



**African Women's Leadership Experiences and Outcomes of Gender  
Transformation Policies: A Case Study of Democratic National  
Government Departments in South Africa**

**By**

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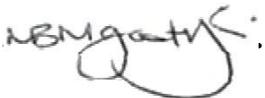
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis on African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies: a case study of democratic national government departments in South Africa is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at any other University. All sources and quotes cited have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

**Nwabisa Bernice Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni**

**June 2018**

**Signed:** 

## DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

I supervised this PhD dissertation to satisfaction and is submitted with my approval.

**Title:** African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies: A case study of democratic national government departments in South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies (Employment Equity and Gender Mainstreaming) in the democratic national government departments in South Africa. The research objectives were to investigate the impact of gender transformation policies on black African women's leadership experiences, examine women leaders' experiences of the outcomes resulting from the implementation of GM and EE. Furthermore, the study investigated how national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practices impede or promote black African women's participation in leadership roles. Given that African women suffered the most oppression under the apartheid system, the democratic South Africa provides an interesting case for studying their leadership experiences of GM and EE outcomes. The study is significant as there is a paucity of empirical studies on the outcomes of gender transformation policies and the impacts on beneficiaries in the democratic South Africa, especially black African women.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to obtain a total number of 35 participants in leadership positions from 25 national government departments. Using a feminist methodology, a qualitative research method was employed to gather data by means of in-depth, face-to-face interviews. The intersectionality, postcolonial and state feminist theories were used as the theoretical framework for critical analysis. Moreover, the subjective experiences of black African women as leaders were analysed in accordance with the grounded theory method and Nvivo Version 11 Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). All standard ethical considerations to protect the participants and the researcher were adhered to. On the one hand, the key findings indicate that GM remains a framework, and not a policy, and is therefore marginalised in departments. Its outcomes are negatively impacted by a lack of human and financial resources and gender budgeting for implementation is not prioritised, consequently gender is not mainstreamed in the government departments. The findings also illustrate the negative impact of the gender-biased, patriarchal and racial organisational culture on women's voices and leadership experiences. Nuanced identity politics were also found to be prevalent manifesting through ethnic, age, and (dis)ability discrimination in the sampled national government departments. The participants' insights further highlighted resistance to gender transformation as the policies challenge the normative patriarchal culture and practices to promote equal substantive representation. The focus on descriptive rather than substantive representation, leading to the marginalisation of EE beneficiaries and their leadership authority

being undermined. This perpetuates the race and gender inequalities that these policies aim to eradicate. Furthermore, a lack of monitoring and evaluation hinders successful implementation of GM and EE in national government departments. The study found that, while GM and EE are important transformation policies, they have yet to be properly implemented, preventing the achievement of the intended outcomes of addressing inequality in the workplace and empowering marginalised and oppressed groups, particularly black African women. The study thus concludes that, while positive strides have been made in addressing gender issues in South Africa such as increasing the number of women in leadership positions in the government, black African women leaders are still subjected to multiple intersecting subjugations emanating from colonial vestiges that undermine the gains made in the democratic era.

**Key Words:** Gender Mainstreaming, Employment Equity Policy, Leadership, Women's Experiences, Gender Transformation Outcomes

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Joel and Mildred Mgcotyelwa, who instilled respect, discipline, diligence, and the need for hard work in me and inspired me to always aim high and achieve that which is deemed impossible. Throughout my life, you have been my pillars of strength and compass, guiding me with your wisdom and providing a sanctuary when I faced challenges. I extend my gratitude for all the sacrifices you made in order for your children to benefit from the opportunities you never had. You put us first and have been devoted and wonderful parents. I have learnt from you to do the same for my children (your grandchildren) so that they can also shine their God-given light and persevere in their journeys to achieve greatness.

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*“No one who achieves success does so without acknowledging the help of others. The wise and confident acknowledge this help with gratitude”*: Alfred North Whitehead

I thank God for all my academic achievements as without His faithfulness, I would not have attained the abundant blessings He has (and continues to) bestow upon me.

Thank you to the 35 participants (who remain anonymous) for setting aside time to be interviewed despite your demanding schedules. Your shared insights made this study possible. I also extend my gratitude to the national government departments for assistance in setting up the interviews.

I extend my thanks to the Commission for Gender Equality and the Public Service Commission for granting me permission to access the national government departments to conduct this study.

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May the good Lord continue to bless you all.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	:	Affirmative Action
ANC	:	African National Congress
ANCWL	:	ANC Women's League
BPA	:	Beijing Platform for Action
CAQDA	:	Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEDAW	:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CGE	:	Commission for Gender Equality
COD	:	Congress of Democrats
CSW	:	Commission on the Status of Women
DoL	:	Department of Labour
DPME	:	Department of Public Service Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	:	Department of Public Service and Administration
EE	:	Employment Equity
EEA	:	Employment Equity Act (Act No. 47 of 2013)
FSAW	:	Federation of South African Women
GAD	:	Gender and Development
GFP	:	Gender Focal Person(s)/ Point(s)
GFU	:	Gender Focal Unit
GM	:	Gender Mainstreaming
JCQLSW	:	Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and the Status of Women
NGM	:	National Gender Machinery
NGO	:	Non-governmental Organisation
NGPF	:	National Gender Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, also referred to as Gender Policy Framework
OSW	:	Office for the Status of Women
PA	:	Platform for Action
PMDS	:	Performance Management Development System
PSC	:	Public Service Commission
RSA	:	Republic of South Africa
SADC	:	Southern African Development Community
SANDF	:	South African National Defence Force
Sida	:	Swedish International Development Agency
UKZN	:	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	:	United Nations
UNCW	:	United Nations Third World Conference on Women
US	:	United States of America
WEU	:	Women's Empowerment Unit
WID	:	Women in Development
WNC	:	Women's National Coalition

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# CHAPTER 1

## CONTEXTUALISING THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

This research study investigated the experiences of African women in leadership positions and outcomes of gender transformation policies (Employment Equity and Gender Mainstreaming) in democratic national government departments in South Africa. Given the long history of systematic racial segregation and oppression during the apartheid regime, the democratic South Africa provides an interesting case for studying women in leadership and their experiences of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) and Employment Equity (EE) outcomes. The apartheid regime created and entrenched systematic segregation, inequalities, gender exploitation and discrimination against those deemed as inferior simply due to the colour of their skin (black, coloured and Indian people). While this system was abolished in 1994, its legacies persist and women are still at the coal face of all forms of discrimination and inequalities. As Meer (1987) noted, white women benefitted from apartheid privileges, although slightly less than white men. While black, coloured and Indian women and men were marginalised and their rights were brutally violated by the apartheid system, black African women were the most oppressed due to historical colonial inequalities as they were (and still are) located in the lowest societal strata.

As discussed in subsequent chapters, they are oppressed due to their race (black), gender (women) and class (constituting the majority of the poor) and many other forms of systemic intersecting oppressions. Twenty-three years after the transition from apartheid to democracy, previously disenfranchised citizens, particularly black people and especially black women, have been prioritised in transformative legislation and policies such as the Employment Equity Act (EEA) (Act 55 of 1998) as amended (Act 47 of 2013)<sup>1</sup> and the GM framework. Gender transformation policies have contributed to increased numbers of black African women in leadership echelons in national government departments. However, a schism was found to exist between policy and praxis in the sampled departments. The study's findings show that national government departments prioritise descriptive representation in terms of increased numbers of

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<sup>1</sup> The Employment Equity Amendment Act (47 of 2013) came into effect on 1 August 2014. In this study, the researcher refers to this amended EE Act.

women rather than substantive participation in terms of EE. They also indicate that the GM framework is marginalised as it is not prioritised and there is a dearth of human and financial resources. Furthermore, GM remains a framework rather than a policy on its own and is rejected in some departments. Thus, this study confirms that, in implementing EE, women are often appointed in government departments solely to fill gender quotas. Transforming numeric representation into substantial participation to achieve systemic and sustainable gender equality outcomes will require strong political will. Merely adding the GM framework without transforming the deep structure<sup>2</sup> of departments' patriarchal, sexist, gender-biased and racist cultural practices and structures will not address gender inequities. The research findings also show that feminist intersectionality, postcolonial feminism and state feminist theories are significant in understanding and studying the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and GM and EE outcomes.

This chapter presents the background to the study and an overview as well as the problem statement and the study's aims, objectives and key research questions. The term 'African' is used to refer to black African women occupying leadership positions in national government departments. The study focused on the positions of Director, Chief Director and Deputy Director-General (salary levels 13 to 15). It examined GM and EE that are recognised nationally and globally as gender transformation policies aligned with democratic ethics that seek to address inequalities. The study specifically focused on post-apartheid South African national government departments as there is a paucity of research on these departments (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). The theoretical framework, methodology and delimitations of the study are also discussed in this chapter. A qualitative research method was employed and the researcher conducted face-to-face, in-depth interviews, which opened a window to the lived experiences of women leaders. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

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<sup>2</sup> The deep structure of organisations refers to 'invisible' aspects at the bottom of the iceberg (used as a metaphor) and includes political access, accountability, cultural and cognitive systems (Rao & Kelleher, 2005) that impede women's substantive participation in leadership echelons. The deep structure is further discussed in Chapter 2.

## 1.2 Background to the Research Problem

The dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994 marked a turning point from a long and brutal history of political, racial, economic and gendered inequalities rooted in the colonial and apartheid regimes. As an intensified form of colonialism, apartheid (an Afrikaans<sup>3</sup> word which means ‘separation’) emerged in the 1930s, and from 1948 until 1994 was the official policy of the white South African government. It refers to the system of segregation that was institutionalised to maintain the supremacy of white South Africans. Africans were systematically deprived of their rights and were made citizens of bantustans<sup>4</sup>. The history of modern South Africa is one of the marginalisation of black women and men. Meer (1985) paints a vivid picture of the brutality they endured under apartheid: “While black women suffer more than black men from the violations of their rights, the violations are gross in respect to both”. Furthermore, as highlighted in the study’s findings, “this reality accounts for very peripheral impact of feminism in South Africa” (Meer, 1985: 1) that has persisted until today.

The historical systematic discrimination and segregation described by Meer (1985) persisted from the colonialist era, through to apartheid and permeated the democratic epoch that continues to reproduce multiple inequalities. Mkhize (2012) argues that:

The new South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and democracy created a false impression that the battle against sexism and racism had been fought and won. In fact, democracy in South Africa has been characterized by continued economic, political, and social inequalities across the country. The democracy has embraced pre-existing forms of gendered power relations whereby men dominate women in most arenas socially, politically, and economically (Mkhize, 2012: 4).

Simply put, the principles of a non-sexist society expressed in the Constitution have not yet been fully achieved. For this reason, Steady and Hassim have argued that women’s collective action is crucial to fight entrenched patriarchal dominance and bring about gender equality and women’s empowerment (Steady, 2006; Hassim, 2006 cited in Mkhize, 2012). An example of such action is the implementation of gender transformative policies to correct the peripheral location and marginalisation of the GM framework within government itself in post-apartheid

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<sup>3</sup> A language developed from 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch that is one of South Africa’s official languages (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Bantustans were homelands or territories set aside for black South Africans during the apartheid era. Residents of such areas were denied all rights in the rest of the country (Thompson, 2000).

South Africa. Given Meer's observations, it is important that researchers consider feminist issues in relation to the outcomes of GM and EE policies in the democratic South Africa.

Democracy entails commitment to non-racial and non-sexist policies to govern the country, its institutions and citizens. Policy transformation is thus of great importance, starting with the national Constitution. South Africa's Constitution states that, "Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law" (Constitution of South Africa, section 9, sub-section 1). It adds that, "Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken" (Constitution of South Africa, section 9, sub-section 2). Such measures would include (gender) transformative policies such as GM and EE.

Gender Mainstreaming and EE are therefore grounded in the Constitution. The former was adopted as a major global strategy for the promotion of gender equality in the Beijing Platform for Action endorsed at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995. It was envisioned as a conduit to promote women's interests and special needs in the formulation and implementation of policies that affect them locally and globally. Gender mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making (United Nations, 2002). This requires explicit, systematic attention to relevant gender perspectives in all areas of the work of government departments. However, while there have been increased efforts to mainstream gender in recent years, a "lack of understanding of 'how' gender perspectives can be identified, integrated and addressed remains one of the most serious constraints" (United Nations, 2002: vi). In the South African context, government departments appear to pay relatively little attention to the GM framework. A Public Service Commission (PSC) report (2006:14) confirms that there are major GM implementation challenges at all levels of government in South Africa. Other authors (Manell, 2012; Mkhize, 2012; Penceliah, 2011; Ntakumba, 2010; Karlsson, 2010; Mvimbi, 2009) reported similar findings; these are discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

The new democratic government promulgated labour legislation in an attempt to prevent, correct and, to some extent, reverse these historical abuses. The EEA of 1998 drew on the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights of 1996. The purpose of the Act, which applies to all employers, is to achieve equity in the workplace by: a) "promoting equal opportunity and

fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination”; and b) by “implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce” (EEA, 1998: 5). While the EEA rejects discrimination, it asserts that mainstreaming through affirmative action (AA) is acceptable in order to correct apartheid’s unfair treatment of designated groups (EEA, 1998: 9). The Department of Labour (DoL) (2015) refers to designated groups as black, coloured and Indian people, women and people with disabilities. Furthermore, GM is acceptable in the democratic South Africa to remedy existing gender inequalities (Commission for Gender Equality, 2015).

While more women now occupy leadership positions in South Africa, Table 1 below shows that, they are still under-represented in senior and top management levels of national government. This suggests that GM and EE policies have not been effectively implemented. Key pieces of government legislation include the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill which, among other things, calls for 50% of all positions at senior decision-making level to be occupied by women. According to the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) Annual Report on Employment Equity since March 2016, 4 119 (41%) of the positions at senior management service (SMS) level were filled by women and 5 735 (59%) by men. On average, women’s representation at this level grew by 1% per annum, from 39.8% in 2014, to 40% in 2015 and 41% in 2016. Furthermore, 72% of the posts occupied by women were filled by black African women in 2016 and in 2015; 13% by whites in both years; coloured women occupied 7.8% of the posts in 2016 compared to 8% in 2015; and Asians 6.5% in 2016 compared to 6% in 2015. The figures show no significant changes from March 2014 to March 2015 (Annual Report on Employment Equity, 2016: 17).

**Table 1: Employment Equity Statistics**

Occupational Title	Male					Female				Total		Grand Total
	Salary Level	White	Asian	Coloured	African	White	Asian	Coloured	African	M	F	
Chief Director	13	543	245	316	2943	386	185	227	2124	4047	2922	6969
Deputy Director-General	14	181	96	126	937	129	68	71	650	1340	918	2258
Director-General	15	61	35	44	268	28	16	18	170	408	232	640
Minister	16	13	5	11	88	5	0	6	36	117	47	164
<b>Grand Total</b>	-	<b>798</b>	<b>381</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>4236</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>2980</b>	<b>5912</b>	<b>4119</b>	<b>10031</b>

Source: Adapted from Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) Annual Report on Employment Equity (2015-2016: 17), adapted from Personnel Salary System (PERSAL) 31 March 2016.

The following departments met the 50% target in the past, but were unable to maintain them: The Presidency, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Social Development, Public Works, Roads and Infrastructure and the Department of Sport Arts and Culture in Limpopo. The Departments of Health in Mpumalanga, and Social Development in the Eastern Cape, Free State, North West and the Northern Cape met the 50% target at some point, but some dropped to as low as 44% in 2016 (for example, the Departments of Community Safety and Infrastructure Development in Gauteng). Only five departments met the targets of both EE and employment of persons with disabilities by 31 March 2016. The National School of Government and national Department of Women have met the targets since 2012; Gauteng Department of Economic Development was below 30% in 2012 and developed a remedial plan; the Office of the Premier in the Eastern Cape was the only Office of the Premier to meet both EE and disability targets, and the Department of Economy and Enterprise Development in North West also met the targets (DPSA Annual Report on Employment Equity, 2015-2016: 26).

These statistics show while South Africa has been free from apartheid for 23 years, female representation in government leadership echelons remains a problem despite the fact that the public service employs more women than men. Furthermore, this study's findings suggest that substantive representation is lacking. The average increase of 1% per year means that it will take the public service another nine years to meet the 50% target (DPSA Annual Report on Employment Equity, 2015-2016: 26). These gender gaps motivated the researcher to explore

the experiences of women in leadership positions in government departments with regard to GM and EE outcomes.

### 1.3 **Research Questions and Objectives**

This study aimed to investigate African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE) in the democratic national government departments in South Africa from their own subjective perspectives. The following research questions were formulated to achieve the objectives:

- What is the impact of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) on black African women leadership in national government departments?
- What are women leaders' experiences of the implementation of gender transformation policies in relation to women occupying national government leadership positions?
- In what ways do national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practice impact on black African women's leadership roles?

The following objectives were formulated:

- Investigate the impact of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions in national government departments;
- Examine black African women leaders' experiences of the outcomes resulting from the implementation of GM and EE policies; and
- Investigate how national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practices impede or promote black African women's participation in leadership roles.

### 1.4 **Rationale for the Study**

This study was motivated by five factors. The first is that transformative policies, especially GM and EE, were developed to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the private and public sectors; however, there is a lack of research on the social environment women experience once they enter these structures (Angevine, 2006). Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on this issue. Secondly, most studies on women in leadership have employed quantitative methods (Gouws & Kotze, 2007), focusing more on

numbers than an analysis of the outcomes of policy implementation from the perspective of women themselves.

Thirdly, Frankforter (1996) and Mooney (2005) argue that 'new tokenism' results when women are not employed due to their competence and ability but to fill AA quotas. Mooney (2005) notes that, "new tokenism arises, resulting in organisations which, in an effort to appear diverse, place women in positions of high visibility but relatively low power, so that they may appear to the outside world to have 'made it', while internally they are still scrambling for a sense of security and acceptance as leaders" (Mooney 2005: 112). The fourth factor is the lack of consistency between gender transformation policy implementation and praxis in government (Moser & Moser, 2005; Mkhize, 2012). Finally, Unterhalter (2007) observes that there is a paucity of research on how the GM framework plays out within government in terms of a social gender justice agenda (Unterhalter, 2007:134).

In order to address these lacunae and challenges and to promote GM and EE policies and practice without 'new tokenism', it is necessary to examine organisational culture, structures, practices attitudes, strategies, resources and institutional features within government departments alongside the challenges related to implementation and the outcomes of gender transformation policies as experienced by women leaders. This study therefore aimed to add to the body of knowledge on gender transformation policies and to contribute to the universal call for gender equality by investigating the outcomes of gender transformational policies (specifically GM and EE) based on the experiences of black African women leaders within South African national government departments.

Black African women were more directly affected than Indians in apartheid South Africa because of what Ngqakayi (1991: 5) refers to as the double process of economic inferiority and the internalisation (or better, the epidermalisation) of this inferiority. Consciousness of being black, commonly referred to as 'black consciousness', would go a long way in eradicating this inferiority complex. The transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa owes a great deal to the Black Consciousness Movement. However, Ngqakayi (1991) argued that discourse alone cannot maintain and sustain black consciousness because for any type of discursive consciousness to persist and endure it has to rest on non-discursive material social matrices, namely, the internal social dynamics of a society and its mode of production (Therborn, 1982). Consequently, Ngqakayi concluded that in South Africa, "we do not only live the ideology of apartheid through discourse but that discourse rests on our actual physical existence of

apartheid on a social and economic level” (1991: 5). The interlocking apartheid oppressions on the one hand and the maintenance (and sustenance) of black consciousness through the improvement of socio-economic standards via transformation policies on the other, run through Cock’s (1984) acclaimed book, *Maids and Madams*.

Cock took a broad view of black and white women in South Africa and the institution of domestic service. Black African women were perceived of as intellectually inferior and only capable of serving as domestic workers in white households. Domestic workers suffered discrimination and separation from their families and their ascribed inferior status was continually reproduced. The author employs Fanon’s double process of economic inferiority and the internalisation of such inferiority to describe black women as objects of racial discrimination and segregation. This motivated the current study’s investigation of whether gender transformative polices achieve the intended outcomes of gender equality and women empowerment. The intended beneficiaries of transformative policies are previously disenfranchised groups (black, coloured, Indian), particularly black African women that were located at the lowest societal strata during apartheid.

### **1.5 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study**

In terms of limitations, this study only presents the selected participants’ (a total of 35) subjective insights and experiences and does not claim to represent all spheres of government and government officials’ experiences. Accessing all 46 national government departments was a challenge as some were not available due to time constraints and schedules. The researcher planned to recruit participants from Director to Director-General level. However, respondents in the positions of Assistant Director up to Deputy Director-General level were successfully recruited. During fieldwork, the researcher encountered travel logistics, financial and time constraints as the departments are located in Pretoria and the researcher resides in Cape Town. Travel costs were self-funded. However, the researcher managed to interview all 35 participants. Another limitation was rescheduling appointments as women in leadership positions have demanding schedules. The interviews were postponed to a later time of day or later in the same week.

## 1.6 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is presented in six chapters. **Chapter one** presented the contextual background, the study's aim and objectives, the research questions, the rationale for the study, the methodology employed and the study's delimitations and limitations. **Chapter two** contextualises the study within the relevant empirical, international, continental and local literature. The study's theoretical framework is also presented. **Chapter three** describes the research design and methodology employed for this study. It specifies the paradigm in which the study is located and methods employed to collect and analyse data. Credibility and dependability are discussed as well as the ethical considerations taken into account. **Chapter four** presents and analyses the data on the experiences of women in leadership positions and their insights of gender transformative policies in the post-apartheid South African government. **Chapter five** discusses the research results by deconstructing women's insights on GM and the EE policy outcomes in national government departments. Finally, **Chapter six** summarises the findings, discusses the study's contribution to knowledge and makes recommendations based on the findings and suggestions for future research.

## 1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided an introduction to this research study on African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies in democratic national government departments in South Africa. It outlined the background to the study, its aims and objectives, and the research questions. The rationale for the study was discussed, followed by a brief description of the theoretical framework and methodology. The study's delimitations and limitations were also outlined. The theoretical framework includes feminist intersectionality, postcolonial feminist and state feminism theories. These theoretical frameworks were important in grounding the study and interpreting its findings in relation to the research topic. For instance, inequalities have been considered as a dis-unified phenomenon that is divided across racial, ethnic, gender, class and disability lines. However, while the intersectionality theory considers the multifaceted and intersectional uniqueness of these different forms of inequalities, they can be considered as a unified phenomenon. Furthermore, the relationship between feminism and the state is not unified, but juxtaposed because most feminists hold that they are mutually exclusive due to the patriarchal nature of society. In state feminist theory, they can be brought together to eradicate inequalities because in reality, feminism cannot achieve its goals without a collaborative partnership and political will on the

part of the state; likewise, the state cannot achieve its goal of redressing past imbalances in South Africa without collaborating with the feminist movement. Finally, postcolonial feminist theory assisted the researcher in contextualising the participants' specific experiences in the context of a historically colonised and segregated South African nation. The following chapter reviews the literature relevant to this study and discusses the theories underpinning it.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature relevant to this study, and its theoretical framework. The main objective of this research was to investigate African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies in democratic national government departments in South Africa. The feminist qualitative research method used to gather data enabled the study informants – black African women – to share their subjective experiences of the outcomes of these policies. Smith (1999: 74) asserts that “how society organizes and shapes the everyday world of experience” should be the goal of feminist inquiries. The author adds that feminist research must be grounded in women's lived experiences to uncover the “relations of ruling” into which these experiences are socially and culturally constructed (Smith, 1999).

The literature on GM and EE policies does not focus on black women in leadership positions in government, and the outcomes of these policies. The literature review pointed to a dearth of empirical studies on this area of research internationally and at continental level, making this study significant. The chapter begins with a literature review, followed by a discussion on relevant feminist theories and ends with a brief summary of the chapter.

#### 2.2 Gender Mainstreaming Framework

Gender mainstreaming is a new concept in social science studies that appeared for the first time in international journals after the Third World Conference on Women (UNCW) in Nairobi in 1985. The debate on the role of women in development within the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) gave rise to this concept that became a reoccurring theme in women and development discourses. This was evident in social science approaches like Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) (Mkhize, 2012; Moser & Moser, 2005; Moser, 1993; Corner, 1996). Moser and Moser (2005) define GM as follows:

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men can benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (Moser & Moser, 2005: 12).

The following sections discuss the history of GM and the strategies to implement this framework.

### **2.2.1 Historical Overview of the Gender Mainstreaming (GM) Framework**

At the height of apartheid, South Africa participated in the first International Women's Conference held in Mexico in 1975 that marked the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women. The follow-up conference in Copenhagen in 1980 concluded that the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace had contributed greatly to women's empowerment at international, regional and national levels (Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1986). The Nairobi Conference on the Review and Appraisal of the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women, Equality, Development and Peace was held in 1995. This was a milestone that paved the way for the development of the principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as well as other international instruments. The fourth conference was held in Beijing in 1995, where the GM framework was born (Commission for Gender Equality: Gender Barometer Report, 2012).

Most feminists who focus on women and development (Boserup, 1970, 1993, 2005; Corner, 1996; Rai, 2002; Mkhize, 2012) view GM as a mechanism to promote the role of women in the development field and integrate women's values into development work. This aligns with what participants at the UNCW had in mind. The concept was developed to design Forward-Looking Strategies for the advancement of the women's agenda. A resolution adopted by the CSW in 1986 urged all bodies to fully integrate these Forward-Looking Strategies into their economic and social development programmes. In 1987, the CSW urged all UN bodies to formulate and implement a comprehensive policy on women's equality and to incorporate the policy into their medium-term plans, statements, objectives, programmes and other important policy documents (Council of Europe, 1998).

This emphasis on the inclusion of women in all developmental policies, programmes and agendas led to the perennial discourse of GM in the social science literature. Feminist authors (Mkhize, 2012; Unterhalter 2007; Moser 2005; Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005; Goetz 1997; Corner 1996) argued that women are often included as add-ons in social science discourses. They thus concluded that the CSW's decision to integrate the concept of gender, not just gender, in developmental studies was timely and important. Authors such as Moser (2005); Squires (2005) and Walby (2005) took this further; they emphasise the need to not only include women in policies, legislation, programmes, and departments in all areas and levels of government, but also to mainstream gender holistically. Such arguments are crucial to this study as they explain why GM is significant in South African institutional practices. However, the literature review revealed that GM implementation in many global institutions, including the South African government, does not address multiple dynamics and gender inequalities. For example, in South Africa that is home to a very diverse population, GM does not address such diversity. The study found that gender is viewed as women's burden in government departments and is thus, not prioritised.

The GM strategy was endorsed by the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) in 1995 at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. The BPA stated that, "government and actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the effects of women and men respectively" (Beijing Platform for Action, 1995). The challenge is that the platform does not provide guidelines on how countries should develop and implement the GM framework. As a result, many countries, including South Africa, have adopted a national GM plan, but it remains a framework and not a policy.

Furthermore, as with feminist critique of gender and development, GM remains largely masculine (Moser, 2005; Rai, 2002; Mkhize, 2012; Council of Europe, 1998). Many global institutions, including those in Africa, interpret it to mean simply adding women as Gender Focal Persons (GFPs). Scholars (Moser & Moser, 2010; Meier et. al, 2005; Corner, 1996) note that transforming masculine global institutions will not be accomplished by the simple addition of women to decision-making bodies. While South Africa promotes GM in government institutions, this study established that these institutions are still largely masculine to the extent that patriarchal cultures and practices hinder the implementation of GM and women's role as legitimate leaders. There is thus a strong need to address male dominance as a prerequisite for

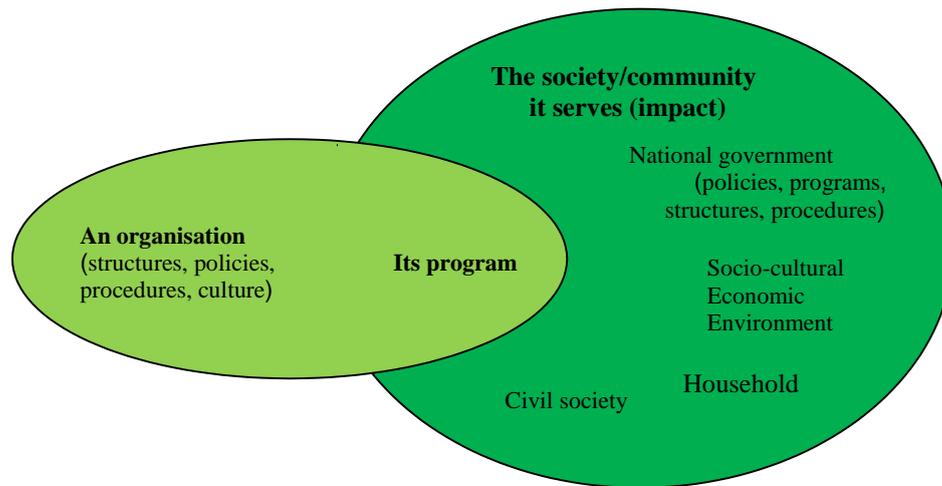
the achievement of non-gender biased implementation of GM and the achievement of women's rights and gender equality. Consequently, this study argues that the goal of bringing gender into all aspects of institutional and project-level policy and practice, enunciated in the BPA, is achievable, but will not occur without concerted and considered gender transformation strategies (Moser & Moser, 2010; Meier et al., 2005; Squires, 2005; Walby, 2005; Goetz, 1997; Corner, 1996).

Therefore, GM is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve gender equality that all government institutions seek. The study found that GM remains a framework; this calls for gender perspectives to be made visible and for the links between gender concerns and achievement of equality goals to be clearly drawn. Moser et al. (1995) illustrated that the indicators used to assess the gender impact of programmes and projects tend to measure progress in implementation rather than actual outcomes. The outcomes of GM can be reflected quantitatively (for example, by the number of women in national government leadership positions relative to men) or qualitatively (for example, women benefiting equitably or being empowered to challenge gender imbalances and promote the transformation of gender relations).

### **2.2.2 Strategies to Implement the Gender Mainstreaming Framework**

Implementing the GM framework requires that the elements of GM be integrated into work environments and policies. This enables the measurement of the gender impact of programmes and projects in terms of actual outcomes. The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) observes that the GM framework is relevant in three intersecting levels: (a) the organisation's structures, policies, procedures and culture, (b) the substantive activity that the organisation undertakes, i.e. its programme, and (c) the impact of the work on increased gender equality in the broader community. Figure 1 below shows the interrelation among these three levels (Schalkwyk, Thomas & Woroniuk, 1996: 3).

**Figure 1:** The interlocking arenas of GM



Source: Adapted from Schalkwyk, Thomas and Woroniuk (1996)

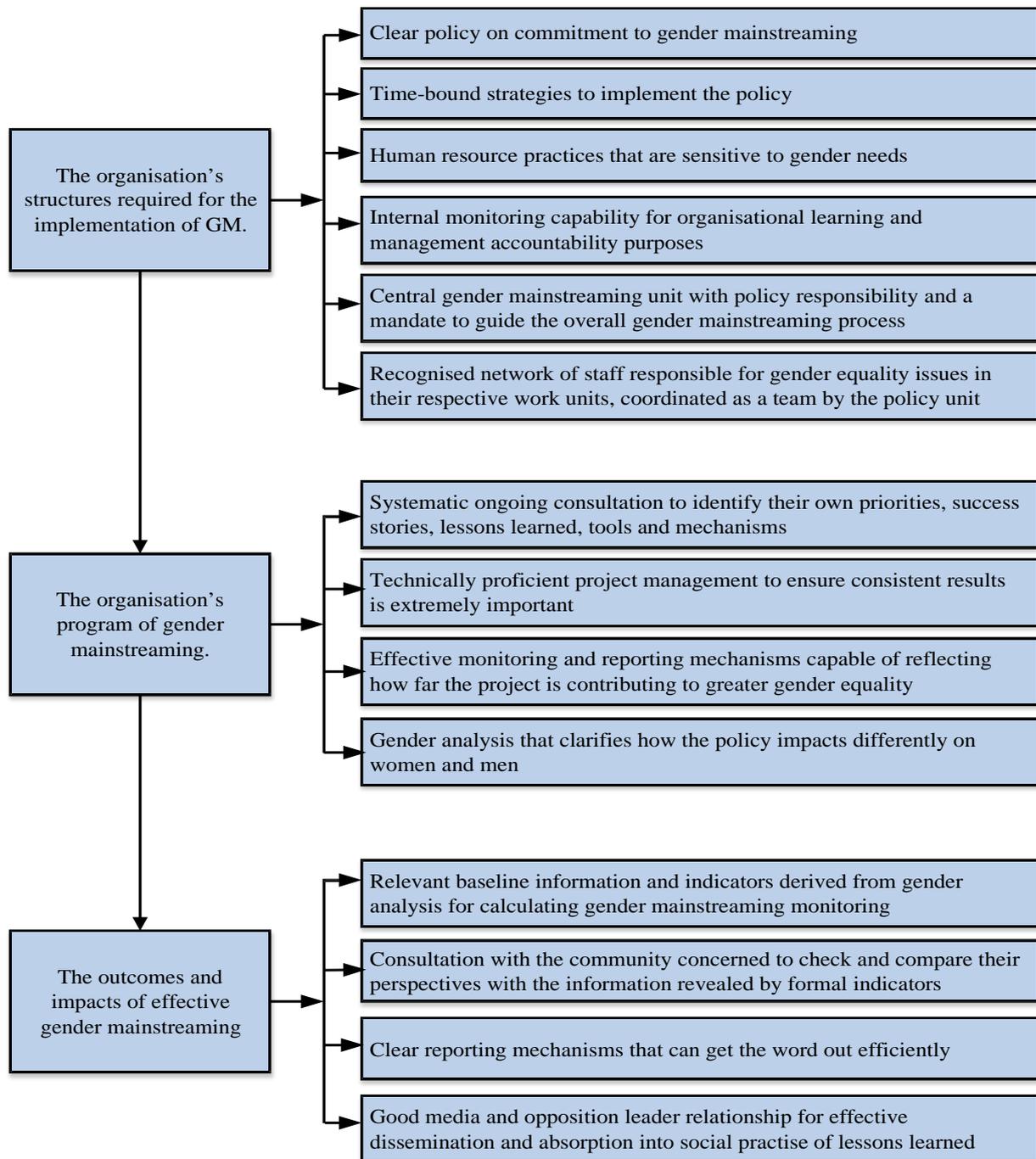
These levels are interlocking (as the findings of this study reveal; see chapter 5) because they interrelate and this connectedness is displayed in the elements they contain. They contain 14 elements that outline the outcomes of implementing a GM strategy. The first level is the organisational structures of policies and procedures required for the implementation of GM. These organisational structures are further divided into six sub-structures. These are: (i) a clear policy on commitment to gender equality, (ii) time-bound strategies to implement the policy, (iii) human resource practices that are sensitive to gender needs and interests, (iv) internal tracking and monitoring capability to ensure that strategic milestones are reached, and to support both organisational learning and management accountability, (v) a central GM unit with policy responsibility and a mandate to guide the overall GM process and (vi) a recognised network of staff responsible for gender equality issues in their respective work units, coordinated as a team by the policy unit (Schalkwyk, et. al, 1996 cited in Murison, 2004: 132-134).

The second level is the organisation's GM programme. It includes at least the following four programming elements: (i) systematic on-going consultation from the design phase of the project through to implementation with women, as well as men, to identify their priorities, success stories, lessons learned, tools and mechanisms, (ii) project management that is technically proficient, aware of the implications of gender differences for project outcomes, remains in touch with the constituency, and establishes positive incentives and accountability mechanisms to ensure consistent results (iii) effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms

capable of reflecting the extent to which the project is contributing to greater gender equality, and (iv) gender analysis (a subset of socioeconomic analysis) that explores the national and international context in which the concerned communities are operating, and clarifies the ways in which this context impacts differently on women and men and the implications of these differences for project activity (Schalkwyk, et. al, 1996 cited in Murison, 2004: 134-136).

The third level is the outcomes and impact of effective GM activity in meeting women's practical needs and strategic interests, and greater gender equality. Effective GM strategies therefore include the following final four elements: (i) relevant baseline information, and appropriate milestones and indicators, derived from gender analysis, so that progress towards greater gender equality can be identified and described, (ii) consultation with the community or individuals concerned to check and compare their perspectives with the information revealed by formal indicators, (iii) clear reporting mechanisms that can get the word out efficiently and (iv) good relationships with the media, opinion leaders and decision makers both in the organisations served, and in the wider society, so that lessons learned can be effectively disseminated, and absorbed into social practice (Murison, 2004: 136-137). The researcher adopted Schalkwyk et. al. (1996) GM framework elements since they are relevant in the context of the study and presented them in the following flow chart:

**Figure 2:** Flow-chart of the levels and elements of GM framework

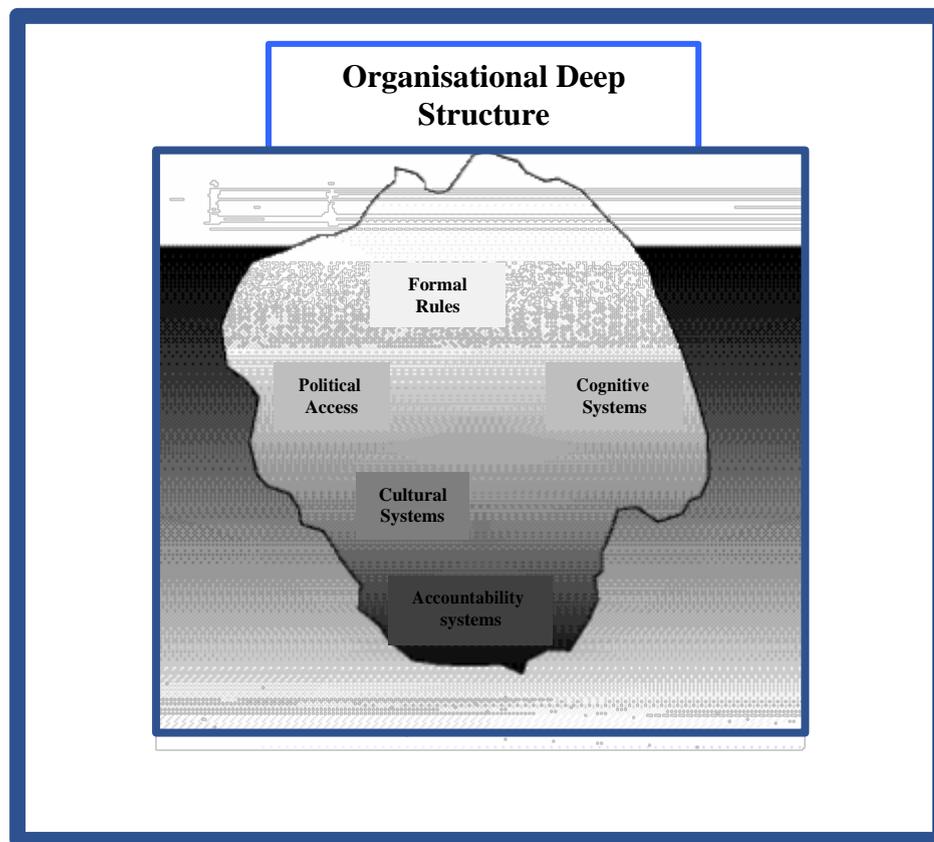


Source: Adapted from Schalkwyk, et. al. (1996) cited in Murison (2004)

According to Schalkwyk, et. al. (1996) cited in successfully actualising the elements of all these levels will ensure that the basic organisational structures that promote GM are in place. However, for any organisation to achieve GM outcomes, it must have an organisational culture that is open, well connected to its constituency, knowledge-sharing and team-based. Staff attention to leadership, knowledge sharing among colleagues, political will and commitment

are required for the successful establishment of an appropriate organisational culture. It also requires attention to the political processes by which knowledge is incorporated into policy and the kinds of knowledge and knowledge channels that are seen to be of value in the organisation (Kolb et al. 1998). However, this is not usually the case as organisations such as government departments have ‘deep structures’ that prevent women from challenging the standard stereotypes surrounding their gender (Rao & Kelleher, 2005). Figure 3 below depicts this deep structure.

**Figure 3:** The iceberg of organisational structure



Source: Adapted from Rao and Kelleher (2005)

As depicted in the diagram, the deep structure of organisations that inhibits women from challenging substantial matters includes political access, accountability systems, cultural systems and cognitive systems. Therefore, the researcher argues that for gender to be systemically mainstreamed in national government departments, the covert deep structures must also be transformed. The results of this study demonstrate that it is futile to superficially insert a GM framework as an add-on in government departments. That is because departments

are marred by institutionalised patriarchy, gender inequalities, racism, sexism and discriminatory practices towards women, particularly black African women. As such, GM will not achieve sustainable outcomes in terms of its goals of gender equality and women empowerment. In tandem with this study's findings, Rao and Kelleher (2005: 65) describe the deep structure systems that subjugate women in the workplace:

- **Political access:** there are neither systems nor actors that can put women's perspectives and interests on the agenda;
- **Accountability systems:** organisational resources are steered towards quantitative targets that are often only distantly related to institutional change for gender equality;
- **Cultural systems:** the work/family divide perpetuated by most organisations prevents women from being full participants in these organisations, as women continue to bear responsibility for the care of children and old people;
- **Cognitive systems:** work itself is mainly seen within existing, gender-biased norms and understandings.

Unsurprisingly, the deep structure of most organisations, particularly government departments is profoundly patriarchal and gender-biased. This acts as a brake on work towards the implementation of a GM framework. For example, one aspect of the deep structure is the separation of work from family responsibilities. A key assumption in organisations is that professional work is completely separate from the rest of life, and that the organisation has first claim on the worker (Acker, 1990). The study's findings show that this assumption marginalises women as cultural practices and structures exclude them as legitimate leaders by not taking their multiple roles into account. Another aspect of the deep structure is the image of heroic individualism. As organisations were originally dominated by men, they are, unsurprisingly, designed and maintained in ways that express and maintain men's identity and hegemony. Heroic individualism can lead to a focus on winning, and visible achievement. This contrasts with the largely process-oriented, and sometimes long-term, business of understanding gender relations in a particular context, and acting for mainstreaming. Given stereotypical gender roles, heroes tend to be men, further contributing to the ideology of men as ideal workers and women as subordinate and thus unsuitable in the workplace.

Theorising GM, Walby (2005) identifies six major issues that reflect many of the central debates in feminist theory; (a) the tension between gender equality and the mainstream; (b) whether gender mainstreaming is based on sameness (liberal feminism), difference (radical

feminism) or inclusion (postmodernism); (c) whether vision can be separated from strategy; (d) how to understand the relationship between gender and other main axes of oppression such as class, race, disability, sexual orientation, faith and age; (e) the relationship between democracy (participation) and expertise; and (f) the implications of transnationalism and global rights, claims and processes. Echoing Walby's concern about gender and multiple axes of oppression, Hankivsky (2005) and Squires (2005) argue that GM needs to reflect the current level of theoretical development in feminism concerning the question of gender and its intersecting relations. Resolution of this question has the potential to propel GM forward as a transformative framework, while not resolving it will lead to its continued marginal and diluted impact. The continued marginalisation and weak impact of GM is evident in the study's findings. Operating as a framework and not policy results in a lack of monitoring and enforcement and political will as well as human and financial resources to effectively implement GM. Government departments' organisational culture, structure and practices are characterised by patriarchy and male-centeredness and these factors contribute to the marginalisation of the GM framework. Furthermore, GFPs were reported at junior levels in some departments but were non-existent in others. Where departments have GFPs, they operate as human resource practitioners and conduct GM functions as additional tasks. This illustrates the failure to prioritise GM and the fact that the GM framework is an add-on. The nine functions of GFPs in government departments are as follows:

- a) To ensure that each department implements the national gender policy;
- b) To ensure that gender issues are routinely considered in departmental strategic planning exercises;
- c) To ensure that departments reflect gender considerations in their business plans and routinely report on them;
- d) To review departmental policy and planning in line with the National Gender Policy Framework;
- e) To review all policies, projects and programmes for their gender implications;
- f) To ensure that departments provide and use gender disaggregated data in their work;
- g) To establish mechanisms to link and liaise with civil society;
- h) To co-ordinate gender training and education of all staff within departments so as to ensure that gender is integrated into all aspects of the work; and

- i) To monitor and evaluate departmental projects and programmes to assess whether they are consistent with national gender policy (South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality, 2001: 29).

### 2.3 The Amended Employment Equity Act (Act 47 of 2013)

Grogan (2011: 8) notes that the preamble to the EEA reads: "Recognising that as the result of apartheid and other discriminatory laws and practices, there are disparities in employment, occupation and income within the national labour market; and that those disparities create such pronounced disadvantages for certain categories of people that they cannot be addressed simply by replacing discriminatory laws". According to Bendix (2011), the EEA was the third major legislative innovation in labour law. The Presidential Labour Market Commission was established by an Act passed by Parliament on September 14, 1995, with terms of reference which included, *inter alia*, the proposal of mechanisms to redress discrimination in the labour market. It recommended the promulgation of the EEA (Burger & Jafta, 2010). The Act was based on Canadian legislation, though it borrowed from other legislation (Bendix, 2010). Swanepoel (2012) notes that, employees of the South African Defence Force (SANDF), National Intelligence (NIA) and South African Secret Services are excluded from the provisions of the EEA.

The democratic South African government made a commitment to adopt non-racial, non-sexist policies to govern the country, its institutions and citizens. The new employment legislation sought to prevent, correct and, to some extent, reverse historical abuses. The EEA of 1998 and Amended EE Act of 2013 drew on the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights of 1996 and applied to all employers. The purpose of the Act is to achieve equity in the workplace by:

- (a) "Promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination"; and
- (b) "Implementing affirmative action measures to address the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels" (Section 2 of the Amended EEA, Act 47 of 2014).

The EEA further states that "No person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds, including race,

gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language, and birth or any other arbitrary ground” (EE Act, 47 of 2014). The EEA requires public and private organisations to submit EE plans to the Departments of Labour and Public Service and Administration (DPSA). These plans are central in ensuring egalitarian policies and procedure at organisational level.

### 2.3.1 Implementation of the EE plan

The Amended EEA (Act 47 of 2014) gives clear directives on the implementation of the EE plan:

- (1) A designated employer must prepare and implement an employment equity plan which will achieve reasonable progress towards employment equity in that employer's workforce.
- (2) An employment equity plan must state:
  - (a) The objectives to be achieved for each year of the plan;
  - (b) The affirmative action measures to be implemented;
  - (c) where underrepresentation of people from designated groups has been identified by the analysis, the numerical goals to achieve the equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups within each occupational level in the workforce, the timetable within which this is to be achieved, and the strategies intended to achieve those goals; the timetable for each year of the plan for the achievement of goals and objectives other than numerical goals;
  - (e) The duration of the plan, which may not be shorter than one year or longer than five years;
  - (f) The procedures that will be used to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan and whether reasonable progress is being made towards implementing employment equity;
  - (g) The internal procedures to resolve any dispute about the interpretation or implementation of the plan;
  - (h) The persons in the workforce, including senior managers, responsible for monitoring and implementing the plan.

### 2.3.2 Reporting the EE Status of Organisations

The Act requires that a designated employer submit the EE report to the Director-General once a year, on the first working day of October or on such other date as may be prescribed, and must notify the Director-General in the Department of Labour in writing before the last working day of August in the same year giving reasons for its inability to do so. However, this study found that the sampled national government departments do not report to the DoL as required and EE monitoring is lacking. Monitoring is discussed later in this chapter.

According to the EEA, an employer that is not able to submit the EE report to the Director-General by the first working day of October must notify the Director-General in writing before the last working day of August in the same year giving reasons for its inability to do so. The Director-General may apply to the Labour Court to impose fines, if an employer,

- (a) Fails to submit a report in terms of this section;
- (b) Fails to notify and give reasons to the Director-General in terms of subsection 4A, and
- (c) Has notified the Director-General in terms of subsection 4A but the reasons are false or invalid (Employment Equity Act, 47 of 2013: 10).

**Table 2:** presents the maximum fines that may be imposed in terms of the EEA for the contravention of certain provisions of the Act:

<b>Previous Contravention</b>	<b>Contravention of any Provision of sections 16 (read with 17), 19, [20, 21,] 22, 24, 25, 26 and [23] 43(2)</b>	<b>Contravention of any Provision of sections 20, 21, 23 and 44(b)</b>
No previous contravention	[R500 000] R1 500 000	The greater of R1 500 000 or 2% of the employer's turnover
A previous contravention in respect of the same provision	[R600 000] R1 800 000	The greater of R1 800 000 or 4% of the employer's turnover
A previous contravention within the previous 12 months or two previous contraventions in respect of the same provision within three years	[R700 000] R2 100 000	The greater of R2 100 000 or 6% of the employer's turnover
Three previous contraventions in respect of the same provision within three years	[R800 000] R2 400 000	The greater of R2 400 000 or 8% of the employer's turnover
Four previous contraventions in respect of the same provision within three years	[R900 000] R2 700 000	The greater of R2 700 000 or 10% of the employer's turn-over.

Source: Adapted from Employment Equity Act (Act 47 of 2013)

### 2.3.3 The Commission for Employment Equity

The Commission for Employment Equity is a statutory body whose role is to advise the Minister of Labour on matters concerning the Act. These include policy recommendations, matters concerning the implementation of the EEA and achievement of its objectives. The Commission submits an annual report to the Minister of Labour evaluating the progress of public and private sector organisations in achieving the Act's objectives. The report usually takes the form of analysis of data from EE reports submitted by designated employers and those that volunteer to submit a report. The duties of the Commission are set out below.

- (1) The Commission advises the Minister on:
  - (a) Codes of good practice issued by the Minister;

- (b) Regulations made by the Minister; and
  - (c) Policy and any other matter concerning the EE Act (Commission for Employment Equity, Annual Report, 2012-2013).
- (2) The Commission may also:
- (a) Make awards recognising achievements of employers in furthering the purpose of this Act;
  - (b) Research and report to the Minister on any matter relating to the application of this Act, including appropriate and well-researched norms and benchmarks for the setting of numerical goals in various sectors (Commission for Employment Equity, Annual Report, 2012-2013).

#### **2.3.4 Shortcomings of the EEA (Act 47 of 2013)**

If well implemented, the EEA has the potential to promote systemic transformation, particularly in terms of an egalitarian work environment. However, its shortcomings include the fact that it overlooks some factors. Three such factors are important in the context of this study.

First, if the precepts of the EEA on achieving homogeneity are taken seriously, there is a danger of assuming that a member of a different population group faces the same type of barriers in accessing employment. Furthermore, Ted (2005) argues that different groupings within a designated group have different needs and that these are not adequately addressed by EE policy. The author argues that even though there are political advantages to being treated in a homogenous manner, there is also the disadvantage of losing ‘minority-specific’ treatment. The Act makes no suggestions as to how this could be resolved.

Second, the EEA takes no cognizance of the uniqueness of women from different population groups and classes in the workforce. Similar to the GM framework, it treats women across members of designated groups as a homogenous category (Samson, 1999). Black and white women currently have different levels of education and job opportunities and earn different wages. Even amongst black women, there are significant differences in relation to ethnicity and social class. Classifying all women under the same category overlooks these issues.

Third, institutions with less than 50 employees are not covered by the EEA. Many women, including domestic workers and those working in the informal sector are thus excluded. However, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act of 1997 (amended as Act 20 of 2013 to

include domestic workers) guarantees, among other things, maternity leave, job security during pregnancy, minimum wages, protect workers' health and safety for previously excluded groups (Sadie, 2014).

## **2.4 South Africa's Historical and Legislative Context on GM and EE Policies**

This section describes the historical and legislative context that impacts on the women who participated in this study. It discusses the history of South African women and their activism in the pre- and post-apartheid contexts. It also focuses on strategies to implement the GM framework in national government departments and outlines key extracts of the EEA (Act 55 of 1998) as well the amended Act (Act 47 of 2013).

### **2.4.1 Women in South Africa prior to 1994**

Apartheid marginalised black African women (who were categorised, alongside black African men, as 'natives' and relegated to bantustans<sup>5</sup>) more than white, Indian and coloured women. Black African women in South Africa have been oppressed at all levels for decades (Flood, Hoosain & Primo, 1997). While they played major roles in politics, resistance politics during the 1980s was dominated by organisations whose main objective was to mobilise women for national liberation as opposed to women's liberation (Hassim, 1991). During the colonial and apartheid eras, around 80% of all domestic workers were black African women. Many were also heads of their households, with the responsibility of caring for their families while their husbands worked as migrant labours in towns and cities (Flood et al., 1997). Black African women had little access to education and those that received tertiary training were restricted to nursing and teaching.

According to James (1984) and O'Brien (1993), an African woman in the workplace faced discrimination due to her race, gender and class. Until the 1980s, professional women in South Africa were restricted from participating on an equal basis in the workplace due to a lack of legal protection (Flood et al., 1997). Gender discrimination in the workplace was only acknowledged as an unfair labour practice in 1988 (De Vries, 1991). Few women held top positions, and the private and public sectors invested less time and fewer resources in training

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<sup>5</sup> Bantustans were homelands or territories set aside for black South Africans during the apartheid era. Those resident in such areas were denied all rights in the rest of the country (Thompson, 2000).

women managers (Lillicrap, 1987). Women were mainly employed at lower levels that were not linked to leadership roles (De Vries, 1991).

While democracy has ushered in many positive changes, gender inequality persists in South Africa (Commission for Gender Equality, 2005). The Government of National Unity that assumed power in 1994 started the process of addressing gender-related discrimination (Office for the Status of Women, 2001). South Africa's Constitution promotes human dignity, equality, human rights, freedom, non-racialism and non-sexism (South African Government, 1996). However, the democratic transition is not complete; much work remains to be done to address gender disparities, racism and other forms of inequality and discrimination.

Since the first democratic general election in 1994, equality and social justice have been at the top of the policy agenda. Various debates driven by women activists and civil society organisations took place in the early 1990s during national and provincial workshops, seminars and conferences. These focused on women's interests and debated how the state should empower women and the new government's gender equality objectives (Mvimbi, 2009). This process culminated in 1990 in the development of a policy document which became known as the National Policy for Women's Empowerment (Mvimbi, 2009). Furthermore, the promulgation of the EEA (Act 55 of 1998) resulted in a notable increase in the number of women occupying leadership positions in national government departments as well as GM. Both policies are part of longstanding feminist and women's interventions to address the patriarchal nature of South African society (Benschop & Verloo, 2006). Locally and internationally, small numbers of men are also engaged in public efforts in support of gender equality in fields such as violence against women, HIV/AIDS and schooling (Connell, 2003; Kim & Watts, 2005).

#### **2.4.2 Women's Activism during the Pre- and Post-Apartheid era and National Gender Machinery (NGM)**

South Africa is the only country in which a politically organised women's movement made significant input in the negotiations that established a new political system (Waylen, 2007). Indeed, the activities of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) prior to the first democratic election in 1994 are often accorded a special role in the transition from apartheid to democracy. Launched in 1992, the WNC embraces women from across the political, economic, racial, cultural and religious spectrums and aimed to ensure that women participated in the making of

the Constitution and in the formulation of the Women's Charter that was launched in 1994. Women's activism was also a feature during the apartheid years. The Federation of South African Women (FSAW) was launched on 17 April 1954 in Johannesburg as the first attempt to establish a broad-based women's organisation. It brought together women's organisations such as the Congress of Democrats (COD), the Black Sash, ANC Women's League, and women in the Natal and Transvaal Indian Congress and the broader Congress Alliance (Waylen, 2007).

The concerted efforts of women's organisations resulted in South Africa's first democratic Parliament passing legislation such as the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 and the Maintenance Act of 1998, which addressed substantive gender equality and mainstreaming issues. Women were given equal rights and status in marriage, protection against domestic violence and maintenance for their children (Waylen, 2007). A group of 'sympathetic insiders' in the legislature and government played a key role in ensuring that progressive gender provisions were included in the final Constitution and new legislation.

Waylen (2007) notes that interactions between women's organisations, often in the form of specific sectoral alliances, the legislature, the African National Congress (ANC), and sometimes in the gender machinery, did not end with a gender sensitive Constitution, but were central to the adoption of new legislation such as that relating to abortion and domestic violence. However, processes to promote substantive representation were arbitrary and unanticipated by many activists. These and other factors circumscribed the space for positive gender outcomes in the post-transition period. They include weaker coalitions among women that dilute capacity to set agendas and raise issues among such coalitions. Baldez (2003) observes that, this phenomenon is not peculiar to South Africa. The author notes the "seemingly inevitable tendency of women's movements to fragment post-transition period" (2003: 268). For example, prior to 1994 the WNC represented the voices of women in civil society. However, most of its competent leaders became members of parliament, while the women's movement itself has become fragmented and demobilised and now organises at a sectoral level around issues such as violence and poverty.

Baldez (2003) points out that in its early days, women in the WNC could hold leadership roles within the organisation and also play an active role in politics. However, following a controversial decision, this status quo was overturned. It was decided that, in order for the Coalition to maintain its autonomy, women in political parties could no longer play a leadership

role. Many activists regarded this as a strategic error and they were subsequently proved correct as the WNC lost a number of its most experienced leaders to politics. The effects were immediate and monumental (M. Manzini, ANC official, interview, July 30, 2003; Kemp et al., 1995: 153-154).

One such effect is that there is no coherent women's movement to mobilise women in support of issues raised by women in government, to ensure that women in government are accountable, or to set a feminist agenda (Gouws, 2008). Another is the decline of the broad alliance of women's organisations represented by the WNC and the lack of a mass grassroots women's movement. These effects were compounded by the virtual withdrawal of the ANC Women League's (ANCWL) from the WNC (Hassim, 2002: 727).

However, possible positive spinoffs of the decision to separate politics from leadership in the WNC include the fact that women became actively engaged in institutional politics in the transition to democracy. The Constitution (1996) "recognises that gender inequality can undermine democracy, and render it inaccessible for a majority of those who are marginalised on the grounds of gender" (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013). The DPSA is responsible for transforming the public service into an equitable institution. It is mandated with public service administration, ensuring public service excellence and the promotion of good governance in all government departments. The DPSA developed the Strategic Framework for Gender Equality within the Public Service (2006-2015).

Since the transition to democracy, the South African state has embarked on creating one of the most integrated national gender machineries in the world to promote gender mainstreaming. The national gender machinery (NGM) is the structural conduit through which gender equality can be achieved (Hendrickse, 2012). A 20-year review conducted by the Department of Public Service Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) outlined the two key national policy documents, which are aligned with international<sup>6</sup> standards and initiated a new discourse and path to end gender discrimination and inequality. The CGE's Framework for Transforming Gender Relations was the first attempt to provide policy-makers, planners and the public at large with

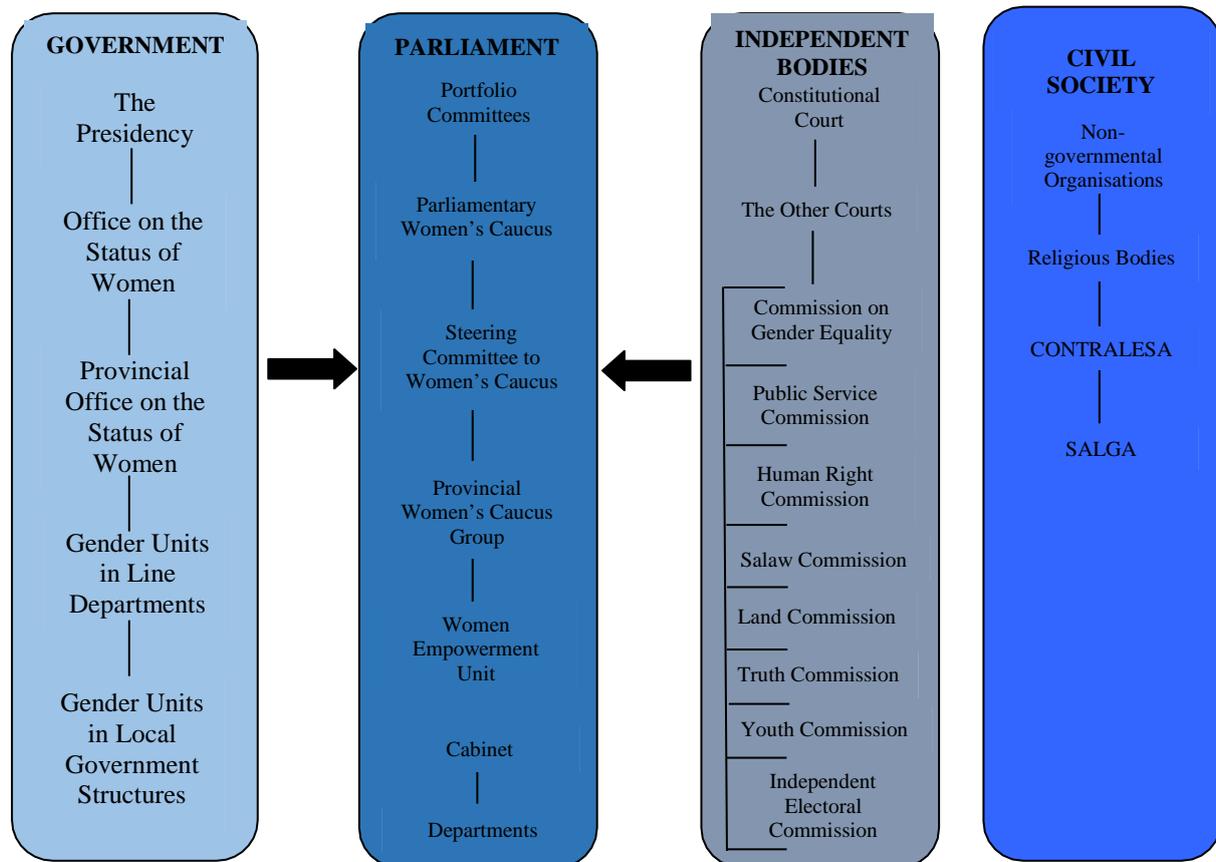
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<sup>6</sup>South Africa's national policies are aligned with and strongly influenced by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform of Action (BPA), which were signed as early as 1995 in the journey since democracy (DPME Review)

a tool to promote understanding of progressive gender concepts and the impact of gender inequality through widespread training and workshops.

Furthermore, the National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality, referred to as the Gender Policy Framework (GPF), outlined the goals of "equality of opportunity" and "equality of treatment" as the means to achieve the broader objective of gender equality. This framework expressed the demands of women's organisations, human rights activists, feminist researchers and political activists and was a major milestone in putting women's rights on the political and economic transformation agenda. Figure 4 below depicts the National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality.

**Figure 4:** South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality



Source: Adapted from South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women Empowerment and Gender Equality (2001)

As Figure 4 above shows, the NGM consists of the Office on the Status of Women (OSW), a Women's Caucus in Parliament, the Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and the Status of Women (JCQLSW), a Women's Empowerment Unit (WEU), and Gender Focal Points (such as gender desks in every government department tasked with GM and monitoring legislation) at the national level. These structures are duplicated at provincial level, and there is an independent CGE (Gouws, 2007). Over the years, the integrated nature of this machinery has elicited ambivalent responses from feminist scholars. It has been hailed as the strong feature of the machinery, and simultaneously it has become one of its biggest drawbacks. The drawbacks include overlapping mandates, personalised politics, poor communication, the lack of a feminist agenda, and a reluctance to call the state to account for serious infringements of women's rights. This has led to perceptions that the NGM is dysfunctional, and mistrust on the part of women in civil society and women's organisations (Gouws, 2007). It has proven difficult for the NGM to achieve its mandate as a regulator when it is not independent of

government (the Joint Monitoring Commission is a standing committee). Seidman (2003) explains that policy machinery mainly focuses on giving women a voice and representation but in post-colonial societies these structures often tilt towards mobilising women and seeking to ensure their participation in gender projects, thus placing a double burden on these structures. Moreover, Seidman (2003) echoes Gouws' (2007) view that the NGM has leadership challenges and it is under-resourced. The challenges include underlying conflict about the nature of a feminist vision for NGM, or indeed if the vision should be a feminist one.

It is evident that government is plagued with challenges in the quest for gender transformation. However, it is important to note that South Africa is a signatory to several regional and international commitments on women's empowerment and gender equality. These include the following:

- CEDAW (December 1995), signed on 29 January 1993 and ratified in December 1995;
- The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, signed in September 1995;
- The African Union Heads of States' Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adapted and ratified in August 2004;
- The Optional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (AU Women's Protocol) (December 2004), ratified on 17 December 2004;
- The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality 2005–2015, adopted in 2005;
- The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development (2012), ratified in 2011; and
- The Sustainable Development Goals – Agenda 2030 (Department of Women 2015/16 Annual Report).

Despite regional and international commitments to eradicate inequality and empower women, government cultures, structures and practices remain patriarchal, placing women (particularly black African women) at the margins in the departments under study. Furthermore, GM and EE policies are not effectively implemented or monitored as required due to masculinised organisational cultures, structure and practices that dominate the bureaucracy. Contrary to GM framework principles, gender is at the margins rather than the centre. The study's findings

illuminate the gender bias and discrimination prevalent in the sampled departments and the lack of interventions to address this situation.

## **2.5 Statistical Overview of Women's Representation in Government and Non-Governmental Organisations**

In analysing women representation in both governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the primary focus is on how GM has been implemented and actualised. This section begins by summarising women's representation in government and non-governmental organisations at the global level, followed by a review of the literature on GM implementation and EE policies.

According to Catalyst (2017), globally, women in general and black women in particular are underrepresented in both the government and non-government sectors. Women's representation in leadership echelons is not a uniquely South African challenge, but a global conundrum. It is estimated that women make up 51% of the global population. However, their representation in the public and private sectors falls way below this level. For instance, in the United States (US), women occupy 19.1% of seats in the House of Representatives, with black women only accounting for 7.1%. There are currently only four female governors and only one is black. The following countries have the highest women's representation in their national legislature: Rwanda, Bolivia, Australia, Canada, the US, Cuba, Iceland, Nicaragua, Sweden, Senegal, Mexico Ecuador and South Africa (Catalyst, 2017). South Africa is ranked fourth in terms of female Ministers and Members of Parliament (Catalyst, 2017). Canada has the highest number of women leaders in firms and private organisations at 45%, while in Japan, the world's third largest economy, women account for 2.5% of public sector leaders. In India, the world's largest democratic nation, women make up only 7.7% of leaders in the public sector. In terms of female leadership in the public sector, Italy, France and Germany perform favourably and South Africa and Brazil are reported to be progressing well (Catalyst, 2017).

## 2.6 International Literature on GM and EE Policies

There is a dearth of empirical literature on GM in government departments. However, a few studies have identified the institutional limitations that obstruct implementation of the GM framework. Macdonald's (2003) study of gender equality and mainstreaming in the strategy and practise of the United Kingdom's Department for International Development found that the department had no centralised gender unit. Furthermore, staff members were required to implement gender transformation policies with next to no information. Assessment of gender progress was obstructed by organisational changes and staff shortages.

Veich (2006) investigated the UK government's approach to GM. The study found that effective implementation of the GM framework was inhibited by a lack of information, clear priorities, training for policy-makers, policy data and resources. The study concluded that GM was absent from the majority of policy work in the UK government (Veich, 2006). Similar to the findings of Macdonald (2003) and Veich (2006), this study found that national government departments lack political will, and human and financial resources to implement the GM framework. Furthermore, GM training was identified as a challenge by policy-makers and decision-makers as departments are not capacitated and do not have the expertise to effectively mainstream gender. Government departments' environment and the structures where GM is implemented are not transformed; male-stream gendered and racial biases prevail, limiting the transformative potential of this framework.

Similar challenges were identified by a survey of environment ministries and departments in 27 countries (United Nations Environment Programme, 2006). Some countries questioned the relevance of GM in the environmental sector, while others excelled in specific areas and could be considered role models. The areas requiring the most attention included organisational commitment, resources, gender expertise and capacity, and equal participation. Other areas included GM tools, gender indicators and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting systems. Most of the departments had excelled at some level, including the adoption of gender policies and at the level of organisational structures, gender focal points and external contacts (United Nations Environment Programme, 2006). Sen (2000) documented similar findings in the Finance Ministry in India. The author reported a lack of analytic clarity regarding the Ministry's work (particularly its changing role as a result of globalisation and liberalisation of economies) (2000: 1380). There was also no clear conceptual understanding of how gender was linked to the Finance Ministry's roles. This was due to the institutional structures and the ethos within

which the Ministry and resistance to GM among employees. Women's organisations' lack of knowledge and capacity to engage effectively in macro-economic policy debates also posed a challenge to the effective implementation of GM policy (Sen, 2000).

Sauer and Tertinegg (2003) examined the challenges of implementing GM in Austria and found that, compared to other countries, GM developed at a slow pace. Bastia (2000) investigated the monitoring and evaluation of GM in the International Labour Organization (ILO). The author observes that monitoring and evaluating of this strategy was constrained by GM's intermediate and ultimate goals. The intermediate goal of GM is the "institutionalization of gender concerns in a country or in an organisation in such a way that gender issues are taken into account in every Ministry or in every aspect of the organisation's work". On the other hand, GM's ultimate goal is "gender equality at the national level and among the target population" (2000: 16). Basitia (2000) found that the broad nature of the ILO was a challenge in monitoring and evaluating GM. Mergert (2012) investigated GM implementation in the European Union Research Policy. The writer argued that, "the European Commission is a liquid, compartmentalised, gendered bureaucracy and that this disposition affects its potential for effectively implementing gender mainstreaming" (2012: 14). Thus, GM often fails to deliver on its objectives of gender equality and women empowerment due to the hierarchical structure of most organisations that leads to its implementation at different paces and frequency. The hiatus between the GM framework and praxis in institutions is thus a recurring theme in the literature.

Other studies identify practical challenges in relation to GM. Jahan (2007) analysed the prospects and constraints of GM in the Bangladeshi civil service and found that, the level of active women's participation was low. The author argues that this was due to the multi-dimensional nature of the civil service in Bangladesh. The following problems were highlighted by female employees: family responsibility, fear of being transferred to remote areas and the transferable nature of jobs, and a lack of child care facilities. Further challenges included a lack of security, non-cooperation from male colleagues and family members, a non-supportive workplace environment and superiority complexes and negative attitudes among male colleagues. Many of these problems are also prevalent in the democratic South Africa.

Callerstig and Lindholm (2015) investigated the effects of GM in Swedish local government. As noted earlier, Sweden ranks among the top ten nations in terms of GM. However, similar to Merget's (2012) findings, the authors concluded that the hierarchical structure of most public

organisations makes it difficult to monitor the impacts of GM. They added that GM has had what they term a “soft effect”, which reflects “increased knowledge and changing attitudes amongst the staff members” (Callerstig & Lindholm, 2015: 65).

Stetson and Mazur’s (1995) comparative study of the national machinery of 14 industrialised countries in North America and Europe concluded that, firstly, those with a high level of success were all established under social democratic governments that prioritised gender equality in their policy agendas (for example, Australia, Denmark, Norway and The Netherlands) and were under pressure from feminist organisations. Secondly, the countries with high success rates all had centralised cross-sectoral approaches and promoted GM. In comparison, states with only one structure or separate structures with no centralised co-ordinating office were less successful. Third, countries with successful machinery had active feminist groups, in which female citizens as well as trade unions and political parties participated. Radical feminist groups raised gender consciousness, while moderate feminist groups put pressure on political party elites to take women’s policy machinery seriously. Therefore, Stetson and Mazur’s (1995) study shows that access and influence are linked to a centralised gender equality structure and integrating gender equity concerns into policy-making while involving women’s organisations.

The status of EE policy implementation is not dissimilar. Affirmative Action strategies to achieve employment equity have been adopted in countries such as the US, Britain, Canada, Malaysia and India (Thomas, 2002). Studies in the North, especially those addressing women in leadership positions since the 1970s, have mainly focused on the experiences of middle- to upper-class white women, neglecting the role of women from other classes and women of colour (De Laney & Rogers, 2004; Collins, 2000). The current study contributes to the body of knowledge by giving voice to black African women leaders’ experiences and the outcomes of GM and EE policies.

The majority of research at the international level has focused on GM within the European Union (Rubery, 2002), transnational networks and GM policy diffusion (True & Mintrom, 2000). Others have explored GM policy in the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (Hafner-Burton & Pollack, 2002). Jones (2011) focused on female chief executive officers in local government, while Macdonald et al. (2005) traced the career trajectories of female senior managers. Yukongdi and Benson (2005) highlighted women’s experiences of the glass ceiling and Singh and Vinnicombe (2004) examined the reasons for

the low numbers of women in leadership positions. The challenges confronting women in leadership were studied by Hang (2008), Gonzales and Bayes (2008) and Zubaidi et al. (2011), while critical mass and political influence were researched by Santana et al. (2015); Chesterman et al. (2005); and Lovenduski and Karam (1998).

However, similar to GM, there is a paucity of studies on EE policy in government departments. Agocs (2002) focused on EE policy and practice in Canada and concluded that employers' failure to implement the policy and a lack of effective enforcement resulted in a disjuncture between EE policy and practice. It is difficult to evaluate a policy that is not implemented. A similar limitation is noted in Spain where there is repeated reference to training and to creating a new professional (Equality Agent) in most of the plans. However, a lack of expertise in carrying out gender impact assessments and even basic understanding of the term gender is still prevalent in some government departments in that country (Villagómez, 2004).

Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) conducted an intra-provincial review of the state of EE across Canada. Following a review of EE policy, the authors conducted a series of qualitative interviews with equity policy stakeholders in order to compare the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of the policy. The study found that different conditions in the country's provinces result in an uneven landscape for the actualisation of EE policies. A host of cultural and epistemological assumptions shape and direct the reception of EE policies. To corroborate their conclusions, Bakan and Kobayashi (2000) conducted a similar study at the federal level, which produced contradictory results. At this level, there were fewer cultural and epistemological assumptions, rendering the assimilation and reception of EE policies more easy and thorough.

Dent (2017) examined the relationship between gender quotas and government expenditure. It is assumed that if a country seeks to increase expenditure in a particular area, it needs to ensure that the gender that is traditionally more committed to this area is elected to legislative bodies. For example, men will favour more funds being invested in sport and the military, while women are more invested in health and education. Dent's (2017) investigation of whether this assumption holds found that, in general, gender quotas are negatively correlated with a nation's expenditure. The author attributed this "to problems in how women elected through quotas represent women of their country and a lack of institutional support for women elected through quotas" (2017: 55).

Friedenvall (2003) considered the effect of gender quotas from the perspective of the number of electoral seats assigned to political parties in Sweden. Many European nations have adopted gendered electoral quotas and the effect is a more gender aware and balanced Parliament. The author found while some parties have adopted gendered quotas simply to gain the support of the female electorate, others have stuck to a rigorous candidate-by-candidate review that is often unfair and ignores women's experiences. The problem with this dual approach is that, women are underrepresented or their participation is insignificant as they are not elected on merit. Either way, EE policy outcomes are not achieved by political parties, with a negative impact on the governmental sectors of European nations.

Kelemen (2008) analysed the effects of a lack of women's representation in the Hungarian Parliament and found that a gender-balanced parliamentary system remains elusive. Furthermore, "women's proportional involvement in political decision-making is not merely a standard of women's equality but a guarantee for it" (2008: 4). This corroborates Dias' (2005) assertion that, "Women should not only be granted equal opportunities because they have the right to them, but also because increasing their number in the parliament allows for taking their specific experience and viewpoints into account in the legislation process, which eventually serves the whole society" (2005: 29). Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson (2005) concur with this conclusion. Their study of 18 Latin American democracies from 1980 to 2003 concluded that democracies that have set aside more Parliamentary seats for women have promoted, supported and established more women's rights and issues than those with fewer women in Parliament. However, the current study's findings indicate that a focus on numbers (representational equity) does not result in equality. Substantive representation does promote equality as women are able to influence policy decisions as active participants in government departments. These findings are in tandem with Sanger's (2008:2) observation that the essentialist notion that women in elected office will automatically care about and prioritise women's empowerment is problematic. This is partially attributable to the patriarchal culture of national, provincial and local government structures and the ways in which this culture creates barriers to women's participation in decision-making processes.

Rai's (2013) study focused on Bihar, India and concluded that there is a disproportionate relationship between women empowerment and gender quotas. Because traditional attitudes limit women's rights and freedom of speech in India, quantitative representation of women in political decision-making does not necessarily translate into qualitative changes in their

political empowerment (Rai, 2013). Hassim (2005) also notes that, numerical representation does not necessarily translate into substantive representation. Rai explains that, “the reservation for women can be an important impetus to women’s empowerment in India on village level but it is not a guarantee for participation of the elected women” (2013: 2). The author recommends that supplementary policies be adopted to build women’s self-confidence and capacity and remove operational obstacles.

The international body of literature on the implementation and outcomes of GM and EE policy lacks empirical evidence on the lived experiences of black African women leaders in national government. The current study aimed to fill this gap.

## **2.7 Continental Literature on GM and EE Policies**

Continental studies on the outcomes of gender transformation policies and the experiences of African women in leadership roles in the government and the non-governmental sectors are categorised under two key themes:

- (i) The impact of male-stream patriarchal politics on GM policy resulting in a lack of substantive representation of women (Para-Mallam, 2006; Ohiole & Ojo, 2015; Durojaye, Chukwudera & Okeke, 2012; Okumo & Asfaw, 2014; Nyachieng’a, 2010); and
- (ii) A lack of political will and resources to drive the GM agenda (Torto, 2013; Durojaye, Chukwudera & Okeke, 2012; Nyachieng’a, 2010).

Various scholars have investigated the under-representation of women and barriers to women’s access to leadership (Pheko, 2014; Anigwe, 2014; Hadjis, 2013; Wallace & Smith, 2011; Yilma, 2010). Simelane (2011) examined gender inequality in the government sector, while Tsegay (2013) focused on women’s perceptions of their leadership. Other researchers have explored women’s substantive and sustainable representation through the implementation of gender quotas, as well as special seats for women in national assemblies and parliaments (Bazugba, 2014; Darhour & Dahlerup, 2013; Bauer & Burnet, 2013; Muriaas, Tonnessen & Wang, 2013; Tonnessen & Al-Nagar, 2013; Yoon, 201; Mkilanya, 2011). Ramguttty-Wong (2002) surveyed CEOs’ perceptions and attitudes to women’s issues in the public and private sectors in Mauritius. Ohemeng and Adusah-Karikari (2014) explored strategies to enhance the

advancement of women in the Ghanaian public service and Hora (2014) identified the factors that affect women's participation in decision-making positions in Ethiopia.

However, few studies have focused on the experiences of African women occupying leadership positions in national government departments in relation to the outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE). There are many possible reasons for this. One could be the general neglect of African women in leadership in the mainstream literature (Blunt & Jones, 2007; Nkomo, 2006; Jackson, 2004). As noted in Chapter 1, within organisational studies, theories of leadership and management have generally omitted women's voices among the racial 'other', whether that be African or other non-Western perspectives (Nkomo, 2006). Spivak (1995) explains the tendency of scholarly writing to exclude and marginalise the subalterns<sup>7</sup>, who are women since women are twice colonised and are the most oppressed. Hence this study contributes to African scholarship on the outcomes of GM and EE policies as experienced by women themselves and spoken in their voices.

According to the BPA (1995), democracy is incomplete without women's equal participation at all levels of decision-making, including public and political office. The goals of equality, development, and peace cannot be effectively attained without such participation and the incorporation of women's perspectives (BPA, 1995). The few studies conducted on the African continent on similar topics to the current study conclude that there is no substantive representation of women in the public sector. The formulation of a GM framework and its outcomes are impeded by disproportionate representation and masculinised bureaucratic cultures and practices. Para-Mallam (2006) examined the challenges of mainstreaming gender issues in Nigeria from 1985 to 2005 within a gender and development analytical framework. The author examined the relevance of the National Policy on Women (NPW) to the aspirations of Nigerian women and whether or not there is sufficient state capacity to implement the policy (and mainstream gender perspectives, as it stipulates). Para-Mallam (2006) found that, while women acknowledged their primary role as reproducers and caregivers, they felt that they should be provided with support to reduce their domestic burdens and be given opportunities for wider socioeconomic and political participation. The majority of the study participants

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<sup>7</sup> The term 'subaltern' originally meant a commissioned army officer at a rank lower than that of captain. The word has now entered the vocabulary of academic discourse, especially in cultural studies, to imply a subject who is marginalised and oppressed.

valued their roles as wives and mothers as this gave them social status and benefits (Para-Mallam, 2006).

Ogundipe-Leslie (1984) observes that, “women [have]... both idealised and ‘cornered’ motherhood”. They consider motherhood to be an investment with short-term emotional costs and social deprivation, and long-term social and material dividends and they do not foresee an end to male patriarchal advantage. De Beauvoir (1997) stated that women’s ‘otherness’ produces subjectivity since “women are conscious of themselves in ways that men have shaped them” (Hughes & Witz, 1997: 49).

Olatunde (2010) focused on women’s participation and representation in Nigerian politics from 1999 to 2009. The author notes that such participation remained an on-going struggle due to gender inequality. Although there was a slight increase in the number of women in politics over the decade, opportunities were generally available to those who were part of an elite and who benefited from nepotism through family or marriage connections, or political alliances. Women were mainly employed in junior ministerial positions or were in charge of ministries dealing with issues traditionally seen as falling within the women’s sphere, such as women’s affairs and social welfare (Olatunde, 2010). The ‘otherness’ of women, male-biased standards, organisational cultural practices and institutional structures hinder state capability to implement the NPW. The author also noted the lack of organisational competence with respect to gender policy and planning among public institutions. Perceptions of the terms ‘gender’ and ‘women’ in institutional practices mean that issues relating to women are treated in isolation and separated from men and the broader context of oppressive gender relations and structures (Para-Mallam, 2006).

Ohiole and Ojo’s (2015) study on the implementation of GM in Nigeria’s public sector found that male leadership negatively impacts on the career progression of women to leadership positions and thereby impedes their substantive representation in policy formulation. Their views are thus not heard at this level. This reflects the deep-rooted patriarchal political culture in most African societies and organisations. Male dominance in leadership and policy making is thereby perpetuated and women remain at the margins. The authors argue that the GM framework could not be successfully implemented because Nigeria adopted an integrationist approach without challenging the patriarchal culture. Transforming the policy into outcomes will not be possible if the status quo is maintained, with policy-makers drawing on GM experts and tools. This does not seriously challenge the masculine culture, structures and practices of

the Nigerian public sector and the disproportionate representation of women in leadership positions (Ohiole & Ojo, 2015). Okumo and Asfaw (2014) compared GM in relation to women's political representation in sub-Saharan Africa and Ethiopia. Their study shows that there is a significant gender gap in ministerial positions and the national Parliament in Ethiopia.

Gilika's (2009) study on the experiences of women in national leadership positions in Botswana reported that hindrances such as gendered role expectations, cultural and stereotypical attitudes and family responsibilities contributed to the low representation of women in positions of power and decision-making. Allah-Mensah (2005) found that the challenges that resulted in women being under-represented in the Ghanaian public service included traditional and cultural factors based on patriarchal attitudes. For example, women reported that men were sometimes insubordinate, refusing to take instructions from women because of their 'superior' gender and because they had been in the service for much longer (Allah-Mensah, 2005).

Longwe (2004) identified similar trends in South Africa and noted that, while it was claimed that men and women's performance was judged in a gender-neutral manner, this was not the case. Men and women are assessed based on cultural stereotypes that tend to be favourable to men and unfavourable to women. Simelane (2011) reported similar findings in the public sector of Swaziland where it is generally believed that women are incapable of being leaders and that they belong in the domestic sphere. According to the author, oppressed women are also oppressors of other women. The author uses the term, 'pull-her-down syndrome' to explain this phenomenon. This is similar to the queen bee syndrome coined by Staines, Tavris and Jayaratne (1973) to describe behaviour that occurs among women who have achieved leadership positions in male-dominated organisations. Similarly, the current study identified a lack of solidarity among women in government departments. Staines, Tavris and Jayaratne (1973) note, that, in such situations, women are unlikely to help their junior female colleagues to climb to upper echelons because they feel that if they could make it without any help, such colleagues should do likewise. In summary, the gendered discourse and patriarchal gender biases are major limitations to women's capacity to perform effectively in leadership roles.

Patriarchal attitudes and normative gender role expectations not only inhibit women's capacity to be effective leaders; they also impact negatively on the implementation of gender transformation policies. Adusah-Karikari and Akuoko's (2010) analysis of GM policy in Ghana's government and non-government sectors highlighted that, despite efforts to

implement GM, there has been slow progress in achieving women's empowerment and addressing gender concerns. The current study also found that GM implementation has been slow and that some government departments are only beginning to embark on this process, 22 years after it was adopted. Adusah-Karikari and Akuoko (2010) explained that one reason is the deeply rooted cultural and traditional gendered beliefs which remain prevalent in the workplace. While they identified a level of gender awareness, there was a lack of commitment and capacity to implement GM policies (Adusah-Karikari & Akuoko, 2010). Thus, there is a fundamental difference between gender awareness, equality and GM in the public sector workplace. While the former involves numeric representation, the latter involves substantive and holistic representation of women in policy formulation and practice, and equality in the workplace.

Dungy (2010) reported similar findings on GM and development in Rwanda. After the genocide, people had to start over and work together. The author posed the following questions: "when women in powerful positions reach their personal and professional goals, are their interests still the same; and will a parliamentarian who earns ten times the amount of a working-class woman still have the passion for fighting for the rights of much poorer rural women?" It was found that, having attained a level of power and freedom to discuss other issues, many used the mainstreamed status of gender as an excuse to find other platforms and concerns with which to keep busy (2010: 67). The author argues that this is a misconception because the ultimate goal of GM is to reposition the various factors that have an impact on gender to include the relational bond between genders. Dungy (2010) adds that, while Rwanda has made progressive strides by including GM in development policy, 'total diffusion of sensibilities, norms, institutions and policy that would continue to support the GM agenda would only be achieved if policy-makers adopt a gender-considerate decision-making process' (Dungy, 2010: 68).

As noted previously, GM implementation is constrained by patriarchal cultures, gender inequality and cultural stereotypes. How have these constraints played themselves out? Domingo et al. (2015) note that, one of the consequences is the underrepresentation and silencing of women's voices in decision-making. The authors found that women's access to key decision-making roles in political life remains limited, even though there has been progress in their access to formal political roles. This is associated with deeply entrenched gender bias and cultural stereotypes in political spaces. Consequently, women continue to have limited

access to political arenas and lack substantive representation in often-invisible pathways of political negotiations. Domingo et al. (2015) conclude that collective action and social mobilisation have been important in changing the rules of access to decision-making and transforming formal and informal institutions to advance GM. Cultural stereotypes also impact on political will and resources to implement the GM framework agenda and research. For example, Nyachieng'a's (2010) study on the implementation of GM policy in Kenya's public sector confirmed that the main institutional barriers included a lack of political will and the slow pace of developing gender policies in various ministries. Other shortfalls were the failure to sensitise staff on gender-related issues, inadequate budgets and a shortage of technical staff. Proper gender training was also identified as an institutional barrier to GM. Similar to Adusah-Karikari and Akuoko (2010) and Dungy (2010), Nyachieng'a (2010) found that socio-cultural factors were external barriers that hindered the GM process in the public sector in Kenya. These include socio-cultural factors like patriarchy, gender stereotyping, socialisation and a lack of societal awareness on issues pertaining to gender.

Torto's (2013) study on AA and empowerment in the Ghanaian government produced similar results. The study notes that the transition from rhetoric to action was the major challenge to gender transformation (GM and EE). Torto (2013) recommends that political leadership should demonstrate the will to implement gender policies and devote more resources to doing so. Mitchell (2004) agrees that the lack of resources is compounded by insufficient political will; this is a structural factor that emanates from high-level decision makers. This trend seems to be prevalent in most African countries. Durojaye, Chukwudera and Okeke's (2012) comparative study on the effectiveness of GM policy at the national level in South Africa and Nigeria assessed whether existing laws and policies recognise gender inequality and how such is redressed. They found that due to limited implementation of gender transformation policies, women have not succeeded in the political, social and economic spheres. The study concluded that the presence of legal and policy frameworks does not ensure improvement in women's status or result in gender transformation. This is due to a lack of prioritisation of gender issues, political will and resources that must complement gender transformation policies. In addition, government bureaucracies should holistically and sustainably transform organisational cultural practices and structures in order to achieve gender parity (Durojaiye, Chukwudera & Okeke, 2012).

Hamah (2015) assessed the opportunities and limitations of women's participation in the Ghanaian political system. The author notes that, despite incessant talk of women's under-representation in national politics and the global call to support their active participation, the number of women in Ghana's national political system remains significantly low. As noted in section 2.1.5 of this chapter, this is also the case in numerous international and African contexts. Hamah (2015) identified the following factors that account for women's lack of representation of women in Ghana's political system: "male dominance in institutions of authority, systematic discrimination against females on the basis of age, public vilification, lack of commitment in implementing AA as well as the increasing monetization in politics contribute to the low participation of women in politics" (2015: 68). The current study also found that ageism affects both young and middle-aged women in the sampled government departments, meaning that women are never the 'right' age in these working environments.

Ocran's (2014) comparative study on women's political participation in Ghana and Tanzania produced similar results to Hamah (2015). The author notes that, "women's political participation in the world and Africa has been possible through access to education by women and men. Also, the use of AA plans, multi-party democracy and concerted efforts of civil organization both local and international levels improves gender parity. Coupled with the latter actions, pressure from women's organizations are all contributory factors to the improvement made by women in political decision making" (2014: ii). Selerud (2014) investigated whether or not there is a necessary connection between education and functional democracy in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The author also examined whether the implementation of EE policies achieves EE targets. The study found that, "women in South Africa, in contrast to women in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, were able to access urban centres which in turn gave them the opportunity to gain organizational and institutional experience. Such experience together with greater gender awareness and the advantage of learning from developments in Zimbabwe and Mozambique has meant that South African women have attained a high level of political empowerment" (2014: 35-36).

Uvuza (2014) demonstrated how gender stereotypes and bias constrain women from actively participating in politics in Rwanda. While an impressive 64% of the country's political stakeholders are women, gender stereotypes and biases prevent numeric representation from translating to active participation. Uvuza argues that "despite the relevance of women's access to political posts, failure to tackle gender inequalities in all areas of socialisation reshape and

reinforce patriarchy in significant ways – especially due to increased time and work penalties that appear not only detrimental to women’s lives but also to the country’s social-economic development” (2014: 218). Anigwe’s (2014) study of the Nigerian political system found both symbolic representation and low participation of women in politics. Indeed, the author states that women still strive “for equality progress to being political leaders” (2014: 96).

The reviewed literature clearly shows a lack of outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE), especially among African countries. For example, while Rwanda ranks among the top ten nations in the world in terms of gender equality, it is still far behind in the implementation of gender transformation and its outcomes in the government and non-governmental sectors (Dungy 2010). Despite the fairly substantial body of literature in this field, no studies focus specifically on the insights of black African women in leadership and outcomes of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) in national government departments. Furthermore, in none of these studies are women leaders’ voices directly heard to articulate their lived experiences. This again highlights the significance of this study, which documents such women’s experiences and expands knowledge in the subject area.

## **2.8 Local (South African) Literature on GM and EE Policies**

Post-apartheid South Africa is a diverse society. Several policies and laws have been adopted to redress apartheid legacies. The legislation includes:

- The Labour Relations Act of 1995 that makes provision for Codes of Good Practice. A Code on the Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases was issued in 1998 by the National Economic Development and Labour Council;
- The Protection from Harassment Act (Act no. 17 of 2011) demands stricter enforcement of sexual harassment policies by organisations;
- The Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act (Act 20 of 2013) guarantees, among other things, maternity leave, job security during pregnancy, minimum wages, reasonable accommodation, sick leave, protection for employees’ health and safety for previously excluded groups, such as domestic workers;
- The Employment Equity Act of 1998 (Amended to Act 47 of 2013) includes women among the designated groups to which AA measures apply;
- The Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act as amended (Act 46 of 2013) aims to increase black ownership and management of existing and new enterprises;

- The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996 recognises women's right to abortion without the consent of another person;
- The Maintenance Act of 1998 and the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act of 1998; and
- The Domestic Violence Act of 1998, which defines violence as encompassing various forms of abuses and gives broad power to courts to shape the conditions of a protection order.

However, this study found that ubiquitous gender inequalities and nuanced discriminatory practices within the deep structures remain pervasive in government departments. Nkomo and Ngambi (2009) argue that the literature on women in leadership positions is over populated by Western ideas with a focal lens on women in developed societies (particularly the US and Europe). There is a paucity of research on women in leadership roles in developing societies and Africa in particular. The literature is also comparatively silent on the lived experiences of women in government leadership. This study sought to address this gap by examining the lived experiences of women in leadership positions in national governmental departments in the democratic South Africa.

The CGE was established in 1996 in terms of Section 187 of the South African Constitution (Commission for Gender Equality, 2012) to serve as an independent regulatory agency to ensure the compliance of the private and public sectors in promoting and protecting gender equality (CGE, 2015:2). Its mandate is to, “monitor and evaluate policies and practices of government, the private sector and other organisations to ensure they promote and protect gender equality” (CGE, 2015: 2). The South African Constitution enshrines gender equality and employment equity. The CGE is mandated to promote the protection, growth and realisation of gender equality. It also provides recommendations on policies and legislation affecting the status of women (CGE, 2012: 13).

While the CGE evaluates the progress and implementation of GM, the PSC is tasked with assessing its implementation at all levels of government (CGE, 2014). Established in terms of Chapter 10 of the Constitution, the PSC is also a key role player in the resolution of grievances in the public service and in promoting sound labour relations. It is responsible for the administration of the public service (Public Service Commission, 2014:1) and is tasked with investigation and monitoring and evaluation as well as recommendation of best practices. It

thus issues policy directives and prepares reports on organisational performance, practices and procedures within the public service (Public Service Commission, 2014: 3).

However, despite the legal prescripts and regulatory institutions in government, the GM framework appears to receive little attention within government departments. A PSC report (2006:14) notes that departments at all levels of government are facing major GM implementation challenges. Mkhize (2012) is of the view that this is due to senior managers' lack of knowledge as to how to translate the framework into practice. Penceliah (2011) assessed GM policy with a focus on the senior managerial cadre in local government while Karlsson (2010) examined GM implementation within selected provincial Departments of Education and Mannell (2012) explored practitioners' perceptions of GM policy in South Africa. Mvimbi (2009) focused on the institutional mechanisms available to enhance and promote gender equality within the public and private sectors and Ntakumba (2010) explored GM in the national Department of Social Development.

Penceliah (2011) notes, that, while some progress has been made in the implementation of the GM framework in the South African public sector, much remain to be done to promote women leadership within the local government hierarchy. The author recommends that women assume the responsibility of empowering themselves by gaining the necessary skills to perform leadership roles (Penceliah, 2011). Mannell (2012) observed that gender practitioners at various organisational levels oppose the GM framework on the grounds of it being too general. Hence, most practitioners point to individual efforts to resolve inequalities within organisations while bringing about transformation. The study therefore, concludes that a tactical, generalised approach to the issue of gender has the potential to not only limit the chances of social transformative change within an organisation, but also to lead to rejection of the fundamental ideas that guide gender and development efforts by gender practitioners (Mannell, 2012).

Other empirical studies focus on the barriers to women's advancement in leadership (Nxumalo & Lethoko, 2014; Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010; Ramashamole, 2010; Mathur-Helm, 2005), leader preferences among employees in organisations (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005), gender and power relations (Mgcotyelwa, 2012) and gender inhibitions in the South African executive boardroom (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007). Longwe (2004) focused on women Members of Parliament and institutional constraints while Francis (2009) investigated women's political presence in Parliament. Further studies include those on substantive representation of women in provincial legislatures (Ramnath, 2006) and perceptions of their effective leadership in Parliament

(Angevine, 2006). Carrim (2012) investigated women managers' identity struggles in various organisations, while Martin and Barnard (2013) explored the experiences of women in male-dominated occupations. In their book, *No Shortcuts to Power*, Hassim and Goetz (2003) examined the history and role of women in government in South Africa and Uganda.

Despite the challenges confronting GM implementation (many of which were discussed earlier in this chapter), Karlsson (2010) traced progressive GM implementation in one provincial education department in South Africa. The author notes that, despite the Constitution bestowing rights to education and prohibiting discrimination based on gender and race, Pahad (2007: 3) reported "a general lack of knowledge and understanding of gender concepts and gender mainstreaming in most departments and across all levels". While Pahad does not single out education, Karlsson contextualised his findings and confirmed that in the education sector, gender inequalities have persisted even though a high proportion of boys and girls enrol in schools (Karlsson, 2007, 2010). The author notes that, "betrothals involving young girls in rural areas, teen pregnancy, gender-based violence, and attracting girls to study technical and scientific careers are some of the gender challenges that persist in the education sector" (Karlsson, 2010: 498).

Ntakumba (2010) analysed GM in the national Department of Social Development. The author found that there is a lack of political will and GM is not supported administratively and in terms of resources. The study participants were not aware of the Gender Focal Point responsible for GM, and lacked basic knowledge and understanding of how GM should be implemented. While this study is similar to the current research, there are major differences in the area of the GM framework studied (the current study focuses on the outcomes of GM and EE implementation). Furthermore, different participants and methodological approaches are used. While Ntakumba investigated a single department, this study focused on black African women in various national government departments. The research participants in Ntakumba's study included senior managers (80% of whom were men); middle managers (60% men and 40% women) and junior staff (60-70% women) (2010: 66). Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from 18 interviews in the national Department of Social Development (Ntakumba, 2010). The current study targeted black African women in leadership positions as gender transformation beneficiaries from Director to Deputy Director-General level. Thirty-five interviews were conducted of which 31 were with black African women (including two Indian

women, two black African men and Deputy Directors whilst the researcher was conducting fieldwork). Twenty-five national government departments formed the sample for the study.

While there is a plethora of studies on transformation policies within South Africa government departments, no study has focused on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and the outcomes of GM and EE in national government departments. The literature also does not enable women to directly voice their views on the implementation and outcomes of GM and EE in national departments. The need for systemic integration and operationalisation of GM within the South African public (and private) sector cannot be overemphasised. This agenda needs to be prioritised by every government department as well as NGOs. It is also imperative that implementation is not the sole responsibility of selected individuals, but collective action across the entire organisational structure (Anderson, 1993).

In terms of EE policy implementation, previous research is categorised into three themes: perceived reverse discrimination (Mabunda, 2016; Zondi, 2009; Mekwa, 2012; Nel, 2011; Isaaks, 2008; Prince, 2006; Brand & Stolz, 2001, Botha, 1995) and transformation-resistant organisational cultures and practices (Monethi, 2013; Kapp, 2002); legal critiques (Nel, 2011; Laher, 2007; Botha, 1995); and the EEA's impact on the private (Joseph, 2006) and public sectors (Thompson & Woolard, 2002).

Mekwa (2012) investigated employees and managements' participation and understanding of the value of this policy in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. The study focused on administrative, middle and senior employees' perceptions of EE among different races and genders. The participants agreed that discriminatory practices in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development had been eliminated through the effective implementation of EE, and that the EE programme added value to the organisation. However, non-designated groups were uncomfortable with the implementation of EE (Mekwa, 2012).

Similar findings were noted in Kunene's (2005) study on AA policy and practice, also conducted in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. This study found that many employees lacked interest in AA and EE. Furthermore, most white respondents were not satisfied with the AA policy, perceiving it as a tool to perpetrate reverse discrimination, whilst a large percentage of the black Africans respondents perceived it as a useful tool to promote equality in the public service (Kunene, 2005). Zondi's (2010) study on the effectiveness of EE in the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries from 2000 to 2006 unveiled

perceptions that managers were not doing enough to effectively implement EE and AA policies. It was also noted that not all employees in the department were satisfied with AA policies. As in Kunene's study (and in the literature discussed later in this chapter), the perceptions of black and white respondents were different. While black Africans perceived EE and AA as corrective measures to rectify decades of inequality and social injustice, white respondents perceived them as reverse discrimination and inequality (2010: 100).

Brand and Stolz's (2001) analysis of AA in a public sector department indicated that AA processes influenced employees' perceptions of their working life and careers and many perceived it as not being successful. White employees felt that AA was discriminatory and that promotions were not based on merit (Brand and Stolz, 2001). It is thus clear that numerous challenges impede effective implementation of transformation policies.

Isaaks' (2008) study on staff perceptions and attitudes towards EE in the Municipal Health Directorate in Cape Town found that there was a lack of communication on EE issues, and that disabled people did not receive sufficient attention. The respondents indicated that, despite the adoption of the policy, sexist comments and subtle forms of racism were still prevalent in the directorate (Isaaks, 2008). The current study revealed a similar trend in the sampled government departments. Prince (2006) explored the perceptions of managers on obstacles to operationalising the Cape Town Municipality's EE Plan. It identified short-term goals, political authority and legislative requirements as the strategic barriers to EE implementation. Three operational barriers were identified: lack of communication, executive support and perceived reverse discrimination (Prince, 2006).

Mabunda's (2016) study of EE implementation at the Department of Water Affairs concluded that non-designated groups view the implementation of the EE as discriminatory and unfair and recommended that management address these fears. However, designated groups regarded the EE policy as an inspiration (Mabunda, 2016).

Ocran (2014) found that while the eThekweni Municipality was complying with the EEA in terms of developing an EE plan and implementing AA policies, progress was slow and tilted towards men. Motoane's (2015) analysis of women's participation in decision-making and leadership positions in Nkangala District Municipality in Mpumalanga province revealed that women continue to be confronted by gendered challenges. These findings are similar to those of the current study that revealed pervasive gender dynamics, stereotypes, attitudes and

perceptions towards women in decision-making. Nkangala District Municipality lacks institutional mechanisms and strategies to encourage and support women's participation in decision-making and leadership (Motoane, 2015).

Nel (2011) provided a legal critique of AA and argued that its main weakness lies in both its over- and under-inclusiveness. Over-inclusiveness is evident in it benefiting a segment of the targeted black population that were not excluded or discriminated against by previous government policies. On the other hand, AA's under-inclusiveness refers to its inability to achieve its ultimate objective of benefitting those for whom it is intended. Similar results were obtained by Botha's (1995) study on the policy status of AA against the background of development theory and racially based economic equality. The findings showed that the concept of AA was not without its critics. Concerns included the administrative costs associated with monitoring programmes and the loss of economic efficiency due to preferential recruitment of lower-skilled people. Botha (1995) concluded that resistance to AA policies is to be expected from white employees in the public sector, where a high premium is placed on productivity and efficiency (Botha, 1995).

Another challenge to EE policy is that some senior managers, and the organisational culture and practices are transformation-resistant. Kapp's (2002) investigation of the practical implications and challenges relating to EE in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) found that male participants held negative attitudes towards deploying women in combat. However, women highlighted that they were able to pass the physical readiness test, that their domestic situation allowed them to be deployed outside South Africa, and that they would go into frontline combat given the opportunity. It was also noted that limited exposure to having females as colleagues during operational deployments might have caused fears among black and white men. Until the 1990s, mainly white men took part in combat. They were found to be the least accommodating of the idea that women be integrated in these occupations. Many of the black African men may have been in exile and thus possibly had more exposure to operating with women (Kapp, 2002).

Monethi's (2013) exploratory study of the extent to which the SANDF supports transformation policies with the ultimate goal of gender equality reached similar conclusions. It was noted that gender issues are incorporated into the SANDF GM strategy. Despite the existence of structures to address GM, such as the Department of Defence Transformation Management Board and the Department of Defence Gender Mainstreaming Council, progress has been

limited and gender priorities have not been integrated into the system. The study concluded that the rationale for women's demand for transfers from combat corps positions to support roles can be traced to gender discriminatory tendencies within the workplace (Monethi, 2013).

There is also a lack of leadership commitment and resources to implement GM and EE policies in government. The CGE's online, self-administered survey of GM processes and progress in government departments identified numerous challenges. These included failures to move from policy to practical commitment of the required resources to support GM, lack of prioritisation by senior management and GFPs being appointed at low levels where they do not have the authority to participate in senior level decision-making structures (CGE, Gender Barometer Report, 2012). Another CGE study on the effectiveness of GFPs in government also identified their low rank as a major challenge. This goes against the National Gender Policy Framework (NGPF) which requires GFPs to be appointed at the level of Director and upwards. In line with the current study's finding that GM is an add-on to human resource practitioner's key priority areas, the CGE found that GFPs are also expected to perform functions unrelated to GM. Moreover, GM is marginalised and under-resourced. In view of this, most government institutions are unenthusiastic about setting up a functional GM unit with clearly defined terms of operation and do not make provision for the development of the necessary skills and training. Departments are also unlikely to have gender dedicated budget allocations (CGE, 2013). Although Women's Budget initiatives were introduced in 1995 (Budlender, 1995), many government departments have yet to adopt them. The current study also revealed a lack of gender responsive budgeting in departments. Without adequate financial resources, GM will remain mere rhetoric.

A case study of the South African public service conducted by the CGE focused on engendering transformation. The sample consisted of eight provincial government and two national government departments and data was collected using an online gender barometer tool. The findings show that majority of the departments have GFPs in acting positions. Other GFPs were appointed in lower ranks (Deputy Director or below) which means that they have no authority and decision-making to influence the implementation of the GM framework. This contradicts current policy (CGE, 2014). Studies conducted by the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) in 2001 and the PSC in 2002 and 2006 showed that GFPs face numerous institutional, functional, resource and practical challenges. They also noted that GFPs are appointed at lower levels than Director in contravention of the National Government Policy Framework (NGPF).

Despite the initiatives of the Gender Equity Task Team as well as constitutional provisions, the South African Public Service Audit Report (2006) observed a knowledge deficiency across all levels within most government departments in relation to GM and other gender-related concepts (Pahad, 2007, 3).

Other problems include a lack of clear guidelines in most departments for GFPs to report on GM progress. Furthermore, GM work is ad-hoc and GFPs are required to perform additional functions. The current research also found that due to a lack of human and financial resources, GM is not effectively implemented and that human resource practitioners without gender training or expertise are tasked with GM work. It is thus clear that GM is fragmented, marginalised and not prioritised as it should be. Gouws (2005) produced similar findings on the challenges facing GFPs and argued that their inefficiency is due to a lack of authority, skills and resources. A 2006 PSC study on national and provincial departments focused on knowledge and understating of GM, empowerment of women, institutional frameworks to facilitate the attainment of gender parity and family-friendly policies. It also examined GM processes such as the inclusion of gender in departmental planning, monitoring and budgeting as well as efforts to address sexual harassment in the workplace. The report reveals numerous gaps and some positive achievements. It notes a lack of knowledge about GM in most departments across all levels. Senior management was reported to be unable to move from policy to strategy and action. However, the gender representivity profile revealed significant improvement in the number of women in senior management positions (Public Service Commission, 2006).

The researcher argues that the focus on quotas (symbolic) does not translate to gender empowerment as women are not substantively represented and are thus unable to influence GM and EE policies. Systemic transformation outcomes are impossible to achieve unless gender is mainstreamed in government departments. Leadership buy-in, capacitated human resources, and gender budgeting coupled with transformed organisational cultural practices and structures are critical in implementing GM policies and transforming gender relations. However, studies show that the key barriers are information, knowledge, resources, and a clear drive to promote gender transformation imperatives (Veitch, 2005).

The literature highlights that gender responsive budgeting is lacking in government organisations. According to Briones and Valdez (2002: 17-19), analysis of gender budgets in South Africa should focus on (i) gender-specific expenditure, (ii) expenditure that promotes

gender equity within the public service, and (iii) mainstream expenditure. Gender-specific expenditure consists of funds allocated for programmes and policies that are specifically gender-targeted. Expenditure which promotes gender equity within the public service refers to amounts allocated to AA action and other programmes which promote representivity within government departments. Such expenditure is measured not only in the equal numbers of men and women employed, but by equal representation in top level management and decision-making posts across different occupations, as well as equitable pay and conditions of service (Briones & Valdez, 2002: 1719).

Sadie (2014) found that, in both national and provincial departments, GFPs are assigned the responsibility of ensuring compliance with the requirements of GM. However, the lack of GFPs at managerial level strips them of the authority to influence policy. As noted earlier, this is compounded by the fact that most GFPs carry out multiple functions. Equally worrying is their lack of training, resulting in most GFPs having little or no knowledge of their roles and responsibilities as well as strategies to carry out their assigned tasks. Though not formally disbanded, most GFPs at national and provisional departments have been redundant since 2009 (Sadie, 2014).

Karlsson (2010) explored how GM policy is implemented in the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Education Department. The data suggest that the Department is implementing GM in both its technical and transformative form, but, in line with the literature and the current study's findings, this is constrained by a lack of resources. Various structures, projects and activities exist, but these are small-scale and seen as 'top-down'. This accounts for the low levels of commitment amongst many staff at district level, inadequate budgeting for activities and personnel, and the unevenness of approaches across districts.

Similarly, Mvimbi (2009) examined the institutional mechanism devised by the government to promote gender equality in South Africa. The study concludes that the limited human and material resources dedicated to GM within departments is responsible for the ineffectiveness of such mechanisms. It argues that most departments are overburdened with responsibilities while having limited staff. The problem is exacerbated by most staff's conceptual ignorance of gender and gender equality. This has led to the separation of feminists' concerns in relation to power relations from policy goals within most departments. Hence, in most cases, interventions are superficial and no meaningful change is achieved. The study further argues that there is a lack of government accountability as well as funding. Thus, while there are measures in place

to promote gender equality, the required commitment to ensure its realisation is lacking (Mvimbi, 2009).

The lack of commitment is also prevalent in the EE policy implementation. Moeti and Zondi (2010) assessed the efficacy of the EEA in the national Department of Agriculture. The study showed that, while headway has been made in the recruitment of black Africans and women, persons with disabilities do not occupy any significant positions. The EEA includes such persons as members of designated groups and stipulates a national target of 2% of employees. Moeti and Zondi (2010) also found that there were insufficient human and material resources in the Department to implement EE and a lack of management commitment. A lack of skilled personnel also impeded negatively on the implementation of the EEA (2010: 318).

Bloom and Lues' (2013) assessment of EE implementation in a district municipality found that, its organisational structure was not designed to adhere to EE targets. For example, the employment equity officer was not senior enough to coordinate other senior managers. This is the same challenge experienced by GFPs. Joseph (2006) investigated the impact of the implementation of the EEA at Telkom SA Limited, focusing on customer satisfaction, profitability and productivity. The study observes that while there was a reduction in staff numbers, the company still recorded increased production. It argues that the implementation of EE does not have a negative impact on production despite the fact that internal improvement led to this increase. The study thus concludes that the decline in customer satisfaction and the increase in productivity and profitability are not due to the implementation of EE. Contrary to Joseph's (2006) findings, Booysen and Nkomo (2014) pointed to negative outcomes of EE policy in state-owned enterprises and private companies. The authors also concluded that low management commitment and lip-service to EE as well as a white, male-dominated organisational culture that excludes black people (formally and informally) hampered effective implementation.

As noted previously, the amended EEA (Act 47 of 2013) requires all employers (designated government departments and private companies as well as employers that report voluntarily) to submit annual employment equity reports to the DoL. These should outline their demographic profile, gender representation and EE plans to address discrimination and inequity in the workplace. However, studies have shown that there is insufficient monitoring and enforcement of EE (Bloom & Lues, 2013; Dweba, 2012). Bloom and Lues' (2013) study cited earlier found that the Municipal Council as well as senior managers lacked commitment

to implement the EE plan. The only time that the 2005 EE plan was mentioned was when it was used to gain political support. Furthermore, those responsible for its implementation lacked authority to monitor and coordinate such implementation. Lack of enforcement by the KwaZulu-Natal DoL is also noted.

Dweba (2012) explored stakeholder perceptions on why Engcobo Local Municipality had not successfully implemented the EEA. The municipality had not appointed, assigned or designated a senior manager to implement its EE plan or a consultative forum to monitor the implementation of the plan. There was no EE policy and policies such as performance management, training and development, and succession planning were either lacking or not fully implemented (Dweba, 2012).

The literature illustrates that there are common factors that hinder the successful implementation of the GM framework in countries within the African continent. The lack of political will and resources to drive the GM transformation agenda in organisations is widespread. This can be attributed to the normative patriarchal culture and practices that impede the GM framework implementation in government departments. Additionally, implementation challenges are linked to the lack of knowledge of how to shift from rhetoric to effective implementation has resulted to the lack of prioritisation of the GM framework. Thus, empirical research reveal that there are no substantive outcomes resulting from effective GM implementation in African countries.

## **2.9 Significance of the Study**

The reviewed studies focused on GM and EE in general and did not examine the specific leadership experiences of black African women and gender transformation policy outcomes. This calls for research that enables such women's voices to be heard. Therefore, this study is significant as it highlighted challenges reported by the women themselves – using their own voices – in terms of organisational culture, structures and practices within national government departments. Additionally, by exploring the outcomes emanating from GM and EE implementation (or non-implementation) contribute to the body of knowledge as there is paucity of empirical literature on this subject. This study makes significant contributions to theory and knowledge as it is one of the first studies to focus on GM and EE policy outcomes as experienced by black African women in leadership positions in national government departments. All the data was derived from the women themselves as beneficiaries of

transformation, using their own voices. The study provides a comprehensive account of women experiences in leadership positions and the outcomes of GM and EE policies, and includes the views of Indian women and black African male volunteers, thus avoiding limited and biased perspectives.

As noted earlier, no studies have investigated the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and outcomes of GM and EE policies in South African national government departments. For example, literature shows that the CGE and PSC's assessments gathered data by means of an opinion survey and web-based questionnaires. Not all departments completed the questionnaires and some were incomplete. Technological limitations were also encountered. For example, some participants found it hard to access the web-based gender barometer tool (CGE, 2010: 18). In contrast, the methodology utilised in the current study allowed for a deeper investigation of women experiences in leadership positions articulated by their own voices through face-to-face interviews. The researcher was able to probe further to obtain rich data on their experiences of and insights on GM and EE policy outcomes in national government departments. This research thus contributes to scholarship in this area by expanding empirical knowledge.

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework**

This study draws on intersectionality, and post-colonial feminist and feminist state theories to understand the experiences of African women in leadership positions and the outcomes of gender transformation policies in national government departments in the democratic South Africa. The relevance of grounded theory is explained in the final section of this chapter.

### **2.10.1 Intersectionality Theory**

The theory of intersectionality provided a lens through which the analysis was viewed and interpreted. The theory was coined by anti-racist, feminist theorist Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1994) in the late 1980s and 1990s. It posits that oppression is centred on multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structured power (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). This allows people to be members of more than one category or social group and to simultaneously experience advantages and disadvantages related to those groups. The intersectionality theory is appropriate to study women in leadership for two reasons. Firstly, it aims to reveal the multiple identities and personas of social actors, exposing

the connections between these points. Secondly, it suggests that analysis of complex social situations should not reduce understanding to a singular category; rather, it should facilitate understanding of substantively distinct experiences from the effects of inextricably connected roles and situations (Mkhize, 2015; Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Butler (2002) notes that it is uncommon for a study to explore the following three overlapping processes: (a) the performance of gender in an organisation (b) intersecting oppressions and (c) the organisational implementation of the GM framework. Hence, the intersectionality theory was selected for this study as it focuses on the multiple identities and subjugations that black African women encounter.

Collins (2000) elaborated how intersecting oppressions and the matrix of domination (which refers to the organisation of power in society) shape women's experiences. Her main work centred around the relationships between empowerment, self-definition and knowledge, with particular focus on the experiences of black women in racist and patriarchal societies. She argues that black women are distinctly placed as they are at a central point where two prevalent systems of oppression, race and gender, are combined. Collins postulates that, "Intersectionality is a particular way of understanding social location in terms of crisscross systems of oppression. It is an analysis suggesting that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age form mutually constructing features of social organisation, which shape black women's experiences, and in turn are shaped by black women" (Collins, 2000: 99). The intersection of such systems is to a large extent identifiable and relevant to South Africa and this research on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and the outcomes of GM and EE policies as they face interwoven identities and oppressions.

A recurrent criticism of intersectionality is there are no methods associated with it or any that it can draw on (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006; McCall, 2005). However, due to its inherent open-endedness, the theory initiates a process of discovery which is not only potentially interminable, but promises to yield new, more comprehensive and reflexively critical insights (Davis, 2008). Skeggs (2006) argues that social divisions have different organising logics. 'Race', therefore, cannot be treated in the same way as social class. Yuval-Davis (2006) and Verloo (2006) point out that different inequalities are dissimilar because they are differently framed. It is therefore important to ground policy strategies not only in the similarity, but also

in the distinctiveness of inequalities. This does not, however, require the avoidance of intersectionality theory since inequalities are not independent of one another (Skeggs, 2006).

Crenshaw (1994) distinguishes between structural intersectionality and political intersectionality. Structural intersectionality occurs when inequalities and their intersections are directly relevant to the experiences of people in society, while political intersectionality is used to indicate how inequalities and their intersections are relevant to political strategies. Structural intersectionality can help to explain why a black woman is not considered for a job because she is black since the 'normal employee' is a white man or woman, while other jobs are also unavailable to her since the jobs for black persons in that context are stereotypically male jobs (Verloo, 2011: 4). On the other hand, political differences as strategies on one axis of inequality are mostly not neutral towards other axes and are most relevant for political intersectionality.

There are two reasons to employ intersectionality theory to study black African women in leadership. Firstly, the theory reveals the multiplicity of identities and personas of social actors while showing the linkage between these points. Secondly, it argues that the complexities of social conditions cannot be understood by means of dissection into singularities, but by understanding the important peculiarity of experiences which are inextricably linked to people's circumstances and roles (Mkhize, 2015; Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Despite its limitations, the intersectionality theory is relevant to this study because a key tension in the transformation process within South African institutions is that intersectional inequalities in organisational practices are treated as separate categories. Addressing race issues has been the primary focus of change for government departments, while gender has been treated as secondary. Class also remains a hidden issue; hierarchy is accepted as a given for organisational structure and design. Efforts to separate and manage race, gender and class are inadequate because the relationships between these categories are interrelated. This is evident in the study's finding that black African women leaders are confronted by intersecting, gendered racism, sexual harassment and male hegemonic practices (among other oppressions) that undermine their authority. In South African institutions, norms and culture, change will fall short of transformation without careful examination of these relationships (Marks, Hassim, January-Bardill, Khumalo & Olckers, 2000). In seeking to fully capture the experiences of black African women in government leadership, this theory provides a framework to

contextualise the epistemological worldview of a group of people that have experienced racism, discrimination and marginalisation.

### 2.10.2 Postcolonial Feminist Theory

Postcolonial feminist theory can be described as a theory interrupting the discourses of postcolonial theory and liberal Western feminism, while simultaneously refusing the singular “Third World woman” as the object of study (George, 2006: 211). In other words, postcolonial feminism finds parallels between colonialism and the subjugation of women. More importantly, “postcolonial feminist theory recognises the need for knowledge construction from the perspective of the marginalised female subject whose voice has been muted in the knowledge production process” (Anderson, 2012: 11). To amplify women’s voices, this study allowed the beneficiaries of gender transformation policies to express their subjective insights and experiences in national government departments.

Mohanty (2003) claims, that, the Western feminist construction of ‘Third World women’ colonises and erases the heterogeneity of their real histories and experiences. These constructions create binarism between such women as sexually inhibited, poor, and uneducated and Western women as modern, highly developed, and able to use their freedom. Thus, in Western feminist eyes, ‘Third World women’ need to be educated when they see themselves as ‘others’ and different from Western women. Consequently, “postcolonial feminist approaches, through their different analyses, bring to visibility the diversity of postcolonial subjects’ experiences and material conditions under which they live” (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012: 574). In the postcolonial democratic South African context, such history continues to shape black African women’s daily lives in multifaceted, interwoven and institutionalised ways. For example, this study found that, gender, ethnic and racial discrimination is pervasive in government departments even though women are in the leadership echelons. Colonial vestiges are thus still dominant in the postcolonial era.

Shenmugasundaram (2017: 385) explains the specific goals of postcolonial feminism as follows:

- i) It seeks not only to salvage past experiences but also to chart how the world can move beyond colonialism towards equality and opportunity for all;
- ii) Postcolonial feminist theory exposes and deconstructs the racist imperialist nature of colonialism and its on-going global and material consequences. ‘Third World’

women are the most exploited and therefore, a new form of international feminist agency is warranted to speak on behalf of all women;

- iii) Postcolonial feminist theory claims intellectual authority by claiming space for multiple voices. For instance, Gayatri Spivak's voicing of the subaltern ('Can the subaltern Speak?', 1995) which includes women metaphorically makes bold to disregard the established views of Western colonial writings;
- iv) Gayatri Spivak suggests the use of 'strategic essentialism' by incorporating the subaltern voice of the marginalised and silenced as a strategic and necessary position from which to speak and to be heard. Thus, the conceptualisation of the subaltern provides a social category of power structures. By speaking on behalf of a group (representation), postcolonial discourse can carve out a clear oppositional identity.

To achieve these goals, feminist research selects methods based on epistemological positions and research aims. This is accomplished through the researcher's involvement with the research participants. Harding (1993) explains that, in feminist research, researchers are "never 'outside' the research process or separated from the research subjects as 'objective' observer" (1993: 26). From a postcolonial perspective, this requires an explicit focus on language and text on the part of the researcher, and studying representation in the form of identity formation. Consequently, the postcolonial feminist researcher does not just have to think about the actual writing of the research in terms of the language and jargon utilised; the researcher also has to think about the audience for whom the research will be written and who is implicated in the writing (Patai, 1991; Lal, 1996; Khan, 2005).

### 2.10.3 State Feminist Theory

The third theory utilised in this study is state feminism which was developed by MacKinnon (1982) and is linked to Marxist theories of power and inequality. Stetson and Mazur (1995) use the term state feminism to refer to government structures and activities which are formally given the task of working on behalf of women's status and rights. However, in feminist theory, there is debate over whether or not government initiatives can truly provide women with opportunities to engage in political activity that will alter oppressive structures in societies, and identify mobilisation, political culture, and organisational structure as the critical variables. Stetson and Mazur (1995) conclude that the highest level of state feminism can be achieved under three conditions: (a) a balance between lobbying by moderate feminist groups and

grassroots pressure from radical feminists outside the state; (b) societies that favour strong state intervention; and (c) agency structure that promotes or requires inter-ministerial co-operation. Other studies have identified international factors and political will among government leaders as important (Friedman 2000). However, state feminism has been criticised both for its reliance on a particular, social democratic inspired, idealised 'participatory corporatism' (Holst, 2002), and homogenisation of women's interests (Borchorst & Siim, 2002).

Scholars have argued for a more sophisticated analysis of the state which recognises that states are part of societies. Therefore, the state shapes and is also shaped by the society. State-society relationships are complex, occurring within different levels of government, from local to national. State feminist theory is significant to this study as it is facilitated when women with feminist aims have access to women's policy machinery, such as GM and EE. Thus, the way that access to political institutions is structured is a crucial factor in promoting a women's agenda (Okeke-Ihejirika & Franceschet, 2002). The study's results show that government departments' patriarchal structures deny women access to influence GM's equality agenda. Gouws (2005) argues that state feminism is constituted by two dimensions – firstly, the supportive role played by women in the state who possess a 'feminist mindset', and consequently the influence they exert on policy making; and secondly, the access the state provides to the women's movement (Gouws, 2005: 74; 2010: 2).

Traditionally, feminism stands out as a distinctive approach to address mainstream social, cultural and epistemological challenges because it perceives the state as an agent of male dominance and superiority over women (Connell, 1990; Stetson & Mazur, 1995). Bustelo (2014) contextualises the weak relationship between the feminist movement and the state in a study on the development of state feminism in Spain. Bustelo's findings reinforce Connell and Stetson and Mazur's theories. However, analysis of the relationship between feminists and the state has progressed in the past few decades due to the significant role of the state in advancing the feminist agenda (Aminudin, 2015). Stetson and Mazur (2013) explain that state intervention in eliminating barriers that prevent marginalised groups (including women) from gaining access to opportunities has increased.

The state feminism theory is constructed on the assumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the state and society, despite the turbulent nature of this relationship (Stetson & Mazur, 1995). It also predicts that feminist interests within public institutions will be institutionalised by public agencies established to promote the women's agenda. A

theoretical weakness is that state feminism assumes the pre-existence of nation-wide and powerful liberal feminist groups. The implications of this assumption are far reaching, especially for countries in Asia and Africa where liberal feminist groups have not developed to the extent required for the applicability of the state feminism theory (Kobayashi, 2002). Kobayashi highlights that state feminism can also easily be misunderstood as suggesting: (a) authoritarian policymaking, (b) justifying a state of agency for women by randomly selecting a group to cheerlead the agency without any significant prowess in critiquing decision-making that affects the lives of women, and (c) rationalising the state's activity in patronising the representative group while doing nothing concrete to heed their calls and demands.

#### **2.10.4 The use of Grounded Theory in the Study**

The researcher also applied grounded theory in data analysis due to the fact that it disrupts the power hierarchies embedded in assumptions. I wanted to avoid imposing my own theoretical assumptions on the participants' voices. The use of grounded theory allowed research epistemologies and related theoretical approaches to emerge from the data collected - the participants' experiences. Research on women's leadership experiences includes analysing social constructs such as race, class, gender, democracy, and community as these are the representations and discourses of the individuals experiencing them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The theory that emerged on women experiences in leadership positions and insights on the outcomes of GM and EE policies in government departments was grounded in the data.

#### **2.11 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented an extensive review of the literature on GM and EE. It began with an historical overview of GM and problems relating to GM implementation. This was followed by an overview of EE policy in South Africa and the provisions of the EEA. Since the study focuses on the lived experiences of black African women in leadership positions in South African national government departments, policies and legislation relating to GM and EE in the democratic South Africa were also discussed. Women's role in the transition from apartheid to democracy was highlighted.

The review of the international and continental literature on the implementation of GM and EE provided a background to local implementation. The chapter concluded with a detailed explanation of the theoretical framework and grounded theory employed for this study. The

framework includes intersectionality theory, postcolonial feminist theory and state feminism. The following chapter presents the methodology employed to conduct this study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY: FEMINIST QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

“What makes feminist research feminist is less the method used  
and more how it is used and what it is used for”  
(Kelly, Regan & Burton, 1992: 150)

#### 3.1 Research Method

This chapter discusses the methodology adopted to obtain data for this study. The study employed a qualitative research method to answer the research questions. Qualitative research is built on the assumption that reality is not a fixed, single or measurable phenomenon, as posited by the positivist quantitative research approach (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative researchers believe that there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality and that they are fluid, and thus, change over time (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research includes various strategies for the systematic collection, organisation and interpretation of textual material obtained through interaction with the research participants (such as interviews) or observation. It investigates the meaning of social phenomena as experienced by people themselves (Malterud, 2001), in this case, black African women as beneficiaries of transformative policies.

Specifically, the study employed a feminist qualitative methodology to answer the key research questions using in-depth face-to-face interviews. Feminists have critiqued quantitative approaches as patriarchal and marginalising women’s voices as research subjects (Pugh, 1990; Reinharz, 1979; Graham, 1983; Mies, 1983; Graham & Rawlings, 1980). Merriam (2002) notes that, qualitative research posits that the world or reality is not a fixed, single or measurable phenomenon as assumed by the positivist, quantitative approach. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are fluid and thus change over time (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research adopts various strategies for systematic collection, organisation and interpretation of textual material obtained while talking with people (such as interviews) or through observation. Furthermore, it investigates the meaning of social phenomena as experienced by people themselves (Malterud, 2001). Thus, most feminist research embraces qualitative approaches as key research methods as they include interpretivism, subjectivity and femininity and are, arguably, less mainstream.

However, not all feminists argue against the use of quantitative methods within feminist research. Some have embraced both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For example, Jayaratne (1983) and O’Leary (1977) argue that linking qualitative feminist research to quantitative methods helps break traditional dichotomies that marginalise other research approaches. Nevertheless, because of the historic marginalisation of women’s voices in research, feminist research prioritises qualitative and oral history research methods for data collection. It is within this context that this study used a qualitative method.

The researcher utilised qualitative methods for data collection as the study focuses on women leaders’ subjective experiences and outcomes of GM and EE policies. The feminist qualitative research method was the most relevant as it enabled deeper conversations that elicited broader meanings of women leaders’ experiences and insights. However, as noted previously, some feminist research views the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods for data analysis and presentation as useful (Mkhize, 2012; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Oakley, 1974). This study thus utilised qualitative methods to understand the research themes that emerged and the participants’ demographic characteristics – presented in tables and graphs – such as the use of percentages. It therefore employed feminist qualitative research methods supplemented by quantitative research methods to investigate African women leaders’ experiences and the outcomes of gender transformation policies in South Africa – GM and EE. The use of in-depth interviews enabled the participants to express their views on these policies.

Trauth (2001) explains that the choice of research method is influenced by the nature of the research problem, the theoretical lens or philosophical assumptions, and the researcher’s skills. In order to understand the outcomes of GM and EE policy implementation and women’s leadership experiences using lenses of intersectionality theory and postcolonial feminism, this study selected a feminist qualitative research method as it aimed to enable the participants to voice their opinions. The research questions were about the ‘what’, ‘how’ or ‘why’ of women experiences of leadership and outcomes of GM and EE policies instead of ‘how many’ or ‘how much’ questions which are answered by quantitative methods (Bricki & Green, 2007). The study’s main objective was to investigate black African women experiences in leadership positions and experiences of the outcomes of gender transformation policies, GM and EE, in national government departments in the democratic South Africa. The questions posed to address this objective are discussed in Chapter one.

The objective was to examine whether or not gender transformation policies (GM and EE) are effectively implemented, and whether they have resulted in the intended outcomes, which are government departments that are gender mainstreamed, and are achieving substantive gender equality and women empowerment (Moser, 2014). Appropriate data collection tools were employed to achieve this objective. These are discussed in the following section.

### 3.2 Procedure

Prior to the commencement of interviews, a letter explaining the rationale for the study, ethical considerations and a request for participation was provided to participants to sign. The researcher gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions before commencing with the interview. The participants spoke different Nguni languages<sup>8</sup> and the researcher therefore established their preferred language for the interviews. They all preferred English. However, some, especially those that are isiXhosa speaking, used their first-language during the course of the interview. In those cases, the researcher translated the data. In chapter four, this is indicated by bracketing and italicising the translation. None of the participants was coerced to participate in this study. Thirty-three of the interviews took place at the participants' offices that offered a safe, non-threatening venue and enabled audio and visual privacy. Due to logistics and time constraints, two interviews were conducted out of office at convenient and safe venues agreed to by the participant and the researcher. Although it was planned that each interview would last 30 minutes to an hour, most took more than an hour as rapport was established between the researcher and the participants.

### 3.3 Research Location

Thirty-five interviews were conducted in national government departments in Pretoria as most departments' headquarters are located in this city. It is also where women in leadership or senior management positions are concentrated. There are three spheres of government in South Africa: national, provincial and local government. National government is further divided into three spheres: law making (legislative authority), the actual work of governing (executive authority) and the courts (judicial authority). The departments and public servants are responsible for executing the work of government and account to Cabinet in Parliament. Three participants from two departments were interviewed in Cape Town as they have regional

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<sup>8</sup> According to Msimang (1989:17) the term 'Nguni' is used linguistically to refer to black African languages, namely: isiXhosa, isiZulu, isiNdebele and Swati and related dialects.

offices in the city. One of the participants whose department is located in Pretoria was interviewed in Cape Town as per her request because she was in the city at the time of the interview. Cape Town was more convenient to the researcher since she also resides in this city. The complexity and uniqueness of the study required careful selection of the participants so as to ensure that only those who could provide answers to the research questions were sampled.

### **3.4 Sample Selection**

This section elaborates on the sampling process, biographical profiles, including the number of departments, participants and their location and positions.

#### **3.4.1 Sampling method and size**

A purposive sampling technique was applied to obtain a sample of black African women in leadership positions in 25 South African national government departments. This technique was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to deliberately select targeted participants due to their qualities or characteristics based on the main research objective. Purposive sampling is a non-random method that is used to identify key informants (Garcia, 2006; Bernard, 2002). The participants were selected due to the knowledge and experience of the research topic (Bernard, 2002; Lewis & Sheppard, 2006).

The researcher originally planned to recruit between 30 and 40 participants – black African women in leadership positions – from all 46 national government departments in the democratic South Africa. In the end, the sample consisted of 35 participants in 25 national government departments. The main issue was the time constraints due to prospective participants' demanding schedules. Since they are leaders in national government departments, gaining access to them was in challenge in itself and scheduling an interview an even more difficult one. The researcher had to adhere to the approved research schedule. The fieldwork took place over a seven-month period between November 2015 and May 2016. The participants were selected based on the following criteria:

- (a) Fully employed in a national government department; and
- (b) At Director, Chief Director or Deputy Director-General (salary levels 13–15) level.

Statistics (see Chapter 1) produced by the CGE in 2017 show, that, a significant number of women are employed in leadership positions in South African national government departments. All participants from each department who fit the above criteria were contacted.

The researcher also ended up interviewing four volunteers, two Indian women (an Assistant Director and Chief Director) and two black African males (a Deputy Director and a Director). Department D11 could not locate women at Director level and above (as the study targeted) and thus provided the names of two black African women (a Deputy Director and an Assistant Director) who participated in this study. The study aimed to recruit only black African female national government employees from Director to Director-General level. However, to limit bias and to add richness to the study, the researcher welcomed the opportunity and interviewed them. Therefore, data was obtained from a total of 35 participants, who comprised of 31 black African women from the original sampling, two Indian women and two black African males who participated voluntarily.

The participants were drawn from 25 of the 46 listed national government departments. In upholding ethical research principles, all 46 departments are listed and the specific 25 are not identified in order to maintain confidentiality: Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing; Arts and Culture; Basic Education; Civilian Secretariat for Police; Communications; Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs; Correctional Services; Defence; Economic Development; Energy; Environmental Affairs; Government Communication and Information System; Health; Higher Education and Training; Home Affairs; Human Settlements; Independent Police Investigative Directorate; International Relations and Cooperation; Justice and Constitutional Development; Labour; Military Veterans; Mineral Resources; National School of Government; National Treasury; Performance Monitoring and Evaluation; Public Enterprises; Public Service and Administration; Public Service Commission; Public Works; Rural Development and Land Reform; Science and Technology; Social Development; South African Police Service; South African Revenue Service; Small Business Development; State Security Agency; Sport and Recreation South Africa; Statistics South Africa; Telecommunications and Postal Services; Tourism; Trade and Industry; Traditional Affairs; Transport; Water and Sanitation; Women; and The Presidency.

### **3.4.2 Demographic Profiles**

The participants' demographic profiles are presented in Table 3 on page 73 and Figure 5 on page 75 that lists their pseudonyms, department codes, age, marital status, job position, qualifications, ethnic group, and their tenure in their position. Fifteen participants were between the ages of 40 and 49 and 12 were aged 50 to 59. Only eight participants fell within the 30 to 39 years age group. In terms of marital status at the time of the interview, 19 were

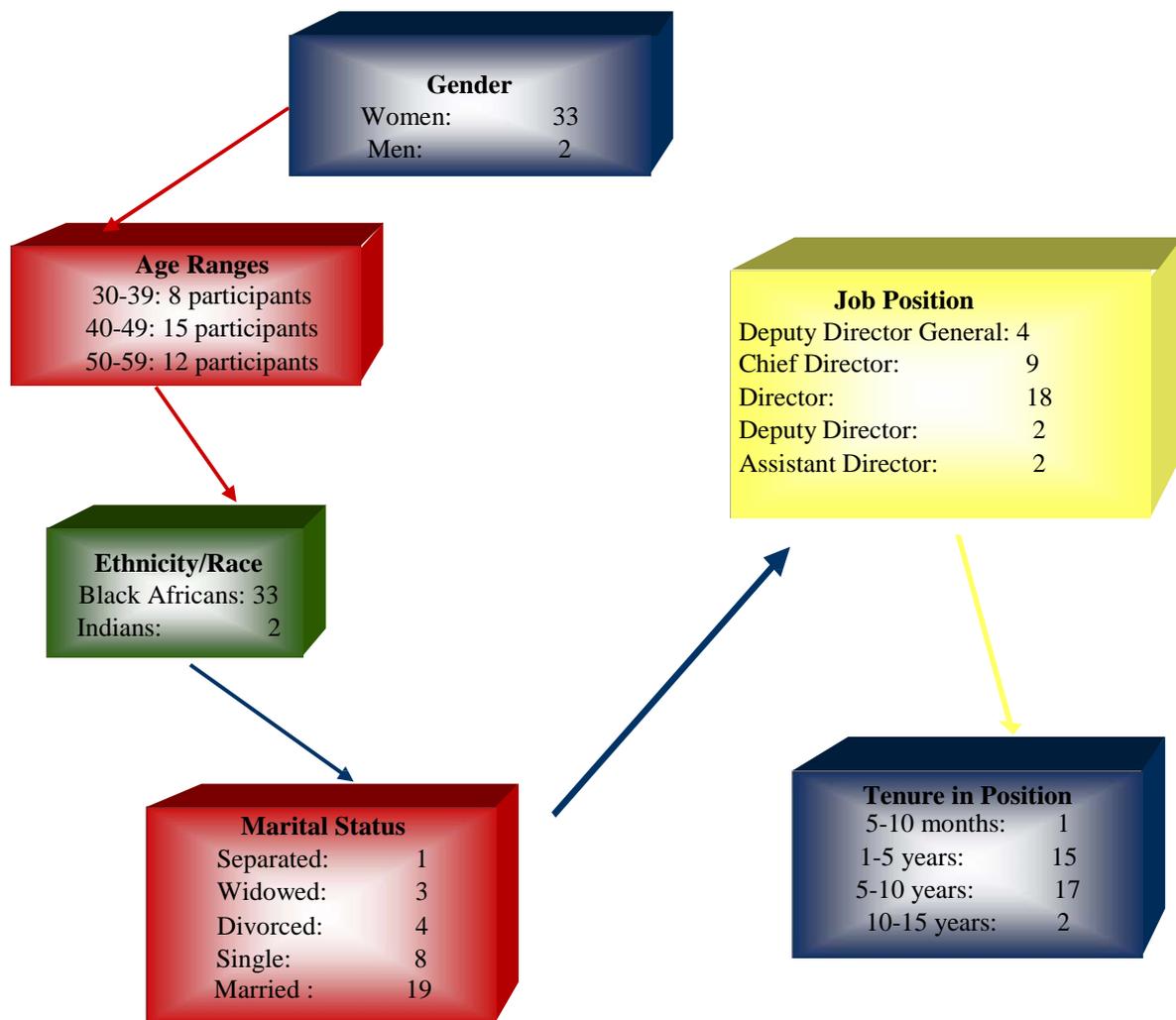
married, eight were single, four divorced, one separated and three participants were widows. The study targeted participants holding leadership positions from Director upwards. However, as noted in Chapter 3, three were below this level, comprising two Assistant Directors and one Deputy Director. Besides the two males, there were also two female volunteer participants of Indian descent. I agreed that they be included in the study because Indian women are women of colour and they held directorate positions in national government. I thus took this opportunity to strategically obtain more diverse female voices.

**Table 3:** presents the participants' biographical details

No.		Dept. Code	Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Age Range	Home Language	Marital Status	Highest Qualification	Job Position	Tenure in Position	Political Affiliation	Family Member(s) Working for Government	Position of Family Member in Government
1		D12	Anne	F	A	50-59	TshiVenda	Married	Master's Degree	Deputy Director-General	1-5 years	Yes	No	N/A
2		D10	Benedict	M	A	40-49	SeSotho	Married	Master's Degree	Deputy Director	1-5 years	No	Yes	Deputy Director
3		D23	Bonelwa	F	A	40-49	IsiXhosa	Single	Honours Degree	Director	1-5 years	Yes	Yes	Social Worker
4		D8	Brenda	F	A	40-49	isiZulu	Single	Junior Degree	Director	5-10 years	Yes	Yes	Chief Director
5		D11	Cecilia	F	A	40-49	IsiXhosa	Divorced	National Diploma	Deputy Director	1-5 years	Yes	No	N/A
6		D3	Funeka	F	A	40-49	Tshivenda	Married	Master's Degree	Acting Chief Director	5-10 years	Not Disclosed	Yes	Teacher & Nurse
7		D5	Gloria	F	A	30-39	Sesotho	Married	Master's Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	No	N/A
8		D2	Helen	F	A	30-39	Tsonga	Single	Master's Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	Yes	Assistant Director
9		D1	Kwezi	F	A	40-49	SeSotho	Divorced	Honours Degree	Deputy Director-General	5-10 months	No	Yes	Deputy Director
10		D13	Lydia	F	A	50-59	IsiZulu	Married	Junior Degree	Chief Director	1-5 years	No	No	N/A
11		D17	Mandisa	F	A	50-59	SeTswana	Married	Honours Degree	Chief Director	1-5 years	No	No	N/A
12		D14	Mathabo	F	A	30-39	SeSotho	Married	PhD	Chief Director	1-5 years	No	No	N/A
13		D13	Matilda	F	A	50-59	SeSotho	Married	Junior Degree	Director	1-5 years	Yes	Yes	Teacher
14		D23	Minentle	F	A	30-39	SeSotho	Single	Honours Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	No	N/A
15		D18	Michelle	F	A	40-49	Venda	Divorced	Honours Degree	Director	1-5 years	Yes	No	N/A

16		D19	Monica	F	A	50-59	IsiXhosa	Married	PhD	Chief Director	5-10 years	No	No	N/A
17		D10	Mpumi	F	A	50-59	SeSotho	Widowed	Master's Degree	Chief Director	10-15 years	Not Disclosed	No	N/A
18		D21	Nikiwe	F	A	40-49	IsiXhosa	Widowed	Master's Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	Yes	Director
19		D20	Nina	F	A	50-59	IsiNdebele	Married	Master's Degree	Chief Director	1-5 years	Yes	No	N/A
20		D16	Nolitha	F	A	30-39	IsiXhosa	Single	Master's Degree	Deputy Director-General	2-3 years	Yes	Yes	Not Disclosed
21		D11	Nombulelo	F	A	50-59	IsiXhosa	Separated	Honours Degree	Assistant Director	5-10 years	Yes	Yes	Clerk
22		D6	Nomusa	F	A	30-39	IsiZulu	Married	PhD	Director	1-5 years	No	Yes	Not Disclosed
23		D25	Nthabiseng	F	A	30-39	IsiXhosa	Married	Junior Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	Yes	Director
24		D15	Pamela	F	A	40-49	SeSotho	Married	Honours Degree	Director	5-10 years	Yes	No	N/A
25		D3	Petunia	F	A	40-49	IsiXhosa	Divorced	Junior Degree	Director	10-15 years	Yes	No	N/A
26		D11	Primrose	F	I	50-59	English	Married	Junior Degree	Assistant Director	5-10 years	No	No	N/A
27		D2	Sarah	F	I	50-59	English	Married	PhD	Chief Director	5-10 years	Yes	No	N/A
28		D5	Samuel	M	A	40-49	SeTswana	Married	Junior Degree	Director	1-5 years	Yes	Yes	Assistant Director
29		D7	Sihle	F	A	40-49	SeSotho	Married	Honours Degree	Director	5-10 years	No	Yes	Assistant Director
30		D9	Snethemba	F	A	50-59	IsiZulu	Single	Master's Degree	Deputy Director-General	1-5 years	No	No	N/A
31		D17	Thabisile	F	A	30-39	SeTswana	Single	Master's Degree	Director	5-10 years	Yes	No	N/A
32		D22	Thandi	F	A	40-49	IsiXhosa	Widowed	Honours Degree	Director	1-5 years	No	Yes	Assistant Director
33		D24	Theressa	F	A	40-49	IsiNdebele	Married	Junior Degree	Director	1-5 years	No	No	N/A
34		D25	Vuyiswa	F	A	40-49	IsiZulu	Married	Honours Degree	Chief Director	5-10 years	Yes	Yes	General Manager
35		D4	Wendy	F	A	50-59	IsiZulu	Single	Honours Degree	Director	5-10 years	Yes	No	N/A

**Figure 5: Participants' Demographic Characteristics**



### 3.5 Data Collection Process

The researcher initially conducted preliminary meetings before commencement with in-depth, face-to-face interviews. The data collection process is discussed in this section.

#### 3.5.1 Preliminary Meeting

Data collection began after the study received ethical approval from UKZN. I phoned the national government Human Resource Directorate to seek permission to interview staff. During the telephonic contact, I explained the purpose of the research study and my intention to interview black African women in senior management positions and the outcomes of GM and EE policies. The Human Resource Directorate advised me to email a request together with the ethical clearance and gatekeeper's letter to the Heads of Department (Director-Generals). The

Director-Generals granted the request. Thereafter, the approval letter was forwarded to prospective participants. Other departments gave me the women's contact details. Some contacted the women on my behalf and obtained consent through Human Resources that agreed to the interviews. I contacted prospective participants telephonically and arranged interviews with those that agreed to participate in the study at a convenient time and venue. The participants work in legal departments, multilateral affairs, strategic management, and as policy advisors, scientists, and medical specialists, amongst others. Their responsibilities include attending meetings, stakeholder engagements and international forums and representing their departments in Parliamentary sessions. Scheduling interviews was thus a challenge.

The main location for the interviews – Pretoria – was also a challenge since the researcher resides in Cape Town. Thus, managing time was of critical importance in the fieldwork. For instance, some women leaders with whom I scheduled interviews had last minute work functions or meetings and could not keep the appointment. This adversely affected other appointments. Some participants arrived late for interviews and the researcher had to reschedule other interviews lined up for that day. Fortunately, due to their own demanding work schedules, all the participants understood last minute changes by their colleagues and agreed to reschedule appointments. This illustrates their level of commitment to participating in this study, which I truly appreciated. The significance of GM and EE was not only verbally expressed by the women leaders in their interviews but also by their willingness to participate in the study despite their many other commitments. However, rescheduling affected the researcher financially, as she had to extend her stay in Pretoria, and change her travel arrangements. Some interviews were interrupted by personal assistants and colleagues that urgently need to speak with the participants. However, I paused the audio-recorder and continued once they were through. Overall, time management was a major challenge.

### **3.5.2 Data Collection Tools**

As feminist-centred research, this study used in-depth, face-to-face interviews for data collection. This qualitative data collection method was chosen because it enabled the researcher to obtain data which addressed the study's objectives through the key research questions set out above. The participants who were women leaders in the South African national government responded to identical, in-depth structured, open-ended questions through face-to-face interviews (see the Interview Schedule in Appendix A). The researcher was the main

investigator and conducted all the interviews. This allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of commonalities and divergences, and subjective and lived leadership experiences and insights into the outcomes of GM and EE, which are referred to as transformation policies in the democratic South Africa. The GM framework's intended outcome is to achieve systemic gender equality and women empowerment. The EE policy aims to promote equal opportunities and fair treatment through implementing AA measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups. Thus, the study sought to determine whether this is evident in daily practices within the national government sector, as the leader of democracy and the nation.

During the interviews and throughout this study, the researcher treated the participants as research subjects and active agents of knowledge. That helped the participants to openly share their leadership experiences and insights on the outcomes of GM and EE policies in national government departments. The researcher considered the women's lived experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). In line with Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide descriptive information and for the researcher to probe for more information. Probing was done in a non-threatening way to obtain sufficient data to address the research questions. The following example exemplifies the model adopted:

**Researcher:** Have you experienced challenges based on your gender or race at the workplace? If yes, what mechanisms have you employed to mitigate these challenges and policy implementation?

**Participant:** It never happened to me but to some colleagues that if you are a female and there's a post of a Director or something, the male bosses usually take advantage of that to sell that position instead of following the right procedures (Bonelwa D23).

**Researcher:** What are you referring to? Even if it never happened to you personally, can you explain further?

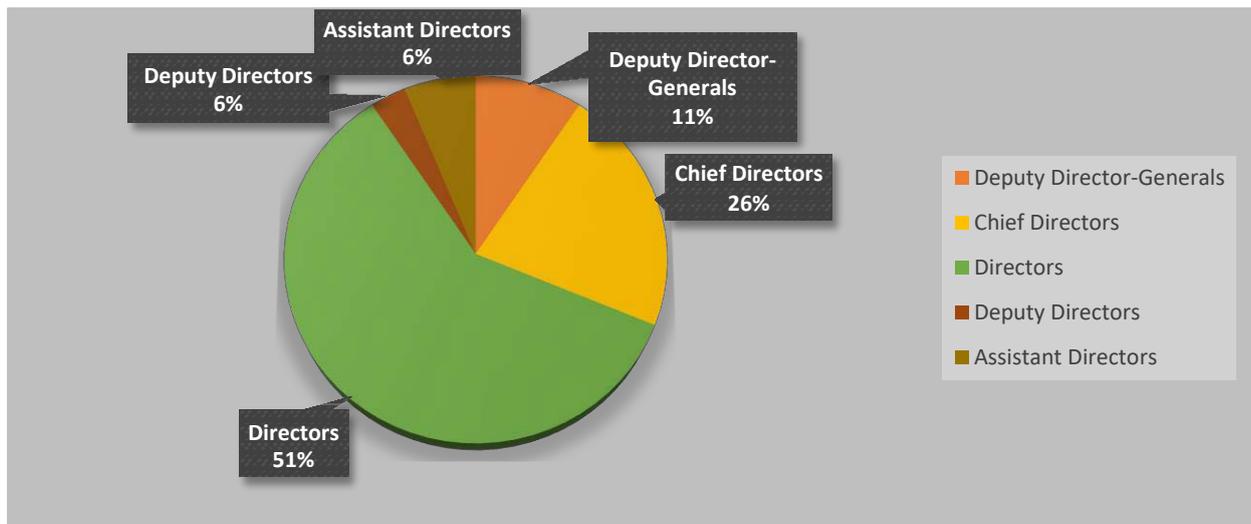
**Participant:** To say if a woman does ABCD for a male boss, he will then give her the post. That is really reducing the value of women. It shows that that some men don't take women seriously, because it's like a woman cannot go to an interview and be able to sell herself. She needs to sleep with the boss so she can get the post. It happens in this department (Bonelwa D23).

King (2004) affirms that open-ended interviews allow for probing on points of interest and the researcher's self-reflexivity. Qualitative research does not only regard the text of an interview as a means of gaining insight into the participants' 'real' experience, but also as an interaction constructed in the particular context of the interview. The interview extract above is an example of how the face-to-face interviews were used to probe further and elicit more information from the participants. Such probing would have been impossible if participants had completed questionnaires.

The participants' consent was sought to record the interviews. Only two of the 35 interviewees did not grant such consent. For these interviews, I had to ask questions, listen and write simultaneously. This was a challenge as the participants had to pause at times while I wrote down the responses. The recordings were very useful in data analysis. The researcher listened to the audio-tapes to identify themes. She also made handwritten notes of important points to be asked in subsequent interviews (Hancock, 2002). As leaders, the participants have demanding schedules and I was conscious of the need to ensure that all the research questions were answered and responses documented – recorded or handwritten.

In line with the University of KwaZulu-Natal's (UKZN) research ethical principles (discussed later in this chapter), the names of the departments from which the participants were drawn are not revealed. Instead the study uses a code (see biographical data in Table 4 in this chapter) such as D1 where D refers to department and the number is a code allocated for each department. The researcher also created pseudonyms to protect the participants' identity. Twenty-three per cent of the sample consisted of Directors. The participants' positions are illustrated in the pie chart below.

**Figure 6:** Pie Chart of the participants' leadership positions



### 3.6 Biographical Information

As noted previously, the original intention was to interview black African women in leadership positions in national government departments to understand their leadership experiences and the outcomes of GM and EE policies. However, the researcher ended up interviewing 31 black African women, two Indian women, and two black African men. Table 4 below presents the pseudonyms used to identify the participants in alphabetical order, and their gender and race.

**Table 4:** Number of Participants, Department Codes, Pseudonyms, Gender and Race

Number	Department	Pseudonym	Gender	Race
1	D12	Anne	Female	Black African
2	D10	Benedict	Male	Black African
3	D23	Bonelwa	Female	Black African
4	D8	Brenda	Female	Black African
5	D11	Cecilia	Female	Black African
6	D3	Funeka	Female	Black African
7	D5	Gloria	Female	Black African
8	D2	Helen	Female	Black African
9	D1	Kwezi	Female	Black African

10	D13	Lydia	Female	Black African
11	D17	Mandisa	Female	Black African
12	D14	Mathabo	Female	Black African
13	D13	Matilda	Female	Black African
14	D23	Minentle	Female	Black African
15	D18	Michelle	Female	Black African
16	D19	Monica	Female	Black African
17	D10	Mpumi	Female	Black African
18	D21	Nikiwe	Female	Black African
19	D20	Nina	Female	Black African
20	D16	Nolitha	Female	Black African
21	D11	Nombulelo	Female	Black African
22	D6	Nomusa	Female	Black African
23	D25	Nthabiseng	Female	Black African
24	D15	Pamela	Female	Black African
25	D3	Petunia	Female	Black African
26	D11	Primrose	Female	Indian
27	D2	Sarah	Female	Indian
28	D5	Samuel	Male	Black African
29	D7	Sihle	Female	Black African
30	D9	Snethemba	Female	Black African
31	D17	Thabisile	Female	Black African
32	D22	Thandi	Female	Black African
33	D24	Theresa	Female	Black African
34	D25	Vuyiswa	Female	Black African
35	D4	Wendy	Female	Black African

After the interview with the woman leader in Department D5 (Gloria), a male Director, Samuel approached the researcher. He indicated that his work entails employee wellness and gender programmes. He was keen to share his experiences as an overseer of gender transformation policies. The second male, Benedict, was recommended by Department D10 participant, Mpumi. She informed the researcher that her department has a GFP who is an African male Deputy Director. The participant and the researcher agreed that including the GFP would be of value to the study. The researcher decided to interview Samuel and Benedict, not by virtue of their sex, but because of their job positions – one being an employee wellness and gender programmes Director and the other a GFP at Deputy Directorship level. The interviewees' sex and gender – male and man, are of significance to this feminist study in terms of reflexivity, credibility and dependability to produce less gender biased data and results. As a result, the study established that GM and EE policies also affect men. Like the women participants, the male respondents confirmed that women work in a gender diverse environment; however, it has been patriarchal and historically male dominated. Similar findings from men and women participants helped disrupt potential gender biases from the women-centred narratives. While the study intended to be gender biased by focussing only on women-centred experiences and narratives, the researcher made room for available volunteers. However, it should be noted that the data obtained comprised only 6% male voices and 94% women voices.

The referral technique also applied to the two Indian women interviewed. While I was in Department D2 to interview the sampled participant, Helen, a black African woman Director, she referred me to Sarah, a black woman in a Chief Director position. Sarah is Indian. Even though Indians are classified as black, the study purposely sampled only black African women due to the fact that they bore the brunt of colonial and apartheid oppression (Mkhize, 2012). Even in the democratic South Africa, despite African black people's political power majority, whites sit at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy, followed by Indians and black Africans at the bottom (Mkhize & Cele, 2017). Thus, women of Indian descent were not originally part of the purposively sampled population. Since Sarah consented to the interview and both the researcher and Sarah were available after Helen's interview, Sarah was also interviewed. The same referral strategy applied at department D11, where the originally sampled woman Deputy Director, Cecilia, referred the researcher to the Assistant Director, Primrose – an Indian woman. Primrose consented to the interview and indicated that she had much to share in terms of her experiences at department D11. Subsequent to the scheduled interview with Cecilia, the researcher interviewed Primrose. Thus, including the two black African men, four participants

were added to the sample. As noted previously, this made the study more balanced, unbiased and inclusive and added richness to its findings. Including these narratives also improved the study's validity and strengthened data triangulation.

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

The main objective of this research study was to investigate African women experiences of leadership and outcomes of GM and EE policies in democratic national government departments in South Africa. Ethical clearance was granted by UKZN in October 2015 (see Appendix E). The complexities of researching people's lives and bringing these accounts into the public domain, which forms an integral part of feminist research, involved ethical issues that needed to be addressed throughout the research and writing process (Mauthner et al., 2002). Ethical considerations make feminist researchers accountable for the knowledge they produce. Since feminist research is about fairness, respect and promoting the good of others, ethics are central. The feminist methodology that guided this research implies that there is a "connection between politics, ethics and epistemology" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002: 102).

Ethical guidelines are often based on assumptions of unequal power relationships, especially where researchers or respondents could abuse their superior power in situations in which either party may not be in a position to protect themselves. Feminist research highlights the exploitative nature of traditional social research, as the interview situation can be a potential site for unequal power relations (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Westermarland, 2001). Furthermore, "feminist researchers work within the wider women's liberation movement and towards the overall aim of all women being free from oppression; it is hence clearly not acceptable for researchers to further oppress women in the name of academic research" (Westermarland, 2001: 7). Feminist research therefore promotes non-hierarchical and non-exploitative approaches that allow the research participants to openly speak about and make sense of their own experiences (Stiftung, 2010).

In the process of conducting this research, the researcher adhered to the following ethical and professional guidelines for research with human participants:

- No participant was coerced to take part in the study; participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained;

- All participants were notified that if they wished to withdraw from the interview for any reason, they could do so at any point in the research process without any consequences;
- I treated all participants with respect, positive regard, empathy, warmth and a non-judgmental attitude. Even after data collection, I continued to protect the identities and interests of the participants by guaranteeing confidentiality of the information communicated to me and anonymity regarding their identities. This is consistent with Kaiser's (2009) assertion that researchers must collect, analyse and report data without compromising participants' identities;
- As the researcher, I ensured that the rights and welfare of the participants involved in this research were protected. For example, some participants became emotional at some point during the interview, and I requested that we 'pause' before continuing. Others became annoyed when sharing negative work experiences, and I would calm them down by reassuring them that 'they will eventually get through the challenges because they are strong-willed women';
- All the participants were informed that they will be provided with a copy of the thesis once completed. Smith (1999) notes the importance of as "reporting back to the people and sharing knowledge, based on the principle of reciprocity between the researcher and the people who have helped to make the research" (1999: 15);
- I did not misrepresent the participants and assured them that the research is only for academic purposes; and
- I complied with the rules of UKZN that approved these research ethics during the proposal stage of the study and continued to uphold these principles.

With the guidance and mentorship of the research supervisor, the researcher complied with UKZN's requirement that researchers must obtain signed permission from relevant gatekeepers to conduct research and report the findings. As decided by the researcher and her supervisor, the gatekeepers for this research study were the CGE and the PSC. They granted the researcher permission to access national government departments to conduct fieldwork and report the findings on women leaders' experiences of the outcomes of transformative policies – GM and EE (see Appendix D). It is hoped that this study contributes to monitoring, evaluation and improvement of these transformative policies to ensure that they are effectively implemented and are practical. Colonialism and apartheid entrenched gender inequalities and unfair employment policies in South Africa. The South African Constitution is committed to gender

equality and fair employment practices for all citizens. It is for this reason that the first black democratic government, led by the late President Nelson Mandela established the CGE an independent statutory body to oversee gender related issues.

The CGE was established under Section 187 of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (CGE). Its role is to promote the protection, development and attainment of gender equality, and to make recommendations on any legislation affecting the status of women in the country (CGE, 2012: 13). The PSC is an independent institution established in terms of Chapter 10 of the Constitution with a specific focus on the public service and oversight of public administration (Public Service Commission, 2014:1). For these reasons the researcher and supervisor found both Commissions suitable for gate-keeping this research. Both approved this research and granted gatekeeper's permission (see Gatekeeper's Letters in Appendix D).

Furthermore, all the participants gave informed consent to be interviewed (see the Consent Form in Appendix B and the participant's Declaration Form in Appendix C). However, two did not consent to audio recording and the researcher took hand-written notes during their interviews. The remainder of the interviews were recorded even though the researcher still took some handwritten notes when necessary. Based on UKZN's ethical requirements, the researcher assured the participants that their identity would be protected, and that pseudonyms would be used and government departments would be coded (see Table 3 and Table 4 in this chapter). The participants were also informed that the research was for academic purposes only for the completion of the researcher's doctoral degree. However, a copy of the thesis will be placed in the University's libraries for public use. Other copies will be delivered to both research gatekeeping Commissions – the CGE and PSC and a copy will be made available at the South African National Government library. The participants were assured that when the findings of the research are shared in the public domain such as through journal articles, mainstream journalism and presentations, their names and those of the departments will remain confidential.

### 3.8 The Nvivo Version 11 Software CAQDAS Package

The researcher utilised Nvivo Version CAQDAS 11 software to analyse the collected data. This software was useful in managing, querying, visualising and reporting on the data (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). The use of the software ensured rigour in the analysis as it includes a query procedure. For example, it records every use of a term or every coded concept, thus ensuring a more complete set of data for interpretation than might occur when working manually. Bazeley and Jackson (2013: 3) identify the following five advantages of utilising Nvivo that assisted the research in this study:

- **Data Management** – Nvivo helped the researcher to organise and keep track of data collected by updating the record after each interview, which assisted in theoretical sampling; and in deducing which themes to focus on in subsequent interviews. This process included transcription notes, emergent themes and conceptual maps of what was going on in the data. The data was disaggregated into segments, and similarities and differences were assessed while grouping conceptually similar data into nodes.
- **Ideas management** – During the course of data collection, the researcher accessed the system to continuously manage ideas and theories generated.
- **Query Data** – The researcher saved the results of queries in the system to further assess data.
- **Visualise Data** – The researcher used word clouds and cluster analysis to show prominent words in a theme and to illustrate the content of cases, ideas and concepts at various stages of the interpretive process (see figure 7 below that shows the word cloud diagram that visually represents the relationships among words).
- **Report from the Data** – The researcher presented the analysis based on the content of the qualitative database, including information data sources, the ideas and knowledge developed from them, and the process by which these outcomes were reached.

**Figure 7:** Word Cloud Diagram depicting results of the Nvivo Node Word Frequency



The researcher derived this word cloud diagram by querying the word ‘frequency’ in the ‘*No substantive outcomes of GM and EE policies*’ node. The researcher queried the 20 most frequent words containing a minimum of 10 letters according to word length in the node and ran the query. The word cloud is the result of this query. Six words stand out in the word cloud: ‘challenges’, ‘performance’, ‘programmes’, ‘achievements’, and ‘departments’, ‘implementation’ located below the word ‘mainstreaming’. Correspondingly, the study identified various challenges around GM policy implementation in the sampled national government departments. It found that the patriarchal culture, structure and practices negatively affect women’s leadership performance, meaning that substantive gender equality is yet to be achieved in South African government institutions (as discussed in Chapter 5). However, it should be emphasised that the use of software did not substitute for the researcher’s role in data analysis. It merely helped facilitate systematic management and analysis (Burnard, 1994). Similar to McLafferty and Farley (2006), the researcher experienced benefits and limitations in using the Nvivo Version 11 CAQDAS package. Table below 5, adapted from these authors’ model, outlines the advantages and disadvantages of using the data analysis softwarepackage:

**Table 5:** Nvivo Software Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages of Using Data Analysis Software Package	Disadvantages of Using Data Analysis Software Package
They can handle large data sets	Becoming familiar with a package is likely to be time-consuming
They are speedy and convenient when coding, searching and retrieving data	Transcripts need to be formatted in a way that the package can recognise and handle
They have the facility to attach memos and notes to data	If users are not selective when coding, the process of categorising can become unmanageable and 'over coding' can become a problem
They facilitate detailed analysis and construct-building	If codes and categories become fixed by the software, the data analysis process may be inhibited
They allow for the production of visual indexed trees	Conceptualising data on the computer screen can be difficult, inhibiting visualisation and contextualisation
The researcher can map the progress of the project through time/date stamps, allowing the dynamic nature of the data analysis process to be audited	Program designers determine rules for specific procedures, protocols and structures, which users must follow.
The researcher can explore relationships between concepts and reorganise these into coherent explanations of the subject	Users must prepare data prior to analysis by organising it into text units

Source: Adapted from McLafferty & Farley (2006)

The main disadvantage the researcher experienced was the time taken to familiarise herself with the software. The researcher underwent training over a two-week period in June 2016, using hypothetical projects for performance assessment. Even after the practical training, the researcher still required mentorship to navigate through the system and to utilise it accurately to obtain reliable results that enhance the study's credibility/validity and dependability/reliability. An additional month of training (July 2016) was required before the researcher was confidently competent in using the Nvivo Version 11 software package.

### 3.9 Credibility and Dependability

From a feminist point of view, completely valid research representing the ultimate truth is not achievable. This is because all knowledge is socially constructed and no knowledge is certain; rather, it is a particular reflection of the process. To reflect on this study's process, I use

Cresswell and Miller's (2000: 126) credibility procedures of a qualitative design to ground this research. Table 6 presents such procedures within this study's context.

**Table 6:** Procedures of a Qualitative Design

Paradigm Lens	Constructivist Paradigm	Steps taken by the researcher
Lens of the researcher	Disconfirming evidence	From the collected data, I created themes and categories through constant comparative method. Subsequently, I read and checked through the data for confirmation that is aligned to or disconfirms the themes. I first found the preliminary themes or categories and then searched through the data for evidence that is consistent with or disconfirms these themes (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).
Lens of the study participants	Prolonged engagement in the field	The fieldwork was over a seven-month period between November 2015 and May 2016. From the population of 46 (total of national government departments); I conducted fieldwork on 25 departments which constitutes 54% of the population.
Lens of people external to the study (reviewers, readers)	Thick, rich description	I presented the data by describing the themes, context, participants in verisimilitude and rich detail (Cresswell & Miller, 2000).

Source: Adapted from Cresswell & Miller (2000)

I agree with Winter (2000) that credibility is not a single, fixed or universal concept, but “rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (2000: 1). Therefore, credibility cannot be defined in absolute terms but only as relative to the purpose of the study (Gcabo, 2003). My use of the Nvivo Version 11 software package ensured rigour in data analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013); which makes this study reliable. Qualitative researchers argue, that, similar to reliability, proving dependability by trying to make social research replicable and generalisable is counterproductive and limiting (Silverman, 1993; Marshall, 1990). This is because social phenomena are fluid, as in the case of women experiences in leadership positions and the

outcomes of GM and EE transformative policies in democratic national government departments. Therefore, it is difficult, and even unnecessary, to duplicate this study and to measure the accuracy of the research tools (Silverman, 1993). In this study, it is therefore unnecessary to prove dependability/reliability, as it is understood and accepted that individuals' experiences, insights, attitudes and perceptions change over time. Therefore, women in leadership positions might not report the same experiences and insights if this study were to be replicated. In this context, it is crucial to focus on the researcher's personal journey and insights in light of the study which is a significant characteristic of feminist studies. The following section presents the researcher's critical reflection on her research journey.

### **3.10 Reflexivity and the Role of the Researcher**

This section examines the researcher's power and representation and how it impacted on the study.

#### **3.10.1 Reflexivity**

As the researcher, my choice of research methodologies and theoretical frameworks was informed by my beliefs about and commitment to the empowerment of previously disenfranchised people and the meaningful application of key feminist principles. This includes the promotion of a participatory research model where the relationship between the researcher and participants is non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian, non-exploitive and non-manipulative (Oakley, 1981). The study investigated black African women experiences in leadership positions and their insights into the outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE) in the democratic South Africa. I applied non-hierarchical feminist research approaches in order to create rapport and enable the sampled participants to reflect on and voice their lived experiences. I not only gained deeper understanding of women's nuanced circumstances in government departments, but was also able to reflect on my position in relation to the study. King (1994) explains that reflexivity in feminist research is significant because "it is through women's own experiences, and especially through their life crises, that they are able to view and to understand the world around them" (1994: 20). Hence, Ramazanoglu (1992) asserts that "it is more logical to accept our subjectivity, our emotions and our socially grounded positions than to assume some of us can rise above them" (1992: 211).

Clarkson (1989: 16) maintains that people cannot be understood outside of the context of their on-going relationships with other people or separate from their interconnectedness with the world. I concur with Harding (1991) and Clarkson (1989) that researchers' social and political locations often affect their research. For instance, our research interests and the research questions we pose and discard, reveal something about who we are. Our choice of research design and methodology as well as theoretical frameworks is governed by our values, and reciprocally helps to shape these values. Furthermore, our interpretations and analyses, and how we choose to present our findings are all constitutive of reflexive research.

In the context of a feminist qualitative methodology, such as this study, reflexivity in research is not a single or universal entity, but an active on-going process that is present at every stage of a research project (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Thus, it is a process of critical reflection, both on the kind of knowledge produced from research on the outcomes of gender transformation policies and how this knowledge is generated (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Critical reflection is important as it ties in with self-reflexivity. According to Edwards (1990), self-reflexivity is an important component of feminist research as a process that acknowledges personal subjectivities. In both qualitative and feminist research, the researcher is not considered an objective, separate, superior person without identity or personal bias. Instead, I am also a component of the research process. This is consistent with my stake in studying women in national government leadership roles. As black South African women and government employee, I am aware of my position as an 'insider' since the majority of the research participants were also black African women and also government employees.

### **3.10.2 Negotiating the Researcher's Power and Representation**

"At what point is being an insider or an outsider a key to insightful analysis? When does it stand in the way of clear thinking? How do we even know when we are inside or outside or somewhere in between?" (Acker 2001: 190). Acker's provocative questions preoccupied me during data collection, analysis and writing because I was careful not to be biased as an insider and outsider. As elaborated below, I was both.

Merton (1972) outlined two opposing views as the insider and outsider doctrines. The insider doctrine holds that outsider researchers never truly understand a culture or situation if they have not experienced it. It further contends that insider researchers are uniquely positioned to understand the experiences of groups of which they are members (Merton, 1972). Contrary to

the insider doctrine, the outsider doctrine values researchers who are not from the communities they study as neutral detached observers.

Based on the research experience, as I was simultaneously an outsider and an insider, I agree with the various authors who contend that there are relational and dynamic aspects of researchers' positionalities (Mkhize, 2012; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Few et al., 2003; Serrant-Green, 2002; Naples, 1996: 140; Narayan, 1993). Hence, idiosyncrasies are said to be deeply rooted in our identities that automatically create moments of intimacy and distance between the participant and researcher. Much of the literature attributes fixed positions in the research process and neglects the "interactive process through which 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' are constructed" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, Stevens & Rouse-Arnett, 2003, Serrant-Green, 2002 Naples, 1996: 140; Narayan, 1993). I found my insider and outsider positions constantly shifting. At some stages of each interview I conducted, I was an insider in terms of being a black African woman, working in a government department. However, similar to Mkhize's (2012) research experiences, the participants perceived me as a 'young woman' and I felt obliged to respect them, following *hlonipha* culture. "*Hlonipha* refers to 'respect' in Zulu culture" (Mkhize, 2012:76). Furthermore, I was always conscious that I hold a junior position compared to my participants as leaders, especially since they work in national government departments. Similar to my experience, Mkhize (2012); Dwyer and Buckle (2009); Serrant-Green (2002) and Naples (1996) maintain that being an 'insider' and 'outsider' in research are not fixed experiences or positions; rather, they are contextual and shifting. Table 7 below outlines the advantages and disadvantages of the researcher's insider/ outsider status and encapsulates my experiences as an insider, an outsider and in the space between in this study.

**Table 7:** Advantages and Disadvantages of Insider and Outsider Status

Advantages of Researcher Insider Status	Disadvantages of Researcher Insider Status
<p><b>Positionality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A nuanced perspective for observation and interpretation</li> <li>▪ An equalised relationship between the researcher and participants</li> <li>▪ Expediency of rapport building</li> <li>▪ Immediate legitimacy in the field</li> <li>▪ Economy to acclimating the field</li> </ul>	<p><b>Positionality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insider status unchecked can complicate or overwhelm researcher role</li> <li>▪ Over-identification and over-reliance on status obscures researcher role or goal of the research</li> <li>▪ Participants' perceptions and expectations co-opt researcher or constrain role</li> </ul>
<p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expediency of access</li> <li>▪ Access to more in-group activities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Access</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bias in entering field and establishing rapport</li> <li>▪ Limited access based on political climate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data Collection, Interpretation and Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insight into the linguistic, cognitive emotional, sensory and psychological principles of participants</li> <li>▪ Knowledge of historical and practical happenings in the field</li> <li>▪ Stimulation of natural interaction and behaviour</li> <li>▪ Detection of participant's hidden behaviours and perceptions</li> <li>▪ Detection of non-verbal gestures of discomfort</li> </ul>	<p><b>Data Collection, Interpretation and Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Observer and/or participant role may be culturally inappropriate</li> <li>▪ Selective reporting</li> <li>▪ Difficulty with recognising patterns due to familiarity with community</li> <li>▪ Bias in selecting participants</li> <li>▪ Insiderness obscures representation or implementation due to turbulent or changing political and historical climate</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Chavez (2008)

Table 7 speaks to my research experiences. I witnessed my positions shifting from being an insider to an outsider, and *vice versa*, and sometimes in between. Being an insider helped me the most in terms of my positionality. As a government employee, a South African citizen, black African woman, and mother, wife and educated woman, I found insider's familiarity with most women participants and we established rapport. I could relate to most of their experiences such as the challenge of practicing multiple roles as career women, mothers or home-carers, and working in the masculine-centred culture, structures and practices of government departments. This study found that all these experiences collectively and negatively affect women's execution of their leadership duties. However, I had to act like an outsider to obtain more unbiased information from the participants. Some made statements such as:

As a wife and mother, you know how difficult it is to strike a balance between travelling and having to be at home (Anne D12).

I often responded, but politely:

I understand, but how yourself do manage these multiple roles and how do they impact your leadership experiences?

This helped me to neutralise the position of being an insider and to come out more as an outsider to obtain more information. I also asked the participants to comment further without allowing my views as the researcher to impede information gathering.

When talking about male dominance and sexual harassment, the participants would say something like:

You (*referring to the researcher*) must never allow men to have power over you by sleeping with them at work, like you are young and equipping yourself with a PhD. I wish other young women would do the same (Anne D12).

Here, I absolutely had to take the outsider position. I responded: “I agree with you, however, what are the issues around sexual harassment in Department D12?” I found the outsider position more useful in avoiding leading questions and probes to get more unbiased responses. However, it was difficult to listen and pretend that I was not familiar with these issues as a woman in a corporate organisation that is familiar with such patriarchal and sexist oppression of women at the workplace. The quotes indicate that the participants perceived me as one of them, as an insider and also highlight their struggles around GM issues and the challenges of achieving substantive equality (as discussed in Chapter 5). Such situations can lead to limitations and challenges in research.

### **3.11 Limitations of the Chosen Methodology**

This section discusses the challenges encountered in the field and steps taken to ameliorate them.

#### **3.11.1 Challenges Encountered in the Field and Mitigating Factors**

My personal connection to the research topic and the intersections of my identity inspired this research. I am a career-oriented and educated black African woman employed by the government of South Africa. I am also a student, wife, mother and daughter and manage all these roles simultaneously. All of these multiple identities intersect and shape my identity.

These are the very same multiple identities that the participants occupied. The following response portrays Collins' (1999) intersectional identities and oppressive systems, as women simultaneously experience advantages and disadvantages through the combined statuses of gender, race, and class to produce and maintain social hierarchy:

People are idolizing you, 'DDG, wow'! But there are still challenges in the workplace because when you are there, people look up to you to take decisions. But at another level, you go back to your community back home; it is different (Kwezi D1).

The above account can be explained in terms of the feminist notion that the 'personal is political', which demonstrates that individuals' personal experiences reflect wider social and cultural conditions and socially structured gender power relations (Babacan, 2004: 78). Furthermore, as an insider to the black African culture of respect, *hlonipha*, and humanity, *ubuntu*, my approach to some research questions was influenced by sensitivity to such norms. Since my research objective was to interview women leaders in national departments, I had to psychologically and practically maintain respect for the country's leadership and the government. The participants are leaders working for the government of my country, South Africa. Thus, while trying to find answers, and evaluate and improve GM and EE transformative policies, I had to approach everything with respect and humanity; respect for the participants and government institutions. However, on the other hand I had to be the voice of the public, citizens, civil society and ordinary woman who look to these transformative policies to offer them better opportunities and lives. I thus had to ensure that the study's objectives were addressed by covering all the key questions and digging through the women leaders' narratives.

I experienced four major challenges in the field. Firstly, as a black African woman interviewing other black African women and men<sup>9</sup>, the participants presumed that we held identical views and experiences of race and gender issues. They often responded in culture-bound phrases as though I already 'knew' of their experiences. That automatically meant we shared the same

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<sup>9</sup>The study sought black African women as participants. However, whilst in the field, two males volunteered to be interviewed as they are GFPs in their respective departments. In addition, two Indian women were interviewed: one volunteered and the other was allocated by D2 since she was in senior management. However, in terms of the EEA, people of Indian descent are regarded as 'black Africans' and members of the designated group. Of the 35 participants, 31 were black African women, making up 89% of the sample.

experiences as working mothers with multiple responsibilities. This was illustrated in responses such as the following:

When I joined the department, my daughter was three years old, I feel like crying when I think about that. As black woman, you would know (referring to the researcher). I wasn't there; there are milestones in her life that I missed (Nikiwe D21).

Another participant said:

As you would know (referring to the researcher), the fact that women they spend most of their time in the kitchen and also looking after children, it really affects us. If you can compare yourself in the studies that you are doing, compare yourself with your male colleague; you will find out that they are ahead of you in terms of his work progress (Bonelwa D23).

Since the women I interviewed were aware of my marriage, motherhood and education<sup>10</sup>, the participants would sometimes make reference to that. To overcome such challenges, I had to constantly ignore this and politely remind them that I needed to hear of 'their' own experiences. I would thus probe further when such culture-bound phrases emerged in their responses. This indicates that the researcher was in a space between and simultaneously an insider and outsider.

The second issue was that the majority of participants were older than me. Some referred to me as 'their daughter' and enquired how I reached doctoral level at such a 'young' age<sup>11</sup>. Others were keen to offer me marital advice as a young educated woman working in government. I just had to smile, thank them as my elders and continue with the questions. However, similar to Mkhize's (2012) research experiences, this put me in a challenging power dynamic position than the participants particularly when they had to respond to issues of sexuality in the workplace because I perceive them as elders. That was not because I was not aware of my power as the researcher, but because of being aware of black African cultural values. The 'older' participants were circumspect in their responses to the question of sexuality and I had to respectfully probe to elicit further responses. I was always conscious of *ubuntu* and respect which provide the rule of conduct and social ethic in traditional African culture,

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<sup>10</sup>I am a married woman and wear my wedding ring at all times. During initial greeting, the participants would say "Oh you are married" and they would start asking questions about where my family is and where I work.

<sup>11</sup>When the respondents saw that I was married, they would also ask my age, saying that I look younger. They would then tell me their age, confirming that I was younger than them.

and that the older and the younger should respect age boundaries (Mkhize, 2012; Nafukho, 2006).

At the same time, since I am studying at doctoral level, some participants who had not studied up to this level treated me as an expert. There were some instances where the participants asked my opinion about gender transformation policies, particularly GM. I had to act ignorant in order to avoid making leading statements and solicit their views. Although we were different in age and sometimes educational level and career pursuits, I maintained professionalism and did not take anything personally. This all became part of the research experience, a learning curve for me as the researcher. Furthermore, being a government employee helped me to easily access government departments and be trusted to interview such high-profile members of national government. For example, many women participants had bodyguards, speaking to the level of high security around them. I doubt that I would have been able to access them if I did not share some similarities<sup>12</sup> with them such as working for the government.

The third challenge was logistical issues. I spent a week per month over a seven-month period in Pretoria as the interviews were conducted in phases. I interviewed three to five women per week. The fieldwork for this study was self-funded and I also experienced time constraints because I am a full-time employee, mother and wife living with my husband and our children. However, in some cases, after confirming a date and time with the participants, I would travel from Cape Town<sup>13</sup> to Pretoria only to be requested to reschedule due to the participants' demanding schedules. To mitigate this problem, I quickly re-organised the schedule and contacted other participants who had already granted consent. If I was able to contact the participant, the interview would be scheduled for later in the day. This was better than returning to Cape Town without conducting any interviews. Since I am unfamiliar with Pretoria's Central Business District (CBD) where all the departments are situated, I had to painstakingly navigate my way through the city centre with the assistance of a Global Positioning System (GPS). Many street names have changed and in some instances, I drove around endlessly without reaching my destination. Some sympathetic participants sent an escort to help me reach their departments. This was humbling as they are leaders and busy people.

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<sup>12</sup> They asked if I have children. I had to be honest – I am an employed mother, wife and student. At times, they would then refer to these similarities during the interviews.

<sup>13</sup> The researcher resides in Cape Town with her family and holds full-time employment. She had to travel to the research site, Pretoria, for the interviews, which was financially draining and time consuming.

The fourth and final limitation was the length of interviews. Some lasted less than 45 minutes due to the participants' demanding schedules and I had to quickly ask the questions; some answers were shorter than I expected. I could not probe further because of time constraints. Others were circumspect in talking about sensitive issues that negatively impacted their leadership performance. I deduced that one participant was uncomfortable and cautious in her responses throughout the interview because we were conducting it in her office, although the participant chose the venue. As the interview proceeded, she spoke in a lower voice as she did not want to be heard by her colleague in the office next door. This posed a challenge as I could not probe as I had hoped to do. As it was evident that this particular participant was uncomfortable, I asked whether the interview should stop, and she stated that we should continue. I think this was because she knew that I had travelled from another province for the interview and was being polite. I could not do a follow-up or telephone interview as I hoped due to time constraints, both on the researcher and the participant's part.

Apart from the identified challenges, the chosen methodology generally had a positive impact, as the fieldwork enabled the researcher to engage with participants in their own environment. The face-to-face interviews yielded much richer data than telephone interviews or a questionnaire would have. Interviews enabled me to derive deeper meaning and interpret the participants' thoughts, emotions and body language. As Legard, Keegan and Ward (2003) observe, the initial response to an interview question is usually at surface level, and the interviewer can use follow-up questions and probes to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's meaning. Interviews generate new knowledge or thoughts. At some point, participants will direct themselves, or be directed by the researcher down avenues of thought that they have not explored before (Legard, Keegan & Ward, 2003). The participants stated that the interview session stimulated them to critically reflect on their leadership experiences, and the gender transformation policies (GM and EE) that aim to benefit them within national government departments in the democratic South Africa.

### **3.12 Limitations and Strengths of the Study**

One of the limitations of this study is that it focused on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and outcomes of GM and EE policies and thus excluded males and other race groups. This was due to the priority given to addressing past racial imbalances in South Africa. However, during fieldwork, two Indian females and two black African males

volunteered to participate in the study. The researcher interviewed them in order to limit the study's bias in terms of race and gender.

Another limitation is that the study cannot claim to represent the experiences of all women in government leadership positions as it focused on national government departments and excluded provincial and local government. Finally, gaining access to the study participants was challenging as they hold leadership positions and their schedules are demanding. Although the researcher aimed to interview participants from Director to Director-General levels, in the end, interviews were conducted with Assistant Directors, Deputy Directors, Directors, Chief Directors and Deputy Director-Generals. The original plan was to interview between 30 and 40 women; this was accomplished as 35 participants took part in this study - 31 black African women, two Indian women and two black African males. Furthermore, while the initial intention was to include all 46 national government departments, access was gained to 25 (54% of the population). The strengths of this research are that no other studies have focused exclusively on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and the outcomes of GM and EE using their own subjective voices as beneficiaries of these policies. Most studies focus on the number of women in leadership; this study took a further step to investigate the outcomes of gender transformative policies. Furthermore, the study utilised intersectionality, postcolonial feminism and state feminist theories as a lens through which to understand and interpret black African women leaders' experiences of GM and EE outcomes. These theories added value to the study as they uncovered a plethora of challenges.

### **3.13 Chapter Summary**

The chapter discussed the feminist research methodology adopted and data analysis. It highlighted the sampling method adopted and the use of the Nvivo Version 11 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software as well as its advantages and disadvantages in the context of this study. I also outlined my reflexivity and insights as the researcher. Based on the feminist qualitative method, this chapter presented the processes employed to gather and analyse the data and the challenges the researcher encountered in the field. The following chapter presents; analyses and discusses the study's results in order to answer the research questions. The discussion is organised in line with the themes that emerged in investigating the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and insights into the outcomes of GM and EE policies in national government departments.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION: GENDERED POLITICS OF TRANSFORMATIVE POLICIES IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT

#### 4.1 Introduction to Data Analysis: Emerging Themes

This chapter presents and interprets the research data obtained during fieldwork conducted over a seven-month period between November 2015 and May 2016. The researcher conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews with 35 participants from 25 national government departments. While the participants included two males<sup>14</sup>, the focus was on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and the outcomes of GM and EE policies – referred to as transformative policies in this research study – in democratic national government departments in South Africa. The study sought to answer the following key research questions:

1. What is the impact of gender transformation policies (GM and EE on black African women's leadership positions in national government departments?
2. What are women leaders' experiences of the implementation of gender transformation policies in relation to women occupying national government leadership positions?
3. In what ways do the national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practice impact on black African women's leadership roles?

Most of the responses indicated that despite women's access to higher echelons in national government departments, the majority lack independent power in decision-making structures. The study found that this is due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture in most government structures and practices. Consequently, the implementation of transformative policies – GM and EE – is impeded by patriarchal, sexist, racist and oppressive organisational cultures that perpetuate gender inequalities. The findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 5. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section presents a summary of the research participants' demographic characteristics. The second section presents an overview of the main and sub-

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<sup>14</sup> The methodology employed to conduct this study is discussed in Chapter 3 that notes, that additional participants identified during data collection period were included to provide diverse voices and avoid bias. The researcher agreed to include these two men as they expressed interest in participating and are GFPs. Thus, their voices were crucial to the study.

themes that emerged from data analysis. The third and final section discusses and interprets the themes and their sub-themes. The discussion focuses on 1) women's roles in activism; 2) women's leadership experiences in relation to gender stereotypes; experiences of GM and EE practices; perceptions of women leaders; gender politics among women; patriarchal power; identity politics; issues relating to sexuality; and monitoring of EE and GM; and 3) an elaboration on the two male volunteer participants' narratives – who are GFPs but were not part of the sampled study population – as well as women's views on gender and democracy in South Africa.

In line with ethical principles, pseudonyms are used for the participants and codes are assigned to their respective national government departments (see Table 3 and Table 4 in Chapter 3). It was important to protect the participants' identities and interests by guaranteeing confidentiality of information communicated to me, as they are all currently employed in national government.

## **4.2 Section 1**

### **4.2.1 Data Analysis**

Data analysis enables researchers to find meaning and order a mass of collected data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). In this study, the data analysis process enabled the researcher to transcribe, organise and interpret the collected information and report and represent valid and reliable research findings. In this study, data refers to audio-recorded and hand-written information that I collected from the participants in leadership positions within national government departments in South Africa. The data was not collected haphazardly, but by means of an interview schedule of questions aimed at addressing the research objectives (see Interview Schedule Appendix A). The main objective of this study was to investigate the leadership experiences of African women and outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE) in democratic national government departments in South Africa. The key questions included: (a) What is the impact of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) on black African women's leadership positions in national government departments? (b) What are women leaders' experiences of the implementation of gender transformation policies in relation to women occupying national government leadership positions? The data analysis is presented and discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Gibbs (2007) notes, that data analysis yields clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and sometimes original results. Using a qualitative data analysis approach, the researcher transcribed the data verbatim from the audio-recordings of the interviews. The data was then organised into Nvivo codes abstracted from the language of the data. This allowed for grounded theory analysis in the language used by participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Thereafter, the data was coded into segments of text according to their meaning, which led to the themes presented in Chapter 4. During this process, I also organised verbatim quotations from the interviews. I subsequently made statements from which I developed themes and sub-themes within the Nvivo Version 11 computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). In this way, the themes and concepts were identified (Farley & McLafferty, 2003). All the themes were imported into the Nvivo Version 11 software computer package that is designed to handle and manage qualitative data.

#### 4.3 Section 2

##### 4.3.1 Data Analysis Methods to Derive Themes

This study's themes emerged from the data analysis. Data was analysed using Nvivo version 11 CAQDAS to facilitate systematic management and analysis (Burnard, 1994). I also applied grounded theory. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 23) state that, "grounded theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents". Systematic collection and analysis of data enabled the discovery and verification of women (and men who volunteered to be part of this study) experiences in leadership positions and their insights on the outcomes of GM and EE policies. This was achieved through inductive, comparative, interactive, and iterative processes as participants expressed their opinions, emotions and feelings during the interviews. Grounded theory analysis should have the following characteristics: (a) a close fit with the data, (b) usefulness, (c) conceptual density, (d) durability over time, (e) modifiability, and (f) explanatory power (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the data analysis shows, this study met these criteria.

I created Nvivo codes, which I extracted from the language of the data and the symbols (language) used by the participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For example, the node "hiatus between gender mainstreaming and employment equity policy and practice" emerged from the collected data. This suggests that there are challenges in implementing these policies in national government departments. Feminist research

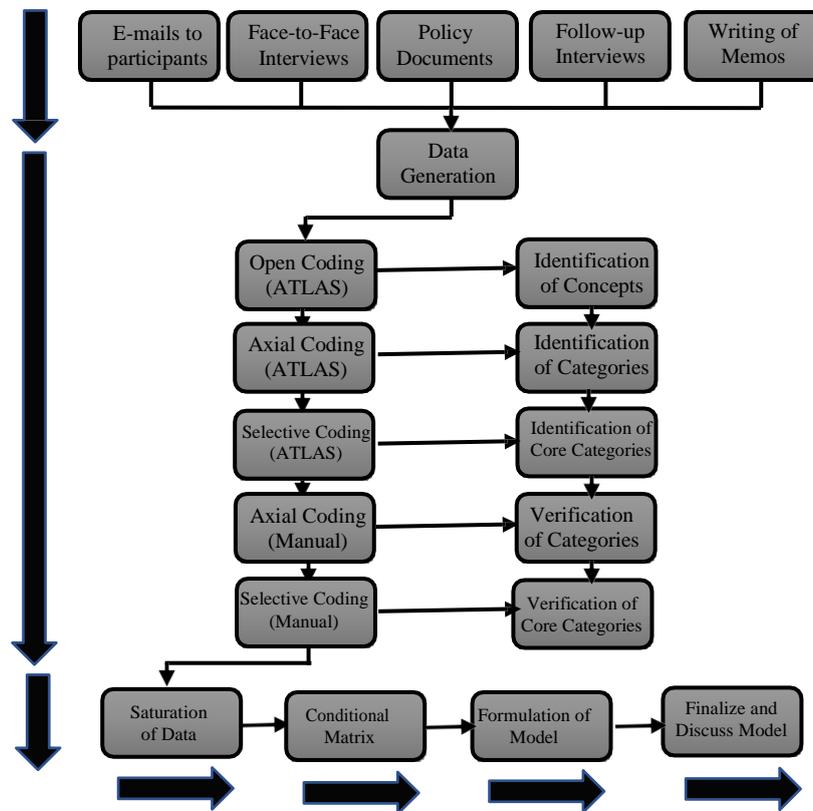
methodologies claim that data collection, analysis and theory are in a reciprocal relationship with one another (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, Wuest, 1995; Ramazanoglu, 1992). As the researcher, I did not begin with a hypothetical theory and set out to prove it; rather, I analysed the data collected in the field to generate theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Like grounded theory analysis, theory must emerge from the actual research – the data collected. I found grounded theory constructive and resonant with feminist research paradigms and feminist intersectionality theoretical frameworks. Grounded theory afforded power to the researched – the participants’ experiences and voices – and advanced the researcher’s understanding of data within multiple contexts: social, historical, local, and interactional (Routledge, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Harding, 1987).

In collecting and analysing data, I adapted the questions posed by Corbin and Strauss (2008), Charmaz (2006), Glaser (1978), and Strauss and Corbin (1967). Their analytical questions helped me, not to describe data, but to analyse the collected data in the context of my study. From the first interview, the grounded theory inductive process allowed me to ask the following analytical questions:

- What is this data a study of? (Glaser, 1978: 57; Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
- What do the data suggest? Pronounce? Assume? (Charmaz, 2006: 47)
- From whose point of view? (Charmaz, 2006: 47)
- What theoretical category does this datum indicate? (Glaser, 1978)
- When, how, and with what consequences are participants acting? (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)

The grounded theory process followed to collect and analyse data is presented in Figure 8 below.

**Figure 8:** Grounded theory Flow Chart<sup>15</sup>



The following section presents the themes that emerged from the critical data analysis. Each theme is addressed using specific sub-themes.

#### 4.3.2 Overview of the Main and Sub-themes

The main objective of this research study was to investigate the experiences of black African women in leadership positions and outcomes of gender transformation policies (GM and EE). As illustrated above, the sample population target was women occupying leadership positions in national government departments in the democratic South Africa. Table 8 below outlines the main themes, sub-themes and the percentage of participants who contributed to the themes. These themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews.

<sup>15</sup> Source: Adapted from Burden & Roodt (2007)

**Table 8:** Main themes and Sub-themes

Theme Number	Main Themes	Sub-themes	Percentage of Participants' Responses
1	Women and Activism	Gender, political and labour activism by women in leadership positions	29%
2	Persistent gender discourse and patriarchal control	Power politics and lack of authority in leadership positions	85%
		Lack of solidarity among women in leadership	54%
		Women rejecting the feminist label	15%
		Specific women-centred conditions: Pregnancy and maternity leave experiences	92%
		Male hegemony	98%
3	Issues prevalent to gender mainstreaming practice	Gender mainstreaming is at an embryonic stage in departments	74%
		Lack of political will by executive management	89%
		Hiatus between policy and practice	92%
		No gender focal persons appointed in departments	74%
		Lack of gender-responsive budgeting	94%
		Employment equity compliance and transformation status	75%
		Tick-box approach to employment equity implementation	88%
		Lack of appropriate physical infrastructure for persons with disabilities	31%
		Performance management and development system (PMDS) assessment outcomes perceived as subjective	71%
4	Perceptions of and about women leaders	Staff perceptions of women in leadership	75%
		Women empowering others	56%
5	Issues of sexuality	Sexual harassment allegations in the workplace	23%
		Impact of leadership experiences to women's health	17%
6	Identity politics	Ethnicity in government departments	53%
		Work and home life dichotomies	89%
		Ageist ideologies	14%

7	Monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming and employment equity in departments	Regulation of employment equity and gender mainstreaming	82%
8	Male volunteer's narratives	Men conducting gender transformation work in government departments	6%
9	Post-colonial South Africa, democracy and deconstruction of the gender discourse	Participants' views on democratic government towards gender issues	80%

The following section discusses the main and sub-themes that emerged from the data analysis.

#### 4.4 Section 3: Critical discussion of themes and sub-themes

This section focuses on the above identified main and sub-themes.

##### 4.4.1 Theme 1: Apartheid and Democratic Activism and Contemporary Women's Leadership Roles in South Africa

Post-colonial feminist theory is centred on examining and analysing contemporary women's experiences based on their specific histories and diverse lived experiences (Mkhize, 2012). The histories, experiences, epistemologies, voices and agency of most women from the South, including African countries, are often marginalised (Mkhize, 2012; Mohanty 2003; Narayan & Harding 2000; Spivak 1996; Ong 1988).

During the struggle against colonial (and apartheid in the case of South Africa) oppression in Africa, black men's mainstream liberation movements had an interest in women's involvement because they needed civil society participation to end the racial and economic oppression of black people. Building on their activism during the years of struggle, women activists played a key role in the negotiations that marked the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa. Twenty-nine per cent of the participants in this study referred to the significance of women's roles as activists in achieving democracy.

##### (a) Women in Positions of Leadership Historical Experiences as Activists

The researcher did not initially envisage discussing women's activism experiences as the research focus was their current leadership positions in national government departments. However, during the interviews, 29% of the participants spoke of their involvement in activism in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. They averred that this wittingly or unwittingly

impacted their career progression. Just as postcolonialist feminists assert the importance of women’s history and their locations (Mkhize, 2012; Geisler, 2004; Mohanty, 2002) this study cannot talk about South African women’s present leadership experiences without locating them in their specific histories as they link directly to the need for and existence of transformative policies – GM and EE – that the study focused on. Transformative policies exist to correct the wrongs of the past as apartheid discriminated against women and people of colour, especially black Africans. The study participants thus noted that their current leadership and life experiences are linked to their histories.

Table 9 below presents a breakdown of women’s experiences of activism during apartheid and in the democratic South Africa. The breakdown is presented based on age groups. Ten participants between the ages of 40 and 59 are (or were) involved in activism in relation to gender, politics and labour.

**Table 9:** Age Range and Number of Participants involved in Activism

Age Range	Gender activist	Political activist	Labour activist
21 - 29	0	0	0
30 - 39	0	0	0
40 - 49	4	0	1
50 - 59	2	2	1
60 and above	0	0	0

**(b) Women’s Experiences as Activists**

While South Africa’s liberation struggle mainly aimed to achieve racial, political, and economic emancipation, many contend that gender and political activism led by women played a major role in promoting a non-sexist and non-racial democracy. However, Beckwith (2000) found that national liberation struggles throughout the world regarded gender issues as secondary. In South Africa, for example, women continually confronted the dilemma of ‘choosing’ between race and gender justice (Hassim, 2006). The 1950s marked the emergence of a clear agenda of promoting the public role of racially and patriarchally oppressed women through the use of a ‘gendered’ discourse which characterised most black women’s political activism. These women expressed their specific political and gender needs and interests and called for equal rights with men (Britton & Fish, 2008; Hassim 2005; Collins 2000). Thus, to

a large extent, African women's activism focused on emancipation in terms of race, gender and poverty (Mkhize, 2012; Hassim, 2006; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994).

One of the participants remarked:

I am a gender and political activist, I have been an activist since university. I understand how we came to where we are. I participated and grew in the structure of the movement and that gave me a broader perspective in terms of the transformation agenda of this country. I was an activist for the UDF (United Democratic Front). You know UDF was a conglomerate of a number of community organisations. I was also involved in the federation of women organisation which was a structure affiliated to UDF which emerged from FSAW (Federation of South African Women). I was in FEDTRAW (Federation of Transvaal Women). After the unbanning, I became a member of the women's league; I became a BC (Black Consciousness) member, a deputy chairperson of a branch at some point. I was involved in anti-racism campaigns in Pretoria (Nina D20).

Nina's views resonate with those of Mkhize (2012); Britton and Fish (2008); Hassim (2006) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1996) who highlight the multiple focuses of black women's activism informed by their specific lived experiences and oppressions. As Nina's narrative illustrates, women were agents of gender and political emancipation in their respective organisations. That meant fighting racial and gender oppression simultaneously. The participants that identified themselves as activists also pointed to the connection between their current position and their activism. One stressed that a number of women in Parliament and in high level positions in the civil service moved directly from the anti-apartheid struggle, political exile, political imprisonment, and labour and political movements/ organisations. This is confirmed by Britton and Fish (2008). For instance, Sarah stated:

I was a school teacher for a number of years; I was a part of depoliticising apartheid in the classroom. My learners also became much politicised, the consciousness levels of the students were high. I went on to the United Nations and then came to government after that. We also do gender empowerment; one of our sub-directorates is gender equity. We do a lot of work on erasing gender violence; a lot of our work is gender violence prevention work. Also on empowerment of girls and young boys, so it's quite a broad menu of things (Sarah D2).

Like Nina and other activists, Sarah's highlights the connection between political and gender activist experiences. Nina and Sarah are Chief Directors at D20 and D2, respectively and they took 20 years to reach their current positions.

Gender activism cannot be separated from labour and political activism or the anti-apartheid struggle. South African women were involved in labour activism as early as the 1920s and 1930s, and this gained significant traction in the 1950s (Berger, 1983, 1987; Mangaliso, 1997). In addition to being active in organisations as workers, students and civil society activists, women organised in separate community groups, in women's forums in trade unions and in women's wings of liberation movements (Meer, 2005). South African trade unions' bargaining power hinged on their ability to sign up 51 per cent of the workers in a workplace. Where women constituted a sizeable proportion of the workforce, the union could only attain a majority when women joined. It was thus important for the unions to recruit and sustain the membership of women workers (Meer, 2005). Sihle had this to say about her involvement in labour activism:

My participation in the union immediately opened my eyes to gender issues. (But) generally, my participation in the union sort of enhanced my love for gender issues (Sihle D7).

Sihle is a Director for Social Inclusion and Equity in D7. Her duties include monitoring EE and ensuring that there is no discrimination in transformation imperatives in government according to race, disability, gender, class and HIV/AIDS. She noted that her involvement in the trade union movement built her capacity to understand the needs and aspirations of women, particularly in a democratic South Africa. Similarly, Sarah<sup>16</sup> claimed that her involvement in trade unionism set a trajectory for her current job and her numerous other international engagements. She remarked that due to the experience she gained as a unionist, she was engaged as a gender and HIV officer with the UN. She had this to say about her current work:

One of our sub-directorates is gender equity. We do a lot of work on erasing gender violence; a lot of our work is gender violence prevention work. Also, empowerment of girls and boys (Sarah D2).

To this day, Sarah undertakes gender equity advocacy work in a national government department. This clearly attests to the impact of pre-democracy activism on the participants' careers. Lanasa (2005) observed that many trade unionists who led the struggle for Africa's political emancipation later rose to positions of leadership. In South Africa, women played key roles in such activism when they joined the industrial workforce in the early twentieth century. Well-known activists include Mary Fitzgerald, Johanna Cornelius, Ray Alexander Simons,

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<sup>16</sup> Sarah reported that she was both a gender and union activist.

Emma Mashinini and Lydia Kompe (amongst others) (La Nasa, 2015). Women activists' experiences during apartheid and post-apartheid have thus had a positive impact on the leadership roles they occupy in national government departments. Since they have expertise in advocacy work and acumen in driving a state feminist agenda, they are well placed to mobilise and drive the transformation agenda of GM and EE. State feminism and its accompanying femocrat phenomenon (feminists who take up policy positions) thus became a reality in the democratic South African context. However, while an impressive number of structures are now up and running, concern has been raised about their effectiveness with regard to policy-making (Gouws, 1996). The following sub-section discusses gendered discourse and patriarchal control in national government departments.

#### **4.4.2 Theme 2: Gendered Discourse and Patriarchal Control in National Government Leadership Structures**

Gender discourses around the globe have changed over the years as gender roles and expectations continuously evolve. Feminist studies have identified discriminatory patterns based on gender differences and advanced theoretical models for the amelioration of such inequalities (hooks, 1992; Alcoff, 2000).

Inequalities and prejudices against women leaders occur in situations where dominant gendered perceptions rooted in socially constructed feminine and masculine roles influence leadership structures (Richardson & Loubier, 2008). Similar to the findings reported in the literature, 91% of the women leaders I interviewed revealed that when women occupy leadership roles, they face biased judgement that originates in their non-conformity to the socio-cultural expectations of femininity. The participants noted that, oppressive gender discourses in the form of stereotyping and harassment affect their performance and leadership outcomes. They further revealed that although GM and EE are prioritised in the democratic South Africa, gendered discourses that disadvantage women persist. Despite their significant contribution to liberation struggles and activism, most women still work under patriarchal and sexist conditions. Gendered discourses result in their authority being perpetually undermined as they are not treated as legitimate leaders. These lived experiences are contrary to the intended outcomes of GM and EE policies that aim to empower women and eradicate gender and race discrimination.

### (a) **Power Politics and Authority in Leadership Positions**

The need for GM in national government departments cannot be overemphasised. However, 91% of participants pointed out that gender and race expectations indirectly affect their performance evaluation and decision-making in the workplace. Leading men in patriarchal male-stream bureaucracies is a challenge. Thandi remarked:

I don't know if I got power and authority because I still feel that I am being questioned by my [male] seniors in the decisions I make. Sometimes I try to explain myself and some other time I do not bother. I sometimes feel disempowered. The authority that I think that I have, I also think I just don't have it (Thandi D22).

Thandi's response shows that because of her gender, male colleagues in senior positions in the department do not trust her ability to make informed decisions as a legitimate leader. Her authority is undermined and as a result, she feels disempowered. Theresa agreed:

We are in a meeting, and you raise an issue, because it is from Theresa [a woman] it is not going to be entertained or taken seriously. You [as a woman] do not find respect here, especially with my [male] supervisor. An Indian male, for him blacks are stupid, blacks cannot think (Theresa D24).

Notably, the participants' responses suggest that gendered racism and sexism is prevalent in government departments. Theresa's experience indicates prejudice towards black Africans by an Indian male colleague. Although national government departments should set a positive example of non-discriminatory practices, the racist stereotype that black Africans are intellectually inferior permeates the culture and practices of government departments. Because Thandi and Theresa are black women, discrimination is not only based on race, but also on gender as women are perceived to be inferior to men due to the deeply entrenched patriarchal culture. Another participant explained:

It's a very patriarchal culture here, the power dynamics are clearly articulated and it's very hierarchal as most bureaucracies are; within those hierarchies there are very serious power dynamics and those play out, generally women are the most affected by it (Sarah D2).

These responses are compelling evidence that GM and EE policies are not effectively implemented. As a result, the organisational culture, structures and practices of government departments are not transformed. This concurs with the findings in the literature on GM and EE (Lessen, 1993, 1996; Potgieter, 1996; Sonn, 1996; Steyn & Motshabi, 1996). This is mainly

because the South African leadership context is marred by socialised assumptions, such as ‘white is right’, ‘West is best’ and ‘think manager, think male’ (Lessen, 1993, 1996; Potgieter, 1996; Sonn, 1996; Steyn & Motshabi, 1996).

In addition to gendered and racialised stereotypes, Nthabiseng stated that she lacks decision-making authority in her department as she has no control over the annual financial budget:

No, no, no, no! You don’t control your budget, you don’t control HR (Human Resources) plan of hiring. You don’t contribute in the budget. When they actually discuss or establish the structure of the department you are told ‘this is how much we have’. It just depends on the budget that is allocated without you. You are never involved and have no say (Nthabiseng D25).

Having their power questioned, being excluded from certain decision-making meetings or not being listened to means that these women are not considered as legitimate leaders. The experiences of these women leaders show that their authority is undermined and this negatively impacts their leadership role. Therefore, gender is not mainstreamed and there are no equality outcomes. This limits their ability to impact on decisions in national government departments. Isaak (2008) confirmed that regardless of EE policy implementation, racism and sexism are still prevalent in government departments. Kapp (2002) also concluded that men do not welcome women in government positions that are considered as ‘suitable’ for males due to stereotypes and patriarchy. These implicit gender stereotypes associate men and women with stereotypic traits, abilities, and roles (Mkhize, 2015; Geisler, 2004; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004; Collins, 2000; Lorber, 2000). Furthermore, 8% of the respondents noted that women often act out internalised subservient characteristics when relating to male colleagues, further undermining their sense of authority as leaders.

One participant remarked:

I have observed, we as women like to make ourselves vulnerable. We want to be taken care of, weak. We portray that image. I observe these things and wonder why is this person doing this? Why are some of our women portraying themselves as weak and as if men know everything? They (men) are the ones who should lead; they are the ones who are correct! (Wendy D4).

This participant illustrates the deeply-rooted gendered social constructs embedded in femininity and masculinity. This can be attributed to the patriarchal male-stream organisational culture, structures and practices. Thus, some women have internalised socially constructed

gender norms and consider masculinity as superior and femininity as inferior. Indeed, this is not restricted to government departments; most members of society have internalised gender stereotypes about ‘appropriate behaviour’ and language that “become self-fulfilling prophecies” (Rhode, 2003: 9). Snethemba agreed with Wendy’s views:

It’s just silliness honestly, because for me I don’t understand why some female colleagues never finish a sentence without saying ‘No, no, even so and so can vouch to what I’m saying or can add’ [referring to male colleagues to support what they have said]. Women are always asking male colleagues to add in their own space of responsibility (Snethemba D9).

Snethemba shows that some women unwittingly echo male voices despite their success in gaining entry to the higher echelons of government departments. Some women conform to assigned gendered roles that serve to undermine their authority and power as legitimate leaders. De Beauvoir (1997) explains that the ‘otherness’ of women produces subjectivity since “women are conscious of themselves in ways that men have shaped them” (Hughes & Witz, 1997: 49). This demonstrates the ubiquitous multiple identities that black African women leaders hold, which intersect with their identity and power. These power relations are mutually constituted at the level of representation and social interaction (Collins, 1999; Smith, 1995). The gendered discourse and patriarchal control in the sampled government departments are a major limitation to the execution of leadership roles by women. This in turn has the potential to cause women to be perceived as incompetent and to reinforce the notion that they are ‘placed’ in higher echelons to fulfil EE policy requirements. It could explain why some women reject the feminist label, as discussed in the next section.

#### **(b) Lack of Solidarity among Women in Leadership**

A total of 54% of the participants reported that there is a lack of solidarity among women in higher echelons in national government departments, citing a lack of support and distrust. Some attributed this to the queen bee syndrome while others stated that because women are afforded more opportunities due to EE policy, they tend to oppress others. One said:

We [women] don’t support each other. It is very few women who will support other women. You want to be the unique one, the queen. You want to be one among the millions. It can be that but you can also be influenced by the situation. You know as women; we don’t even have support groups. But another thing is because we don’t trust each other (Nina D20).

Nina spoke of the lack of support for other women due to the queen bee syndrome of wanting to be unique. Another participant recounted that women in her department victimise one another:

We used to say as black people when you get appointed, you get excited when you are the only black person there, and there is that element also with women. I don't think we support each other correctly and you will find that sometimes we become too harsh to our own women for the wrong reasons of which some of them it is pettiness (Snethemba D9).

Funeka expressed her sentiments thus:

As women, we have been raised as submissive, so when you get to the top then that's when you experience your freedom, it's like you have been liberated so you tend to oppress others. You see, there are such cases where you see that if this woman can get a higher position, we will be dead (Funeka D3).

Funeka's experience is linked to patriarchy as women who have reached leadership positions adopt the same characteristics as men in order to be 'accepted' as legitimate. Primrose explained that her supervisor's bullying hindered her career progression:

Females. Very, very bullish! Very high handed! Very in control! When she says black was white, black was white and that it's very difficult. That's why I said, it hampered me and my progress and so many other things (Primrose D11).

As noted earlier, the 'Queen Bee' syndrome is a term first coined by Staines, Tavis and Jayaratne (1973) to describe a phenomenon that is especially prevalent among women who have reached leadership positions in male-dominated organisations and are unlikely to help their junior female colleagues climb the career ladder because they made it without any help. Marvin (2001) maintains that there is a contradiction between the gendered context of senior management and the expectation that senior women will promote and prioritise gender issues. Expectations of solidarity are not easily fulfilled. Labelling senior women as queen bees who are responsible for other women's lack of progress is not helpful, especially since there is strong evidence that deeply entrenched cultural practices of male hegemony, sexism, racism and discrimination serve to subjugate women in bureaucracies. Reinforcement of the queen bee syndrome may be part of a broader discourse of maintaining women in second place in management and ensuring the maintenance of male dominance. It may also serve to reproduce the divide between women in management and other women within work contexts (Marvin,

2001). While some participants reported challenges relating to the lack of solidarity among female counterparts, others stated that they reject the feminist label.

The lack of solidarity has the potential to further marginalise women and perpetuate male dominance. Steady (2006) and Hassim (2006) argue that collective action is crucial to fight entrenched patriarchal dominance and bring about gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, the gains made in terms of EE policy in addressing numerical representivity of women in leadership echelons can be undermined by a lack of solidarity. For example, women will be unable to unite as a formidable force to advocate for their rights and intersecting challenges. Inevitably, the GM framework will also be impacted as women will not be able to influence it in ways that transform gender and work relations in departments.

### **(c) Women Leaders Reject the Feminist Label**

Pre-colonial Africa is awash with examples of women who resolutely stood for gender equality but did not necessarily operate under the cloak of feminism or other modern-day terms used to describe women's quest for gender mainstreaming. Fifteen per cent of the participants stated that they do not need to be labelled feminists for them to advocate for the rights of women. They argued that rather than build a critical mass of homogenised women, terms like 'feminism' actually discourage black African women's public involvement because they would be perceived as anti-male, which in the long run negates the traditional African culture which they are socialised into.

Some participants shared their self-perceptions on whether they are feminists or gender activists, while others rejected the feminist label. It is possible that the rejection of feminism is based on a misunderstanding of the term due to social and African cultural/traditional constructions. Society has in-built templates that define socio-cultural perceptions and expectations. As such, an ideology such as feminism that does not fit into that socially constructed template is rejected by society. One of the participants said:

I've never even taken an interest in looking or to understanding what it is a feminist. I've never even checked because I just think I'm not one, I'm not a feminist. I was born and bred *elalini* (in a rural area). I believe there are things women cannot do that are specifically for men, there are roles! I believe society must have different roles, roles that are specifically allocated for women and roles that are specifically allocated for men. Whatever that is allocated for men, women do not have any business to interfering or wanting to interfere. The reason why

I'm saying I'm not a feminist I don't want to be *ngaphanangapha* (here and there). There are things I think we must respect and preserve our culture (Nthabiseng D25).

Nthabiseng highlighted an essentialist view that upholds prescribed gender norms due to cultural and traditional values in relation to what women and men can or cannot do. She emphasised that she was born in a rural area, implying that because of her socialisation, she accepts the unequal naturalised hierarchy of the gender order. Therefore, the feminist label negates her cultural values and expectations. Nomusa also shared essentialist insights:

Rather than being feminist, I would be more on the side of empowerment and advocacy. But now the feminists' side, for me it takes it a little bit too far because it's like pushing the boundaries to where they really don't need to. For me being feminist is a little bit stronger. Sometimes we try too hard to defend things that are not necessarily about gender but just about the human make-up (Nomusa D6).

Nomusa's view shows that she rejects the feminist label, but supports empowerment and advocacy. She holds essentialist views of not wanting to challenge that which she deems the 'human make-up'. In the South African context, black women hold the belief that feminism is a Western ideology that is thus un-African. De La Rey (1999) discusses Benjamin's (1995) work entitled 'Don't call me a feminist' that spelt out her reluctance to identify with feminism in the South African context. While acknowledging the role of race in the divide between women who identify with feminism and those who don't, she also stated that several other factors influenced her decision. In arguing for the use of the term 'gender activist', she maintained that unlike feminism, it is inclusive of men who advocate for gender equality and as a label it is unlikely to lead to a diminishment of one's influence as is usually the case with being called a feminist. Fourteen per cent of the study participants identified as gender and empowerment activists as they are of the view that this represents South African women and men:

You know feminists have got their views. I think for me, it's about advocacy. Making sure that I protect the rights of women in the workplace and making sure that I also popularise and make sure that I empower. Not more like I deserve it and I want to be like a man. No, I am still a woman (Kwezi D1).

When a woman does not identify herself as a feminist, this does not mean she is unaware of gender inequalities and oppression (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1994). Like some of the

women I interviewed, rejection of the feminist label is common among women who clearly promote feminist views (Griffin, 1989). For example, only a third of the women that participated in Henderson-King and Stewart's (1994) study identified as feminists. The women leaders that took part in the current study drew on gendered, classed, racialised, colonial and cultural discourses and it is within these social constructs that society and institutions are organised. The same constructs are oppressive weapons used to disadvantage women in government departments, such as patriarchal control and perpetual discriminatory practices. Such practices are prevalent despite EE legislation and GM policy. These gender-biased practices can also be seen in specific women-centred conditions such as pregnancy and maternity leave experiences. The rejection of the feminist label by women leaders attests to scholars' (Sanger, 2008; Hassim, 2005) observations that achieving women's representivity in government leadership does not automatically translate to advocacy for GM and EE. This is due to the persistent patriarchal culture in government structures and practices that exclude women from key decision-making processes.

#### **(d) Pregnancy and Maternity Leave Experiences**

Despite progressive laws and GM policy in South Africa, such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act (Act 20 of 2013) that aim to outlaw a myriad of discriminatory practices in the workplace, gendered discrimination and inequalities are still prevalent. The social construction of female gender roles based on feminine traits – weak, submissive, delicate, emotional and nurturing – and childbearing and motherhood directly and indirectly contribute to discrimination and stereotyping of women in the workplace (Mkhize, 2015). Ninety-two per cent of the study participants cited gender-based discriminatory treatment of pregnant women in government departments and maintenance of the ideology of gendered separate spheres. Most related gendered discrimination to pregnancy and maternity leave:

A male manager discourages women not to fall pregnant because they have too much work to do this year. One woman even complained that this manager called her from her maternity leave to come and work while she was pregnant, and that person got a miscarriage. So, there are those kinds of extreme incidents and they don't see anything wrong with what they are doing. And those things are done in a very subtle way and people don't talk openly about it, no one sits in the meeting and writes minutes about those things, if one can do that, it would be your word against the male authority or manager (Funeka D3).

In Funeka's department, a manager requested women not to fall pregnant due to work demands. He legitimised discrimination based on patriarchal working conditions and disregarded women's right to reproductive freedom. Such discrimination is also based on the broader discourse and normative practices of control of women's bodies to uphold hegemonic masculinity. Funeka's manager's request is an example of male hegemony and patriarchal control of professional women's bodies and their reproductive decisions. This also shows that the organisational culture, structure and practices do not support women's right to pregnancy. Mackinnon (1989:41) asserts that sexuality and sexual relations remain central to women's oppression. In her view, women experience oppression and denial of their rights at the hands of patriarchal power as illustrated by Funeka. This belief in male superiority, female weakness and dependence has several implications. Men take it as their legitimate duty to protect women even from themselves by controlling them (Masheti, 1994:10).

Regus (2010) also noted that South African employers are of the view that working mothers show less commitment and are less flexible than other employees. They are concerned that mothers will leave shortly after training to have another child, and that returning employees' skills will be out-dated. As a result, South African organisations have reduced their expectations of hiring working mothers to 20%, which is lower than anywhere else in the world (Regus, 2011). Women's bodies, female sexuality, their ability to procreate and their pregnancy, breast-feeding, child care, menstruation, and mythic 'emotionality' are thus stigmatised, and used as grounds for patriarchal control. The study participants noted that this results in some not disclosing their pregnancy due to fears of backlash and victimisation in government departments. A participant reported:

I've seen that before where there are complaints as to a person that has applied for a job and we never knew the person was pregnant. She ends up here. And after getting this job, she says, no, I am going on maternity leave. And everybody was amazed. The burden is on them. Now that she is not here, now we have to do this work. Why did we not know? And they expect that she should have at least have told them but I wonder is there any policy that says when you are pregnant you must tell the employer? There is none. So, I'm wondering, why should we think she should have done that? And if you are still telling us before we employed her, maybe we would have decided we won't. Then that is discrimination. Yeah, it won't work like that. So, we just need to work, make a manner that naturally, we must be allowed to give birth (Michelle D18).

Michelle's response confirms that discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy is a major barrier in women obtaining jobs and advancing their careers. Furthermore, colleagues are resentful when they are called on to perform their responsibilities during their maternity leave. Mandisa recounted that one of her colleagues was not granted a performance bonus because she was on maternity leave:

When people were on maternity leave and then we've got the performance assessment issue, and then in one case the persons outperform, the person might attack us, but because in terms of the policy, performance policy they had to have worked for more than eight months in order to qualify for a bonus, so the person was disadvantage because she did not work for that period. We have to check against her performance as against the work plan, she did perform well. So, she was recommended to be rewarded accordingly (Mandisa D17).

This strongly suggests that gender is not effectively mainstreamed and that the EE policy is not complied with in government departments. One of the GM policy outcomes is for organisations to improve the work-family balance and equalise power relations. However, only 9% of the participants reported positive experiences among pregnant women and mothers in their departments. They averred that pregnant women are supported and that the environment is gender-sensitive. For example:

Pregnant women in the office get adequate protection and care, I advocate for them during their pregnancy or any complications and we facilitate upon what should be done to them (Thandi D22).

Another participant stated:

We have a facility for pregnant women to be able to go and rest, even when they want to express the milk, a facility to be able to do that (Mpumi D10).

In Thandi and Mpumi's departments, pregnant women are not discriminated against, but supported. For example, D10 has a facility which enables women to rest, take care of themselves and express milk. This enables these women to fulfil their reproductive and leadership roles. Some participants explained that women's multiple roles should not be used as a tool to discriminate, but to promote a supportive environment:

The employer must be able to create a conducive environment. So, for me as a woman in a management position, those soft issues I feel they are being taken care of and being allowed a space where I can lead

without being classified that she is a woman or being disadvantaged by the roles that I occupy by virtue of me being a woman (Vuyiswa D25).

In Vuyiswa's department, issues pertaining to women's multiple roles are acknowledged and supported. Her femaleness and multiple roles are not used to disadvantage her as a leader. In other departments, when women go on maternity leave, temporary arrangements are made to cover their work:

If you have a unit that has child bearing age people, the reality is that at some point, they will disappear. And sometimes it happens they disappear at the same time. So, the impact could be that, but it's not a sickness. People come and go. We have to live with it and accept it as part of our day to life. Because it has to happen, in the department we find a way. If it's a PA (personal assistant), they hire a temporary person for that PA post. If it's a technical post, sometimes it's just a matter of restricting the priorities and see which ones can wait or somebody can act in that position. Nobody dies (Gloria D5).

Gloria indicated that when women are on maternity leave, their positions are filled by temporary staff until they return. She pointed out that departments should accept the reality that officials enter and exit the system. Gloria's department is an exemplar of how national government departments' structures and practices could achieve GM and EE outcomes in terms of women's reproductive roles. Fursman (2002) observes that a supportive organisational culture that recognises employees' multiple identities is significant in women retaining their worker identity during pregnancy, thus resulting in positive outcomes for women. Such measures are in tandem with GM and EE policy objectives. Gendered discrimination of any kind, including against pregnant employees is prohibited by the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) and cannot be justified on any grounds. However, the majority of the participants in this study revealed that multiple burdens of oppression (being women, black African, second-class citizens, responsible for reproduction and incapable leaders) are still prevalent in national government departments despite these policies. This suggests that they are not effectively implemented. Male hegemony is also evident in the departments' cultural practices. This is discussed in the next section.

#### **(e) Patriarchal Power: A Perpetual Male Hegemony**

Ninety-eight per cent of the women leaders I interviewed attested to working under patriarchal – male centred – systems. According to their narratives, this hinders them from making informed decisions as leaders; they always have to abide by existing patriarchal practices

regardless of EE and GM policies. The participants shared their views on male hegemony that impedes their leadership practice, thus maintaining women in marginal positions within the patriarchal cultures and structures of government departments. One participant stated that, despite lodging a complaint with the Head of Department, she was ignored:

I've been explaining to the Head of Department that A, B, C males dominate us. They are not treating us good as women, but you can see *uba* (that) he is not getting what I'm trying to say to him. So, it is an environment where you have a culture where a man he still thinks that they are men and must be heard and its fine for them as men to do things and push the women aside (Petunia D3).

A participant from the same department added that:

The culture is not good in this department because we have a group of men who think they are better than women (Funeka D3).

Being ignored when reporting grievances to executive management (who are male) suggests that male hegemony and gender bias has permeated the departments to the extent that executive managers are blind to the discrimination experienced by women. This indicates that the government departments' culture, structure and practices limit effective implementation and the sustainable success of GM and EE policies. Therefore, black women leaders suffer within racial and gendered government departments, and are excluded and disadvantaged in being legitimate leaders. Johnson and Thomas (2012) describe such a situation as being leaders in the margins.

Nombulelo attributed men's perceived superior status to African cultural and traditional practices that demean women's position in society:

Those things when I'm looking at them, I find that because in our culture if you are an African, you always regard a superior person as a man. Always, everything if it is done by a man it is good, but if it is done by a woman, it is not good (Nombulelo D11).

Nombulelo's assertion emphasises that, regardless of her being appointed to a leadership position, normalised gendered cultural ideologies are pervasive, for example, the belief that men are superior and more capable than women. Eagly and Carli (2007) asserted that a socially constructed gender bias exists where men are associated with being leaders because they are perceived to embody assertive masculine traits that connote leadership, such as dominance; whereas, women are less likely to be regarded as leaders because they are more likely to

demonstrate communal qualities such as compassion. These oppression(s) and inequalities are legitimised through everyday practices and are culturally and historically embedded.

Despite women occupying leadership positions in government departments, the majority of the participants reported that male hegemony is perpetuated within organisational structures, cultures and practices. Consequently, GM and EE policies are not effectively implemented and do not produce the intended outcomes of gender equality and empowerment. Women still report experiences of prejudice and oppression that these policies aim to eradicate. Being perceived as inferior forces some women leaders to always be on the defensive and educate men on how to treat women colleagues.

One said:

There is this male colleague who likes to criticise all our work, and I said to him, 'you know Mr Nkosi, you are very hard-headed, I don't even know what to do with you'. He said, 'Mrs Funeka, you are a very difficult woman, if I was married to you I would divorce you today.' I said, 'I would have divorced you myself'. So, you see, it's a man against a woman, so I stand my ground (Funeka D3).

Funeka responded assertively to a male colleague who oppresses women by criticising their work. Her experiences point to socialisation that reinforces socially constructed gender categories which are stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. These stereotypes are socially reinforced through the family, religion, mass media and language. They are thus internalised; men perceive themselves as superior to women and society is structured according to the patriarchal order. Mkhize (2015) argues that hegemonic masculinity is consciously or unconsciously used to perpetuate patriarchal stereotypes of those gender and sexual identities considered as inferior, through ascribed gender roles which are believed to be cultural and a 'norm'. Therefore, the femaleness of women in national government leadership is considered as an inferior identity compared to masculinity based on sexism, patriarchy and heterosexism, and as a result is a source of oppression (Mkhize, 2015: 134). Prevailing organisational cultural practices of male hegemony, gender discrimination and devaluing women are clearly not addressed by the transformative policies. This is because of the deep structure of departments that are nuanced and reinforced in everyday normative practices. For gender to be mainstreamed, social constructs such as male hegemony must be considered when implementing GM and EE to ensure that they are not perpetuated.

#### 4.4.3 Theme 3: Issues Relating to Gender Mainstreaming Practice

Eight sub-themes are discussed under this main theme: GM implementation is at an embryonic stage; a lack of political will on the part of executive management; the hiatus between policy and practice; no GFPs appointed in most departments; a lack of gender responsive budgeting; the tick-box approach to EE implementation, a lack of physical infrastructure for employees with disabilities; and Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) assessment is perceived as subjective.

The new legislation took into cognisance the need for GM that would encourage greater participation of women in South Africa's socio-economic and socio-political milieu. The impact that the new legislation and policies has on women's leadership experiences, particularly in the workplace, cannot be overemphasised. Policies such as GM are significant in the organisational environment as they ensure positive outcomes for women in leadership.

##### (a) Gender Mainstreaming Implementation is at an Embryonic Stage

Seventy-four per cent of the study participants reported that implementation of the GM policy only commenced in 2015. They stated that not much has been done as they had not yet witnessed any specific outcomes. Although the concept of GM has been in existence for 22 years since its formal introduction in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, some government departments in South Africa are still in the beginning phase of its implementation. A participant observed that:

The outcome of gender mainstreaming, I wouldn't say we are as yet reaping the benefits of it. To be honest, our organisation is in a baby phase. We are still implementing but I wouldn't say we are really there (Nomusa D6).

Another said:

Gender Mainstreaming policy has just been introduced now and it is not being well or effectively implemented. We are hoping that with the establishment of the unit, people will be made aware. The Employment Equity plans must still be aligned to Gender Mainstreaming policy and it's still early (Matilda D13).

Based on the participants' views, it seems that GM policy is not prioritised because gender matters are generally considered 'soft' issues and do not form part of core business decision-

making. In most of the sampled departments, there are no outcomes of GM as implementation only commenced recently.

**(b) Lack of Political Will on the Part of Executive Management**

A significant number of participants (89%) explained that there is lack of political will among executive management to drive the GM agenda. This has been the major obstruction to the implementation of GM around the world (Sadie, 2005). One of the participants said:

We should be meeting with the DG (Director General) once per annum, to look at a progress because there are objectives that need to be achieved. We have those meetings once in a while, but sometimes as women we are our own worst enemies. You find, we have got task teams that are supposed to drive certain agenda items, but those task teams you find that they are lacking. So really, I don't think that at this point in time we have a programme that is well functioning, it's something that we need to grow into (Anne D12).

Anne seemed frustrated by the lack of drive and responsibility on the part of the Director-General to implement the GM policy. She indicated that gender mainstreaming meetings are held on an ad-hoc basis which clearly reflects that gender issues are not prioritised as discussed under the previous sub-theme. The 'women are our own worst enemies' syndrome that camouflages the broader system of gender inequities is blamed for policy deficiencies. Other participants pointed to a lack of commitment to GM. They explained that it is only during Women's Month in August that gender empowerment is observed as a celebratory and symbolic event:

Someone asked what they are doing about gender mainstreaming because we have never had workshops on that, we've never had anything. Unless it is Women's Month, in August, that something happens. But that only happens in August, it's very patronising because men start to say that 'Oh now its women's month so we can't say this and that', so such things, you know, it becomes a joke, so its malicious compliance in the public service (Funeka D3).

Nikiwe observed:

Only in a Women's Month that there is this hype around it (GM). Or perhaps when there is someone from our headquarters in Pretoria for some reason that comes to the province to deal with issues of that nature. So, in my view it is not structured (Nikiwe D21).

Kwezi explicitly stated that there is no GM policy in her department:

What I found was that there is no Gender Mainstreaming policy. But for the department, you must also have your internal policy which we don't have (Kwezi D1).

Funeka paints a bleak picture in terms of GM only being observed during the month of August and being perceived as a joke by male colleagues. Nikiwe shares similar sentiments and notes that GM is not an everyday practice or agenda. Kwezi noted that, despite the fact that GM is a requirement, there is no internal GM policy in her department. This suggests that it is perceived as an insignificant policy. While the government should be setting and implementing the GM policy equality agenda, in the sampled departments, the policy is not prioritised due to the patriarchal nature of government bureaucracy. This can be attributed to the perception that gender issues are 'women's issues'.

Another participant stated that the Human Resources section hosts discussions with the senior service women's forum, but with no substantive outcomes:

People will tell you the truth about the 80% that we are trying to service in the country rather than what has been taken down for the 20%. The 10% that you think that you have long thrown away only to find that some of the aspects and the key aspects remain. We don't have those structures at a systemic level but we do have the senior management service women forum where the people from HR, they just bring us together once in six months, twice a year and we have a discussion with the DG (Director General), what has happened, what are the real issues, blab - blab -blab, and that ends there (Monica D19).

Vuyiswa was also of the view that successful GM and EE outcomes have yet to be achieved:

The outcomes of these policies (gender mainstreaming and employment equity) for me right now is we are not there yet, we are not winning. But what we want to see as the main outcome is that we should have an equal society. So, the policies' main outcome is to ensure that there's gender equality, there's women empowerment and access to services for all regardless of whether you are a woman or a man (Vuyiswa D25).

Monica's views suggest that government structures are merely paying 'lip service' to this policy. Another reason could be that there are no gender transformation structures at systemic level. Vuyiswa stated that GM and EE outcomes had not been realised and they should include equality and equal access to services. Most of the participants' insights on this sub-theme reflect a lack of political will and commitment to implement GM, resulting in haphazard application. These views are corroborated by Nyachienga's (2010) study on the challenges of

implementing GM in Kenya's public sector. This study confirmed that the main institutional barriers hindering GM policy implementation included a lack of political will on the part of the government and the slow pace in developing gender policies at ministry level. The participants' responses reveal a significant gap between GM policy and practice in national government departments.

### **(c) The Hiatus between Policy and Practice**

The participants stated that there is a gap between GM policy and actual practice and outcomes. Ninety-two per cent of the women leaders agreed that there is lack of implementation. The GM policy aims to promote gender equality; and bring the gendered nature of assumptions, processes and outcomes from the margins to the centre (Walby, 2005). Thandi stated that:

Gender Mainstreaming is not a favourable word for me, it is the government terminology. I have read some report, papers on what is being done about gender mainstreaming, to me it is not the reality of what is happening, if we are to reach the level of equity between male and female both qualitative and quantitative. There are no specific outcomes, I cannot say we have achieved. From the perspective of the individuals feeling the impact of what was intended then it is a different story. Gender mainstreaming, we still have a huge gap in terms of that, I think there is too much of focus on the senior management levels and we have ignored some other levels in our environment, we are still picking up the pieces, when we talk about Gender Mainstreaming we are not talking about women in team management, we are not talking about women holistically. These are two different words, the practice is different and what is expected of us from practice point of view is too little if we are to measure the impact that needs to make by it, be it gender and Employment Equity Act. We have people who attend international conferences on gender and this, but they fail to take any action on those things when they are back (Thandi D22).

Thandi's views point to the challenges of translating policy into holistic practice in her department. The policy has had no impact due to a lack of implementation. She adds that the focus is on meeting EE quotas at senior management, neglecting women at lower levels in the department. Furthermore, staff that attends international conferences on gender issues fails to implement the policy in the department. As a result, there are no GM outcomes. Sihle expressed strong views on this issue:

It's not just the issue of the officials; it's about gender not being mainstreamed. The policy is not even being mentioned in senior meetings and my DG (Director-General) told me that before you talk

about gender equality why don't you go King Zwelithini's palace and implement it there. I have a lot of work to do. So, it is not taken seriously. It's not mentioned (Sihle D7).

Sihle's views reflect disregard of the GM policy that can be linked to the broader discourse of patriarchy and the bureaucracy's silencing of women's voices as women are not considered to fit into the masculine ideology of leadership. Therefore, any platform or policy that would amplify women's voices is muted. For example, the sarcastic remark by the head of the department that Sihle should implement gender equality at the Zulu King's palace, shows rejection of the policy and male hegemony in the department's culture, structure and practices. This gives cause for concern because it is likely that other staff will take the lead from the head of department. It is thus important for GM to be monitored in national government departments and for the policy to be enforced. Monitoring is discussed in Section 3 of this chapter.

Sarah pointed to ineffective implementation of GM policy and linked it to structural inconsistencies:

For me the Gender Mainstreaming policy, the intention of it is obviously progressive but the way it has been contextualised and operationalised is very conservative and much fractured and very fragmented. I mean it's all like taking bits and pieces of the policies of the framework and implementing them, so as a result you don't have a holistic change (Sarah D2).

Based on Sarah's views, GM is not structured in terms of its mandate. Operationally, there is no consistency, hampering transformation. Organisational cultures, structures and practices remain unchanged in the sampled national government departments and this is evident in the lack of GFPs.

#### **(d) Gender Focal Persons (GFP) Have Not Been Appointed**

Only 26% of the participants reported that a GFP had been appointed in their departments to drive and manage the gender transformation agenda. The majority (74%) stated that no such appointments had been made. The participants pointed out that one of the challenges with regard to gender issues is moving from policy to action. Action cannot be achieved without human resource capacity. The participants noted that GM is often an add-on responsibility. For example, Thabisile noted that:

It (gender mainstreaming) doesn't have a dedicated section, what they did is this gender mainstreaming they introduced, they added to my colleague's Key Priority Area (KPA), my colleague does things related to wellness programmes but she is not dedicated to gender mainstreaming (Thabisile D17).

Another participant said:

I work as a Director responsible for labour issues, employment equity, employee health and wellness. I am also assisting on gender special programmes (Pamela D15).

Helen pointed to the dilemma:

If you are gender focal point in a department, it is most likely that you will do many other things like HIV, children issues, people with disabilities and others (Helen D2).

The fact that those responsible for GM have other key responsibilities results in the marginalisation of this policy in national government departments and attests to their weak organisational structures and practices when it comes to gender equity. While the South African government approved the establishment of GFPs in all government departments shortly after the transition to democracy, progress has been uneven and policies tend to focus on quotas. This means that core gender issues such as GM are neglected (Beall, 1998). In the sampled national government departments, the participants reported a lack of gender responsive budgeting, further suggesting a lack of institutional commitment to GM. Outcomes will not be achieved because implementation requires sufficient funding and capacitated human resources. Therefore, it can be concluded that the GM framework is marginalised in departments by the same government that is mandated to promote it and empower women.

#### **(e) A Lack of Gender-responsive Budgeting**

Gender budgeting is a tool to ensure that government commitment to gender equality and the advancement of women are supported by the necessary financial resources. Ninety-four per cent of the study participants pointed to the lack of gender-responsive budgeting. Sihle stated that:

I honestly don't believe that you can claim seriousness on gender issues and yet give that department such a small budget. The actions on the ground in terms of the budget, human resources and the mandate, I do not think we have put enough thought into making it work and making it successful so that it is felt (Sihle D7).

Anne stated that the lack of financial resources for GM policy implementation and the fact that GM is not enforced in national government department speaks volumes:

The fact that programmes that are looking at gender mainstreaming are not as enforced as others, it tells you. The fact that the resources are not pumped in that direction, it tells you (Anne D12).

Enforcement of GM policy was another major issue highlighted by the participants (see theme 7). One can conclude that the lack of human resource capacity and financial resources are due to a lack of monitoring and enforcement in national government departments. Kwezi stated:

Our Chief Director responsible for gender empowerment and all these other programmes but she did not have a budget. She had to go out and beg. And just her coordination work may be impossible because if you have to coordinate and run certain programmes, you must have a budget. But she never had a budget. It was like sometimes people feel that it's by the way. There are other priorities in the department (Kwezi D1).

Again, this illustrates a lack of prioritisation of gender issues. Gouws' (2005) assessment of the National Gender Machinery in South Africa noted that the challenges that continue to affect GFPs include inefficiency due to a lack of authority, resources and skills. The participants' responses reveal that GM policy implementation is facing major challenges ranging from the patriarchal culture and practices, to the policy not being prioritised, rejection and a lack of resources. The next sub-theme focuses on EE policy and its impact on women's leadership experiences in national government departments.

#### **(f) Employment Equity Compliance and Transformation Status**

The EEA (Act 47 of 2013) outlaws discrimination (EEA, 1998: 7) and makes provision for mainstreaming through AA in order to redress apartheid legacies (EEA, 1998: 9). Seventy-five per cent of the study participants reported negative experiences of policy outcomes as the environment and institutional practices are not conducive for women. One stated:

We were considered the Employment Equity appointments. Perhaps had it not been for employment equity, I would not be here, what was expected of us was nothing but inferiority. The myth that is out there is that once you acknowledge employment equity it is as if you are not here on merit. And I think it's something that we still need to educate *abantu* (people) that employment equity is no equivalent to lowering your standards (Nikiwe D21).

Nikiwe's views accentuate the unintended outcomes of EE policy implementation - discriminatory practices based on stigmatisation, devaluation and negative perceptions that standards were lowered to accommodate black women in government leadership positions. This perpetuates stereotypes that black African women are not competent leaders and are only appointed to leadership positions in order to fill quota requirements.

Mathabo shared:

You are put there because you can become a number, whatever you think and whatever proposals you have, no one listens to you because you were put there to be a number (Mathabo D14).

Mathabo's response illustrates that, women in leadership positions are regarded as tokens and colleagues thus do not value their input. Sihle described a toxic organisational culture where she received backlash when making independent decisions as a legitimate leader:

The organisational culture is bad, instilling fear to people in this department. You are not free to voice your opinion and say this what I think things should be done. My former DDG (supervisor), made it clear to me, I did something my way because I thought of the later problems that could occur. I applied my mind. He asked 'Why did you do it that way? I asked you to do this way'. He made it clear that 'Sihle, you do not get paid to think, you are paid to do what you are told to do'. I said 'in this level? Are you sure?' He said 'Yes'. It breaks you because it says, 'you are just a tool to be used'. So, the structure is bad, there a lot of harassment happening (Sihle D7).

Sarah also described how her supervisor silences her:

I have a male boss it's extremely disempowering, I'm constantly told that I'm just a line function and I'm supposed to deal with operational stuff, I'm not allowed to think critically or to question. When I demonstrate critical thinking, I am told 'You are trying to show off, you trying to make me look bad, you should just keep quiet.' It's been ugly to the point that I'm leaving (Sarah D2).

The participants' experiences highlight that women are not regarded as competent leaders and their skills are under-utilised as they are blatantly side-lined and their voices are silenced. Sarah's boss' statement that she should not question or think critically suggests that women leaders are tokens in order to fulfil quota requirements. They are thus not perceived as adding value and their views are suppressed. Sihle added that she felt objectified and pointed to harassment in her department. Patriarchal culture results in gendered racial discriminatory

practices, indicating that gender is not mainstreamed and the outcomes of EE are adverse rather than progressive. Policy implementation focuses on numeric representation for compliance purposes rather than substantive gender transformation, thus reducing this progressive and transformational policy to a paper exercise. This is because the transformational agenda of GM and EE policies is hindered by sexism, hostility and patriarchy that are deeply entrenched within organisational cultures, structures and practices in national government departments. However, 19% of the participants reported positive outcomes of EE implementation relating to buy-in at ministerial level and substantive representation of designated groups and people with disabilities. One participant stated:

Starting from the way we conduct our meetings, there's equality, the voice of women against the voice of men is heard equally, that's my experience. Women are given more opportunities than men. Even the Minister would say where she got control, like when travelling, she wouldn't approve of a delegation that has only men, if it's an all men delegation, and you know that submission is going to go bad. So that reinforces the fact that women are taken seriously (Anne D12).

Anne points to equality of women and men's voices in her department that is lacking in other departments. This appears to hinge on the example set by the (woman) Minister. Another participant said:

It (EE policy) features on the day to day function because in a week in the meetings that I sit in, women are represented fully. People with disabilities are represented fully and even when project teams are being formed, they make sure that all forms of employees are represented at those particular meetings. When decisions are also taken, everybody is taken into consideration. Be it disability, be it women, be it men (Nomusa D6).

Nomusa's statement on equitable representation of staff with disabilities is important because, as noted earlier, in the sampled departments, human resource recruiters appear to act as gatekeepers. It was noted that the physical disabilities of educated and competent individuals are used as a justification not to appoint them even though they meet the requirements (see theme 3). Turning to the appointment of black people, Michelle remarked:

I see more black people in the department and positions. I never thought that I would find such a young person in this higher position and yet, she is black and she is doing it very well. She is performing very well and now you realise it is because of this policy (Michelle D18).

This points to the prevalence of age discrimination. The participants' responses are evidence of the intended outcomes of the EE policy in national government departments. As noted previously, this seems to hinge on political will and buy-in from the higher echelons. Vermeulen and Coetzee (2006) observe that positive EE outcomes are driven by management. These include the fair distribution of resources such as job positions, promotions and educational opportunities that have a direct impact on employee perceptions (Esterhuizen & Martins, 2008). Heads of departments are best positioned to exert positive influence on structures and practices. The next section discusses the tick-box approach to EE implementation.

### **(g) The Tick-box Approach to Employment Equity Implementation**

Eighty-eight per cent of the participants reported numerical representation of designated groups in senior positions without adequate training, development and support for women in leadership roles. This reinforces the stereotype that women are incompetent and lack leadership abilities. Lydia commented:

But all the time it's like a tick-box business (ticking boxes for compliance) for HR (the human resource unit) because there's no follow-up on the issues of gender mainstreaming and employment equity that gets discussed in the meetings. I have a little bit of a problem there (Lydia D13).

In her view, EE policy implementation over the years has been reduced to a 'game of numbers' where the goal is to 'tick compliance boxes'.

Anne remarked:

Unfortunately, the emphasis is put on numbers and the ticking of boxes, like you know as far as middle management is concerned, we have this number of males and females. But there are things that are untold, things that are hidden, things that are skin deep that still exists that still need to be addressed (Anne D12).

The participants' experiences indicate large gaps in terms of sustained impact, systemic change and effectiveness. The focus on fulfilling quotas causes women leaders to be perceived as tokens since the focus is not on substantive, but representational equality. This perpetuates stereotypes and inequality as women are not perceived or treated as legitimate leaders. One participant stated that during recruitment for a particular position, a white male supervisor only shortlisted black Africans to ensure that a member of the designated group was appointed.

She regarded this as indirect discrimination. She said:

The white manager made it explicit that he was looking for a black person. He never shortlisted any white people. He made explicit that he wants black people, it made it look like, the way we are so incompetent, he had to eliminate competition for us. I did not want anyone to eliminate competition for me because that makes me feel inferior (Mathabo D14).

Other participants not only emphasised the importance of qualifications and suitable experience among women in leadership echelons, but stated that they should be appointed on merit and receive adequate support. Minentle said:

I would not want to be appointed just because I am a woman. For me it's like sabotage. You are going to fail, you are just put there to meet the equity target. At the same time, it perpetuates that stereotype about women. We should be given positions but at the same time we shouldn't be treated as if it is out of favour (Minentle D23).

Minentle shows that women are disadvantaged by being placed in leadership positions solely in order for a department to comply with EE targets. She raises the important point that a person is bound to fail if they are not qualified for a senior position. The amended EEA (Act 47 of 2013) states that AA measures must include equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in all occupational categories. Thus, the appointment of unqualified employees to higher echelons contravenes the Act as well as perpetuates stereotypes that women are incapable as leaders and are only appointed as a favour. Racial and gendered structures and practices place them on the margins of these departments, with detrimental outcomes. Like Minentle, Primrose emphasised the importance of appointing suitably qualified and experienced women in leadership positions:

I am not saying don't empower women, but also, you've got to look at what the person knows how much is their experience, what the person can bring into any organisation to make it a success. Number one is the qualification and number two is their experience (Primrose D11).

Cecilia, who works in the same department as Primrose above, elaborated on the negative impact of focusing on quota targets:

It's not necessarily maybe to just fill a vacancy for the sake of filling it. You still need to make sure that you do not deviate from the calibre of people that you still need to have as directors because if you just employ whoever then which means that you will have a department

which is not productive enough or that people who are not competent enough to do the job (Cecilia D11).

Cecilia's response suggests that focusing on targets results in an unproductive and incompetent staff complement and far from substantive EE outcomes. Esterhuizen and Martins (2008) highlight the importance of training and development for designated groups while Coetzee (2005) and Thomas (2002) affirm that focusing on numbers without considering skills and development will not achieve the transformation required in government departments. The lack of transformation is also noticeable in physical infrastructure requirements in the national government departments.

#### **(h) Lack of Appropriate Physical Infrastructure for Employees with Disabilities**

The amended EEA's (Act 47 of 2013) requirement of adequate infrastructure and equipment to assist persons with disabilities in national government departments was raised by 31% of the participants. They noted that departments are not equipped to accommodate officials with disabilities. South Africa's laws and policies aim to redress inequity and eradicate all forms of discrimination. In practice, however, the focus has been on the eradication of racial, gender, class and religious discrimination. Limited attention has been paid to disability, particularly in work settings. The EEA (Act 47 of 2013) defines reasonable accommodation as "any modification or adjustment to a job, or to the working environment, that provides a person from a designated group access to participation or advances employment", while the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act of 2000 prohibits individuals and the state from discrimination based on race, gender and disability. The Code of Good Practice on the Key Aspects of Disability in the Workplace of 2001 and the Technical Assistance Guide to the Employment of Persons with Disabilities of 2004 provide guidelines for employees and employers in promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment of persons with disabilities as part of the 2013 EEA. However, the participants pointed to a lack of appropriate physical infrastructure in government departments to accommodate employees with disability and unfair discrimination in the recruitment and selection process. They added that people with disabilities are not prioritised even though they are members of designated groups. One said:

Physical infrastructure for people with disabilities still remains a challenge. We have a building with 21 floors for example. A disabled official used to work in that office and she's not the only one disabled. So, you can imagine that somehow it becomes a burden when there are no lifts working. They can't come to work. There was a time; they

couldn't come to work; they had to work in another office somewhere.  
It can't be like that (Michelle D18).

Michelle's statement shows that her department has not fully complied with the EE policy requirement of "provision of reasonable accommodation", which entails assistive equipment and infrastructure for people with disabilities. This further indicates that the focus of GM and EE policies in government departments is on numerical representation (representivity), limiting the potential to achieve substantive outcomes. Isaaks' (2008) analysis of the perceptions and attitudes of staff in the City of Cape Town Health Directorate in relation to EE found that, in many instances, the focus of EE implementation was on race and gender, with less attention paid to officials with disabilities. A participant reported that she felt a strong need to defend a candidate with a disability during a recruitment process as the Human Resources section was not keen on appointing her from the short-listed candidates. She remarked:

I was looking now at the submissions of people who were shortlisted for the post of Chief Director. It's a woman who's got a Master's degree and who is a Director. But they say she is in a wheel-chair, how is she going to travel around? Remember this person (saying this) is a Chief Director, but I said this person has her own car. Just the question, 'how is she going to travel'? I said, 'this person is already a Senior Manager. If she has to go to Cape Town, she must be able to fly and when she gets to Cape Town going to parliament, she will be shuttled to Parliament'. So, you see some of the prejudice? She is a woman, she is a black African (Kwezi D1).

This example highlights that women with disabilities suffer multiple subjugations and intersecting identities of being racialised, classed, gendered and disabled – people who cannot function (Mkhize, 2015). According to Mkhize, even referring to people with disabilities as 'disabled' deprives them of their functionality and agency. The participants' views resonate with those of Wilson-Kovacs et al. (2008) who conclude that many human resources departments lack organisational knowledge of disability, and this impedes the career progression of professionals with disabilities. The literature also confirms that professionals with disabilities are primarily defined in terms of their disability and treated paternalistically (Mkhize, 2015; Wilson-Kovacs et al., 2008).

Du Plessis (2015) and Mkhize's (2015) research on the intersectional oppression of women and people with disabilities in South Africa found that, as in the example cited by Kwezi above, work seekers with disabilities are at a particular disadvantage because they are not likely to be viewed in the same light as mainstream employees. They also confront legal and structural

impediments if they try to challenge unfair discrimination (Du Plessis, 2015). Mkhize (2015) and Siebers (2006) add that all bodies are socially constructed. In terms of a social constructionism perspective, disability is the effect of an environment that is hostile to some bodies and not to others, rendering prejudice unjustifiable based on physical appearance and ability (Siebers, 2006).

It is clear that organisational cultures, structures and practices are not conducive to people living with disabilities in national government departments. Despite the EEA's (Act 47 of 2013) requirements, they are still discriminated against and marginalised to the point where infrastructure and equipment is not modified to enable them to function optimally. This means that national government departments are non-compliant with the Act. Furthermore, Kwezi's response shows that human resource recruiters are 'gatekeepers' that prevent educated and qualified persons with disabilities from being appointed solely based on their physical challenges. The next section addresses performance management and assessment of women in government leadership positions.

**(i) Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) Assessment Outcomes are perceived of as Subjective**

In the view of 71% of the participants, the 'subjectiveness' of PMDS assessments, results in negative outcomes, that hinder women's leadership performance. They feel that the assessment outcomes are inaccurate indicators of their leadership performance and accountability. This negatively impacts their performance as their capabilities are devalued for invalid reasons. For example, a participant stated:

It's very much subjective. I am a trained and accredited assessor. I don't play games. So, it took them more than a year before they gave me a bonus, I had appealed the first time. This time, I think he (the Supervisor) realised that he was going to be in trouble. So, if I am going work this hard, you don't mess up with my performance and your perception of what I am performing. There are realistic ways in which I can be measured but not your perceptions (Monica D19).

Another echoed a similar sentiment:

I can provide the evidence and think the evidence is objective for me and my Supervisor depending on the day whether she likes me or whether she doesn't like me. For a person to impress you, there are a whole lot of issues. Because for some people they are impressed when

you are a 'yes woman', the moment you say 'No' to them, you're not the favourite anymore; then your performance assessment suffers (Thabisile D17).

Bonelwa explained:

The way performance assessment is being conducted, it's subjective and you know if someone doesn't like you or let's say there was something that you didn't get along with, with your boss or you fight over then your boss he or she will make sure she gets you that during the assessment or evaluation period. You will get low marks compared to others even if you didn't fight or anything just because he doesn't like you then he will underscore you (Bonelwa D23).

The views expressed by Monica, Thabisile and Bonelwa point to the unfairness and subjectiveness of the PMDS assessment conducted in national government departments. Monica clearly shows that she is assessed based her supervisor's perceptions of her. She even had to appeal to receive a bonus. This system is not utilised effectively as perceptions, employee relations and work issues affect the results of assessment. For example, Thabisile explains that when she displays assertiveness, she knows that her performance assessment results will 'suffer'. Bonelwa notes that when she has work disagreements with her supervisor, she knows is underscored during assessment. The women's experiences point to the inconsistent manner in which supervisors conduct performance assessments. In addition, the women interviewed for this study were generally concerned that performance assessment or evaluation is inadequately administered. Overall, the participants perceived the PMDS as a negative experience that demotivates employees, with negative effects on EE compliance and transformation.

#### **4.4.4 Theme 4: Perceptions of Women Leaders**

One of the themes that emerged from the fieldwork was colleague's perceptions of women leaders in government departments. Given that the study's main objective was to investigate black African women's leadership experiences and the outcomes of gender transformation policies, it is pertinent to examine how their colleagues perceive such women, as well as EE and GM.

##### **(a) Staff Perceptions of Women in Leadership**

It is important to note that the data on staff perceptions was obtained from the interviews conducted with the sampled women themselves; this is because the researcher was mindful of

the study's scope which was limited to women in leadership positions. Most of the participants shared challenges in relation to colleague's perceptions, with 77% citing not being accorded respect and recognition as legitimate leaders by both junior and senior colleagues.

Some participants reported that they had to assert themselves and request colleagues to address them appropriately:

I had a white guy I used to report to and the tables turned, he was reporting to me. The people were still referring to him as *Meneer* (Mister) and they called me by name. I addressed that, I called them in, I told them 'If you are going to call him Mister then call me Mrs (Anne D12).

Anne's experience shows that a junior white male was accorded more respect than her regardless of her leadership position and the fact that she is his supervisor. Lydia shared similar experiences:

I had to correct the way they addressed me, you know in a casual way, 'Yaah sister'. When I'm at work I'm not a 'sister'. Because I always worry once you let those casual things people tend not to respect you, they take you anyhow and it gets worse as time goes (Lydia D13).

Nombulelo said:

Even if you are a female and you are in high position; the other employees normally don't give you respect they would if you were a man (Nombulelo D11).

Another participant revealed that the structure and practices in the higher echelons are very unfriendly:

The higher you go the colder it becomes. Also, it's more political up there (Mpumi D10).

Anne and Lydia had to assert themselves by communicating to colleagues the appropriate manner in which they should be addressed. Nombulelo observed that women are not respected in the same way as their male counterparts in government departments. Mpumi reported on the unfriendliness of higher echelons and that they are highly political. These are all characteristic of a patriarchal system. The participants' reports on their colleagues' attitudes towards them illustrate that, despite the imperatives of gender equality and GM, deeply entrenched social constructs such as patriarchy, prejudice, sexism and racism continue to undermine women's

leadership authority and that these intersectional constructs pose a challenge to women's practice of leadership in the democratic South Africa context.

Mkhize (2012) argues that the new South African Constitution and democracy created a false impression that the battle against sexism and racism had been fought and won. However, the new era has been characterised by continued economic, political, and social inequalities across the country. Like the participants, Mkhize (2012) avers that gendered power relations persist. The participants' comments show that despite black African women being in leadership positions, they have to contend with gender, race and class discrimination. It is important to note that merely inserting the GM framework in government departments without assessing and planning to transform organisational cultural practices and structures is counterproductive. Employees require gender training in order to understand the purpose and intended goals of GM and EE. The next theme focuses on women empowering others in national government departments.

#### **(b) Women Empowering Others**

Fifty-six per cent of the study participants emphasised the need to empower women in junior positions through mentorship and internship programmes. Some were very passionate about this issue as they felt that it would make a significant difference. Mentoring relationships are widely recognised as a key career resource in organisations. One participant explained:

I make sure that I give equal opportunity especially to women, to previously disadvantage because the employment equity also addresses even males at the lower level. I mean give people opportunity to actualise themselves. Train the person; give them opportunities to make sure that they are empowered. Again, make sure you give priority to women, to previously disadvantage (Brenda D8).

Anne reported that she mentors many women both within her department and externally:

At the top management, spoke about issues around coaching and mentoring, you know, mentoring young women, the youth in particular because those are up and coming. Another young person will be sitting here, so what am I doing to bring young people like yourself; I'm actually mentoring about 37 women. I have a mentorship programme that I do and when I have an opportunity to sit on the panel [interview panel for new recruits], I drive the agenda of women empowerment (Anne D12).

Nolitha stated:

I wanted to change the narrative of whites that 'blacks don't know'. I would assist a black person because let's show them we're smart and to believe in your technical competency. We have an internship programme and females come out on top. The nature of our unique role, we deal with them as normal corporate and give exposure for females to broaden the depth and breadth of their skills (Nolitha D16).

Nolitha is driven not only by the need to impart knowledge to other women, but by the desire to dispel stereotypes that black people are ignorant. She mentors people through the internship programme rolled out in her department. Another respondent indicated that they run mentorship programmes internationally and travel far and wide to achieve women empowerment:

I went to the global summit on women, it happens annually. Last year I think it was in Brazil and the other year it was in Malaysia. It's always about 100 women attending, from about 80 or 90 countries across the world. We had a programme when I was doing gender issues that were targeting young women. So, I addressed them on that one. But I also had a programme that I was running in Atlanta, Georgia in the USA where I would be visiting that programme once or twice a year (Nina D20).

Thus, the study participants acknowledge the importance of imparting knowledge and giving of their experience and time to mentor protégés in their departments and outside them. This is not merely an act of benevolence; the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) requires the training and development of members of designated groups. As discussed in section 4.4.2 (b), solidarity among women is imperative in driving gender empowerment. Mutual support is invaluable as women contribute to the empowerment of their colleagues. The next section deconstructs identity politics in the context of this study.

#### **4.4.5 Theme 5: Issues of Sexuality**

During the interviews, 23% of the participants spoke to issues of sexuality, specifically sexual harassment, and also highlighted the impact of leadership roles on women's health. South African legislation that addresses sexuality at the workplace includes the Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), the EEA (55 of 1998), the Labour Relations Act (66 of 1995), the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (4 of 2000) and the Code of Good Practice.

### (a) Allegations of Sexual Harassment in Government Departments

Twenty-three per cent of the participants alleged that sexual harassment occurs in government departments and spoke of their personal experiences of such harassment. Thompson and Wilson (2001) state that, sexual misconduct in the workplace refers to men exercising their power over women co-workers and other members of society. It refers to inappropriate use of power that undermines, degrades and isolates women as the perpetrator is usually a man, and reflects men's attitudes towards women. The government has adopted legislation like the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) and Labour Relations Act (Act 66 of 1995) that outlaw such conduct. It is thus ironic that women in government departments allege that they are the targets of sexual harassment.

Bonelwa stated:

In other sections is that if you are a female and there's a post of a Director or something, it never happened to me I'm just giving you an example. So, the male bosses will take advantage of that to sell that position instead of following the right procedures, they would say if you do A, B, C, D [sexual favours] for me I'll give you the post. You see! That is really reducing the value of women. It's like a woman cannot go to an interview and be successful, she needs to sleep with the boss so she can get the post. It happens in our departments (Bonelwa D23).

Bonelwa highlights sexual harassment through demanding sexual favours in exchange for positions. Other participants reported that it was inferred that they must have been given their high-ranking jobs because they offered men in executive positions sexual favours.

One said:

There were rumours that I slept with a male in charge to get this post (Deputy Director-General). So, people believe that as a woman you should open your legs to get a higher position at work. But they don't think that with men colleagues. So, you can see its perception (Anne D12).

Generally, people do not believe that women can gain leadership positions solely on merit, due to their qualifications and experience. Because women are devalued and leadership is considered a male sphere, they are labelled as 'sleeping their way up'.

Another interviewee remarked:

Politically you are expected to have sex with men in power so that they can nominate you to be on this board. It was that time when there was this issue about this man and the multiple women - married women and single ladies (Mathabo D14).

It was reported that some women do exchange sexual favours for jobs and business opportunities (government tenders). However, participants reported that they were assertive in dealing with this challenge and addressed it immediately.

Mathabo shared that:

There were those people that would come and they would want to date you, and some of them are married. Some male colleagues will call you to their offices. I usually respond: 'Why should I be coming to your office if I don't report to you? Why do you want to date me when you are married?' But other female colleagues are not that strong. So, they end up being in the situation. For example, I heard that someone was taken advantage of. He actually stripped the power off this other woman that he dated. But I still have my power and the respect because I said 'No'. I am not liked by some of the male colleagues because I say 'No' to them. There is this married one I said 'No' to. I told him I don't want to date you, I mean you are married, why should I? He hated me and I was labelled as defiant. This man has multiple relationships within the office. So, he is not used to 'No' that's why he just hates me. Still even to date, when we talk, we talk about work and issues (Mathabo D14).

Despite the laws in South Africa that protect women's rights and criminalise sexual harassment, it is clear that it occurs in government departments. Because Mathabo rejected her male colleague's sexual advances, she was resented. She disclosed that a male colleague has multiple relationships in the department and cannot understand why Mathabo refuses his advances. However, many victims suffer in silence due to their subservient positions (Greenberg 1998:6). Willer (2005) explains that men harass women in leadership positions due to masculine overcompensation. They react to threats to their manhood by enacting sexual harassment as an extreme form of masculinity. Such abuse mutes the voice of sexually harassed women and is part of the broader discourse of males controlling and believing that they 'own' women's bodies. Those that have intimate sex with male colleagues cannot break free as they are controlled and fear a backlash from the male perpetrators. Mathabo exercised her power and challenged the silence around sexual harassment by being assertive and vocal. However, she could lose her job for refusing to be sexually harassed. Another issue is that of infidelity

where married men have sexual relations with married women. Sexual harassment involves the exercise of gendered power by men over women while it reinforces sexism and male hegemony at the workplace. The organisational structures of the sampled departments show that men possess authority over women, despite women being in leadership positions. Prevailing organisational cultural practices of male hegemony and the fact, that, women are devalued result in sexual harassment. Some women participants suggested strategies to avoiding being caught in sexual scandals at the workplace. One said:

A way of dealing with it, don't have relationships at your workplace because remember it's your right to have a relationship. You will do it with one and you don't know where it's going to, most of them end badly. Don't date at work. Of course, they will call you names and say what is wrong with her? There's something wrong with her, she is full of herself. It's better to say that than being in scandals and get hurt because these relationships end so badly (Wendy D4).

Wendy suggests that women who refuse intimate sex with co-workers are pathologised. Some participants reported that their departments suspend and/or dismiss the perpetrators of sexual harassment. One said:

The person was suspended and was dismissed after that. The woman that reported was very strong from what I heard because it was a serious, high position man. He was the DDG at that time. The guy who did that and this woman who reported was just a PA. She was good (Michelle D18).

This shows that when women stand firm and report crime, the law takes its course. The DPSA (2013: 3) notes that both the EEA and LRA have Codes of Good Practice on the handling of cases of sexual harassment. The Codes encourage the development and implementation of policies and procedures that will lead to the creation of a workplace that is free from sexual harassment, where the employer and employee respect one another's integrity, dignity, privacy and right to equity. As required by legislation, some participants stated that their departments actively intervene to address sexual harassment, with the Head of Department sometimes playing an active role. Mathabo offered an example:

The DG just said we should have a social club. So the DG had to take this one because a social hub for me, people should be free and learn something about each other to understand colleague's background. So, I must be considerate and some people will know those little things about [you]. That was the intention why he had that. Then the complaints were flocking in to his office about other things being done.

I think the achievement for me was that the work environment was improved, has improved actually since then, drastically (Mathabo D14).

Mathabo's Head of Department helped form a social club for staff members to communicate and understand one another's cultural backgrounds. She acknowledged that it improved social relations between colleagues and that, victims and perpetrators of bad behaviour knew that there was support from the highest office in the department. This is in line with the roles and responsibilities assigned to Heads of Departments in the public service. The DPSA (2013: 13) notes that these include communicating the sexual harassment policy to all employees, through regular awareness raising, training and education programmes. It (2013) adds that government departments must appoint a sexual harassment advisor and announce this through all communication channels. They must also submit a report on sexual harassment cases dealt with to the DPSA every six months and encourage staff to report violations of the policy. Departments must also ensure that the disciplinary measures applied are in accordance with the Disciplinary Code and Procedures (Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council Resolution 1 of 2003) in the public service.

I agree with Mackinnon's (1989) view that sex as a systematic division of social power, a social principle inseparable from the gender of individuals, is enforced to women's detriment because it serves the interests of the powerful, men. Women share a common experience of oppression built around male control over women's bodies. The author views sexism not just as a disparity to be levelled, but a system of subordination to be overthrown (Mackinnon, 1989:40). The gender hierarchy defines sexual politics and only transformation in the equation of gender (gender difference) power relationships that delegitimises sexual dynamics of power and powerlessness can alter it (Mackinnon, 1989:41). Men's hegemonic control and objectification of women's bodies as sexual is deeply rooted patriarchal practice. The prevalence of sexual harassment is an indication that GM and EE policy principles have not infiltrated or transformed the national government departments' cultures, structure and practices. Another challenge to women's leadership is the impact of organisational cultural practices and structures on their health.

#### **(b) Impact of Leadership Experiences on Women's Health**

Performance and success are dependent on mental and physical well-being. Hostile, racist and gender-biased working conditions can cause stress, resulting in ill-health. Seventeen per cent

of the participants stated that their mental and physical health is compromised due to the hostile and male-stream organisational culture and practices in their departments. Sarah explained:

Women are the most vulnerable because it's a very masculine bureaucracy. I am really in such a bad space; I'm being weaned off anti-depressants. I have been diagnosed with clinical depression. The DG knows, very sympathetic but does nothing about it. The Minister knows. Everybody is very sympathetic but nobody does anything about it (Sarah D2).

Sarah associated the patriarchal nature of the department's culture and practices with female officials' ill-health. She suffers from depression and while her superiors are aware of this, no steps have been taken to address the situation. Sihle also mentioned that women's health is negatively impacted by the patriarchal culture:

Women collapse here. They are battling with heart attacks. They are charged with non-performance. They sometimes take three months of leave because of stress. There was a time that I almost went mad, I believe it's just the grace of God (Sihle D7).

Sihle notes that when women in the department fall ill due to work-related stress, they are accused of non-performance as though they are incompetent. This perpetuates stereotypes and beliefs that women are incapable leaders. Being charged with non-performance overlooks the fact that the patriarchal, racist, gender-biased and hostile work environment is the cause of their ill-health. Support structures are also lacking.

Funeka identified bullying as one of the causes of mental and physical health ill-health among women leaders:

We have women who get sick and admitted because they are bullied. We have one who was admitted once and we have one who was admitted reportedly and ended up resigning because of such issues. As much as those issues are there, the people don't talk about them openly (Funeka D3).

This resulted on one women resigning. She added that such issues are not acknowledged and there is no platform to discuss these challenges. Gender Mainstreaming and EE objectives are not prioritised as the focus is on performance and outputs. It is clear that this has negative effects on women's mental and physical health.

#### 4.4.6 Theme 6: Identity Politics

##### (a) Ethnicity in Government Departments

Ethnic prejudice in national government departments was cited by 53% of the participants. This is mainly based on cultural stereotypes that serve to divide black Africans, illustrating that the EE policy requirements of equality and non-discrimination are not complied with. The policy aims to redress the effects of discrimination and achieve a diverse workforce that is representative of all South African citizens. However, as noted previously, the participants pointed to a hiatus between EE policy and practice, hampering the achievement of ethnic diversity.

One shared that:

Yoh! You know what I can tell you, in Pretoria tribalism [referring to ethnicity] is a lot, it's a problem. So, yes, I do experience tribalism even here at my workplace. I remember even during the Thabo Mbeki era I heard them saying 'Ya it's good that this Xhosa president [term has ended]. Xhosas, this power that they have and this Xhosa nonsense at least it will be taken away from them, now a Zulu will come to power'. So, tribalism is rife here (Bonelwa D23).

Bonelwa's response not only reveals the prevalence of ethnocentrism in her department, but shows that it extends to the broader political discourse of which ethnic group the President belongs to. When a Zulu person is President, it is assumed that Zulu people have social power. The participant's views concur with Nyabegera's (2002) conclusion that while organisations attract members from different ethnic groups, individuals uphold values that characterise their identity and this is reflected in their behaviour in work contexts. Funeka also revealed the fluidity and intersectionality of ethnicity in that it is not limited to cultural identities, but extends to intra-group discrimination in terms of gender:

Here, you find a lot of 'I am the man'. Especially with males, you will find the male Venda who is undermining a Venda woman or a male Xhosa who is undermining a Xhosa woman (Funeka D3).

Thabisile elaborated at length on how ethnic discrimination intertwined with patriarchy affects her as a woman in leadership. She added that her Director-General took steps to address this issue:

My manager is a male and then he expects me to sit down when I talk with him. But when another male talk to him he doesn't require the same. There are other cultural groups which are very strong in terms of how women should be treated. Our Zulus, Vendas or Shangaan people, they expect women to do certain things. Some they were uncomfortable issues and there were a number of complaints that were lodged anonymously saying this person is doing this. So, the DG played a role in this regard. He also set up an IT link, where people could just drop any complaint to him directly and their identity is not known even to himself (Thabisile D17).

By expecting Thabisile to sit while talking with him, the manager relegates her to a lower status. Cultural-traditional norms are thus transferred to the government department regardless of GM and EE policies that prohibit discrimination. Thabisile's DG was proactive in setting up an electronic platform where officials could lodge anonymous complaints to address such problems. The participants' experiences confirm that the complex racial and ethnic categories imposed during the colonial era permeate the democratic context, and are reinforced through cultural stereotypes and daily interactions between collective identities. Ethnicity impacts on most behaviour in multi-ethnic societies (Bhopal, 2000; Marger, 1994) like South Africa. As a colonial vestige, ethnic and gender discrimination directly contradicts the EEA's provisions on non-discrimination. It also shows that gender is not mainstreamed as traditional cultural norms that perpetuate inequality persist. This suggests that GM and EE policy is implemented superficially with the sole purpose of achieving numerical targets. Bastia (2000) contends that GM is not only about the tangible outcome of increased gender equality, but also about changing attitudes towards such equality. The next section discusses the misalignment between work and home life responsibilities.

#### **(b) Work and Home Life Dichotomies**

One of the themes that emerged is the need for women in government leadership to manage multiple roles. Eight-nine per cent of the participants stated that they have to juggle their leadership roles and home life responsibilities.

Nikiwe recounted:

When I joined the department, my daughter was three years old, I feel like crying when I think about that. When I saw this child slipping away because as a mother was not there to take her to day-care. There are milestones in her life that I missed (Nikiwe D21).

Nikiwe missed out on spending time with her child due to her demanding career. Sarah noted the lack of support for working mothers:

If you look at management in these departments and the way they work and the fact that there also are mothers and have families, how they are so alienated from that particular aspect of their lives because of the masculine way in which the bureaucracy operates. It doesn't create a kind of supportive network to women and mothers (Sarah D2).

Government departments are male-centred and are thus not tailored to accommodate women's multiple roles. This suggests that GM policy is not effectively implemented in these departments. Monica and Nomusa pointed to the demands made on women leaders' time that prevent them from spending time with their families:

I consider it to be a serious sacrifice. The example is that before coming here, normally I would have worked at home for an hour or two. I come here in the morning and I would stay on until 6 to 7 in the evening and I will come back again (Monica D19).

Nomusa spoke of her busy schedule and working through the night:

Unfortunately, they will say you: 'You said you want to be in management'. I have tried to learn and balance; but when things come one has to do what is required. I do work over hours. Like this past week, I have been home in morning hours trying to rest. This Friday, I got home past 7 in the morning since I left the previous day. Exactly, around the clock I was really tired. Even today, I really wanted to leave early but I realised that I have other meetings (Nomusa D6).

Monica and Nomusa's work schedules are in conflict with their responsibilities as mothers and care-givers. They both report working after hours and even through the night. Again, gender is not mainstreamed as demanding work schedules are physically and mentally strenuous. Working long hours is detrimental to their mental and physical health. Theme 8 discussed the impact of leadership roles on women's health. The role conflicts women experience between the traditional duties of care-givers, wives, and mothers and their professional roles as leaders are largely responsible for the stress they experience (McLellan & Uys, 2009; Brink & De la Rey, 2001). According to Jones and Montenegro (1982:8), gender roles are transferred from generation to generation via accumulated acculturation and socialisation and are the foundation of gendered practices. Funeka confirmed this notion when she remarked that she is following her mother's example. However, she added that her husband understands the demands of her job:

Because whether you are working or not, you are still a wife and a woman, so you tend to learn from what your mother did. I come back from work, I have to cook and feed my husband who comes back and sits. Also, by naturally being a woman, there are certain responsibilities [you] take as a mother and as a woman. And sometimes you take work home, sometimes you work on weekends, like when I was at home during Easter holidays, somebody from SABC called and said, 'We need to interview you on domestic violence'. I had to come back a day early from holidays and I drafted a report and submitted. So sometimes you need to make those kinds of sacrifices and my husband understands (Funeka D3).

Funeka had to return early from family vacation time due to an impromptu media interview. She acknowledges that this is a sacrifice that she has to make and her husband is supportive.

Nina gave a poignant account of the stresses of managing multiple roles:

'No! You are not a Chief Director, you are my mother', my kid once told me that. Here at home we want you to be our mother'. If you married, it's even worse; your husband wants his wife. You can't come and boss them around. You must be able to switch (Nina D20).

Nina's response points to the multifaceted gender role expectations imposed on women by cultural and patriarchal practices. Her child reminded her that at home, she is a mother and not a Chief Director. Her husband expects her to be a wife and she has to switch roles after a day at work. Some participants expressed the challenge of being leaders in the workplace as well as the 'subservient good wife' that their in-laws expect. Petunia said:

Even when you are about to go to your husband's home, you have to condition yourself, it's a countdown that you are going to slavery, you will not sleep. And you have to work and protect your family name and you are also protecting your husband because he will be insulted if you are not working. Even if you are not granted a leave at work, you have to go because they will label you, saying: '*Ucinga uba ungcono ngoba ufundile*' (she thinks she's better because she is educated). It is very difficult (Petunia D3).

Petunia's experience confirms the discourse that marriage perpetuates gender inequities and male hegemony. Educated women in leadership positions are still expected to abide by the rules of the hierarchical patriarchal order. Some participants stated that such role conflict led to the break-up of their marriages:

Ey! I divorced with my husband. My relationships always suffer because I am always travelling. I don't know when last did I finished a week being at home (Petunia D3).

Similarly, Kwezi stated:

You can make it if you don't have a husband who will be nagging that you are around twelve (referring to 12am, midnight). I was married for 18 years. But it was a big challenge. To say (quoting her ex-husband) 'You are arriving late, you are all over' (Kwezi D1).

These responses indicate that women are subjugated and disadvantaged by multiple forms of oppression in government departments and in the private domestic sphere. Patriarchal control infiltrates all aspects of their lives and they are always at a disadvantage. For example, some of the women's husbands did not support their leadership careers and this led to divorce. However, if the men were leaders, arrived home late and were always travelling, women would be expected to support them and understand the demanding nature of their work. This illustrates the double jeopardy women encounter. The participants' accounts underline the intersectional identities and oppressive systems identified by Collins (1999) as these women experience disadvantage through the combined statuses of gender, race, and class to produce and maintain social hierarchy. Kwezi referred to her conflicting identities:

People are idolizing you saying, 'DDGs wow'! But there are still challenges in the workplace because when you are there, people tend to look up to you and take the decision. But at another level, you go back to your community back home; it is different (Kwezi D1).

This reinforces the notion that the 'personal is political', which women activists use to demonstrate that personal experiences reflect wider social and cultural conditions and socially structured gender power relations (Babacan, 2004: 78). Such power relations are accepted norms and values in society that oppresses women. Ferguson (1984: 92) argues that bureaucratic organisations are gendered since their structure and mode of operation inevitably produce a gendered effect that continues to negatively impact on women's ability to balance their leadership identity roles in the work environment, and maternal roles within the private sphere of their homes and in the broader community. The GM framework recognises and accommodates women's multiple roles. However, it is evident that the sampled departments expect women leaders to be ever-present without considering their other roles. Therefore, gender is not mainstreamed. This results in competing role identities and responsibilities,

relegating women to the margins. Another identity role that affects women is ageist ideologies in national government departments.

### **(c) Ageist Ideologies**

Fourteen per cent of the participants reported experiences of gendered ageism in their departments. Gendered ageism refers to discriminatory actions, whether intentional or unintentional, based on the intersection of multiple identities. It is not limited to relations between men and women, but manifests between women as well as between men. Some authors argue that ageism is more ubiquitous than sexism and racism (Banaji, 1999), although it is much more difficult to detect (Levy & Banaji, 2002). Some participants explained that they suffer prejudice due to being young:

I suffer from discrimination because I am young. I would go to Parliament to present, I would sit and wait to be called. Some will say 'How could the department replace an official without letting us know? Where is the person that we requested?' and I say, 'It's me'. That discrimination you feel it from different races and different genders, even from females (Mathabo D14).

Mathabo's subjective experiences mirror other axes of identity. Negative perceptions and reactions due to her youthfulness are exacerbated by her gender (female) and race (black African). Thabisile shared that her work is trivialised by her colleagues due to her young age and that this undermines her authority:

I'm the youngest, my team members are quite adults. They've got kids I don't have kids. I'm not married so I'm still regarded as raw in the sense. They do not take me seriously. I sometimes have to tell them, 'I didn't sleep, I compiled the research and now that I'm presenting you have to listen, you have to engage. It's not some chit chat or giggling kind of stuff' (Thabisile D17).

Other participants stated that they experience prejudice due to their perceived old age. Mandisa stated:

You read the environment at my age, nobody likes to work with a fifty-year-old person, so those are the things I considered not fighting (Mandisa D17).

Mandisa decided not to challenge age discrimination. This could be because she feels that age discrimination is deeply embedded within the department's cultural practices and structure.

While the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) prohibits all forms of discrimination, the participants' responses show that age discrimination is prevalent in government departments for women perceived as young and older. This highlights the multiple oppressions confronting black African women. While women are legitimate leaders in government departments, they have to contend with male hegemony, gendered racism and sexual harassment among other discriminations and inequalities. Men were not reported to face age discrimination. Itzin and Phillipson's (1993: 45) case studies in local authorities concluded that, whatever their age, women perceived that it was held against them, and that line management attitudes' revealed in interviews were consistent with the view that 'women are never the right age'. From a social constructionist point of view, both gender and age identity are socially engineered and culturally constructed (Ginn & Arber, 1995; West & Zimmerman, 1987) rather than being inherent and differs over contexts and time. It is thus clear that there is a schism between EE policy and practice in the sampled departments. The next section focuses on the monitoring of GM and EE policies in national government departments.

#### **4.4.7 Theme 7: Monitoring of Gender Mainstreaming and Employment Equity Policies**

All the participants (100%) indicated that EE and GM policies are not effectively monitored as required by the DoL and Department of Monitoring and Evaluation. Only 14% said that their department reports to the PSC, DoL and Department of Monitoring and Evaluation. The majority (82%) do not submit EE and GM reports. There seemed to be confusion as to which department they are accountable to. Other participants identified challenges in monitoring and enforcement of EE and GM.

##### **(a) Regulation of Employment Equity and Gender Mainstreaming**

The researcher deduced that since the participants' responses indicated that some departments submit EE reports, the focus is on EE; GM monitoring was not mentioned. Kwezi emphasised that the focus should not only be on targets:

I think what we are doing as a department is that we report to the Public Service Commission or DPME (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation) on the numbers or targets. But it shouldn't be just about the targets, it should be more (Kwezi D1).

Sihle pointed to a schism between EE practice and monitoring. She noted that there is no GFP to ensure implementation of EE and it does not make a difference whether the department complies or not as the DPSA is not effectively monitoring implementation:

I don't think the DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration) has a ticket to buy it. They mention it and they have made it part of the impact process, in terms of evaluating the management performance. The management performance tool, which rates departments and obviously which the results become public, but I think our department has become immune to it. It's like it doesn't matter whether they are performing or not. Why because that are attitudes that still need to be dealt with, and they cannot be dealt with until there is a gender focal person. I have tried to deal with it, but I am not the gender focal person (Sihle D7).

Snethemba pointed to inadequate monitoring and evaluation as well as undue focus on targets:

I think we lack monitoring and evaluation. It is not about quantity, it has to be quality (Snethemba D9).

Sihle stated that it does not matter whether the department is compliant or not in terms of EE implementation as it is a paper exercise. She adds that attitudes need to change; however, this is not possible as there is no GFP in her department. A DPSA Public Service Employment Equity Workshop indicated that only 33 of the 141 departments in the public service (25%) submitted EE reports. It added that compliance with the EEA is not only about submitting reports to the DoL, but putting structures and processes in place such as having proper EE plans and implementing these plans. Similarly, Adusah-Karikari and Ohemen's (2012) study found that there are no adequate incentives to enforce equity quotas in Ghana's public service. Snethemba recounted that she requested the DPSA to assist her department to implement the EE policy with no positive results.

Sihle and Snethemba's insights dovetail with Dweba's (2012) study on EE policy implementation in a local municipality. While an EE plan was developed and submitted to the DoL, the document was then filed and never revisited. Further findings indicated that the municipality had not appointed, assigned or designated a senior manager to monitor and implement the plan.

Sarah stated that, regardless of the EE policy, patriarchy is still prevalent in the organisational culture:

The Employment Equity policy, it's a progressive policy that's there to change the patriarchal culture, specifically towards employment and management positions as well supporting what the Constitution wants for the country. But it's not actually enforced so again it becomes like a white elephant. So, I mean people don't actually take the employment equity policy seriously, and that is a concern (Sarah D2).

This suggests that gender transformation policies are not taken seriously in government departments. Other participants stated that, while an EE report is submitted to comply with regulations there is no proper monitoring:

In gender mainstreaming we are lacking behind because it is not as organised as it should be. In some instances, we are just complying because DPSA (Department of Public Service and Administration) needs that report and we don't do it right (Anne D12).

Anne's response suggests that GM is not properly managed or implemented. Furthermore, the participants did not provide information on whether departments meet the targets set in the reports and whether substantive outcomes are achieved. The effectiveness or otherwise of most interventionist programmes depends on the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation vis-à-vis the achievement of set goals and objectives. Together with impact indicators and other evaluation tools (such as qualitative evaluation methods or gender auditing) this would enable assessment of whether or not GM is taking place. The lack of GM and EE monitoring suggests that government departments and the DoL and CGE are not assessing the status of gender transformation. Lack of monitoring translates to a lack of progress and sustainability of these policies as departments' compliance status remains unknown. If gender transformative policies are not reported by departments and not monitored by the DoL and CGE, the objectives of the policies cannot be achieved as there is no accountability.

#### **4.4.8 Theme 8: Male Volunteers' Narratives**

As discussed in Chapter 3, whilst conducting fieldwork, two males volunteered to participate in the study as their key priority areas are gender transformation and health and wellness, respectively. At the end of the interview at D5, a male Director, Samuel indicated that his work entails transformation programmes and employee health and wellness and he was keen to share his experiences of leadership and as an overseer of transformation policies.

The second male, Benedict, was recommended by Mpumi at D10, who informed me that her department has a GFP who is a black African male Deputy Director:

The gender manager is a white male director and the deputy director is a black male and he has a Master's in gender studies. The director got the position more because we had our structure reviewed last year so people had to be moved, so he asked that he be given that post. He is a person with disability so he is able to drive gender and disability programmes. They have been very active because last year we really tried to push to make sure that a policy was in place to sensitise people about gender (Mpumi D10).

Based on their job positions focusing on gender transformation, I interviewed the two males to add value to the study. The roles and participation of men as partners in the quest for gender equality cannot be overemphasised. Connell (2003) noted that it is mainly women that place gender equality on the public agenda. Since they are disadvantaged by the main patterns of gender inequality, women should have a claim for redress. This logic is so strong that gender issues have been widely regarded as 'women's business' and of no concern to men and boys. However, the role of men and boys in relation to gender equality has emerged in international discussions, beginning with the Beijing Fourth World Conference.

Paragraph 25 of the Beijing Declaration committed participating Governments to "encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards equality". The detailed Platform for Action that accompanied the Declaration restated the principle of shared power and responsibility between men and women, and argued that women's concerns could only be addressed "in partnership with men" towards gender equality. A similar approach was adopted in the 23<sup>rd</sup> special session of the UN General Assembly (Beijing +5) held in the year 2000. The Political Declaration adopted at this session made an even stronger statement on men's responsibility: "[Governments] emphasize that men must involve themselves and take joint responsibility with women for the promotion of gender equality."

It is important for men to participate in promoting gender equality. Gender mainstreaming emphasises gender equality, which is inclusive of men. The EEA also includes men in the transformation agenda. To achieve GM and EE outcomes, women and men should be custodians of gender equality goals. In particular, in departments where women and men work together, a change in attitudes and normative inequalities is important to achieve GM and EE outcomes.

### **(a) Men conducting Gender Transformation Work in National Government Departments**

The male volunteers constitute 6% of the sample. Both Benedict and Samuel undertake gender programme work in their departments. One of the most exciting parts of the study for the researcher was the opportunity to observe participants in their work environment without necessarily probing. In the process, the researcher observed and interviewed men, which was not the original intention. Including male narratives on GM enabled a study that is more balanced, unbiased and all-inclusive. It also improves the study's validity and strengthens data triangulation.

Samuel had this to say:

Issues of employment equity, us achieving the target as a department, we all contribute. There is a commitment and we have forums where we engage; we have learning networks. Recently, we've a discussion around the Employment Equity Commission's report, dissecting, unpacking it, and understanding it (Samuel D5).

Samuel states that EE is openly discussed and understood in his department. The fact that all officials contribute to achieving the EE policy targets stood out. This is because EE is not only about heads of departments taking responsibility for its implementation; it is every official's responsibility. His views also attest to the fact that it is crucial for departments to have a dedicated unit and appoint GFPs. As discussed in section 3, without a dedicated unit, there is no will or responsible person to manage and oversee implementation of gender transformation policies.

Benedict expressed different, but strong views:

With me as a man, you can preach it [gender transformation]. But when it comes to practice, that is where the problem is because of the manner in which I was brought up, it becomes a problem. However, I can articulate it in the workplace environment but translate it to me personally, it is difficult. There is a conflict. Unconsciously, [you] see yourself pursuing the patriarchal system. If my wife can see me preaching these things, she would probably say, 'Yoh! I wish he can do that at home' (Benedict D10).

Benedict's response highlights that patriarchy infiltrates all spheres of life including social environments where progressive laws and policies promote gender transformation. He is a GFP in D10; however, he admits that it is difficult (if not impossible) to transgress his gender and cultural socialisation. For example, he reported that he can communicate and promote gender

transformation in his department, but his subconscious and practices are contradictory. It is a challenge to translate gender equality to his personal life; he remarked that his wife would be shocked if she could witness him doing his gender transformation work. Benedict also shed light on the schism between GM and EE policy and practice in his department:

There are lots of challenges. Gender mainstreaming, even employment equity, they are just taken as add-ons. At the same time, that creates a serious problem. We are unable to translate the international into domestic laws and it is because no one is taking women empowerment more seriously (Benedict D10).

Benedict indicates that GM and EE are regarded as add-on policies that are not taken seriously. In contrast, Samuel spoke of open dialogues involving women and men:

We've got culture programmes and diversity management programmes where different races interact. On issues of gender, we've got a men's forum and a women's forum where we hold dialogues. There are times when we combine women and men in the dialogues. Women have their own issues to discuss just like men. We have sessions where we invite people from the Gender Commission. On issues of sexual harassment, sometimes we have different engagements. We've been able to give employees a platform to engage (Samuel D5).

Samuel's response indicates that for GM and EE policies to be effectively implemented, government officials must be sensitised through open communication and consultation. The department's gender programme practices are in tandem with GM policy as it aims to achieve equality between women and men. However, this does not mean that there are no challenges as Samuel mentioned the existence of sexual harassment. As discussed under theme 8, women share a common experience of oppression built around male control of women's bodies. This is due to normative sexist and patriarchal government structures and cultural practices that oppress women.

The researcher is of the view that the issue of GM, particularly as it concerns men, is more complex than an attempt to provide a monolithic, fix-it-all approach that seeks to alter the culture at the policy level. Culture is more than just a way of life; it is life; imbedded and socialised from birth. Thus, any policy approach that aims to succeed, must not only be a bottom-up approach, but must take into cognisance the cultural background and dispositions of the targeted individuals or group(s). The final section analyses the deconstruction of the gender discourse in the democratic South Africa.

#### **4.4.9 Theme 9: Post-colonial South Africa, Democracy and Deconstruction of the Gender Discourse**

Eighty per cent of the participants offered insights and perceived outcomes in relation to GM and EE in the sampled government departments. Waylen (1994) showed, how the focus of what the author terms ‘orthodox’ views of democratisation, omits women. At a constitutive level, this omission stems from a narrow view of politics as an elite-driven and pro-male process. Likewise, analyses of South Africa’s transition to democracy have tended to focus on the actions and motivations of a narrow range of key stakeholders (Friedman, 1993; Ebrahim, 1999) although some have been concerned with the extent to which the masses or activists at the grassroots level were marginalised in the negotiation process (Marais, 1998; Webster & Adler, 1999; Saul, 1991).

##### **(a) Participants’ Views on Gender Issues in the Democratic Context**

In a bid to ascertain the participants’ views on the place of GM in the South African democratic context, the researcher solicited responses from both women and men. Their views are presented in this section. The opinions can be delineated into negative (48% of the participants) and positive (52%) perspectives.

Funeka remarked that:

Since we became democratic, a lot was put in place and so many good policies like Gender Mainstreaming. However, we lack implementation and the problem with the government is that we keep producing and not reviewing policies. It has been 20 years, we are repeating the same thing. Now we have the National Development Plan, we’re saying in 2030. Women empowerment is not there totally, we have policies but practically nothing is done. So, women are not empowered (Funeka D3).

Funeka points to the misalignment of policy and practice. She states that new policies are developed without reviewing current ones. As a result, government repeats the same mistakes. She also suggests that the National Development Plan was introduced without reviewing current policies. Consequently, the women empowerment agenda is not achieved.

I know so many gender focal points, we are located lower levels. We are trying to empower people. It translates to individual departments and nothing is happening. The focus on soft issues but not on core issues that would enable emancipation and empowerment of women.

The environment is not conducive. We have pieces of legislations that are good, but are they being translated into reality? Not at all (Benedict D10).

Benedict mentioned that GFPs are appointed at lower levels where they cannot impact decision making. Similar to Funeka, he identifies a schism between policy and practice; this major challenge was highlighted by most of the participants.

Sarah posited that government has regressed in terms of the gender agenda:

Many people play lip service to gender equity issues, they do not really understand it, in order to be implemented there needs to be a basic understanding of what I think people must be honest, they are not serious about gender. This brilliant research and reports but absolutely no teeth. I think we must be very honest that we have taken several steps back in terms of advancing our gender agenda (Sarah D2).

Sarah's views allude to the lack of proper monitoring and enforcement of gender transformation policies. As discussed in theme 9, government departments lack proper monitoring and enforcement. While some participants had negative views, others shared positive insights that acknowledge the government's concerted effort to drive and implement the transformation agenda:

We must thank the government, because if it were not the effort of the government I will not be in this position, they did well for the country and for us who were disadvantage. I think the government still need to do more in term of ethics. Honesty, openness, because if honesty is not in our country, then the country is doom. We need honesty at all levels and institutions (Theresa D24).

Theresa acknowledges that she would not be in a leadership position if it were not for the opportunities the democratic government created for black people. On the other hand, she emphasised that government must focus more on ethics.

Vuyiswa also acknowledged the government's commitment to gender transformation:

We are blessed in that there is the country's leadership commitment. I've seen in the work that we do where there'll be follow-through from the office of the President himself responding to reports like the Status of Women in the South African Economy. The President's office has issued letters to all departments to say, 'You need to now plan in gender sensitive manner and putting women as a priority'. There's still resistance, there are still issues of patriarchy. There are still cultural

practices that challenge the gains that we've made. But I see us soldiering on to achieve what we have set to achieve (Vuyiswa D25).

Vuyiswa highlights the government's concerted effort and commitment to redress and gender transformation. For example, she mentions that the current President's office issued a communication to all government departments stating that planning must be conducted in a gender-sensitive manner. However, she also notes that patriarchal cultural practices are hindering progress. Patriarchal culture perpetuates gender roles, which reinforces the gendered environment in government departments even with the GM framework in place. Women as a gender are mainstreamed to fill the gaps but gendered roles and practices that regard women as inferior to men persist. This means that GM is restricted to quotas. Patriarchy and sexism still largely inform work practices and decision making. The same applies to EE; individuals with disabilities and black women are employed, but are still regarded as tokens that serve the purpose of achieving quotas. Their voices are not heard in decision-making and many do not feel that they are qualified for their positions. Thus, significant challenges remain in achieving GM and EE. These issues are further discussed in the following chapter.

#### 4.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, the experiences and insights of the women (and two men) that were interviewed strongly indicate the need for on-going gender transformation, GM and EE in South African national government departments. The chapter discussed the participants' experiences of and insights on GM and EE. It is evident from their responses that these policies are not effectively mainstreamed and implemented in national government departments due to gender-biased, racist, sexist and patriarchal organisational structures, cultures and practices. The lack of dedicated gender transformation units and GFPs to drive the transformation agenda further impedes progress. Furthermore, GM is a framework rather than a policy. While EE is a policy, it is also clear that its implementation is impeded by patriarchal systems of oppression. For example, the majority of the women leaders lack independent power in decision-making structures and their authority is perpetually undermined. In terms of EE policy, implementation mainly relates to numerical representation and it is mired in gendered, sexualised and racialised politics. This argument is developed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS: AFRICAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND EMPLOYMENT EQUITY POLICIES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This feminist qualitative study investigated black South African women leaders' experiences and the outcomes of GM and EE as transformational policies in democratic national government. This chapter presents the findings drawn from women leaders' insights on the functionality of GM and EE in national government. It also presents the outcomes of these policies as experienced by the study informants. Feminist intersectionality, postcolonial feminism and state feminism are used as theoretical lenses in the discussion of the research results. The chapter starts with a presentation of and discussion on the women's insights informed by their lived experience of working in national government. This is followed by conclusions in relation to these insights. The chapter ends with a summary.

#### **5.2 The Impact of the Gender-biased, Patriarchal and Racial Organisational Culture on Women's Voices and Leadership Experiences**

This section discusses women's muted voices and oppressive organisational cultures and practices that perpetuate gender inequality. Patriarchal control of women's reproductive rights, such as maternity rights and sexual harassment is discussed. The exercise of control over women's bodies remains the major conduit by which men oppress women. The study's findings attest that women leaders in government departments lack control over their bodies due to male hegemony despite the adoption of GM and EE as government policies to challenge androcentric norms and promote gender equality (Squires, 2005; Verloo, 2005, 2001; Walby 2005; Rees 1998; Jahan 1995).

##### **5.2.1 Patriarchal Control of Women's Reproductive Rights and Bodies: The Impact of Pregnancy on Women's Professional Work**

Women-centred conditions such as pregnancy are not acknowledged and there is thus a lack of organisational support and covert discrimination, particularly among senior management. For example, it was reported that some women were discouraged from falling pregnant due to

demanding work schedules as this would negatively affect organisational performance. This deprives women of their reproductive rights despite their entitlement to four months paid maternity leave in the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act (Act 20 of 2013). Pregnant women who apply for positions also experience discriminatory practices during recruitment and selection even though they meet the job requirements. This led to some not disclosing their pregnancy. This finding points to the intersecting oppression that maintains women's subjugation regardless of progressive laws and policies that protect their rights and aim to eradicate discrimination.

Concerns were also raised about resentment among colleagues that are expected to fill in for women employees while they are on maternity leave. These colleagues felt overburdened as the work was not evenly distributed. Thus, when the woman returns from maternity leave, she faces negative attitudes. This clearly indicates that women's reproductive rights are controlled and that gendered separate spheres are maintained. Discrimination is legitimised based on patriarchal working conditions. This means that government departments are not sensitive to women-centred conditions. Discrimination is also grounded on the broader discourses of normative practices of control over women's bodies to uphold hegemonic masculinity. The notion of hegemonic masculinity examines and critiques behaviour and any social phenomena that privilege the dominant position of men over women in society (Connell, 2005). Mkhize and Njawala (2016) emphasise that hegemonic masculinity is valuable in the analysis of power relations, male dominance and the implications thereof. In the sampled departments this notion impacts women's decisions about parenthood, restricts their reproductive freedom and signals that women are not the ideal workers. Therefore, GM and EE policies must address the intersecting deep invisible systems of oppression within departments' structures that restrict women from challenging institutions on any matter based on the standard stereotypes and subjugations surrounding their gender (Rao & Kelleher, 2005) and the protection of their reproductive rights. The intersectionality theory helps to uncover the invisible systems of oppression whose impact is directly and tangibly felt by women in government departments.

### **5.2.2 Hegemonic Control over Women's Bodies**

Subordination is also evident in the patriarchal control experienced through sexual harassment that was found to be prevalent in government departments. Both the EEA (No. 47 of 2013) and LRA have Codes of Good Practice that set out appropriate procedures to deal with allegations

of sexual harassment. The Codes encourage the development and implementation of policies and procedures that will lead to a workplace that is free from sexual harassment, and where employers and employees respect one another's integrity, dignity, privacy and the right to equity in the workplace. The policy also finds expression in the Protection from Harassment Act (No 17 of 2011) (DPSA Report).

Generally, women are sexually harassed by mainly senior male colleagues in government departments. The female body is not perceived of as something the woman controls, but as a man's possession. The prevailing organisational cultural practices of male hegemony, and intersecting gender discrimination, devalue women even though they are professionals, resulting in sexual harassment. This is because women are objectified as sexual and nurturing human beings. Sexual objectification is embedded in hegemonic masculinity where the constructed 'superior' sex has a sense of entitlement to possess and oppress the 'inferior' sex. The study's findings confirm that some men in government departments have coerced or consensual sexual relations with multiple women partners as a symbol of their power among other male professionals. Thus, women are objectified as trophies, symbolising a man's virility. The women that wilfully agree to sexual exploitation are also participating in patriarchy as they perpetuate deeply rooted stereotypes about women and how they attain leadership positions. Women that challenge sexual harassment are negatively labelled, disliked and resented by male colleagues. Those that dare to speak the truth are always in danger of being attacked and discredited in order to maintain the silence (Johnson, 1997: 158) of their exploitation and subjugation. Mitchell explains that male hegemony is never complete; it must continually reaffirm itself (2013) and this often results in multiple, intersecting oppressions that confine women in the matrix of male hegemonic domination.

Black women's struggle presents specificity due to historical oppression, slavery and their social representation through erotic, sexual objectification. Feminist authors (hooks, 1992; Collins, 1990; Davis, 1983; Lorde, 1973) conceptualised multiple identity subjugation(s) as intersectionality due to black women's overlapping, multiple forms of oppression (sexism, racism, and classism) mutually constructed in a system of power. The study found that women in government departments are expected to 'nurture' their male colleagues by being 'available' for male sexual gratification. MacKinnon (1979) asserts, that sexual harassment is a component of organisational structures. Some women perpetuate sexual harassment by exchanging sexual favours for promotion. This disadvantages all women and perpetuates gender-based

stereotypes. Some of the study participants stated that they had been accused of such practices. Those that refuse are victimised. Butler (1997) cautions that women need to be aware of the experience of their body as a lived body, bringing to light the double subjectivity dimension. On the one hand, the body as 'lived' is part of one's own subjectivity; on the other, it is an object belonging to another subjectivity (that of males). The subject should be aware of this condition of double significance, because the body as subject-object exists from the perspective of the other, which recognises the female body as the object of another subject.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that male hegemony in national government departments gives men perceived legitimate cultural, social, political and economic control over women's bodies, reproduction and paid work. Therefore, hegemonic masculinity is used not only as a tool for sexism (Connell, 2005; Johnson, 2007; Howson, 2006) but also, wittingly or unwittingly, as a tactic to perpetuate patriarchal stereotypes against those gender and sexual identities considered inferior, through ascribed gender roles of femininity and masculinity which are deemed cultural and a 'norm' (Mkhize, 2015). These findings confirm that male hegemony is perceived and acted out normatively. It signifies male privilege and requires all other men to position themselves in relation to it, thus maintaining gender inequities. This is where male ideology translates to male-stream culture and it is perceived and practiced in the legitimate mainstream of departments.

### **5.3 Consequences of Compulsory Conformity to the Male-stream Culture**

Conformity to male-stream cultural practices in departments is not without consequences that continue to challenge women. The study identified that conforming to the hegemonic organisational culture and practices has negative outcomes for women such as health complications, tokenised leaders, stereotypes, and on-going sexism despite the EE and GM policies.

#### **5.3.1 The Hostile, Male-stream Organisational Culture's Impact on Women's Health**

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that for women leaders to succeed in government departments, they must conform to organisational cultural practices and processes even if this adversely affects their health. The participants noted that women leaders suffer from ill-health due to the hostile organisational environment and culture, work stress and discrimination. For example, while one participant reported her condition to her Head of

Department, no action was taken. As a result, some women leaders decided to resign. This is due to the fact that gender is not mainstreamed in government departments. Cabrera (2006) also found that women resigned from their jobs because they were dissatisfied with working in the masculine organisational culture that dominated their organisations, and with gender-biased practices and intersectional oppressions. Furthermore, the study revealed that women leaders are held responsible for non-performance regardless of ill-health. The focus is on job outputs; they are thus regarded as incompetent and unable to meet performance standards.

Again, existing stereotypes and beliefs that women are incapable leaders are reinforced even though the patriarchal, racist, gender-biased and hostile work environment is the cause of their ill-health. Acker (1990: 139) states that men's bodies, sexuality, and relationships to procreation and professional work are subsumed in the image of the worker. Images of men's bodies and masculinity pervade organisational processes, marginalising women and contributing to the maintenance of gender segregation. The patriarchal nature and multiple oppressions in government departments have detrimental effects on women's physical and mental health. Despite GM and EE policies, due to the patriarchal organisational norms, there is no platform to communicate or interventions to challenge patriarchal practices. This means that gender transformative policies are not operationalised as women are represented in leadership echelons and appear to have made it, but continue to struggle within male-centred work contexts. Such domains reproduce gender inequalities even though government has placed gender transformation at the top of its agenda. The researcher argues that integration and the functionality of the GM framework and EE policy could address these negative effects on women's health as women's rights will be protected by EE legislation and the integration of a gender perspective will ensure that employees' challenges and needs are prioritised.

### **5.3.2 Lack of Substantive Decision-making**

Since national government institutions are policy makers, government departments should set a positive example of non-discriminatory practices. However, the study revealed the prevalence of racist stereotypes and gender-based exclusionary practices. Such practices are based on perceptions that black Africans, especially women, are intellectually inferior; this permeates the culture and practices of government departments. Due to such stereotypes, black women's legitimate leadership authority is perpetually undermined. Women are in powerful positions; however, based on these findings, I argue that gender quotas do not automatically lead to the

substantive representation of women in departments as colonial legacies remain deeply entrenched. Similar to intersectionality, feminist postcolonialism highlights the re-positioning of women's identities through the lenses of specific positions and locations (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 1981).

The glass ceiling has been shattered in government departments as quota requirements have been effective in achieving descriptive representation, such as increased numerical representation of women in leadership echelons. However, substantive representation of women in leadership is lacking. Generally, the implementation of quotas is believed to be a panacea for the under-representation of women in politics (Dahlerup, 2006). It is also believed to enhance the quality of democratic decision-making on a substantive level by including women's interests and perspectives (Phillips, 1995; Young, 1997). In contrast, this study showed that women lack functional decision-making authority and control and are also sidelined in departments, although job descriptions entail full decision-making powers. Therefore, implementation of EE and GM policies has focused on descriptive representation, thus devaluing women to become tokens with no leadership authority, autonomy, or significant impact on decision-making. Moreover, women leaders' power to articulate women's interests, perspectives and GM in departments is non-existent due to normative exclusionary, patriarchal, sexist and racial practices. Vetten et al. (2015: 2) state that "women's political participation in formal government is widely recognised as a pre-existing condition for the realisation of full democracy" in the democratic South Africa.

According to Mankazana (2014: 76), women in South Africa are excluded from decision- and policy-making in all spheres of influence. This study's findings show that, this has led to neglect of women leaders' needs as well as daily gender-specific constraints. Hassim (2014: 10) asserts that such exclusion is the reason why "institutions which are supposed to articulate gender equality in government policies have been less successful in making an impact to redress inequalities". Ideally, such impact would take the form of effective state feminist practices (inclusive of GM and EE) as an extension of the state's responsibilities in improving women's status. This could occur on various organisational fronts, including ministries, agencies, commissions and national government departments (Stetson & Mazur, 1995; Rai, 2003; Lovenduski, 2005). However, state feminist practice or its imperatives were not mentioned by the participants in the sampled departments and the findings attest to a lack of such practices. Applying state feminist theory, Kano (2011) points out that the state will be

more driven to champion state feminism if it needs to do so to achieve its objectives. However, the state will be less fervent if state feminism challenges the gender-biased status quo. The researcher concurs with Kobayashi (2002) that state feminism and women's representation in public spheres are important, yet limited in addressing gender imbalances in society. However, state feminism should institutionalise feminist interests within public institutions by establishing an independent policy agency for women capacitated by feminist activists or those who share feminist interests. It should also employ activists as administrators and officials in leadership positions, and increase the number of women politicians advocating for gender equality policies. This will result in policies and laws that take feminist interests into account and will address gender disparities (Kobayashi, 2002).

The study's findings show that GM and EE policies challenge the status quo by aiming to redress gender power relations and racial inequities in government departments; however, the policies are marginalised by the same government that is mandated to promote them. Overall, the marginalisation and exclusion of women from substantive representation is rationalised through normalised feminine and masculine stereotypical gender roles that perpetuate and legitimise inequalities between the sexes. Feminist theorists (McKinnon, 1989; Ferguson, 1984) posit that despite the number of women entering government and the many laws and policies adopted, unequal gender relations that maintain male privilege and female oppression will not be transformed if there is a lack of substantive representation and an independent feminist policy agency. The significance of the establishment of an independent feminist policy agency cannot be overemphasised. Since the CGE is a statutory body, in practice it is not operating independently. It is constrained by its location as it would be difficult to apply statutory procedures if the same government that appointed it does not deliver on its mandate.

Stetson and Mazur (1995: 16) identify two aspects of state feminism: (a) state capacity — the extent to which women's policy machinery influences feminist policy; and (b) state-society relations — the extent to which “women's policy machinery develops opportunities for society-based actors (feminist and women's advocacy organisations) to have access to the policy process”. In line with this thinking, state feminism will be achieved when the South African state is defined as a site of social justice and has the capacity to institutionalise new demands for equality, and “when society sustains widely supported feminist organizations that challenge sexual hierarchies”. Without such conditions politicians may establish women's policy offices (such as the CGE); however, it will be challenging to influence women's equality or empower

women in society (Stetson & Mazur, 1995: 290). The next section examines the impact of gender schemas and normative gender roles in government departments.

### **5.3.3 Impact of Gender Schemas and Normative Gender Roles**

The study's results confirm that despite the increased number of women in leadership positions in national government departments, gender schemas organised according to the patriarchal order subjugate women. Bem (1981) explains that a schema is a cognitive structure, a network of associations that organises and guides an individual's perceptions. Schemas interpret perception as a constructive process wherein what is perceived is a product of the interaction between the incoming information and the perceiver's pre-existing schema (Neisser, 1976).

Pre-existing schemas affect black African women leaders as they experience gendered stereotypes, racism, sexism and male domination that the GM and EE policies aim to eradicate. These stereotypes are grounded and reinforced by gender schemas of masculinity and femininity, which identify a set of characteristics, values and meanings related to gender roles and the gender division of labour (Mkhize & Njawala, 2016: 382). People have a proclivity to conform to socially constructed gender stereotypical norms engineered through instruments of socialisation such as the family, religion, mass media and language. Consequently, these gender norms shape society and are internalised as men perceive of themselves as superior to women. For example, as the study's findings show, women are perceived of as submissive non-thinkers, and men are believed to be powerful thinkers in all spheres of life.

### **5.3.4 Persistence of Sexism**

Apart from racist oppression, black African women leaders in government departments have to contend with sexism. Sexism is "a system of oppression based on gender differences that involves cultural and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" (Shorter-Gooden, 2004: 407). While the study participants are legitimate leaders, they are still considered as inferior to males and inferior to other racial groups. I agree with de Beauvoir (2009) that, "one is not born a woman, but rather one becomes a woman". This places women as constructed 'others'; and black women suffer the most. Thus, women leaders' status is reduced to being dependants of men in government departments. Sexism is a complex phenomenon that is not tangible and is thus difficult to deal with as it is embedded within the deep structures of departments. Butler (1993: 2-3) notes that the construct of 'sex' is no longer

a bodily given on which the construction of gender is artificially imposed, but a cultural norm which governs the materialisation of bodies. The study results show that women leaders are regarded as tokens that must do what they are told regardless of seniority. They are side-lined based on their race and gender in decision-making processes even though their work entails decision-making. The oppressors maintain their position and avoid responsibility for their actions. Lorde (1984) states, that, as a tool of control, women have been socialised to focus on the human differences between women and men. They have learned to coexist with men and negotiate gender differences; although this perpetuates dominant/subordinate human relationships, the oppressed must know the master's difference to survive (1984: 122).

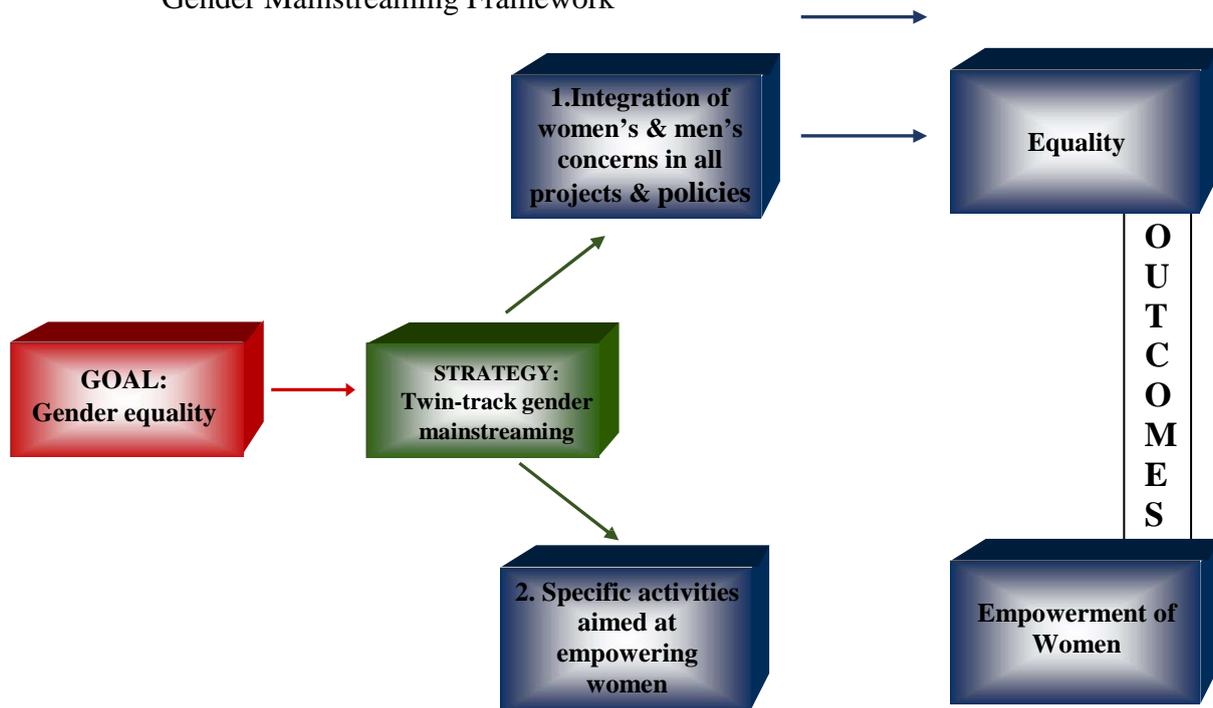
Organisational policies such as GM and EE aim to eradicate sexist discrimination but fail to recognise the complexity of sexism and there is no platform for women to report problems because government departments are bureaucratic and male-stream. The lived experiences of these black African women leaders are encapsulated by Crenshaw's (1994) observation that structural intersectionality takes place when inequalities and their intersections directly impact the experiences of women in leadership. The study participants' experiences point to a myriad intersecting identity and oppressions. Such crisscross oppression is centred on multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structured power (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). This has resulted in women simultaneously experiencing structural intersecting disadvantages related to race and gender hierarchies. Hence the significance of utilising intersectionality theory in this study since multiple connected identities are brought to the fore such as women leaders' experiences as objectified 'others'. This negatively impacts on GM and EE as these policies that aim to eradicate gender inequalities are marginalised in departments by also being objectified, especially the GM framework as it is added-on to male-centred organisational contexts that are resistant to its effective operationalisation. Therefore, the outcomes remain elusive. As the study's results show, the intersectionality theory can rectify the interlocking challenges that marginalise GM and EE policies by (a) revealing and acknowledging intersecting oppressions, gender and race relations challenges within departments, (b) by doing so, enabling departmental structures, cultures and practical procedures to promote gender-sensitivity, guaranteeing equal treatment of genders and races, and (c) implementing substantive practical activities such as programmes that promote GM and EE policies. Moreover, the process of eradicating interlocking challenges must be driven by political will and accountability by Heads of Departments and policy-

makers. Employees should also be active partners in GM and EE as the implementation and outcomes of policies has direct impacts on all within government departments.

#### **5.4 Outcomes of GM and EE Transformational Policies in Government Departments**

The study's findings show that the equality and women empowerment outcomes intended by GM and EE policies in government departments have not been fully achieved. The major reasons are patriarchy, women abuse, identity politics, and the marginalisation of GM and EE. Moser's (2005: 581-582) twin-track GM framework resonates with this study as it includes GM's integration of women's and men's concerns (needs and interests) throughout a development process (in all policies); and specific activities aimed at empowering women. In addition to the integration of women and men's needs, the researcher suggests that state feminism (through national gender machinery) must also be integrated with GM and EE policies. In order to achieve systemic outcomes, mainstreaming gender into policy-making requires transformation of organisational cultures and structures in policy processes, and mechanisms, and accountable actors (Council of Europe, 1998). Figure 9 depicts the processes in GM policy documents, and can help policy-makers in government departments to differentiate between goals, strategies and actions to achieve sustainable outcomes (Moser, 2005).

**Figure 9:** Flow Chart of the United Kingdom Department for International Development Gender Mainstreaming Framework



Source: Adapted from Moser (2005)

Therefore, the state should be perceived of as the historical product of a collection of practices and discourses. Policy outcomes will therefore depend on the interests instituted within the state. For black women (and men) to benefit from policy outcomes such as GM and EE, their interests need to be articulated, constructed and maintained within the state. National government departments are located at the apex of the state; hence the imperative to achieve sustainable outcomes through effective gender transformation. The challenges confronting implementation are discussed in the next section.

#### 5.4.1 Male-centred Government Institutional Culture and Practices

The gendered and male-centred character of government departments is a major finding of this study. This institutional patriarchal culture can be attributed to the fact that the majority of African societies are patriarchal. For example, the Nguni ethnic groups in South Africa are based on the visible hegemonic social position of men and the non-hegemonic social position of women (Mkhize & Njawala, 2016: 380). The study found that women leaders in government departments are perceived of as the inferior sex and men as the superior one. Male hegemonic

culture cannot be justified as it is based on essentialist biological characteristics; gender is the main premise behind sexism.

Despite the GM and EE policies, the study participants still experience prejudice, firstly because of their gender and secondly their race. Qualifications, skills and acumen are secondary factors. This demonstrates the deeply rooted socially constructed patriarchy that subjugates women leaders in these departments. It is evident that GM and EE policies have not been properly implemented as substantive equality and empowerment have not been achieved. Moser (2005) explains that the GM framework consists of two components: the integration of women's and men's concerns (needs and interests) throughout the development process (in all policies and projects), and specific activities aimed at empowering women. The outcomes thus relate to both increased equality and empowerment.

#### **5.4.2 Women Abuse in the Workplace**

The study's findings reveal that gender-based violence such as sexual harassment is prevalent in government departments, with males generally being the perpetrators. Sexual harassment occurs despite the Protection from Harassment Act (Act no. 17 of 2011) which demands stricter enforcement of sexual harassment policies by organisations. Sexual harassment and gender abuse is driven not only by sexual desire, but largely by men's dominance and exercise of power over women. This perpetuates male hegemony and maintains women in subordinate, powerless positions even in terms of their bodies. In some departments, perpetrators are dismissed when reasonable evidence is found of sexual misconduct. However, for the most part, they are not held accountable for their actions. Mkhize (2015) postulates that, consciously or unconsciously, hegemonic masculinity is a tactic to perpetuate patriarchal stereotypes of – and even violence against – those gender and sexual identities considered inferior, through ascribed gender roles which are deemed cultural and a 'norm'.

Other forms of abuse include sexual innuendos and insults aimed at those that refuse sexual advances and cultural gender-bias at work. This includes males expecting women to sit down when speaking with them, whereas other men can stand. Women leaders are relegated to subservient positions that undermine them as women and as legitimate leaders. Sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination communicate to women that they are not welcome in the workplace and that they are not respected members of the team (Reskin & Padavic, 1994).

The study's findings paint a bleak picture with regard to implementation of GM and EE policy. If these gender transformational policies were effectively implemented, enforced and monitored by those responsible, government departments would not be marred by discriminatory practices. The outcomes would be gender equality rather than perpetual inequality. The researcher concurs with Walby (2005) that there is tension between gender equality – the goal of mainstreaming – and the mainstream, that is, the policy environment into which a gender perspective is to be incorporated. This renders GM a contested and open-ended process (Walby, 2005), which can result in integration into existing power structures and goal displacement or bring a new agenda to the policy process (Jahan, 1995). In the studied departments, the success of GM and EE is negated by hostile, patriarchal, male-stream organisational cultures, practices and structures.

#### **5.4.3 Politics of Identity: Ethnic Discrimination**

South Africa has a raced, gendered and classed history shrouded by perpetual discriminatory practices. In the democratic context, this history continues to shape citizens' daily lives in multifaceted, interwoven and institutionalised ways. For example, this study found that ethnic and racial discrimination are pervasive in government departments. Women leaders shared that colleagues devalue other ethnic groups through prejudice and stereotyping. This kind of discrimination emanates from the colonial vestige of racial and gender stratification where ethnic groups hold negative beliefs about members of other groups. For example, the participants emphasised the divide among Xhosa and Zulu speaking officials caused by stereotypical beliefs and the remnants of colonialism which divided black Africans according to tribes. Women leaders are further disadvantaged when men from the same ethnic group undermine them, as well as women of different ethnicity. This points to the multiplicity of oppressions that converge to dominate women. Corresponding with these findings, the feminist theory of intersectionality postulates that multiple social identities such as gender, race/ethnicity, class, and age (among many other possible identities) are not independent of one another (Crenshaw, 1989; Mkhize, 2015). The researcher argues that when government departments operationalise GM and EE policies, it is important that these multiple intersectionalities are taken into account as they have a direct impact on policy planning, implementation and the outcomes (or lack thereof).

People hold to old rooted blueprints of expectation and response, and old structures of oppression and these must be altered simultaneously with the living conditions which are a result of oppression structures (Lorde, 1984). Echoing Lorde's (1984) assertion, the study's findings highlight that colonialist practices persist in the democratic South Africa through multiple identities and simultaneous oppressions, interconnected histories, shifting and diverse material conditions and "a place in which new racisms and oppressions are being formed" (McConaghy, 1999: 121). These colonial oppressions continue to subjugate black African women despite the gender transformational policies introduced by the democratic government. Government employers and employees need to recognise, respect and embrace diversity, and intersectional identities for a conducive work environment and respect all people's rights and voices irrespective of race, gender, ethnicity, class, age, and ability. In addition to ethnic discrimination, women leaders' insights pointed to the ageist ideologies prevalent in government departments.

#### **5.4.4 Seniority Stereotypes: Age Discrimination**

The study found that age discrimination is based on multiple intersecting discriminatory practices that negatively affect women's leadership performance. Ageism is not limited to relations between men and women, but manifests between women as well as between men. Women leaders' negative experiences are not only due to their gender, race, and ethnicity; but also, their age, marital status and child-bearing status. Some of the participants reported that they were discriminated against because they are young, unmarried and childless. Despite occupying leadership positions, 'young' women are regarded as naive and ascribed junior status by both women and men across races. Thus, gender and age intersect and impact their personal lives, such as the decision not to have children. Their work performance and inputs are undervalued and trivialised due to their perceived youth. Being young, black and a woman situate women leaders in the margins.

Itzin and Phillipson (1995) suggest that women and men experience age, ageing and ageism in different ways in organisations and management (Itzin & Phillipson, 1995). Duncan and Loretto's (2004) study found that women in the workplace experience more age discrimination than men. Ultimately, age is socially, historically, and culturally specific and fluid. For instance, in the African culture, seniority, especially among males (and women, although secondary to males) is revered through the *hlonipha* values and is associated with wisdom and

life experience. In contrast, within the sampled government departments, older women employees reported that they are discriminated against and colleagues are not eager to work with them. Thus, women are never the 'right' age and being childless is held against them. However, as discussed earlier, pregnant women are also disadvantaged. This highlights the intertwined identity ambiguities, simultaneous oppressions and shifting conditions women leaders face in national government departments. This finding is consistent with the intersectionality theory which states that social experiences rooted in multiple dimensions of difference interlock and shape identities (Mahalingham, 2001). Since the leadership experiences of women are linked to age discrimination and gender relations, this theory is relevant in addressing identity based discrimination. As discussed in Section 5.3.4 above, this can be achieved by integrating the intersectionality theory in GM planning by including strategic action plans driven by political will to eradicate systemic oppressions and patriarchy in government departments' organisational culture, structure and practices. Other oppression is inflicted through the marginalisation of persons with disabilities in government departments.

#### **5.4.5 (Dis)ability Invisibility**

The study's results suggest that the socially constructed male-stream and able-bodiedness ideology within government departments marginalises persons with (dis)abilities as the 'pathologised other'. This is evident in the recruitment process where such persons are deemed unsuitable and incompetent for mainstream work. Human resource recruiters act as gatekeepers and deny persons with (dis)abilities employment as legitimate workers in these departments. In line with Mkhize (2015: 138), the use of an intersectional theoretical lens revealed that gender and disability intersect in that they both speak to bodily, social and cultural constructions, as well as hierarchy, identity, discrimination and inequality.

This study found that despite the provisions of the EEA (Act 47 of 2013) that states that persons with (dis)abilities should have equal opportunities for positions for which they are qualified their physical challenges are used as a rationale not to employ them. Furthermore, prejudice and discrimination are prevalent in departments with officials with (dis)abilities. This is despite the EEA's (47 of 2013) requirement of fair and equal representation of race, gender and disability at all occupational levels. The Act further stipulates that appropriate physical infrastructure must be provided to accommodate persons with (dis)abilities and enable them to effectively perform their duties.

However, the study participants reported that provision is not made for officials utilising wheelchairs or in need of specialised equipment. This limits their ability to do their jobs, and contributes to their seclusion and invisibility. Organisational cultural practices and structures also exclude them. These results are supported by previous research that found that the European colonisers “othered” colonised spaces and native races, and structured institutional hierarchies and power differentials marginalised and made invisible persons with (dis)abilities (Parekh, 2007: 148).

Colonial medical discourses which pathologised (dis)ability and rendered it a site of social erasure (Parekh, 2007) are common practice in the sampled departments. These findings point to a lacuna between GM and EE policy and praxis for the constitutional rights of persons with (dis)abilities. The researcher argues that since government is the custodian of gender transformative policies (GM and EE amongst others), it should be an exemplar in practicing non-discrimination by promoting equal opportunities, substantive representation and systemic transformation for persons with (dis)abilities. Furthermore, a paradigm shift is required to establish cultures, structures and practices to achieve transformative equality. Again, the intersectional theoretical lens is useful in shifting ideologies relating to persons with (dis)abilities by accepting that ‘othering’, marginalisation and ‘erasure’ of persons with (dis)abilities perpetuates unjustifiable inequalities and discrimination based on physical bodily challenges perceived as ‘abnormal’. The EEA (Act 47 of 2013) should recognise and include the impact of intersecting oppressions on persons deemed as social outcasts based on their physical bodily challenges. Furthermore, it should require that government departments and other sectors run awareness programmes to normalise and mainstream disability.

## **5.5 Marginalisation of the GM Framework**

The main finding that emerged from this study is that the GM framework has not advanced from rhetoric to systemic practice since it is marginalised. There are four reasons for such marginalisation. Firstly, the fact that the GM framework is still not a policy is a major challenge as it cannot be effectively monitored or enforced in departments. Secondly, there is a lack of political will and resources in government departments to implement the framework and the study has shown that without these drivers, successful implementation is not possible. This leads to a conundrum as sustainable outcomes are not achieved. Thirdly, GM is not monitored.

Fourth, senior management is resistant to GM in most departments because it is not regarded as core business and is dismissed as women's responsibility.

#### **5.5.1 Disadvantages of GM as a Framework Instead of a Policy**

The fact that GM is a framework and not a policy is a challenge as Heads of Departments cannot be held accountable. It thus becomes an add-on instead of being formalised into official policy. Employment equity is an official policy that is monitored by the DoL. Heads of departments are held accountable if non-compliance is detected. Crenshaw (1995) explains that GM is marginalised due to political intersectionality as inequalities and their intersections are relevant to political strategies. Sadie (2014: 118-119) notes, that while the CGE evaluates and monitors progress and implementation, it confronts its own challenges. The first is its limited budget allocation, which is significantly less than other Chapter 9 institutions such as the Public Protector, South African Human Rights Commission, Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities and the Auditor-General. This questions the government's commitment to gender equality and its understanding of the nature of gender work, and limits the CGE's ability to reach out to remote parts of the country where gender inequality is most severe. Secondly, like GFPs in the studied departments, most CGE Commissioners do not have gender training, which compromises their ability to fulfil their functions. Finally, the majority of commissioners are political appointments, and are thus reluctant to challenge the government.

Due to the gendered nature of political bureaucracies, commitment tends to be weak in gender matters. Furthermore, it is a challenge for departments to operationalise the GM framework as is it described as ambiguous and lacking clear vision. Therefore, some departments struggle to move from the GM framework to practice. In general, the practice has been to incorporate GM programmes in departments without transforming the environment in which it is implemented. As noted above, the organisational culture, structure and practices remain the same. The implementation of both GM and EE requires a conducive environment and policy makers and employees that are active partners in the quest to eradicate multifaceted intersecting inequalities.

### 5.5.2 Lack of Human and Financial Resources for GM Implementation

Leadership buy-in, capacitated human resources and gender budgeting are critical tools to implement GM policies and transform gender relations in government departments. The women leaders indicated that government departments lack human and financial resources to implement the GM framework. Various studies have noted similar challenges (Torto, 2013; Durojaye, Chukwudera & Okeke, 2012; Ntakumba, 2010; Nyachieng'a, 2010; Veich, 2005; McDonald, 2003). The departments' organisational structures, cultures and practices are inconducive as GM cannot be successfully integrated in male-stream, gender biased and hostile environments. It was reported that the majority of the departments do not have GFPs or dedicated gender focal units. The few departments (26%) with GFPs lacked appropriately gender trained officials. For example, employees with gender expertise are employed at junior levels and their key priority areas are human resources. Therefore, GM is simply an add-on component to their core functions. Since GFPs are appointed at low ranks, they are not strategically positioned to take part in decision-making at senior management level. Other authors (Sadie, 2014; Roggeband & Verloo, 2006) also attest that the GM framework requires government officials to have gender competences, for which they have not been trained. Gender training of employees in government institutions has developed as a practice to capacitate civil servants and politicians to mainstream gender into policy-making, thereby achieving equality outcomes.

Overall, there has been very limited progress as some departments are at the beginning stages of GM implementation even though the framework was adopted 22 years ago. Limited progress is also evident in the establishment of gender focal units and GM and EE policies tend to focus on quotas instead of substantive representation. Several other studies confirm this finding (Beall, 1998; Gouws, 2005; CGE Gender Barometer Report, 2012; Sauer & Tertinegg, 2003).

The study's findings also suggest that due to lack of GM prioritisation, there is a lack of gender responsive budgeting in the departments. This is a significant limitation considering that the Women's Budget Initiatives in South Africa were introduced in 1995 (Budlender, 1995). It is important to note that gender responsive budgeting does not connote a separate budget for women. Instead, it raises awareness of the effects that budgets have on women, men, girls, and boys and holds governments accountable for their commitment to gender equality (Budlender, 1998: 4). However, in the context of government departments, it refers to budgets allocated to

gender focal units to drive and implement the GM framework. In the sampled departments, during annual budget allocations, gender budgeting is an afterthought. This is a challenge as, like other policies, the GM framework cannot be implemented without an adequate annual budget, human resource capacity and gender expertise. This attests to the gender-biased culture and male-centred practices of government departments. The study findings therefore also confirm GM marginalisation through lack of gender budgeting, meaning that gender cannot be mainstreamed and the intended outcomes cannot be achieved.

### **5.5.3 Resistance to the GM Framework by Senior Management**

The women leaders' insights show that due to the masculine culture of departments, senior management is gender-blind, lacks political will and is resistant to the GM framework. The study also found resistance to gender transformation in departments as the policies challenge the normative patriarchal culture and practices to promote equal substantive representation. This resistance highlights that patriarchy and sexism inform work practices and decision-making. It is discouraging for women leadership because senior management is responsible for overseeing the management and implementation of the GM framework. However, they are not gender aware and do not have the required expertise. Roggeband and Verloo (2006) also found that the challenges to GM implementation lie in the fact that it requires a high level of gender awareness among policy-makers and actors. Sauer and Tartinegg (2005) and Sen (2000) concluded that lack of expertise in GM implementation is a major hindrance. Hence, the researcher argues that GM is not recognised as it functions as a framework and not a policy.

The study's results further illustrate that the democratic government that endorsed the GM framework in 1995, is the same government that is not prioritising GM in national government departments. Therefore, GM is on the margins instead of the centre. Moreover, women are considered GM gatekeepers and their male counterparts resist and distance themselves from the framework. Other scholars have also noted resistance to the GM framework (Verloo, 2006; Stratigaki, 2005; Diaz Gonzalez, 2001) because it challenges gender and power relations between women and men at work. Under these circumstances, black African women in leadership positions in government departments are at the margins, being leaders yet strategically excluded from decision-making and thus not having a substantive impact. It is evident that there is a schism between the GM framework and practice; however, no-one is

held accountable despite the CGE's mandate to regulate and enforce gender mainstreaming in public and private institutions.

#### **5.5.4 Lack of GM Monitoring**

Although the CGE has a constitutional mandate to monitor, enforce, investigate, research, educate, lobby and report on issues concerning gender equality in state organs (CGE National Report, 2011: 4), this study's findings reveal contradictory evidence in the sampled national departments. They point to a dismal lack of GM monitoring and accountability. In sharing their insights, the women leaders seldom mentioned GM monitoring and those that did, noted that it is non-existent and spoke mostly of EE monitoring which is also not effective (see Section 5.7 below).

The researcher argues that, while the CGE is an independent statutory body established in terms of Section 187, Act 108 of 1996 of the South Africa Constitution, in practice it is not operating independently. It is constrained by its location as it would be a challenge to apply statutory procedures to the same government that established it. Given the general lack of prioritisation of GM, as well as political will, and resources, and slow and fragmented implementation, it is argued that the CGE is weak in terms of monitoring. Seidman (2003: 548) and Meintjes (2006: 271) observed that the CGE was hesitant to challenge the government whilst Sadie (2014) emphasised that the institution does not challenge legislation, or direct or propose policy and legislation.

#### **5.6 Marginalisation of EE Beneficiaries**

Despite the EEA's (Act 47 of 2013) aim of systematically redressing discriminatory legacies and empowering historically disadvantaged members of designated groups, the study found that EE beneficiaries are marginalised in various ways. The participants' insights revealed intersecting and nuanced gendered, racialised, and sexist approaches to EE.

##### **5.6.1 Perceptions of Race and Gender**

In national government departments, women are perceived of as incompetent employees that lack leadership abilities, solely due to ascribed and intersecting gender and race perceptions. Numerical representation of designated groups in senior positions without adequate training, development and support will not achieve equality outcomes, but merely reinforce stereotypes

such as tokenism, the negative perceptions of EE beneficiaries held by non-designated groups (white), and the tick-box approach to EE implementation. Furthermore, women are perceived to obtain leadership positions solely to fulfil quotas and are treated as tokens. Therefore, government departments lack substantive representation. Women's authority is undermined and they are sometimes excluded from key policy decisions.

The study participants noted that, while they have the qualifications, skills and experience for the positions they occupy, prejudicial race, gender, ethnicity, class and age (among others) intersections overshadow their achievements and they continue to be marginalised. It can be argued that there is a schism between effective EE policy and practice in the sampled departments due to deeply entrenched colonial perceptions of race and gender.

### **5.7 Lack of EE Monitoring in Departments**

The EEA (Act 47 of 2013) requires employers to submit annual EE reports to the DoL. However, many employers are not complying with this requirement. Eighty-two per cent of the study participants confirmed that their departments did not submit such reports to the Department between 2016 and May 2017 (at the time of fieldwork). Like GM, EE is marginalised to a certain extent. Non-submission of EE reports was attributed to the fact that there are no gender focal units in some departments and that in others GFPs' work is not properly co-ordinated. Furthermore, some participants added that it does not matter whether or not departments comply as the DoL is not monitoring EE effectively.

To illustrate this point, the Commission for Employment Equity's 2016 annual report noted that (a) national government submitted 49 of all the reports submitted, which totalled 0.2%; (b) provincial government submitted 136 reports, or 0.5%; (c) local government filed 193 reports that constituted 0.7% and (d) the private sector submitted the highest number of 24 899 reports, totalling 94.8% (Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report, 2016: 12). Thus, national government departments submitted the lowest number of EE reports to the DoL, suggesting non-compliance with the EEA (Act 47 of 2013). While there are penalties for non-submission, this is applicable to private sector companies or institutions, not government. The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and CGE are mandated to monitor government departments' EE compliance. The women leaders made no mention of statutory notices or punitive measures being applied to non-compliant national government departments. I argue that since national government departments are government in themselves, applying

sanctions would be a challenge as government would be effectively punishing itself. The women's insights confirm that EE monitoring is a paper exercise as there is lack of proper monitoring and accountability. This undermines the transformative gains made by the democratic government. The next section focuses on reinforcement of gender normativity in departments.

## **5.8 Reinforcement of Gender Normativity**

The differences between women and men are not only grounded in biology, but socially constructed and ascribed gender normativity. Normative constructions of gender reproduce stereotypes that devalue women whilst overvaluing men since society in general and bureaucracies are masculinised. Some of the major issues emerging from this study are conflicting gender roles, a lack of accommodation of women's needs and weak solidarity or discord among women in departments.

### **5.8.1 Conflicting Gender Roles**

The study revealed that women leaders in government departments experience conflicting gender roles and this is used to exclude and devalue them as legitimate leaders. This can be explained by the fact that women's authority and decision-making is perpetually undermined, relegating them to tokens since men do not perceive them as equals even though they progressed into leadership echelons on merit. Another source of relegation (as discussed in section 5.5.8 above) is that women are expected to be loyal to normative gender roles by nurturing men in departments. Thus, male colleagues demand that they avail themselves sexually; through gender schemas, men feel that they are entitled to hegemonic control over women's bodies. These results show that, in national government departments, black African women leaders are "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986: 14). This dichotomy is the result of entrenched gender schemas of masculine traits that construct men as strong, independent, providers and family breadwinners. In contrast, within femininity, women are constructed as weak, dependent, passive recipients and submissive care-takers in the domestic sphere (Mkhize & Njawala, 2016) with no place in the workplace or in leadership echelons.

As stated in chapter 3, during fieldwork, two males volunteered to participate in the study as their jobs involves employee wellness and gender focal work in their respective departments. What stood out for the researcher in the male narratives was the conflicting gender roles males

also experience. For example, one male faced the challenge of being a GFP and a husband that upholds gender normative and patriarchal values. While he promotes GM, EE and other transformational policies in his department, there is no nexus between his role as a GFP and as a traditional husband at home. This contradiction seems insurmountable. The researcher emphasises that men must be part of the gender equality struggle as [we] co-exist in society. Gender mainstreaming targets women and men in prioritising their concerns and experiences in political, economic and societal domains; unequal gender power relations can be transformed over time through societal commitment. For example, “The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality” was adopted as one of the themes for the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2004 (Olowu, 2011: 2) to include men in gender equality agendas.

However, this study’s findings show that matters relating to gender equality are perceived as the concern of women and not men. It is generally believed that because women are disadvantaged by gender inequities, they should address gender transformation (Olowu, 2011). In contrast, Connell (2003) maintains that men and boys are inevitably part of gender issues. Men control the resources required to fulfil women’s claims to fairness. However, gender inequalities are grounded in gender relations, in the complex intersection of relationships that exist at every level of society. The intersection of men’s identities that results in conflicting gender roles provides important insights into systems of male domination that have implications for the realisation of progressive gender transformational policies (GM and EE). As discussed in Chapter 2, government departments need to make a concerted effort to transform the invisible deep structure that continues to oppress women and men. While numerical representation in leadership roles has been achieved through quotas, men in these departments are also negatively impacted by socially constructed and conflicting gender roles. As depicted by the iceberg diagram in Chapter 2, the deep structures include political access, accountability systems, cultural systems and cognitive systems that must be aligned with GM and EE objectives in departments’ gender agenda.

### **5.8.2 Lack of Accommodation of Women’s Needs**

The participants’ insights illustrate the schism between professional work and responsibilities as mothers and care-givers. They stated that they spend long hours at work, sometimes working through the night to meet deadlines and also travel extensively. Due to unequal power relations

between women and men, women are expected to be primary care-givers within their families. The multiple intersecting identities of being woman, black African, a member of an ethnic group, wife, and employed leader, having an ascribed lower-class status, and being of a certain age, are inextricable crisscross systems of oppression that impact women's lived experiences. For example, some women got divorced due to work commitments. While they are in leadership echelons in government departments, these women are still devalued in their communities. Even in their departments, they face a myriad of intersectional challenges (discussed in this chapter) by being black and female. They are thus, socially treated as homogenous second-class citizens due to patriarchal cultural practices. Peterson and Rutherford (1986) describe this as "double colonisation" as women simultaneously experience the oppression of colonialism (even in today's post-colonial democratic context) and patriarchy. Post-colonial feminist theory explains how these social inequalities are inscribed within historical, political, social, cultural, and economic contexts (Racine, 2003: 18). The researcher argues that government departments are male-centred and are thus not tailored to accommodate women's multiple roles. This emphasises the importance of the GM framework becoming a policy that obliges government departments to assist women to effectively manage their multiple roles. The next section discusses women's solidarity in government departments.

### **5.8.3 Women's Solidarity Questioned**

The study's findings suggest that oppression manifests through a lack of solidarity, and sabotage and distrust among women in national government departments. In general, women leaders have assimilated patriarchal characteristics that subjugate them by furthering their own oppression. The participants' insights demonstrate that they must act like males to be 'accepted' as legitimate leaders, to the detriment of other women. This is evidence of the intersectional multiple gender identities as patriarchal practices are propagated by oppressed women, further oppressing other women.

This finding is similar to Freire's (1968) theory of horizontal violence that arises when the oppressed attack their counterparts. The oppressor exists within the oppressed and they lash out indirectly against him. Such behaviour hinders transformative action. The oppressed are emotionally dependent, and before they acknowledge such dependence, they transfer their anger and feelings of hopelessness to their counterparts as a conduit to vent their frustration. The evidence from this study indicates that women leaders are a source of oppression of other

women as they participate in patriarchy. Some also stated that their career progression was suppressed by other women in their department. The reason is that some women want to be the only black African among white colleagues in the upper echelons. In these circumstances, GM and EE principles are not actualised as women horizontally oppress one another to the extent that oppressed women's career progression is affected and there is no solidarity among women.

Johnson's (1997: 154-155) depiction of patriarchy describes this horizontal oppression between women in government departments. It was noted that some women leaders have adopted male characteristics as the 'ideal man' closely resembles society's core values. These include qualities such as control, strength, competitiveness, toughness and forcefulness that are associated with the work that is most valued in patriarchal societies such as politics, business and law, amongst others. They are thus regarded as the ingredients for success. In contrast, qualities such as efficiency, co-operation, mutuality, sharing, compassion, caring and readiness to compromise that are culturally associated with femininity and femaleness are devalued. However, femaleness is not entirely devalued. For example, women are esteemed for their outward appearance as objects of male sexual desire, but as such they are often possessed and controlled in ways that ultimately devalue them (see section 5.2.2 of this chapter) (Johnson, 1997).

## **5.9 Democracy Revisited and Evaluated**

This section discusses the advantages and disadvantages of democracy in the context of the study. Drawing on the study participants' insights on women in leadership echelons, the outcomes of GM and EE policy are also discussed as well as their impact on the organisational culture, structure and practices.

### **5.9.1 Limitations, Advantages and Disadvantages of Democracy**

Although equality is enshrined in the South African Constitution, this does not inevitably lead to systemic transformation of black African women's lived experiences in government departments and society at large. Despite legislative milestones such as the Constitution, the EEA, GM, Basic Conditions of Employment Act, Codes of Good Practices and independent bodies such as the CGE, implementation is not always effective and the intended outcomes are not achieved (Fester, 2004) in the sampled national government departments.

Democracy advocates for equal rights and opportunities for all citizens and transformative policies such as GM and EE aim to redress past injustices and imbalances. Gender mainstreaming and EE policies have resulted in significant gains in terms of numerical representation of members of designated groups in leadership echelons within government. However, women leaders remain marginalised due to nuanced discriminatory practices that are both overt and covert. The participants' insights revealed that women leaders experience multiple intersecting discrimination(s) based on race, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, pregnancy, age, and social class.

The shortcomings in the implementation of gender transformational policies (GM and EE) are also due to the fact that they are not prioritised, or sufficiently funded, capacitated, monitored or evaluated. For example, the study found that the CGE, DoL and Department of Public Service and Administration are not undertaking the necessary monitoring and many departments do not submit annual EE reports. While the national Machinery for Women in South Africa has the responsibility of ensuring women's participation in decision-making and the accountability of state structures to women (Hassim, 2003: 508), this study's results point to a lack of accountability as regards GM and EE.

### **5.9.2 Equal Gender Representation**

The study also shed light on the misalignment between policy and praxis in terms of equal representation as EE beneficiaries are marginalised. The core focus is on balancing the numbers and substantive representation is lacking. Equal gender representation and systemic transformation are impeded by socio-cultural factors that maintain gender power imbalances between women and men in government departments. For example, patriarchal, gender-biased, racist and sexist organisational cultural practices undermine the advances made by the democratic government. The researcher argues that equal gender representation and substantive parity are determined by the sustainable impact women make in government in terms of policies aimed at empowering them. The findings suggest that women do not have an impact on GM and EE as they are not effectively implemented; thus, not producing the intended outcomes.

Human (2000) points out that the EEA requires a fundamental change in the way policymakers think about and perceive people; and that if such change does not occur, implementation of an EE strategy will remain problematic. Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk concur and

point to the fact that, while “laws can require organisations to employ and promote historically disadvantaged individuals, the law however cannot remove societal barriers arising from people’s attitudes” (2000: 157).

### 5.9.3 The Patriarchal Nature of Democracy

The study’s findings demonstrate that democracy is a masculinised mainstream. As beneficiaries of transformative policies, black African women leaders are negatively impacted by government departments’ organisational culture, structures and practices. Because women are only numerically/symbolically represented they continue to be treated as token subalterns. There is no platform for their voices to be heard due to the deep structures of cultural, political and cognitive systems reinforced by patriarchal systems. Furthermore, discrimination is experienced where EE beneficiaries are perceived of as not achieving higher positions on merit but to fill quota targets.

Thus, the inevitable question is: can women in leadership echelons play a vital role in state feminist agendas? The answer is a resounding ‘no’, mainly because the study’s findings show that despite GM and EE policies, women leaders are still subjugated by interwoven male hegemony, racism, ethnicity, sexism, ageism, and abusive practices in government departments. Their voices in decision-making are silenced even though they occupy leadership positions. Their roles and agency as legitimate leaders are devalued by persistent colonial and apartheid segregatory and oppressive vestiges of perpetual ‘othering’, and systemic discrimination. Women leaders are located in the margins as ‘outsiders within’. Other scholars also point to the need for women’s substantive representation. For example, Goetz and Hassim (2003 cited in Hassim, 2005: 338) identify the need “to make the voice of women louder” — that is, to be more “effective in interest articulation and representation”. Yet, Goetz (2003) cautions that women’s louder voice should not be expected to inevitably strengthen the social claims of the marginalised and result in accountability to that group. The author adds that institutional norms and processes can weaken the impact of women’s voice in the societal sphere. I concur with Goetz as deeply entrenched patriarchal institutional practices have undermined and silenced women’s voice in the sampled national government departments. The functionality of gender transformative policies (GM and EE) is also marginalised by the gender-biased and male-centred organisational cultures and structures in the democratic

government. Therefore, the study concludes that no substantive gender equality and women empowerment outcomes result from GM and EE policies in these departments.

### 5.10 Chapter Summary

Overall, this study's findings suggest that while transformational policies (GM and EE) have been adopted, they have not been able to eradicate sexism, patriarchal attitudes and prejudice based on gender, race, ethnicity, age, (dis)ability, women-centred conditions (pregnancy) and social class in national government departments. The theoretical frameworks that underpinned this study were all useful in analysing the data collected. Feminist intersectionality theory was a useful theoretical lens as it enabled deconstruction of the perpetual, multiple and intersecting oppressions black African women endure in national government departments in the democratic South Africa. The organisation of power and gender relations in the South African context is deeply hierarchical despite black African women having accessed leadership positions through transformative policies such as GM and EE. The study revealed that they are nonetheless still predominantly placed at a central point where race, gender social class, sexuality, ethnicity and age as systems of oppression merge and are reproduced. Women are further subjugated by conflicting gender roles and identities and lack substantive decision-making as legitimate leaders in these departments.

Postcolonial feminist theory was also significant in analysing the women leaders' experiences. In line with this theory's objective of researchers producing knowledge from the subjective perspectives of marginalised groups, this study enabled the women participants to voice their insights on leadership and policy (GM and EE) outcomes. Spivak's (1995) subaltern voice of the silenced and marginalised was an important platform for the participants to speak and be heard. Finally, postcolonial feminism assisted the researcher in analysing black African women's simultaneous experiences of oppression, patriarchy and colonialism. The findings confirm that colonial vestiges manifest through patriarchal control over women's bodies and their reproductive rights, and resistance to GM and EE policies that aim to achieve racial and gender transformation outcomes by redressing historical colonial and apartheid systematic oppressions. Furthermore, hegemonic control over women's bodies is closely tied to colonialism as 'Third World' women were objectified, controlled and exploited by the colonisers using their powers over colonised subjects. The study shows that colonial practices persist in the post-colonial democratic era.

Finally, feminist state theory was an important lens to determine whether GM and EE policies can achieve gender equality and women empowerment outcomes in government departments and to understand whether the presence of women leadership enables them to influence or impact these policies. The study's results show that government departments' patriarchal and racial structures deny women access to influence the GM and EE policy agenda and outcomes. For example, EE beneficiaries are marginalised and women are mainly affected as they are stigmatised as tokens and are negatively perceived by other racial groups. The results thus show, that despite the progressive strides and commendable achievements of the democratic government, the patriarchal character of democracy as a masculine-centred mainstream weakens the sustainability and effectiveness of GM and EE practice and outcomes. Ultimately, GM and EE policies are not effectively implemented and thus do not produce the intended gender equality and substantive outcomes in the sampled national government departments.

The following chapter presents a summary of the study's findings, discusses the limitations of the research and makes recommendations based on the findings as well as suggestions for future research. The importance of advancing GM from a framework to a policy is also highlighted.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF RESULTS, CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to investigate African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies in the democratic national government departments in South Africa from their own subjective perspective. It set out to answer three key research questions: (a) what is the impact of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions in national government departments? (b) What are the women leaders' experiences of the implementation of gender transformation policies in relation to women occupying national government leadership positions? (c) In what ways do the national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practices impact on black African women's leadership roles? These questions were answered by applying feminist qualitative methodology and conducting 35 face-to-face, in-depth interviews in 25 departments. The data was obtained from the participants themselves using their own voices to report their experiences of the outcomes of GM and EE policies. During fieldwork, two Indian women and black African men volunteered to participate in the study, and the researcher took this opportunity to limit bias by involving other race and gender groups. The data were analysed using Nvivo version 11 computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) and the applied grounded theory method as the model.

Despite democratic gender transformation policy imperatives – GM and EE – to eradicate the wrongs of the past, such as gender and racial inequalities, in alignment with the literature (Moser & Moser, 2005; Mkhize, 2012), this study found a lack of consistency between policy and practice. For instance, as noted in Chapter 5, while GM and EE have assisted in addressing gender and racial inequalities in proportionate terms, there is no substantive representation. Scholars such as Moser and Moser (2005) argue that the implementation of GM has been hindered by it being limited to a few activities (such as adopting the terminology of gender equality and mainstreaming, putting a GM policy in place and implementing GM) rather than being a coherent and integrated process. In line with the PSC (2006) and CGE's (2015) reports, this study found that GM is not included in departmental planning, monitoring and budgeting

processes. While EE is a policy, the study found that it functions to meet targets with no support for beneficiaries. Indeed, beneficiaries suffer discriminatory treatment in government departments as they are perceived as not being hired on merit and their contributions are thus not acknowledged.

## 6.2 Key Findings of the Study relative to the Research Questions and Objectives

The research questions helped to address the study objectives. In relation to the impact of gender transformation policies (EE and GM) on the experiences of black African women in leadership positions in national government departments, the women leaders' insights suggest that GM has had no impact as it has not been operationalised and is not functional in some departments. Some departments are in the early stages of implementing GM, while others lack sufficient knowledge and expertise to do so. Moreover, some departments do not have gender focal units or GFPs, illustrating non-compliance with the prescripts of the CGE Act (Act 39 of 1996). Moreover, the CGE does not seem to be fulfilling its mandate to monitor GM implementation in national government departments. Sadie (2014) suggests that this could be due to the fact, that CGE Commissioners are political appointees and could be reluctant to challenge the government.

The lack of monitoring has negative outcomes such as the marginalisation of GM; the study found that there is dearth of human and financial resources to operationalise GM. Furthermore, senior managers in the sampled departments do not prioritise and are resistant to GM due to institutionalised patriarchal cultural practices. These findings concur with the literature that concludes that there is a wide gap between GM framework implementation and praxis (Youngs, 2008; Daly, 2005; Moser, 2005; Parrons, 2005; Rees, 2005; Walby, 2005; Beveridge & Nott, 2002).

The study found that another reason for the gap between policy and practice is the superficial manner in which the EE policy is implemented in government departments. The women leaders' insights confirmed that compliance is limited to achieving quota targets, thus accomplishing descriptive/symbolic representation as opposed to substantive representation. The researcher argues that the former does not automatically result in the latter. Other studies have also concluded that EE policy implementation focuses on numbers (Gouws, 2005; Beall, 1998). The result is that women leaders are regarded as tokens, undermining their authority, decision-making powers and legitimacy. Descriptive representation also causes these women

leaders to suffer intersecting oppressions reinforced by the patriarchal character of organisational cultures and structures. Gender schemas such as stereotypes, gendered racism, ethnic discrimination, ageist ideologies, discrimination against those with disabilities and denial of women's reproductive rights are prevalent. This is despite the EEA (No. 47 of 2013) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No. 20 of 2013) protecting employees from all forms of discrimination. The government departments' culture and practices are male-stream and hegemonic; the study's results highlight that women-centred conditions such as pregnancy are regarded as an interruption of work duties. This marginalises professional women's reproductive rights set out in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act. Such marginalisation also has a negative impact on recruitment and selection because female job applicants do not disclose pregnancy. When the pregnancy is noticeable and maternity leave is due, interpersonal relations with colleagues and managers are negatively affected as colleagues are expected to take up their workload.

These outcomes are also linked to the lack of monitoring by departments. Furthermore, the participants indicated that, it does not matter whether their departments submit annual EE reports or not, as the DPSA, DoL and CGE are not enforcing the legislation. Furthermore, the credibility or accuracy of the reports submitted is not verified. The literature confirms that there is weak monitoring and evaluation of EE (Bloom & Lues, 2013; Adusah-Karikari & Ohemen, 2012; Dweba, 2012).

The study also revealed that EE implementation is a tick-box exercise. The outcomes are such that EE beneficiaries are marginalised in a myriad of ways, including sexism, racism and gender prejudices that occur simultaneously. Such intersectional subjugations mean that they are not perceived or treated as legitimate leaders, but as simply filling quotas, perpetuating stereotypes that black African women are not capable leaders. Discriminatory practices are often covert/ invisible; intersecting inequalities that are deeply embedded within organisational deep structures comprising cultural, cognitive, political access and accountability systems (Rao & Kelleher, 2005).

Therefore, the researcher argues that for gender to be mainstreamed effectively and EE to be substantively implemented, these covert and entrenched patriarchal, cognitive and gender stereotypical deep structures must be transformed by systemic integration of the GM framework and substantive EE policy implementation. These policies must be underpinned by

gender awareness; senior managers and employees should be cognisant of multiple intersecting inequalities and how they impact or could impact on women as leaders in government departments. Feminist intersectionality theory could be employed to strengthen these policies to acknowledge and respect diversity and involve different voices and gender(s) in decision-making.

The second research question related to the women leaders' experiences of the implementation of gender transformation policies (GM and EE) in relation to women occupying national government leadership positions. The study's findings show that these departments have attempted to address gender, racial and disability disparities, since women, black people and persons with disabilities have been employed. However, they still face discrimination. Women's leadership and performance of their work duties are disrupted and side-lined by male-centred organisational cultures, structure and practices. The participants' experience gendered abuse such as sexual harassment, and ethnic, age and disability discrimination that perpetuates their secondary status. Intersectional identities and needs are thus neglected. Diversity is not respected as there is still discrimination based on identities. Respect and acknowledgement of women and persons with disabilities' voices, power, credentials and intelligence are an important step towards the achievement of equality. Although the study focused on women as a gender group, other genders, including lesbians, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBTs) are also marginalised by these policies. With reference to feminist intersectionality theory, all South African identities need to be represented and acknowledged to render these policies more functional. Thus, it is imperative that male dominance is addressed in government departments. Benschop and Verloo (2006) state that, since GM is participatory, the level of co-operation between senior managers and employees as equal partners in promoting the agenda of feminist goals, and addressing power differences and gender-biased relations determine its outcomes. Intersectionality theory and gender training programmes could assist in changing socially constructed ideologies to promote gender equality. From a feminist postcolonial perspective, the study participants' insights show that, colonial practices are still prevalent in the democratic era in South Africa. The theory exposes the racist imperialist nature of colonialism and its persistence, with negative impacts on society and black people, especially women. 'Third World' women are the most exploited; therefore, a new form of international feminist agency such as the GM framework is required to represent diverse women (Shenmugasundaram, 2017) in leadership across the globe. Recognising that deeply entrenched discrimination is the result of colonialism and apartheid

(Grogan, 2011), feminist postcolonial theory advocates that society should shift from colonialist practices towards equality and opportunities for all citizens. Thus, the researcher posits that intersectionality and feminist postcolonial theories can help to eradicate prejudice and promote respect for diversity and historically specific experiences. Diversity/awareness programmes should be run in national government departments as part of GM and EE policy plans. This would change perceptions of beneficiaries and ensure that they enjoy employment rights and respect and are able to make their rightful contribution.

The final research question sought to identify the ways in which the national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practice impact on black African women's leadership roles. The analysis of the participants' insights using intersectionality theory showed that, to a large extent, male-centred, race and gender-biased organisational cultures, structures, and practices negatively impact on their leadership roles. This is due to a lack of political will to prioritise GM and EE as they are considered women's responsibility and do not form part of day-to-day business in these departments. Other studies have also found that a lack of political will, prevents successful GM outcomes (Torto, 2013; Nyachieng'a, 2010; Veich, 2006; Sadie, 2005; Murison, 2004; Macdonald, 2003). Women experience structural intersectionality since intersectional inequalities directly impact their lived experiences (Crenshaw, 1994). Such intersectionalities manifest through institutionalised oppressive cultural practices that are patriarchal, sexist, racist, and ageist and also subjugate persons with disabilities as they are pathologised. From a feminist postcolonial perspective, such oppressive practices are inherited from colonial and apartheid times.

The national government departments' organisational cultures, structures and practices are also not accommodative of women's needs and their multiple roles as mothers, care-givers and wives. Despite the GM framework recognising women's multiple roles, departments expect them to always be available, disregarding their maternal role. Such practices perpetuate the stereotype that leadership is men's domain. This results in clashing role identities and responsibilities. Due to the hostile environment, women have to work extra hard to prove their leadership capabilities. Their multiple roles are used as a weapon to side-line them in decision-making, perpetuating normative gender stereotypes that a woman's place is in the home. On the other hand, the male narratives indicated that they experience conflicting roles as patriarchal men in their homes whilst being gender advocates in government departments. This shows that patriarchy is deeply entrenched and to some extent, places men at a disadvantage.

For women to be accepted as leaders, they conform to male-stream culture, with negative effects on their physical and mental health. This once again suggests a lack of implementation of GM as these negative experiences are not addressed.

The situation is exacerbated for persons with (dis)abilities because human resource recruiters act as gatekeepers despite the prescript of the EEA of equal treatment for all. For example, educated and competent individuals with physical disabilities are not hired even though they qualify for advertised positions. Therefore, government departments' cultural practices and structures place women and persons with (dis)abilities at a disadvantage, perpetuating inequality. The results clearly show that gender is not mainstreamed and EE is not effectively implemented as the cultures, structures and practices are discriminatory and ostracise those perceived as inferior such as women and persons with (dis)abilities. Hence, there is a major tension between gender equality and the mainstream (Walby, 2005) due to male-stream and 'compulsory' physical ability 'requirements' in the culture of departments. The findings suggest that like black African women, persons with disabilities' needs are not accommodated in national government department as the EEA requires. The lack of EE monitoring means that physical infrastructure and equipment are not altered to suit their unique needs. Some professionals with disabilities are thus often absent from work not from choice, but due to the inconducive physical environment that is designed for able-bodied persons. This means that they are marginalised and their rights to equality are denied to the point that they are invisible. The study participants confirmed that the EEA's target of 2% representivity of persons with disabilities is not met. This is unsurprising given that they are marginalised in these departments. Disability management plans are thus required to eradicate the marginalisation and discrimination suffered by persons with disabilities.

Discrimination and patriarchal cultural practices also impact women in national government departments due to a lack of solidarity resulting from the hegemonic structure of the departments. The study found that some women are unsupportive and sabotage one another because they conform to the patriarchal culture. Freire's (1968) theory of horizontal violence best explains the lack of solidarity and marginalisation among women in leadership echelons that arise when the oppressed attack their counterparts (see Chapter 5). In such circumstances, GM and EE outcomes are not actualised and women are segregated in some departments. The Council of Europe (1998) asserts that mainstreaming gender into policy-making demands changes in institutional and organisational cultures across policy processes, mechanisms, and

actors (Moser, 2005; Council of Europe, 1998). However, the study's results show that GM is still not implemented as a policy but is functioning as a framework and is therefore not well respected in the sampled national government departments.

Feminist state theory assisted in critically analysing the findings on organisational structure, culture and practices as it confirmed that the presence of women in leadership echelons in government does not translate to successful implementation of feminist policy agendas such as GM. Women leaders are operating in bureaucracies that silence their voices and actions due to the broader discourse of male hegemony in societal institutions. Verloo (2006) notes that, the intersectionality theory suggests that a GM framework should be accompanied by a strategy to address differentiated inequalities through diversity mainstreaming or (in)equality mainstreaming. The theory shows that the oppressions confronting women are interconnected and simultaneous. The intersectionality theory is also useful because while departments implement GM and EE, further initiatives to eradicate these different, multiple and intersecting oppressions can be planned.

### **6.3 Contribution to Knowledge**

This study fills a gap in the literature by expanding the existing body of work on South Africa and the African continent. The feminist intersectionality, postcolonial feminist and feminist state theories were useful in critically analysing and explicating the women's shared insights. The study extended these theories by showing that gender awareness and policy impacts to employees in departments and integrating intersectionality, postcolonial feminist and state theories to underpin GM and EE implementation plans can aid successful policy implementation. It also adds to the body of knowledge on how to manage disability. Training programmes to raise awareness of gender and disability are urgently required since departmental structures, culture and practices are gender-blind and discrimination is perpetuated by male-centredness and 'required' able-bodiedness.

Moreover, by revealing a myriad of intersecting oppressions, the study showed that although South Africa is a democratic state and has adopted legislation and policies to eradicate discriminatory practices, colonial discourses continue to ground black African women's leadership experiences within government itself. The study thus adds to the body of knowledge by pointing to a wide gap between policy and practice in government departments. Furthermore, while the literature focuses on Western women in leadership, this study focused

on South African women who were historically discriminated against and marginalised; it thus expands knowledge on indigenous women's leadership experiences and GM and EE policy and practice in national government departments in the postcolonial South African context.

Finally, there is a paucity of empirical research on GM frameworks, especially their outcomes. This study paid close attention to how the framework is implemented (or not) within government departments and the outcomes.

#### **6.4 Recommendations for Further Study**

To ensure that GM and EE transformation policies are well implemented and are practical with satisfactory outcomes, transformation enforcers/watchdog organisations such as the CGE and PSC need to monitor policy implementation and ensure that the government commits the necessary resources and adopts rigorous strategies to implement GM. These include gender mainstreaming budgeting, formal training for GFPs and employing them at the level of Director. As required by the CGE, they should be located in the Director-General's office in order to influence decision-making on GM and EE in departments. The findings show that some departments employ GFPs at low levels and they are not represented in senior management meetings where key decisions are taken. Many are also misplaced in human resource sections and primarily tasked with human resource key priority areas; GM is an add-on and is not fully integrated, thus functioning on an ad-hoc basis. The commissions and departments responsible for enforcement of GM and EE should also ensure that functional gender focal units are operating in departments and are not fragmented. There is a lacuna in the EEA concerning enforcement strategies to ensure employment of persons with disabilities. Policy-makers and regulators thus need to formulate such strategies and should also monitor the physical infrastructure of government departments to ensure that there are conducive facilities and equipment to enable persons with disabilities to perform their duties effectively.

The CGE, PSC, DPSA and DoL should also prioritise the eradication of gender-based violence. Perpetrators must face the consequences of breaking the law and the institutions responsible for monitoring must ensure a safe working environment for all employees irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, age and ability. Professional women's reproductive rights should also be protected. There should be no victimisation or discrimination against pregnant women in government departments or those that apply for jobs.

Women's multiple roles should be taken into account by senior management and flexible work arrangements should be adopted to enable women to fulfil their care-giving and/or household responsibilities where necessary. The government should not act as a gatekeeper by being gender-blind and not acknowledging women's maternal roles.

The study's findings will assist policy-makers, researchers and practitioners to design interventions to address the challenges hampering proper implementation of GM and EE, such as symbolic participation, tokenism and women's lack of authority in leadership positions. The results will also assist government and private sector institutions to understand the outcomes of GM and EE policy implementation or non-implementation and to identify interventions to ensure that these policies are meaningfully and sustainably integrated. Labour unions will also benefit from this study in their quest to protect workers' rights and its findings will be of value to NGOs that advocate for gender equality and human rights.

In terms of future studies, it is recommended that research be conducted on how government departments could link with the academic fraternity, feminists and civil society organisations to advance GM and EE policy implementation as the study's results highlight government departments' lack of deep understanding of how to implement these policies. Scholarly studies could also be conducted on gender-based violence such as sexual harassment and its impact on victims and government departments. Future studies could explore flexible work arrangements to enable women to perform their care-giving roles without compromising their professional duties. Finally, the experiences of men who undertake GM work in national, provincial and local government departments is another topic for further research as the narratives of the two male volunteers revealed that they face challenges as GFPs advocating for gender equality, yet practising gender-normative patriarchal practices on a personal level.

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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

## **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to interview you. My name is Nwabisa Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni, a PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. As one of requirements necessary to successfully complete my Ph.D. degree, I am conducting a research on **African Women's leadership experiences and the outcomes of gender transformation policies: A case study of National Government Departments in Democratic South Africa.**

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary and if you wish to withdraw from the interview for any reason, you can do so at any point in the interview process without any consequences. I will maintain confidentiality of information communicated to me and your identity will not be revealed in any form even after the research study is fully completed. I will use pseudonyms in order to ensure participant's complete confidentiality. In circumstances whereby the findings of the research may be shared in the public domain such as through journal articles, mainstream journalism and presentations, participants' names will still remain anonymous. This research is for academic purposes.

Do you permit that I record this interview? If yes, thank you. If no, I shall write your answers down. And do you permit that I transcribe this interview verbatim? The audio-tape as well as other items (pages of written observation notes) associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file and locked cabinet accessible only to myself. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the University, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.

### **Introductory/ Biographical Information**

Pseudonym:

National Department:

I. Job Position:

II. Age:

a) 21-29

b) 30-39

c) 40-49

d) 50-59

e) 60-69

f) 70-79

g) 80-89

III. Marital Status:

IV. Ethnicity:

V. Home Language:

VI. Religion:

VII. Educational level and major:

VIII. Political Affiliation:

IX. Do you have any of your family members working for the South African government?

If yes:

- a) Relationship to you:
- b) His/ her position:
- c) Job Location:

### **In-depth Questions**

1. Explain your progression to the position and the length of time you are serving in the level.
2. What are your main duties?
3. What is your understanding of Employment Equity policy?
4. What is your understanding of Gender Mainstreaming policy?
5. Does your department apply both of these policies/ If yes, how? If no, why?
6. What is the impact of Employment Equity policies in the daily operational functions in the department?
7. What is the impact of Gender Mainstreaming policies in the daily operational functions in the department?
8. Do you think Employment Equity policies are effectively implemented? Why/ How? Please explain by giving examples on the status, progress and achievements within your department.
9. Do you think Gender Mainstreaming policies are effectively implemented? Why/ How? Please explain by giving examples on the status, progress and achievements within your department.
10. How do you think the Employment Equity policies should be effectively implemented?
11. How do you think Gender Mainstreaming policies should be effectively implemented?
12. As a leader in your department, what are your insights of the outcomes of Employment Equity policies based on your experience?
13. As a leader in your department, what are your insights of the outcomes of Gender Mainstreaming policies based on your experience?
14. In general, what are your colleagues' (people of your same positions and higher, you usually hold meetings with) opinions or attitudes on Employment Equity?
15. In general, what are your colleagues' (people of your same positions and higher, you usually hold meetings with) opinions or attitudes on Gender Mainstreaming?
16. Generally, what are employee's views or attitudes on Employment Equity?
17. Generally, what are employee's views or attitudes on Gender Mainstreaming?
18. In what ways do the national government department's organizational cultures, structures and practices impact on your leadership role?
19. Do you experience gender or race-specific challenges in the workplace, and what mechanisms do you employ to mitigate these challenges and in the implementation of the policies?

20. How do you as a woman in a leadership position ensure that other women's rights or needs are addressed within your department and outside the department where applicable?
21. Do you empower or mentor other women in your department, and in what ways?
22. Have you acquired the power and authority that comes with being in a leadership position in national government, and in what ways?
23. In your views as a legitimate leader in your department, how are you perceived (or treated) by senior and junior staff?
  - a) Do you receive the same level of treatment from all genders in your department? If yes, how? If not, why?
  - b) Do you have the some form of leadership evaluation in your department? If yes, who evaluates you? How do you feel about the results of evaluation?
  - c) If no, why there is no evaluation? How do you measure the quality of service delivery?
24. How do you effect change as a leader in your department?
25. How do you generally feel about you as a woman in such a higher position?
26. Do you intend to apply for or move to higher positions than this one? Why?
27. What are your general views about the democratic South African government in relation to gender issues?
28. Is there anything else you would like to add or you wish to share with me about your job or position?
29. Do you have any questions that you would like to ask me?

Once again, thank you very much for taking this time to share your experiences of leadership and insights and outcomes of gender transformation policies in your department with me.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

## Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

My name is Nwabisa Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni (Student No: 215079063). I am a PhD candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus in Durban. The title of my research is: **African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies: A case study of democratic national government departments in South Africa.**

The aim of the study is to investigate black African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies (Employment Equity and Gender Mainstreaming) with reference to those occupying leadership positions in national government departments in the democratic South Africa. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You have a choice to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The interview will take about 30 minutes minimum to one hour maximum in length.
- Participation in this research is voluntary and if you wish to withdraw from the interview for any reason, you can do so at any point in the interview process without any consequences.
- Data will be collected through face-to-face interviews that will be audio-recorded (based on participant's consent). Those who do not consent to the audio-recording, data provided will be written down.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my Supervisor. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement (a separate sheet will be provided for signatures)

I can be contacted at: School of Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus, Durban.

Email: [215079063@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:215079063@ukzn.ac.za) or [nwabisa.mgcotyelwa@dmr.gov.za](mailto:nwabisa.mgcotyelwa@dmr.gov.za)

Cell: 072 783 9488 or 082 946 2737

My Supervisor is Dr. Gabisile Mkhize who is located at the School of Social Sciences, Howard College Campus, Durban of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Contact details:

Email: [mkhizeg2@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mkhizeg2@ukzn.ac.za)

Phone number: (031) 260 1114 or 060 878 4095

The Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee contact details are as follows: Ms. Phumelele Ximba, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Research Office,

Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)

Phone number: (031) 260 3587

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION FORM

**DECLARATION**

I..... (fit!/ *na,nes of  
Parlicipant*) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project. and I consent to partic ipating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

I consent / do not consent to have this interview recorded (if applicable)

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

## APPENDIX D

GATEKEEPERS' LETTERS OF APPROVAL

# 6

Commission for Gender Equality  
A South African Commission for Gender Equality

## Gatekeeper letter

Commission for Gender Equality  
5<sup>TH</sup> Floor ABSA Building  
132 Adderley Street  
CAPETOWN  
8001

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

*African women's leadership experiences and insights about the outcomes of gender transformation policies: A case study of democratic national government departments in South Africa*

Mrs Nwabisa Mgcoty elwa-Ntoni from the Department of Mineral Resources is a PhD candidate in Gender Studies at the University of Kwazulu Natal's Faculty of Humanities. I am writing to you requesting that you allow her to interview some of your SMS within your respective department. The information provided will be used for scholarly research only and the respondents shall remain anonymous, their names will not be disclosed.

Thanking you in advance for your cooperation

Yours sincerely,

Nwabisa Mgcoty elwa-Ntoni



Date

12 October 2018

Provincial Manager: Western Cape Office

Telephone 0214264080



OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

W u u r n C • P • R o g l o n a l D i i e • : P O 8 0 1 2 0 7 e . c e p e l o w n . 8 0 0 0 T e l ( 0 2 1 ) 4 2 1 3 9 8 0 F u 1 0 , 1 ) • n • 0 6 C  
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(D

■ (0 21) 421-3980

Ca (021) 421-4060

Ref.:

**Dr G Mkhize**

Gender Studies Programme, Howard College  
241 Memorial Tower Building  
**UKZN**

Dear Dr Mkhize

**RESEARCH GATE KEEPER PERMISSION**

The Public Service Commission has considered the request of Ms Mgcotshelwa-Ntoni (215079063) to access information and reports pertaining to our organization.

Noting that her research focuses on the implementation of gender transformation policies (Employment Equity and Gender Mainstreaming policies) in national government departments, and acknowledging its alignment to the Commission's mandate, her request is viewed favourably.

This letter therefore serves as confirmation that we are aware of the intended research and grants Ms Mgcotshelwa-Ntoni access to the information at our disposal via our Provincial Office, Cape Town.

Yours faithfully

PROF GAVIN WOODS  
COMMISSIONER

DATE: 4 \ } \ 101S

APPENDIX E

ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNIVERSITY OF  
**KWAZULU-NATAL**

INYUVESI  
**YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

04 November 2015

**Mrs Nwabisa B M gcotye Iwa-Ntoni 215079063**  
**School of Social Sciences**  
**Howard College Campus**

Dear Mrs Mgcotyelwa-Ntoni

**Protocol reference number: HSS/1535/015D**

**Project title:** African women's leadership experiences and outcomes of gender transformation policies: A case study of democratic national government departments in South Africa.

**Expedited Approval**

In response to your application dated 19 October 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

**Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/ Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note : Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.**

**The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.**

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

DSh . (Chak).....

/px

cc Supervisor: Dr Gabisile Mkhize  
cc Academic Leader Research : Professor Sabine Marschall  
cc School Administrators: Ms Nonhlanhla Radebe & Ms Nozipho Ndlovu

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snvmanm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

1910, 2010

100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Fc, Jr. J. Carri, s3s • Edgewood • Howard College • Medical School • Pietermaritzburg • Westville