker to issue memorandums. It might alternatively suggest that women recognise the institutional position of the Speaker as a further ally in securing a women's agenda.[157] Respondents from the ANC were divided in their views of the achievements and status of the WPC. Other parties, such as the IFP and NNP,

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[157] Berry 2005

were also sceptical with what the caucus has done thus far, confirming the existence of a division in opinion on the WPC. Furthermore, one respondent 5 of the ANC did not have any knowledge of the caucus's activities to date and therefore were unable to respond or elaborate substantially during the interview.

In particular, respondent 5 (ANC), when asked about what the caucus has done thus far answered as follows: *"Nothing. We formed this women's caucus early this year so we are still trying to come up with more documents. We are still struggling with the terms of reference and once we finalize that we will come up with a policy"*. The response indicates that there is a lack of knowledge amongst some MPLs of the role of the WPC. It is questionable whether this ignorance is due to a lack of initiative amongst MPLs concerning involvement in the caucus, or a failure of caucus members to communicate adequately with all the MPLs that are eligible to participate in it. Furthermore, why does the process of devising terms of references and documents take so long? The fact that no formal mechanism is in place for the caucus as yet clearly suggests that too little significance is attached to the status of the caucus by parliament in general.

The status of the caucus is in question in terms of the MPLs' attitude towards it, together with the division of opinion that exists over its achievements and status. This could explain why some MPLs regard it as a waste of time. Also, the contradictions in the comments made by MPLs about the WPC being a committee indicate the lack of knowledge that MPLs have concerning the status of the caucus. It suggests that MPLs are unaware of the happenings in their environment. Obviously, if the caucus was recognised as a standing committee, as some claim it to be, then there would not be the kind of problems that exist. There is clearly no consistency in the views of MPLs on the status of the caucus. Women are unaware of their environments within which they operate and therefore lack the capacity to act on behalf of women.

The NNP respondent claimed that the WPC has not achieved what it intended to and she suggested that the objectives of the WPC need to be made clear. Although the same respondent did indicate that the WPC is in principle necessary in order to ensure that women's concerns can be represented across party lines, she also indicated that she was not a regular attender at the caucus meetings. *The reasons for this according to respondent 4: " at this stage there is no consistency with the caucus. They meet, then they cancel the meetings and it saddens me"*. If the caucus were a

standing committee, members could be sanctioned for cancelling meetings as and when it suits them. Also there seems to be some level of frustration on the part of the NNP MPL 4, regarding the lack of consistency of the caucus which explains why she was not a regular attender of the meeting. This respondent suggested that although there is a general commitment in theory towards concerns affecting women, it does not manifest itself in practice. She believed that the WPC could be developed into a committee that is taken seriously but at this time, arrangements of all kinds are insufficiently formal.

The NNP MPL 4, claimed that: " caucus meetings are often cancelled and that the caucus has not developed into a structure that can be respected by men". On the other hand some respondents argued that the caucus constitutes a place where MPLs can discuss their concerns and aim to influence government decision-making Therefore, it can be argued that it is a safe space from which the substantive representation of women may potentially take place.

The IFP respondent 7 claimed that although a lot of concerns affecting women are tabled at the caucus, there is not a clear commitment to attend and otherwise involve oneself, from many women or from men. This particular MPL did believe that the WPC should be inclusive of men. While this indicates her lack of understanding for a safe space for not herself but also other MPLs from other parties, it also suggests that she believes that only through the involvement of men could women make a difference. She indicated that people only register the importance of the work of the caucus when it is Women's Day; but it is not clear whether the implementation of resolutions taken by the WPC occur. This MPL claimed that in many departmental programmes there are few stipulations as to what is being done for women. She mentioned that things are discussed during lunch breaks on an informal basis, which diminishes the seriousness of the problems that are being discussed; no minutes or recordings of such discussions are made. The respondent stated that: *"You don't even see benchmarks that are addressing those issues...I think we as women need to ensure very vigorously that we do our oversight on those issue".*

Another respondent from the ANC indicated that the caucus has not really achieved what it set out to, as the members are still learning many things. A failure to be self aware and a lack of capacity among women also hampers substantive political

representation.[158] Issues that have been spoken about have not been addressed and furthermore the caucus has not created conditions which are congenial to women. Respondents also claimed that the caucus has not come up with adequate reports on matters that it had dealt with which could be used to put pressure on the legislature and the executive. A reason given for this was that our country's democracy is still too young, and has not yet accustomed itself to the idea that all groups, including the previously oppressed, should be heard. Also it was claimed that in the majority of committees there is a battle to define benchmarks to evaluate performance. A lack of capacity in the legislative committees in parliament hampers substantive political representation. As the parliamentary committees struggle to define evaluative criteria, women's concerns are suspended.

Respondents were also questioned about whether women's concerns were tabled at the caucus and what the response was like from other women. In this regard, not all respondents felt that there was support from other women. Many believed that the caucus is not successful in looking at women's concerns as there is apathy amongst some women who seldom attend meetings or are uninterested. Respondent 2 of the ANC states: *many women don't want to engage in debates in the women's caucus. They would disappear, look for stories. In the DA one woman is committed, the IFP has a woman who is committed, while others just don't care".*

The NNP respondent 4 indicated that: *"although women's concerns are brought up in the caucus, the minute they go back into the house, MPLs revert to emphasis on established party concerns. So in the case of the ANC, the women's caucus representatives might have agreed with other party representatives, they fall back into party discipline the minute they have to move into the house."* Once again, this illustrates that the caucus is considered a safe space which allows women to agree unanimously on concerns. However, it would seem that women do not perceive that they have sufficient power once in the legislature to carry through their proposals. Therefore, women do not have the ability to substantively represent the concerns of women and a possible silencing is taking place outside the caucus. This could also suggest that women of the ANC are career minded which would limit the extent to which they would seek to act for women.

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[158] Berry 2005

Some respondents from the ANC indicated that women from their own party don't even attend the caucus meetings as they believe that it is a waste of time. This failure to attend occurs in all parties. According to Respondent 2 of the ANC,

> many white liberal women very often don't attend caucus meetings, but they sit in on other committee meetings till late at night. Now this definitely does not support what changes we as a caucus want to bring about in favour of women here at the institution. But it is not many of them and since they are in the minority we don't really care, but it is sad that they would do anything just so that their party expects it and their male colleagues accept it.

The respondent above makes reference to the NNP MPL who was not a regular attendee of the WPC meetings. The NNP respondent herself also attested to this claim in an earlier discussion. Given that the minority parties have few seats and many committees to attend to, women MPLs from minority parties simply don't have the same amount of time to attend the WPC as MPLs from the dominant party. Hence, the limited number of seats held by minority parties means that MPLs from those parties are overworked, and women's concerns suffer as a consequence. Also the institutional position of the caucus could also mean that it is not considered as important as other standing or portfolio committees and therefore impact further on attendance for women MPLs who are already stretched.

MPL 7 of the IFP indicated that although the caucus is significant in bringing women's concerns to the fore, it would have more impact if men were brought on board, as one cannot separate men from something that also concerns them. It was pointed out that the caucus, although called the WPC, is not for women only but open to men and therefore more men should make the attempt to attend. The respondent also suggested that it would be a good idea to implement programmes related to men's interests and not discuss concerns that affect women alone. The MPL does not recognise the safe space nor does she see women as a special interest group because of their subordinate position in society and this approach threatens to subsume women's concerns to other struggles. The MPL also appears to buy into the traditional

contested conceptions of power between men and women, by failing to see that women can act for women. She seems to suggest that only if men are involved would more be done. This could also suggest that only if men are involved, more will be done for women.

The caucus can be seen as a 'safe space' for women to air their problems, but not by all women. Some women don't even recognise it as a safe space or see why it should be just women only. Perhaps the divide in opinion on the status of the WPC is indicative of a more substantial problem, which is the institutional position of the caucus. The fact that the caucus has not been given the status of a standing committee suggests that women MPLs may be tempted to be lax in their commitment to it. This was the case in KwaZulu-Natal.[159]   Undoubtedly, the caucus is an arena in which women have the power to act. But, do they act and take the deliberations of the WPC beyond the caucus? Perhaps not, as indicated by the responses of some of the interviewees. In fact a silencing of women's views seems to be occurring outside the caucus. The only avenue that the WPC appears to have right now is through the Speaker. Thus they recognise that the institutional position is important and will use the Speaker's position accordingly. Women's institutional power is not only dependent upon the number of women occupying leadership positions, but it is also dependant upon the ability of women to organize themselves collectively. The link between women's numerical and substantive representation would be strengthened if there is consensus amongst members of the WPC. This is further enhanced if the WPC was to be recognized as a standing committee.

The strategies women MPLs employ to cope with often hostile working environments are many and various (Ross 2002:197). The caucus could be a strategic space in this regard, if it received the support of all, or even most women colleagues. In this context, the cross-party cooperation that already exists may provide an arena in which women are able to survive and cope in the male-ordered world of parliamentary politics.

Perceptions of representation in this study were found to be varied. Some MPLs felt that they have an obligation to represent the concerns of women, being women themselves. Other MPLs believed that their representation role is not gender

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[159] Berry 2005

specific but is inclusive off various other constituencies. The majority of women, however, were found to express their interest in women's concerns.

Women MPLs articulated that they felt that it was a struggle as women to survive in their parties. As a consequence, what was particularly evident was that MPLs political ambitions were a primary focus for some at the disadvantage of women's concerns.

Within their wider roles, women MPLs have used their constituency work as a method to engender the agenda. MPLs conducted workshops, held meetings, advised constituents on the legislative processes and also assisted with petitions for constituents. This indicates that there was a concerted effort to identify the needs of women within communities through involving the public in the policy process. Therefore through actively engaging with constituents, MPLs were acting in a manner that was responsive to them.

The concerns MPLs perceive that they have an impact on included social, political and developmental concerns. Women in all parties expressed concerns that cut across these three categories. Women in the ANC were found to predominantly support social and developmental concerns, while IFP women were primarily concerned with developmental and political concerns.

The WPC is the only mechanism available to women in their attempts to engender the agenda. However, the majority of women did not have knowledge of the official status of the WPC and failed to recognise that the institutional status of the WPC was not equal to that of other standing or portfolio committees. Many sub structures existed next to the WPC which indicated that the WPC did not have powers but had to use the other structures as avenues, a factor which was not clear to the women. Women MPLs did, however recognise that institutional status was important in securing a women's agenda. As such, they used the Speaker as an important ally to secure the women's agenda.

A few MPLs were disgruntled about the achievements of the WPC, while others felt the WPC achieved a lot for women. It was evident that in not recognising the real status of the WPC, women were not aware of the environments within which they operate and therefore lacked the capacity to act for women.

In the next chapter I will examine the perceptions of women's effectiveness in parliament. I will look at the question of whether women perceive that their presence

has made a difference in articulating women's concerns for gender mainstreaming. Changes in the political agenda as a result of their presence will be explored, together with any difficulties which they perceive that they experience in carrying out their representative role.

Chapter Three

Do women perceive that they make a difference?

In this chapter I shall try to determine whether parliamentary women perceive that their presence in parliament is effective. I shall investigate whether the presence of women has made a difference to the articulation of women's concerns in parliament and whether women perceive that their presence has led to changes in the policy agenda. This chapter explores what has been done to feminize the political agenda in order to mainstream gender issues. The difficulties women parliamentarians experience in carrying out their representation role will also be explored.

3.1   The Effectiveness of Women in Parliament

There is strong evidence in this study where MPLs believed that the increased numbers of women in the provincial parliament has made a tremendous difference to their ability to carry out their representative function.

Theorists argue that in order for women to be effective in political institutions, their numbers must reach a certain level, so that a woman representative is no longer an unfamiliar (or even resented) presence. This is evident from the responses of women MPLs who agreed that had women not been there in substantial numbers it would not have been possible to bring about institutional and policy changes for the benefit of women. This sentiment is shared by women parliamentarians of all parties, suggesting a recognition by them of the link between the presence of women and their substantive representation. Respondents also indicated that women's concerns are unlikely to be raised in the absence of women MPLs. A respondent 2 of the ANC when asked whether male colleagues bring up concerns of women stated: *"No. Not necessarily. They would often bring up issues of finance while women would often raise questions of health and social issues. My thought is that if there are no women representative's women's concerns would not be raised."* Their effectiveness is enhanced with an increase in their number. Moreover, it appears unlikely (though it is obviously untestable) that women would be represented to the extent that they are if no quota were in place.

One of the changes that were brought about in favour of women through the establishment of the WPC was the provision of a day-care centre in the legislature.

Although some MPLs indicated that the day-care centre is not used by all women, it does illustrate that women do continue to campaign for facilities on behalf of their women successors.

Respondents indicated that although they felt that the presence of women is effective in bringing about changes, the process has been very slow. In late 1996 and early 1997 WPCs were institutionalized by establishing structures such as gender committees in every institution. These women's structures looked at enabling women by teaching them how to write speeches and reports, to undertake public speaking and scan reports and documents. The funding received was channelled into those areas. Once the enabling of women MPLs was achieved, the focus was shifted onto women constituents. Women's initial ability to act for women was hampered by a lack of capacity.

On the other hand, respondents 2 and 3 of the ANC claim that women's presence is still not effective enough. Within some political parties, women's concerns are dismissed, since women MPLs, when in the legislature fail to raise or to support such matters. If the majority of women are uninterested in women's concerns, an increase in the number of women will make no difference. Even with substantial numerical representation women need to be conscious of and articulate their particular needs and abilities.[160] Therefore, Bystydzienski argues that the mere placing of women in decision-making positions does not guarantee that political and policy change will take place.[161] It seems that many women align their interests with those of men for fear of being ridiculed. Women need to be convinced that women's concerns are important. If the claims by the aforementioned respondents are correct, it suggests that there is a conflict of interests amongst MPLs of the same party. It would seem that, at least in this case study, women may not share a common understanding and commitment in terms of their obligations to the concerns of women. These divisions among women and lack of support for one another's efforts can hinder substantive representation and the feminizing of the political agenda.

The quota system adopted by the ANC has encouraged other parties to follow suit and place women on their party lists.[162] Although this increase in numbers is

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[160] Bystydzienski 1992:74
[161] Bystydzienski 1992:14
[162] Britton 2002:53

welcomed by respondents, the special obligations of women MPLs as well as their competence is at times questioned by MPLs of the IFP and the NNP. The MPLs feel that the quota system does not benefit them. Numerous reasons could be advanced for this, an important one being that they (and their constituents) may feel that the urgent need to increase the number of women in parliament has resulted in competence being sacrificed for tokenism. This could possibly mean that they would rather have a more competent man as a representative than token women. Critical mass is based on the belief that the election of an adequate number of female politicians will result in governance and policy which is more responsive to the needs of women. In this instance, the critical mass thesis can be challenged in that not necessarily will the increased number of women representatives result in effective representation. The same conclusion was drawn in Berry's study too where she argues that parties may be the arenas that replicate contested societal conceptions of a woman's place.[163]

The fact that some women have neglected matters of gender confirms that they are not adequately conscientized or that they prefer to adhere to the party line, which in itself is not sufficiently inclusive of gendered matters. In Childs study one of her pessimistic interviewees argued that transformation in parliament would be determined by the behaviour of women themselves, whether or not they actively pursue changes and make politics more gender conscious and more gender sensitive. It was evident in her study that some MPs seek to further their own careers.[164]

The fear of jeopardizing their careers in terms of elections may be the reason for some MPLs not paying attention to women's concerns. Women, like men, enter politics with their own personal agendas. Often, individual ambitions like advancement in their careers result in a lack of interest in the concerns of women. If career advancement is a priority then feminizing the agenda may be neglected and the transformation of politics will not take place. Hence in this study, like Berry's the party list system and the critical mass thesis may indeed be in a state of tension.[165]The NNP respondent believed that the presence of more women in parliament would increase the effectiveness of women, though the attitudes of some male colleagues

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[163] Berry 2005
[164] Childs 2001:183
[165] Berry 2005

might remain less supportive. According to Respondent 4 of the NNP: "*Some people don't speak about it, but chauvinism is alive and well in the political world*". She claimed that male politicians were reluctant to interest themselves in women's issues, and preferred to delegate those tasks to women. The mindset of male colleagues makes it difficult for women to operate in this environment. During the course of this study, however, four respondents, number 2 and 3 of the ANC, number 4 of the NNP and number 7 of the IFP claimed that some progressive men do support concerns raised by women.

The NNP respondent 4 claimed that the presence of women has also allowed them "to keep men in check". She noticed that in the ANC an increasing number of women were branch executives, and that a similar pattern was emerging in her party. "*There has been a noticeable change with more women coming to the fore, and this has been a very good sign*". This is attributed to the precedent set by the ANC's implementation of the quota system and as a result other parties are following suit. Also by being branch executives, it allows women a better institutional position which enables more critical acts to be made.

While one respondent from the DA, and a few from the ANC felt that the 30% representation of women is not enough and that 50% would be a truer reflection of the population composition, one ANC respondent 8 claimed that women in her party resisted the 30% stipulated for women representation. She felt that having more women representatives makes no difference and claimed that: "*when it comes to elections find that male colleagues get elected more often as opposed to females*". The IFP and NNP while supporting the increase did however feel that the calibre of women being elected must be considered important. Some MPLs have even suggested that currently men are threatened by the increase in number of women representatives.

3.2   Feminizing the Political Agenda and Mainstreaming Gender Issues

Studies of women's impact in the political arena, including policy-making, have supported the notion that women politicians have a distinctive role in setting the policy agenda.[166] This idea was supported by most women MPLs who said that they raise different policy concerns from men. Respondent 1 of the DA, respondent 2, 3, 8

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[166] Freedman 2002:186

and 9 of the ANC felt that since they could identify with the needs and concerns of women, they felt obligated to put them forward.

Respondent 1 of the DA indicated that her party has formed of a structure which they call Democratic Alliance Women's Network (DAWN). She stated that this structure focuses on the development and empowering of women in terms of their economic and socio-economic position.

The powerful influences of ideology, party policy and party discipline shape not just how women analyse interests, but how far they can go in representing certain interests.[167] This is illustrated in the response from the ANC MPL 2 who felt that the integration of women's concerns on the agenda is controlled by party policies. The MPL does not seem to realise that the party policies are created by men, nor does she consider that the party is an arena which is dominated by men. Her lack of awareness of the importance of institutions is problematic. She claims: *"If parties want to pursue women's interests, then they must integrate these into their party policies, even if they delegate the implementation of such policies to women politicians. Party policies ensure that the integration and representation of women in the political sphere is accepted and engendered policy is promoted"*. Furthermore, her response implies that the integration of women's concerns on the agenda is an easy process and she does not recognise or perhaps chooses not to acknowledge the possible constraints that exist in engendering a parliamentary agenda.

The WPC supports the amendments to electoral acts whereby all parties will be compelled to have a minimum of 30% representation of women, although not all women in parliament will be equally interested in women's concerns. Not all political parties are supporting the quota system adopted by the ANC. If many women are in parliament as tokens, as suggested by the IFP respondent 7, in order to meet the required quota, this could seriously affect delivery. Although the NNP respondent 4 felt it was good to have quotas in place, there was a sense of ambivalence in her tone as she also believed that "on the other hand unless you have proper developmental programs for ladies you can find yourself in embarrassing situations". The DP respondent 1 was also critical about quotas and felt that although there needs to be a 50% representation of women in parliament, women must be represented equally. She

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[167] Galligan 2001:3-4

says : *"within my own political party for instance our representation in the legislature is more than 50% so without a quota it just realizes in that way".*

Squires claims that women should enter formal politics to work for women's interests, but the present study suggests that this is not always the case.[168] Placements engineered to satisfy the demands of quotas can cause conflict where there is a lack of knowledge of society and its needs. A woman who is aware of her lack of experience and is indebted to male party officials may hesitate to pursue a separate agenda from theirs.

Respondents of the ANC indicated that since this is the majority party there can seldom be a disagreement with the established gender policy which might prevent women MPLs and even men from supporting reform in gender matters. In Berry's 2005 study she showed that in areas of party competition women were unlikely to support one another across party divisions. In this case, where party competition is almost absent and one party dominates, a women's agenda can theoretically be guaranteed if the dominant party support it. The ANC quota compounds this further, claimed respondent 3 of the ANC. Even if some individuals are not happy to include women's concerns on the agenda, they are in the minority and have no choice. One ANC respondent 3 states that: *"If there is disagreement, then there is nothing they can do since these changes are enforced, particularly in the ANC, whether you like it or not".*

MPLs claimed that through men dominating the political arena, many women become sidelined. Some respondents indicated that not all parties place women in leadership positions. The ANC respondent 2 explained: *"in the Whip structures of the ANC, women are in the majority, but unfortunately in the DA they removed a women as Whip and replaced her with a man, but since it is their party politics one cannot interfere with it".* She further explains that: *"this is something that would never be allowed to happen in the ANC, where a woman is replaced by a man".* She suggested that in her party one "can make a noise" and be listened to, unlike in other parties, and therefore it would be difficult to replace a woman with a man. The respondent also indicated that if a woman on the party list becomes ill or quits, she must be replaced by another woman. This indicates that although women have achieved positions in politics as public representatives, parties have not really changed to include women in

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[168] Squires 2000:204

senior decision making positions. While Lovenduski suggests that parties must change their ways evidence here indicates that that is not really the case.[169]

The NNP respondent 4 stated that there is no method of integrating women's concerns with the main political agenda. She believes that although members of the WPC may ask questions about gender issues, it is not done in a coordinated manner. Other portfolio committees, according to her, have done nothing yet about integrating gender issues with party agendas. She claimed that women themselves are the barriers to mainstreaming gender issues, since they fail to coordinate or identify the real issues. The lack of coordination of meetings suggests that no formal processes exist to create a platform for the integration of gender issues. Furthermore, the lack of cooperation amongst women MPLs would render the process difficult and less will be done for women.

Furthermore, there is also the perception among women MPLs that less assertive colleagues were a hindrance to their roles as politicians in brining about change. The NNP respondent 4 explains:

> I must say to you that the new HOD of local government is a
> lady and she is very soft and I fear that she is not going to be
> forceful enough to put benchmarks in place for service delivery
> by local government to women. I'm concerned that within the
> department in which she is placed she may not be able to take
> these issues forward simply because she is around too many
> men.

This suggests that some women are easily influenced by their male counterparts and are intimidated or lack confidence. It also suggests that being too "soft" or having a personality that is less assertive disadvantages them. The relevance of the personality type of a woman MPL to service delivery can only be explained in terms of her ability of to act independently of influences, whatever her inclinations. Training which would effectively enable them (I have already described the training that they receive at present) should be given to women MPLs if they are to achieve this independence. Being surrounded by men cannot be reason enough for a women

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[169] Lovenduski 2001:757

being unable to act on behalf of other women. The suggestion by MPL 4 of the NNP above underestimates the potential of women MPLs to develop in this way. The very office of MPL creates the expectation that a woman who occupies this office should be assertive and able to function amongst male counterparts.

Carmen Lawrence of the Labour Party in Australia points out that "women cannot afford to show any weakness".[170] The NNP respondent adopts a similar stance to Lawrence's, in that she sees a confident and assertive persona as a prerequisite for achieving credibility amongst parliamentary peers. Ross however, maintains that there are double standards at work here, and the confident individual may be caught up in the conventions of the male-ordered environment, rather than challenge this male-favouring context and work to change it.[171] This study therefore challenges the claims of Ross.

On the other hand, the experience of Margaret Reynolds of the Labour party in Australia indicated that she tried to retain her own sense of propriety in discussions with male colleagues in an aggressively debating context and realised that despite using a variety of different tactics she was still ignored and undermined.[172]

3.3. Challenges Experienced by Women MPLs in Carrying out their Representation role

Although the electoral system may facilitate an increase in women's numerical representation, it cannot be a guarantee of the effectiveness of women MPLs in articulating women's concerns. Conditions are affected by cultural norms which place expectations upon women, the lack of skills and capacity of MPLs in terms of carrying out a representative role, and a lack of support from other female MPLs and male their counterparts both in and across parties.

The domestic role occupied by women MPLs acts as a further obstacle to their effective participation due to family expectations and demands. Women MPLs in their family life continue to bear the responsibility of assisting their children and preparing family meals. Meetings run late into the night and this schedule fails to accommodate women's gendered responsibilities. Although some MPLs claimed that through the

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[170] Ross 2002:192
[171] Ross 2002:192
[172] Ross 2002: 195

WPC they have achieved a change in seating times more suitable for women, this is not necessarily the case as is illustrated by the response of some respondents. Respondent 2 of the ANC states: I have children to see to. Meetings that run late into the night give no consideration to the fact that women have to see to their children." This sentiment is also shared by respondent 7 of the IFP.

Amongst the respondents interviewed it was apparent that the kinds of problems experienced by women parliamentarians included a lack of support from men in their families but the women themselves at times lacked confidence. Respondent 7 of the IFP states that: "majority of the women are the best speakers in the women's forums, but if the husband has to call and give her instructions to do something immediately, she drops everything and she goes". Although women have made entry into the public realm of work and politics, their domestic demands hamper their participation and hence their ability to represent. Women must also remain responsible for the household – they can occupy the public space so long as they still take care of the private space What perpetuates this further is that some MPLs have unsupportive partners who are still embedded in traditional modes of thinking that women are the keepers of the home. Therefore, cultural conceptions of this nature and the gendered division of labour effectively hamper the ability of women MPLs to represent women.

Respondents believed that, although quotas for women increases the numerical representation of women, it can also be embarrassing if there are not proper skills development programs for them. The NNP respondent 4 spoke of a woman in the legislature who had been there for nine years and had not developed adequately. The respondent says: *"this is not creating a good impression of women's capabilities, while there are other capable women who don't hold leadership positions although they may be able to stand up against men in their rank".*

This claim suggests that women may be placed without proper training and development and this requires attention. A lack of proper training could hinder their participation in the legislature. Also the lack of capacity among women does not help women to be taken more seriously by men. It is questionable whether the women's empowerment units adequately identify the training needs for women. Respondent 2 of the ANC speaks about the kind of training women received when they first entered parliament. She says: "At first the capacitating of women was looked at on how to

write speeches, how to speak in public, how to write reports and how to go through documents the funding that was received was specifically meant for that". Whilst it is certainly the case that untrained and inadequately skilled persons of both genders may be elected to the legislature, the special demands on women may require additional attention over and above the training needs that overlap with those of their male counterparts. Placements in leadership positions are questionable in this context. The party-list system of proportional representation used in South Africa implies that a woman MPL must have worked hard in her party to obtain a leadership role despite her lack of competence. The quota system could also be criticized from the point of view that it has the potential to undermine the image of capable and effective women who have progressed through merit. When quotas result in the appointment of women who are not ready or qualified for positions, their failure can do harm to the cause of women's representation. In the long run these factors could undermine the case for representation by and of women.

The general lack of male support for women's concerns and women's own poor attendance at caucus meetings are serious problems of which other women parliamentarians are aware. However according to the ANC respondent 2:

> Fortunately with the ANC, it is policy that women's concerns are part of policy in all departments. There are a few men who have their old traditional ways of thinking, including some liberal women who are not too keen on women's concerns as they see it a waste of time, but they are forced to accept change due to policies that exist whether they like it or not. So in fact they are not a long term problem to our representation role at the legislature.

This claim indicates awareness that the presence of women does not necessarily imply that women will support each other and 'feminize' the system or policy. However, the influence of the ANC seems to be a major mechanism ensuring that women's concerns are put forward. It also raises concerns about the future of women's representation should the ANC lose support and votes. On the other hand having one party creates an environment in which there is an absence of party competition and women may better act for women. The problems encountered with men MPLs are that

some still undermine women. Women often find they are seen as props to male leaders instead of themselves occupying positions of leadership. Respondent 4 of the NNP confirmed this by saying: *"I was tolerated as an understudy for two old men, one on education and the other one on local government but I was not accepted as a spokesperson, but I was a deputy spokesperson"*.

The issue of women not being placed in direct leadership roles is not unique to the NNP, as women are not taken seriously in the ANC either. According to an ANC respondent 6, there are not many women in decision-making posts. Since there is a tendency for women to be appointed as deputies more than men, women MPLs feel that men talk about change in theory, but in practice they do not support it. According to respondent 6 of the ANC :

> "Our Chief Whip since we came here in 1994 is a male, the Speaker is a male and females are deputizing. One woman was transferred to Cape Town and she was replaced by a man. We are making a lot of noise about these things, like, why are women always deputizing? If we keep quiet nothing will be done.

This indicates that the full acceptance of women into the political office has not been achieved which effectively translates into women not being given an equal voice. It seems that women are deemed not competent enough, suggested by their deputizing and behind the scene roles. Therefore the quotas can be considered to be window dressing on a parliament that remains dominated by men.

Respondents also mentioned that when there are conferences to be attended, men place themselves at the top of the list of candidates to attend without any consultation taking place with women. If women do not query such occurrences, men would turn a blind eye. Women MPLs claimed that they react immediately once they find out about it. Respondent 1 of the DA indicated that there is a problem with the representation of women in the structures of her party, particularly in leadership, and it sends a clear message of how women are treated. She claimed that when it comes to the management of the party women are not part of it. Although the party would have stipulated that a certain number of women should be represented, the respondent indicated that in the practical sense of delegating tasks women are generally given

menial things to do. Furthermore, the respondent indicated that women are overburdened with committee work and seem to be handling too many things. Despite the numerical increase of women in parliament, women it seems do not have the leverage to address the inequalities that they experience. Although, the quota system has afforded women opportunities, it has also created burdens for women representatives such as heavy workloads which they seem to be reluctant to challenge for fear of jeopardizing their careers. Women have to overcome cultural and institutional constraints which hinder their representation role. The mere placing of women in decision-making positions does not guarantee that political change will take place.[173] Similarly here, women seem to continue to struggle with challenges that constrain their full participation. It also suggests that women are operating in an unfavourable institutional context.

Respondents indicated that across party lines and even in the ANC itself men dislike the 30% women representation and even when women are candidates, male colleagues are elected more often than females. It seems that under normal circumstances men are quite comfortable in the absence of women. According to Respondent 8 of the ANC: *"this is still a problem because men feel that women are still not well developed and we cannot perform duties. Also we have another problem of women being behind the scenes or deputizing. Women have to usually go the extra mile in fulfilling their duties"*. A clear disparity seems to exist in the distribution of workloads where women are given more than they can handle and are also not treated as equal role players.

Amongst other problems experienced is that of late working hours. MPLs claimed that they are not told in advance about meetings in order to prepare for them. According to Respondent 8 of the ANC: *"we are just told we are politicians 24hours and that's it"*. It was also mentioned that meetings that run late into the night give no consideration to the fact that women have to attend to their families, particularly their children. The respondent claimed that women from other parties don't attend the WPC meeting, but are able to stay until late for other meetings. Although the ANC respondent perceives women of the other parties not being supportive, it is also possible that most of these women act in line with their parties' expectations including those of their party bosses. A lack of attendance at caucus meetings could

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[173] Bystydzienski 1992:14

also imply that women are overworked and are therefore forced to dismiss the caucus as opposed to other meetings, since the caucus is not a committee with little institutional clout. However, if the caucus were a committee, then attendance would be mandatory and women could circumvent the opinions of male party members.

On the other hand, the fact that meetings run late into the night with no consideration for women and their families suggests that women are either incapable of standing their ground and changing the status quo or they are afraid to do so. In an earlier discussion on the WPC, although reference was made to changes in parliamentary session times, a clear contradiction surfaced. Women claimed that through the efforts of the caucus, they did achieve reasonable session times and a precedent had been set for other meetings. This effort however has not been permanently effective due to MPLs not using the session times and through failing to attend the meetings. Other parties perceive the NNPs actions of sitting in late at night for committee meetings as merely accepting the status quo of late meeting hours, instead of challenging it. This begs the question as to why complaints around session times exist and whether women can bring about the necessary permanent changes. According to Respondent 8: "there seems to be more support from males than from your white liberal women. These white women say they are liberal; in their parties they use this liberal thing, but the bottom line is you are women. The fact is, women are oppressed at home, in society as well as your own party". Women from the ANC perceive women from formerly white parties as not fighting for women's causes and consider them a hindrance to the process of feminizing the agenda. It is possible, as mentioned earlier ,that the NNP MPL is overworked especially belonging to the minority party with a few seats, the workload has to be spilt by only a few. The NNP MPL may also not engage fully with the ANC MPL because she doubts the capacity of other women in the legislature, a factor that was explored earlier. This does show that the black ANC MPL may have limited knowledge of and understanding of the role of the white NNP MPL.

The NNP Respondent 4 claimed that women are the problems themselves as they bow to pressure from men. She mentioned that women MPLs accept advice from male colleagues and are not capable of making independent decisions. It was suggested that women MPLs have to negotiate for more opportunities to reach leadership roles, for which they need to be more assertive. This is also indicative of

women's inability to act in unison. While men undermine women's potential with a lack of support towards them, perceptions of some MPLs reveal that women also undermine and lack confidence in each other. The substantive representation of women and the engendering of the agenda cannot take place under these circumstances.

Some respondents claimed that when women in the legislature appear successful and are vocal, men regard them as a threat. Respondents claim that men would behave aggressively towards women and even insult them. One women MPL claimed that there were instances when men would proposition them so that they could damage their careers. A respondent from the ANC states: *"there are so many things that they attempt to do to jeopardize your position. They would actually start by proposing to you to start a relationship and once you go down to that you know that is the end of your career"*.

It would seem that men deliberately sabotage women. The motives which cause men to behave in this way are likely to be complex: the simplest is a wish that women will comply with the suggestions and even reciprocate. This implication is strengthened through earlier discussions, where women MPLs suggested that some women make things difficult for them by giving an impression of willingness to accept sexual propositions. It appears that men are reducing women to a level of submission and that propositioning them minimizes the threat that women pose to them. This is similar to Ross, who says that by reducing women to base sexuality, their threat is diminished and tamed.[174] If this claim is true, then there is at some level destructiveness amongst some male parliamentarians who would resort to even attacking women through their sexuality and jeopardizing their careers. This suggests contested cultural conceptions of representation where women are regarded as unimportant and to be used as men deem fit.

While respondent 1 of the DA claimed that in her party *"women are generally given menial things to do and they are often considered in a subtle sense incompetent"*, a respondent 4 from the NNP, respondent 7 of the IFP as well as respondents 6,8 and 9 of the ANC mentioned a similar thing. The NNP respondent 7 indicated that in her party there is a tendency for men who feel threatened by women, to accept a 'token' woman who is not as competent others. They would tag a

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[174] Ross 2002: 196

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competent woman as arrogant. She claims that women have to work twice as hard as men to receive recognition, and supposes that if this is the case in her party then it must be common in other parties. She also claims that in her party she is respected by some men who do not feel threatened, but on the other hand she is not well liked by others who would prefer to see a "cuddlier woman". She explains:

> I don't ask for favours and I work purely alone. I don't try to charm nor do I try to act in a masculine way. What I do try to do is keep a balance by maintaining femininity and to make sure that when I make a statement I have the facts to back me up. I've noticed that men don't take you seriously unless you back your statements with facts and figures. So instead of trying to become masculine I use that so that they must develop respect.

It appears that this MPL is aware of the behaviour of other women MPLs, which tends towards aggression and masculinity. Her claims concerning 'charm' and 'favours' indicate that she is aware that some women are exaggeratedly feminine in their behaviour, and that she believes this type of behaviour jeopardizes what most women fight for. She seems to feel uncomfortable when women use aggressive tactics which essentially suggests that she accepts the way men have traditionally expected women to behave and does not challenge it. Hence, she is not feminised. If the presence of women results in a transformation of the political climate, there might be change in the personal styles of politicians. A 'feminine' style in politics may eventually be accepted as a 'normal' mode of political behaviour.[175]

The NNP respondent claimed that many MPLs are over-influenced by their male counterparts. She stated that *"you must negotiate between being forceful and the collapse of power. You have to sort of negotiate your way through and the only way that I can find it working is to be assertive based on my information"*.

There is no need to seek advancement by compromising one's individual style. It seems that instead of challenging the system, women MPLs have a tendency to maintain the status quo by imitating the behaviour of men, even though a style of behaviour ought surely to be less important than cogent arguments. This is line with

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[175] Freedman 2002:186

arguments that institutions are constructed to centre the male. A successful political career should be related to commitment and wise decision-making, rather than to the ability to shout loudest on the floor of the chamber.[176]

3.4 Women's Perceptions of their Male colleagues and their Attitudes to Gender Concerns

Atleast four respondents, two from the ANC, one NNP and one IFP respondent indicated that male colleagues do not necessarily raise concerns of women, while women raise questions of health and social issues. ANC respondent 2 and the NNP respondent 4 both stated that if there were no women representatives, women's concerns would not be raised. The aforementioned ANC respondent believed that the mere presence of women ensures that men become more sensitive to concerns raised about women. She explains: *"women seem to give greater priority to women's concerns. In most cases it is the women who bring up cases of rape, social grants and question how the policing system is handling the cases that are brought to the police stations".*

Other women MPLs believed that there are men who support them although a few need still to be educated. Motions of interest to women debated in the house are also debated by male members. Reasons given for the fact that a few men were unsympathetic were the cultural factors that influence them in the way that they perceive women. While women have achieved leadership status as public representatives, they are still faced with the challenges of males who seem to believe that the political arena is only really for themselves. These tendencies of men constrain the participation of women. In this regard a contested conception of representation in gender and culture exists whereby unsupportive men are hurdles to women's full participation.

Although men do have tendencies that lean towards the subtle oppression of women in their work environment, it was clear that some MPLs were asserting themselves and challenging their counterparts. An ANC respondent indicated that some men in her party do create difficulties, but women members try to discourage that kind of behaviour. Men are clearly chauvinistic who see women as objects. Some

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[176] Joan Kirner cited in Ross 2002:191

of these men obviously have no confidence in the fact that women can make capable representatives. In cases where male MPLs had abused their wives, the wives themselves at times asked for assistance from female MPLs, which seem to indicate that there is a group of male MPLs who are unlikely to give genuine support to women's concerns. As such, according to the NNP respondent 4: *"when women raise concerns, the concerns are often humoured or ridiculed by males. Women have to fight against some tendencies that have developed. Strong women who want to argue on the basis of good argument are often regarded as a threat by male colleague"*.

The same respondent also indicated that men may ignore women's concerns or make sneering comments about them. She further explains that although some men do bring up or support women's concerns, it is rare. She believes that if women were not there the men would not bring up these concerns at all. This is similar to Childs study where five MPs whom she interviewed argued that male politicians fail to articulate women's concerns.[177]

The IFP MPL respondent 7 feels that male colleagues behave like all other men, who take it for granted that if concerns are merely discussed and Women's Day is celebrated then women would be satisfied. She maintains that only a few men are supportive. According to the respondent:

> You raise a women's concern and there is the perception that if you make noise and then have Women's Day and so forth, then women are happy. My problem is that what happens after that. There are a few, that is one or two, that seem extremely passionate about women – who would support debates etc. However, I would actually like to see almost all of them taking up issues and being examples for other male programmes. Then I think it would make a difference.

While at least 50% of women claimed that they do not receive support from men, many also believed that some men were supportive. Women do acknowledge the conscious efforts men make to marginalise them. Similar to Ross's study, in this study it seems that male colleagues are also confident in their in their own security and

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[177] Childs 2001:181

belief in a shared view of their male world (which is often the dominant norm of parliamentary culture) to make their overt prejudices towards women.[178]

3.5   Racial and Cultural Conceptions of Representation

In South Africa perceptions of diversity of race, ethnicity, and culture among women and men divides them. There were subtle differences in the concerns articulated by women of different racial groups. Two white MPLs of the DA and NNP did not say too much about social concerns. The DA respondent was particularly interested in violence against women and children from a legal perspective, while the NNP was concerned about budgets in Departments, and education. The black MPLs were particularly interested in the social concerns of women. There was a definite belief that despite diversity, women's concerns such as violence, child care, rape, and domestic work were identifiable. The increase in the number of women in parliament helps to put these concerns on the agenda.

An ANC Respondent 9 indicated that the justice system is an area of particular interest to her as she claims that this system fails most women. She mentioned that in order for the justice system to respond to what women experience, there needs to be a female Justice Minister. She felt that the Minister must be considered on the basis of race in order for her to understand the background of the majority. If the Minister comes from a white background, she would not be able to identify with the real issues of people. According to Respondent 9 of the ANC: *"I don't think a white person would be as strong as a black woman who was brought up in a township"*.

The respondents seemed to believe that the ability to represent depends on the social and racial characteristics of individuals, and suggested that the minority of MPLs who were formerly racially privileged would not be able to identify with the plight of the black majority. Obviously according to the logic of this argument it is possible that a black representative will not be able to represent the concerns of the white minority. These perceptions of difference that divide women and hamper an engendered agenda were evident when an ANC MPL whose constituency was in a upper middle class suburb in Bryanston felt that she could not knock on the doors of the constituents or even get them to a common place to meet. Therefore, a contested conception of representation is evident here, where her reluctance could be construed

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[178] Ross 2002:195

as her prejudice towards that particular predominantly white community. This shows how salient racial identity still is and it subsumes women's concerns among other struggles that centre the male

The argument could follow that a male may not be able to represent a female as males cannot identify with females' concerns, yet some argued that a competent male was better than an incompetent female.

The NNP Respondent 4 indicated that in white communities and even in other minority communities there is a growing realization that women make better local representatives, because they can understand the problems of communities. She claimed, that this idea still has to be accepted among many communities where the problem is a traditional belief that women are not capable enough. The respondent suggested that in certain communities, such as in Afrikaans and black communities, there are still cultural and psychological barriers to women in leadership.

MPLs suggested that women make things difficult for themselves. Respondent 2 of the ANC explains: *Regarding issues of sexual harassment for example, some women actually say that we are making it difficult for men to actually propose to them or even ask them out. So they see the women's caucus as an obstacle for them to actually be glorified by men".*

The conscious effort to enter the political arena which women make renders them reluctant to jeopardize their relationship with their male colleagues, since they believe (understandably, since the majority of senior politicians are men) that to do so might endanger their future careers. This claim indicates that there is a tension between women MPLs' wish to transform politics, and their wish for advancement in their parliamentary careers. If women are to make a difference they must demonstrate a feminist commitment, a necessary prerequisite for them to seek to 'act for' women[179]. It also signals that they perceive they have limited freedom to advocate women's concerns. The lack of ability of women to act in unison sends a message to their male counterparts that no strength exists amongst women. This further perpetuates and creates more leverage for the superior overtly confident behaviour that men depict, thus allowing them to insult women as and when they please. Another inference is that women MPLs operate in an unfavourable institutional

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[179] Lovenduski 1990 cited in Childs 2001:178

context. They claim that men do not realize the seriousness of women's concerns and that women from all parties need to stand together in order to get respect from men.

Questions arise at this point as to what the role of the women MPL is as a politician, as opposed to her role as a woman. It seems that some women take care of their personal interests first and transfer the social constructions of gender that exist at home and in their cultures to work. Such women fail to understand the professional behaviour desirable for a politician. Although they realise that their careers could be jeopardized by indiscreet involvements, they are prepared to take the risk which indicates that their personal goals are much more important than what they are actually mandated to do as public representatives.

Differences in racial and cultural conceptions by women clearly hinder the ability of women MPLs to act in unison. It seems that what might be regarded as a serious offence in one culture might be a trivial matter in another. This fits in with the claim made by Berry 2005.[180]

While there has been an increase in the numerical representation of women in the Provincial Legislature of Gauteng, this did not necessarily correlate into an increased effort on the part of women to effect change for women. It is evident in many cases that women did not support each other. Many were concerned about their own political career which they did not want to jeopardise for the sake of women. The fear of party bosses was also evident.

The IFP, NNP and DA were not necessarily supportive of quotas, although they did support the increase in the number of women representatives. They were particularly concerned that representatives would have to be capacitated and competent. They also believed that while the quota system was used to achieve targets, quality of skills and in capacity was compromised.

Women also perceived that they were sidelined and served as mere deputies in parties due to males dominating the political arena. It was also evident that parties had to change their ways to incorporate more women. While many women indicated the pressure of heavy workloads, it seemed they did not challenge the system to alleviate their loads due to fear and concern for their careers

Women MPLs experienced problems with both male and female colleagues who were not supportive. The NNP perceived that concerns she raised to do with

[180] Berry 2005

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women were sidelined due to the power of the majority party. Women were struggling with chauvinistic males. Sexual advances that were made towards women suggested that men were confident in their positions but were prepared to sabotage the position of women MPLs.

In the concluding chapter which follows, I outline the problems experienced by women MPLs in their representation role and offer recommendations for the problems experienced. My recommendations are based upon the challenges that women MPLs face in carrying out their representation role and what, given my research in this dissertation, I consider as possible solutions to these problems.

Chapter Four
Challenges and Recommendations

This study has highlighted numerous challenges that women MPLs face in their attempts to substantively represent women. In this chapter I examine these challenges that women MPLs face and offer a series of recommendations which, if implemented, would substantially increase the possibility of women acting for women.

4.1. The Impact of the Party-List system of Proportional Representation and the Party List Quota system

In South Africa the party-list system of proportional representation is used which places the onus for selection of candidates on incumbent party bosses who have a crucial role in the selection of candidates and in the order in which they are placed on the party list. In this system, candidates rely upon selection and placement by the party for their institutional role rather than on the public. Once elected the MPLs are appointed to broad geographical constituencies by their parliamentary parties. Although this system of proportional representation is helpful in ensuring that women are numerically represented, there are also significant problems with this system for ensuring substantive political representation. Senior party politicians are often influential in deciding upon the ranking of candidates on the party list. The political parties' nominations committees often decide who will be elected, as they select candidates and place them to effectively give them a stronger or weaker chance of being elected. Even before the elections, the political parties have an idea of whether someone will be elected or not depending upon their list position.

Women's perceptions of party hierarchies and discipline were found to prevent them from raising concerns that might make the party uncomfortable and threaten party unity. The party leadership can command loyalty from its members and impose firm discipline because members rely on the party for a place firstly on the party list and secondly in the legislature. Hence, the current electoral system encourages members to support their parties' mandate, effectively discouraging independent behaviour and cross-party initiatives by its members. It also means that as candidates rely upon the party for their position, they are less likely to challenge to effectively

scrutinise policy decisions by senior members of their own party.[181] The political ambition of MPLs causes them to conform to the party line, which may translate into a lack of support for women's concerns if parties do not actively encourage them. Hence it may be argued that the party-list system of proportional representation in a dominant party system may limit the legislature from effectively scrutinizing executive decisions.[182] This electoral system substantially limits accountability.

Although opposition parties have claimed that the quota system is not necessary, it has been the main mechanism through which women have been guaranteed access to decision-making positions. While the quota system has made provision for the inclusion of more women in the political arena, it has also created burdens for women MPLs. The quota has been perceived by some as a factor that leads to compromises in quality, capacity and skills

Recommendations

Given the challenges that women face in engendering the political agenda I suggest that a legislated quota system should be put into place in parliament. A legislated quota would be effective in ensuring that women remain in government and are more willing to begin to engender the parliamentary agenda in the knowledge that they cannot simply be replaced by a man if they advocate greater change for women.

I further recommend the introduction of a constituency-based electoral system rather than one which is solely based upon the discretion of political parties. This would serve to counterbalance the control of parties in parliament and to significantly improve the ability of MPLs to fulfil their designated roles by claiming that their actions are mandated by their constituents. In this way, women MPLs attempts to act for women could be seen as directly representing their constituents rather than as undermining the party.

4.2.   Inadequate Training of Women MPLs

In this study I have found that there is an urgent need for the provision of further training for women MPLs. Although on entering parliament all

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[181] Berry 2005.

[182] www.parliament.gov.za/eupsp/newsletters/building_democracy/chpt2.pdf [01/07/05]

parliamentarians can take part in a training programme that assists MPLs in the writing of speeches, reports, and in oratory, this is clearly insufficient. Beyond this basic training no compulsory form of skills development or capacity-building training exists. Many skills gaps are evident. Some MPLs were not even aware of current developments in the legislature, such as the official status of the key institutional component to engender policy – the WPC. Others claimed that their male counterparts are often given priority and selected to attend conferences and workshops, and women are consistently overlooked as possible attendees.

The NNP Respondent claimed that an ANC MPL was in the legislature for nine years but still had not undergone any formal training to develop her in her role as an MPL. If this is true then it is potentially one of many cases that highlight a severe need for training among women. In addition, despite oratory training the inability of some MPLs to express themselves came across very clearly in interviews. Some interviewees were unable to speak freely and articulately and instead responded in monosyllabic terms indicating a lack of confidence, assertiveness skills and an inability to hold a discussion. This could obviously hinder their functions within the legislature itself. This could place women who are easily intimidated by stronger colleagues at a disadvantage.

Recommendation

The legislature is well placed to request an account of programmes and policies which government departments put in place with respect to skills development and capacity building. It should also prioritise training for MPLs. Training modules should be tailor-made according to the specific needs of MPLs and focus both on skills development to enable them to carry out their roles effectively, but also on the policy areas that MPLs are individually concerned to address. The impact of training programmes should also be assessed on an ongoing basis and the effectiveness assessed by the MPLs. In particular emphasis must be placed on the orientation process for new MPLs.

Capacity building in terms of gender awareness should be an ongoing process and should not be looked at as a 'one-off process'. Besides regular training for both men and women throughout each parliamentary session, specialized training for female parliamentarians is critical for the overcoming of a range of political,

institutional and other barriers. Since the parliamentary terrain is new for some, training should be offered in communication, designed specifically to teach women how to assert themselves and hold discussions on any platform or forum. Women should be taught how to respond to questions and this can only be done once they have a thorough understanding of the functions of the legislature. Hence, in the first instance, a programme that instructs women on the powers and functions of the various institutional positions and mechanisms should be implemented.

Specific further training for women MPLs should be provided. The objective of training should be to empower women for the positions they will hold and further prepare them for the world of politics and debate. Training should be offered in the areas of devising policy, analytical skills, planning, policy analysis, monitoring and oversight.

4.3.   The Institutional Position of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus

In this study the WPC came across as a platform for women to get together to discuss the problems that affected them as MPLs. A clear division of opinion concerning the role, powers and functions of the WPC demonstrated that not all women were committed to it and some knew very little about it. Some respondents spoke about the lack of attendance at WPC meetings, poor coordination of agendas and the frequent cancellation of meetings. The struggles by the members of the WPC to devise terms of reference, policies and evaluative criteria led to the suspension of substantive women's concerns while women MPLs dealt with other functional and procedural issues. There were perceptions that the WPC was not doing much to feminise the political agenda or to address women's concerns in parliament or in committees. It was clear from this study that MPLs were not clearly aware of the powers, functions and mandates of the environments within which they work and the institutions through which they carry out their roles and therefore lacked the capacity to act on behalf of women.

Recommendation

It is imperative that there is the formal recognition of the WPC as a standing committee in parliament. A secure institutional position is crucial in enabling the WPC to function effectively and to be taken seriously by both men and women MPLs.

As a standing committee the WPC would be allocated official times for regular structured meetings. In addition, it would be provided with the necessary resources to function effectively, such as offices and secretarial support, rather than having to rely upon the generosity of men or the institutional position of others to provide resources. Once this is achieved it would be possible to make the attendance at meetings by women MPLs mandatory and ensure that regular reports are submitted. As a standing committee the caucus would have to be accountable. In addition, women MPLs would potentially take the WPC more seriously as they would not be at the mercy of party bosses. The improved institutional status of the WPC would safeguard women by providing a forum which they would have to attend, and through which they could engage in more critical acts for women.

4.4. Racial and Cultural Conceptions of Representation

In this study, female MPLs were found to perceive that many of their male counterparts still show a disregard for the presence of women. The quota system which enables the inclusion of women MPLs does not make up for the treatment of women by their male counterparts in the legislature. If male perceptions of women, as belonging in the private space, continues unchallenged very little will be done for women in parliament and in policy. It is clear that 'chauvinism is alive' as one NNP MPL put it.

Although women MPLs come from a range of different cultural and racial backgrounds which affects their attitudes towards each other, a clear distinction must be drawn between their backgrounds influencing important decisions, and their attitudes towards each other. A sense of tolerance needs to be encouraged.

Women MPLs perceived that their female colleagues from differing racial groups were unsupportive. The failure of women to act in unison impacted negatively upon attempts to represent the concerns of women. In some cases women MPLs pursued ambitious career development initiatives while placing the concerns of women in communities as secondary – thus demonstrating a tension between their advancement as parliamentarians and their wish to transform politics. Differences in cultural conceptions of what constitutes representation, and the methods through which one might carry out the act of representing was found to be a hindrance to women acting in unison. In some cases, what was considered offensive in one culture

was not in another. This clearly shows that women across racial and cultural divisions failed to understand one another. This lack of understanding was a significant barrier to an engendered agenda.

Women's domestic demands and a lack of support and appreciation of these demands was a constraint to their ability to carry out their parliamentary duties. In addition, women had to defend themselves against unwanted sexual advances by men which were sometimes perceived as a deliberate attempt to sabotage the careers of MPLs. While some women found this conduct by men to be unprofessional, others thought it to be part and parcel of the South African cultural fabric and did not recognise it as problematic. Hence, divisions over contested cultural conceptions further divide women in parliament.

Recommendation

A compulsory training programme for men must be introduced into parliament to educate them in terms of professional conduct within the workplace and to sensitise them to gender concerns. This programme should further include a policy approach from a gender perspective to show men how policy can be constructed differently so that it does not centre the male. Once a training programme has taken place, further training should take place to enable all MPLs to clearly identify as they arise any psychological, social, economic and ideological hindrances that interfere with the representation process. Men who have completed this training programme and still impress chauvinistic attitudes upon women should then be subjected to fines and sanctions as well as normal workplace disciplinary procedures.

Better channels of communication should be established in the WPC so that women can learn more about each other's cultural constraints and how they impact upon the ability of women to represent. Through a better understanding of one another, women will be better placed to find ways in which they can act in unison. Through better understanding of one another women will then be better placed to defend and support one another in the legislature.

4.5. Male Domination of the Institutional Arena

There are wide ranges of subtle pressures exerted by men MPLs upon women MPLs by men. These very real pressures and women's perceptions of the sanctions

that will be imposed upon them if they do not conform restrict women's ability and the perceptions that they hold of their ability to effect real changes for women. Women are frequently sidelined by being relegated to positions where they are required to deputize, whereby they spend a substantial amount of time in committees where they carry heavy workloads. They often fear that raising women's concerns will result in them being labelled and their careers will suffer, and so they often conform to the party line which centres the male.

Although some women perceived men as supportive of women's concerns, many did not. The previously discussed inconsistency of responses around committee seating times, for example, implies that women who fear being labelled do not act in unison. Male MPLs dominate decisions and women MPLs become silenced through a culture that is unsupportive of women speaking out. It may be argued that in some cases, women MPLs support their male counterparts due to the PR list system, which very subtly compels politicians to remain popular with their male party bosses in order to survive. Male dominated leadership structures invariably select which women are promoted within party structures and in parliament.

Recommendation

In order to overcome the informal pressures placed upon women there must be the introduction of formal political institutions in parliament whose role is to monitor the selection processes for parliamentary committees and decision-making positions in the legislature and executive. In addition these institutions should ensure the fair and equitable allocation of resources, facilities and opportunities for women. Women MPLs need to be protected from any form of unfair and discriminatory treatment through the establishment of these institutions. It is important to institutionalize considerations of gender impact at all levels of the political and policy process rather than rely on the presence of women alone to ensure this.

A system could also be introduced where the quota system is extended to positions of power in the legislature and the executive. Hence, women would be placed in key decision-making positions as equal role players. This system could be monitored by the new formal political institutions of parliament to ensure that parties comply with the system. Parties that do not place women on their party lists, or allow them to lead, must be fined and exposed. The status quo must be challenged.

The recommendations offered in this chapter entailed the implementation of a legislated quota together with introducing a constituency based electoral system. Providing customised training programs for MPLs to cater for their specific needs and ensuring assessment as an ongoing process is advised to capacitate MPLs with the necessary skills to carry out their functions. Gender awareness capacity building is integral. Institutionalising the status of the WPC as a standing committee is suggested to ensure that MPLs have a forum to act for women. Training programmes is also advised for men to educate and sensitize them on gender concerns. Communications channels should be open for women to learn about each others cultures. Formal political institutions should be introduced to monitor selection process for parliamentary committees and decision -making positions to avoid discriminatory practices together with the imposition of fines for non compliance discriminatory behaviour.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I attempted to do the following four things. Firstly I examined women's conceptualization of political representation in order to ascertain whether there is a gender dimension in representation as well as whether this includes substantive representation. Substantive representation presumes that women parliamentarians share an affinity with women in society and are therefore able to represent multiple gendered interests. Secondly, I explored the methods used by parliamentary women in their representation role. Thirdly, I considered whether parliamentary women perceived that their presence was effective in influencing the policy agenda. Fourthly, I explored the challenges that women parliamentarians have experienced in carrying out their representation role and I made a series of recommendations designed to improve their opportunities for the substantive representation of women.

1. Women's Conceptualization of political representation

Many respondents perceived representation as representing constituencies and following their parties mandate as well as including women's concerns in their role. Some women did not specifically attempt to substantively represent women whereas others did. Women MPLs also brought a variety of different perspectives to their approach of representation and how they viewed women's concerns. The party-list system of proportional representation was found in this study to impact negatively upon the ability of women to represent women as women were constrained by the male dominated party in their representation role. Some women MPLs further indicated that they don't feel close to people of their constituencies and this impacts on their representation negatively. MPLs also felt that the representation of women could curtail their parliamentary careers.

2. Methods used by women in their representation role

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus was a tool used by women in their representation role. The WPC, is not an institutionalized mechanism as it does not have the status of a committee. Many respondents were generally divided on their knowledge and role of the caucus. Some MPLs did believe that the caucus was an

excellent mechanism to gather women together upon a common platform and put forward women's concerns. Although, some MPLs believed that the caucus was successful in achieving changes in the legislature, many were not very clear about the status of the caucus as some believed that the caucus was a committee. It is therefore clear that women MPLs lack knowledge. It is, however, not clear whether they lack knowledge on what it means for a structure to have the status of a committee or whether they do not really know what status the WPC has. Some MPLs suggested that the WPC "lacks teeth". Many agreed that they did not attend caucus meetings on a regular basis and further claimed that the caucus did not co-ordinate their meetings very well.

It was also evident that MPLs were glad to have the support of the Speaker to communicate matters on their behalf. Again, however, it was not clear whether women recognised that the institutional position of the Speaker was important in furthering a women's agenda. It would appear that women MPLs are not brave in asserting their needs for a change on the status of the caucus. They are satisfied with the situation as it is. Some MPLs suggested that the caucus is not something that can be taken seriously, so if this is the case then I would maintain that women themselves are not strong enough to effect change in the status of the caucus.

The split in opinions and interest illustrate that change is difficult to achieve as most are concerned about their own needs in the political arena. How then can there be serious progress on the substantive representation of women in such a divided legislature?

3. The effectiveness of women in Parliament

The Gauteng Provincial Legislature does have a 'critical mass' of women members in that the majority of MPLs seem to have a strong identification with women's concerns and perceive that they make a difference to policy initiatives. Some did believe that parliament has a long way to go in terms of being fully representative of women and therefore they would prefer to see a further increase in representation to at least 50%.

With regards to the process of feminizing the political agenda, women MPLs perceive that they do raise issues differently from their male counterparts. While they

perceive that women raise social concerns, they suggest that men on the other hand are more likely to raise technical and financial concerns. Women have disclosed that they are concerned about women and do attempt to bring women's concerns to the fore. While some MPLs did believe the feminizing of the agenda is progressing well, others felt it was too slow and not going according to plan. The reasons provided were that MPLs are extremely lax when it comes to attending meetings in the WPC. It was also mentioned that there are no clearly defined benchmarks with which women in the caucus can work, together with a lack of coordination. Women believed that they were not perceived as capable enough to carry out tasks allocated to them by parliamentary men.

4. Challenges Experienced by Women in Carrying out their Representation role

Solving the problems that women face would require immense changes in the mindsets of individuals. Although the party list system of proportional representation ensures that women are numerically represented, the system is problematic in ensuring substantive political representation, as senior politicians of parties decide who will be elected, even before elections. A constituency-based electoral system is recommended to counterbalance the control of parties. Legislated quotas would also ensure that women remain in government and are willing to engender the agenda.

It was evident that parliamentarians received no form of compulsory skills development or capacity-building training resulting in a skills gap. Training modules should be customised to suite the specific needs of MPLs with the assessment of training programs done on a regular basis. In light of the challenges of training, it was recommended that training be given in areas of policy analysis, devising policy, analytical skills, planning, monitoring and oversight.

A division of opinion existed amongst MPLs concerning the role, power and functions of the WPC. This demonstrated that not all women were committed to the WPC, while some MPLs knew very little about it. It was evident that MPLs were not aware of the powers, functions and mandates of their working environments and the institutions through which they could carry out their roles. It was advised that the WPC should be formally recognised as a standing committee. As a standing

committee it would be provided with the necessary resources to function effectively and also act as forum from which

Female MPLs perceived their male counterparts as showing a disregard for the presence of women in parliament. A clear distinction should be drawn between the backgrounds of MPLs in the decisions they make and their attitudes towards each other. Tolerance must also be created for a harmonious environment. The failure of women to act in unison was considered problematic in their attempts to represent the concerns of women. Women's domestic demands and a lack of support was also a constraint in carrying out their parliamentary duties. Training programs must therefore be introduced to educate men on professional conduct at the workplace and also sensitise them on gender concerns. Disciplinary procedures, fines and sanctions should be imposed on men who continue with their chauvinistic attitudes. It was evident that what was acceptable in one culture was not acceptable in another. Communication channels should be open for women to learn about each other's cultural constraints.

Women were sidelined into positions where they were requested to deputize and carry the burden of heavy workloads. They also feared that raising concerns of women would result in them being labelled and their careers suffering. Male MPLs dominate decisions, while women MPLs were silenced from speaking out. Therefore, formal political institutions should be in place to prevent the pressure on women. These formal institutions should be responsible for monitoring the selection process for parliamentary committees and decision-making positions in the legislature. Women MPLs would have a mechanism that would protect them from unfair discriminatory treatment. It is also recommended that a quota system could be introduced which is extended to positions of power in the legislature and the executive. These should be monitored by the new formal political institutions of parliament.

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