"We are all products of history, but each of us can choose whether or not to become its victims"[1]: An exploration of the discourses employed in the Women's National Coalition

Thuto Thipe

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies

School of African and Gender Studies, Anthropology and Linguistics
University of Cape Town
September 2012

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

[1] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

ABSTRACT

As South Africa transitioned into democracy and began negotiating the terms of the new dispensation, the near exclusion of women from the early stages of the negotiations *propelled* a movement of women across the country, organising to ensure that their needs and aspirations were represented in the defining of the new political order. At the heart of this movement was the Women's National Coalition (WNC), formed in 1991 to identify and advocate for women's primary needs in the post-apartheid Constitution. The outcome of this advocacy was South Africa's adoption, in 1996, of one of the most comprehensive protections of gender rights of any national constitution. The Coalition brought together women from not only different, but also historically, materially and ideologically conflicting backgrounds. This created unprecedented opportunities for women from all parts of the country to identify and to organise around commonalities, and it also exposed some of the deep divisions and power inequalities that separated groups of women from each other. In seeking to understand these dynamics, I explore dominant discourses that were employed within the WNC to frame experiences, needs and realities arising from being gendered female in South African society and I examine how these discourses reflected negotiations of power between different groups of women within the Coalition. This discourse analysis takes an intersectional approach, examining how individuals' multiple identities interacted with each other to influence the ways that women coming from different locations in South Africa experienced the Coalition and its work and related to its objectives.

ACKNOLWEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Anne Letsebe, Debbie Budlender, Sheila Meintjes, and Pregs Govender for their generosity in sharing their time, experiences of, and insights on, the Coalition with me in interviews. Your inputs have been invaluable in this research. I would also like to especially thank Debbie Budlender for sharing her personal collection on the WNC with me.

Thank you to my family and friends for their unwavering belief, good humour and love.

Thank you to my supervisor Jane Bennett for her support and guidance in this research.

The financial assistance of the National Research Fund (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> *We will not agree on everything, many of us will have different views on one or another issue that should go into the Charter. If we try and force unity we will not succeed. We have to try and understand each other and show flexibility. Let us work together on the things we agree, and work separately on the issues on which we differ.*
>
> Frene Ginwala[2]

Seventeen years after its formal adoption, the South African Constitution remains a model, providing one of the most comprehensive protections of gender rights of any national constitution in the world. At the forefront of championing and fighting for the explicit inclusion of women's rights in the South African Constitution was the Women's National Coalition (WNC), an umbrella organisation of women's organisations from throughout South Africa across political, racial, social, economic and religious spectrums. Seizing the unprecedented moment of opportunity presented in the transition from apartheid to democracy and marked by the (re)conceptualisation of national political order and the Constitution, the WNC organised to create a visible platform from which to advocate for women's rights in the Constitution and to pursue gender equality in the new political dispensation.

The pioneering gains in gender rights detailed in the South African Constitution illustrate the WNC's success in influencing South Africa's political negotiations and the development of the Constitution to be inclusive of, and sensitive to, women's needs and roles in society. The WNC's active participation in the writing of the Constitution ensured that women were not sidelined as passive observers, but rather engaged in the process as active political agents. In this role, women were able to establish non-sexism as a cornerstone of the South African democracy and gain political recognition of, and action against, gender inequalities that prevented women from enjoying the full benefits of citizenship.

The two decades leading to the dissolution of apartheid and the formation of the WNC were some of the bloodiest and most brutal of apartheid, with the government

[2] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" p. 5. Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection

intensifying restrictions and violence reaching civil war proportions in parts of the country in the 1980s.[3] This period also saw a growth in women's organisations, with local and regional organisations mobilising around women's interests and articulating women's rights as central to the national liberation movement. Much of the growth in women's organising during this period was centred around grassroots mobilising and organising that addressed community issues that women confronted on a daily basis such as housing costs, education, low wages, and sexual harassment and assault in the workplace. Through this localised organising, women's organisations built consciousness around the importance of women's political participation and the power in identifying and fighting against sources of oppression for women. Many of these local and regional women's organisations also joined the United Democratic Front (UDF), an umbrella organisation of groups mobilising around non-racialism, democracy and the end to the apartheid regime. This participation in the UDF allowed women's organisations a platform from which to participate in and shape the priorities of the national liberation struggle.[4]

While the negotiations leading to democracy and the development of the new Constitution represented a period of unprecedented opportunity, hope and possibility, it was also a period marked by significant instability and tension between competing ideals, and peace was not a given from the outset.[5] There was limited consensus, even amongst groups opposing apartheid, on the direction and priorities of the new dispensation and even greater tensions between groups from the minority ceding power and those seeking majority rule.[6] Within the women's movement during this period, tensions were also high on how to frame women's rights, how to balance women's rights with nationalism espoused in the broader liberation movement, and how to most effectively ensure substantive change for women in the new dispensation.[7] At times, these divisions

[3] Ebrahim, Hassen. *The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford UP, 1998. Chapter 3.
[4] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 69-75.
[5] Ebrahim, Hassen. *The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford UP, 1998. Chapter 8.
[6] *Ebrahim, Hassen. The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa. Cape Town: Oxford UP, 1998*. Chapter 8.
[7] Bazilli, Susan, ed. *Putting women on the agenda*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991.

threatened to undermine the effectiveness of the Coalition,[8] but an understanding of the uniqueness of the moment inspired a significant level of cohesion in the WNC. Shireen Hassim quotes the research director of the WNC's charter campaign, Sheila Meintjes, as explaining this cohesion, saying, "a lot of women were very good at looking beyond ideological and political differences and slights, for the ultimate recognition that if this didn't work then South African women would feel the effects in the future. There was a sense of a historical task." Hassim also quotes the WNC's Co-Treasurer Jennifer Kinghorn as observing, "even when tensions developed in the National Office, we could stomach it because it was our window of opportunity, and if we didn't get this together, women would never be part of liberation. The cause was much bigger than the individual. And that was what kept us all together."[9] Women in the WNC recognised that if they did not work together and present a united front, none of them would provide input into or enjoy the full benefits of the developing democracy. Many recognised that in this moment individual and collective responses to South Africa's past would determine its future as the blueprints for systems of national governance took shape.

Formed in a moment of political opportunity, uncertainty and vulnerability, for many in the WNC's leadership, accomplishing the goals of the Coalition was essential to addressing the realities of South African histories and to imagining a future together. In a 1992 National Workshop, the WNC's Convenor, Frene Ginwala, communicated these sentiments, saying,

> …we do not have to be overcome by the past. We are all products of history, but each of us can choose whether or not to become its victims. Our past can become the reason for retaining our divisions, or can be something we move beyond as we go forward together. That is our choice. Our presence here today indicates, that despite the many things past and present that divide us, women are anxious to work together for a common future.[10]

Ginwala's words highlight some of the core ideals behind the conceptualising of the WNC. While recognising and confronting the material realities of inequalities amongst women, the Coalition maintained that there were rights and interests that affected women

[8] Botha, Sandra. Report to National Committee. 3 December 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[9] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 143.
[10] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

across difference which could positively impact their lives if realised. Building on this foundation, the WNC sought to identify and understand commonalities among women, using these as a platform from which to mobilise and to discuss women's rights.

An important component to the WNC's success in drawing together women from not only different, but also historically, materially and ideologically conflicting backgrounds, was its focus on concrete issues and practical campaigns rather than uniting around theoretical or ideological frameworks.[11] The Coalition did not seek to establish a definition of patriarchy or an understanding of feminism around which to organise women but rather built its national campaign around five primary themes: women's legal status; women's access to land, resources and water; violence against women; health; and work.[12] These broad categories allowed participants in the WNC to organise around material issues without having to directly confront the different constructions of identity and power relationships implicit in these identities that divided them as women.

Also key to the success of the WNC was the independence of the different groups within the Coalition which allowed individual organisations to retain their autonomy and loyalties to different groups. Part of this independence meant that while supporting the larger objective and sentiments of the Women's Charter, women's organisations within the WNC retained their "freedom to reserve their position on particular clauses with which they do not wish to associate themselves."[13] This freedom to disagree demonstrates the Coalition's acknowledgement of the diversity of the Coalition and the unlikelihood, if not impossibility, of universal agreement between its different groups. Describing the significance of this independence and the way that it allowed women from different spaces and with different priorities to work alongside each other, Thenjiwe Mtintso explains,

> A coalition allowed separate identities, independence and interdependence, organisations tackling specific issues determined by their specific material conditions and lived experiences, while simultaneously creating networks, sharing information, skills and resources and uniting in action around those issues which each organisation agreed upon. A coalition allowed pliable and

[11] Cock, Jacklyn and Alison Bernstein. "Gender Differences: Struggles around 'Needs' and 'Rights' in South Africa." *NWSA Journal.* 13, 3, 2001: 139

[12] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 148.

[13] "The origins, history and process of the Women's National Coalition: Report of the Women's National Coalition Research." *Women's National Coalition*. Johannesburg. 1994.

> flexible boundaries between which members moved from time to time with integrity, acceptance and respect of each other. It also allowed for autonomous organisations and coordinated programmes avoiding political fragmentation or emphasis on difference while not imposing false universalism or "sisterhood" under notions of a homogenous category "women".[14]

The importance placed on independence within the Coalition illustrates the enormous diversity within the WNC and the extent to which women imagined themselves, their political identities and their priorities differently from each other. Although united around a common goal of ensuring that women's representation and full participation in the development of the new political dispensation, participants of the WNC did not all subscribe to a common understanding of what women's liberation meant, what it looked like or how it could best be achieved.

My research is located in this space of contradiction within the Coalition. The moment of seemingly boundless opportunity and hope represented in the (re)imagining of the national political order was also a moment of cautious negotiation as old enemies became new allies and balances of power shifted. Starting from the understanding that the coalition of different groups of women under a single banner was not a given from the outset of the transitional period, I examine the discourses framing the ways that different groups of women articulated their participation and their priorities within the Coalition and how these different imaginings of womanhood and political participation were represented in the Coalition. Central to my research is the examination of the ways that power was negotiated between different groups of women in the Coalition and how these negotiations of power influenced the priorities outlined in the WNC's Charter and also influenced the strategies employed by the Coalition in reaching out to women across the country and in developing its organisational goals and direction.

In engaging with material from the archive, I identify three dominant discourses employed by the WNC in mobilising support and challenging patriarchy. First, the discussion of law and culture as regressive and needing reform because of their failure to meet the needs and reflect the realities of women's lives. Second, the discussion of race, class, gender and national liberation as interdependent and mutually constitutive

[14] Mtintso, Thenjiwe. "Umrabluo Series on Building the South African Women's Movement Part 1: The Women's National Coalition." African National Congress: South Africa's National Liberation Movement. http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/10/umrabulo10d.html (accessed March 25, 2010).<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/10/umrabulo10d.html>.

struggles. Finally, the discussion of women's roles in private and public spaces as valuable and politically significant. These discourses were central in the WNC, framing many of its objectives and offering the positions around which women organised and constructed the Coalition's purpose. Reading these discourses also provides space to read the inaudibilities that surrounded them, the areas that while present existed outside the dominant discourses. The three dominant discourses that I engage with reveal the ways that women challenged patriarchal oppressions but also framed men as their allies. They also reveal the ways women framed their own particular experiences as women, how this framing created space for solidarity and alliance among women, but also how it limited the space for women to critically examine and challenge relationships between and with each other.

In working with interview material, I identify five dominant discourses that reflect the ways that women who participated in the Coalition framed and discussed their experiences of and perspectives on the WNC. The first of these discourses focuses on "the moment," discussing the role that the limited window of opportunity presented by the transition to democracy played in galvanising support for a coalition. Second is "purpose, vision and leadership," which explores how different women in the Coalition conceptualised the purpose of participating in the Coalition and imagined the role of the WNC in shaping the South African political landscape. Next, "race, class and parties" examines how different women understood their role and felt a belonging in the Coalition and how they read the significance other women's positions in and contribution to the Coalition along the lines of race, class and political affiliation. The fourth discourse, "common ground," explores areas that the WNC framed as commonalities between women across difference, and examines how women from different groups believed these areas related to themselves and to women from other groups. Finally, "work of the Coalition" explores how different members of the WNC understood and experienced the Coalition's work, and how they imagined this work influencing the democratic dispensation.

Although significant work exists analysing the history, formation and major achievements of the WNC, there is a gap around theorising the negotiations of power between women in the Coalition and specific analysis of the areas that necessitated

compromise and specifically tested unity between actors in the Coalition. As such, my work speaks to this gap in the current literature, engaging with material and dimensions of the Coalition previously not engaged with. Understanding the internal dynamics within the Coalition that both allowed it to be successful and that brought to the surface the difficulties in bringing together women from such different backgrounds provides insights into the ways that women shared common experiences across diversity and how at times the materiality of their difference shaped their perspectives in diametrically conflicting ways.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. In Chapter 1, I begin by reviewing literature on women's organising across difference, highlighting common themes around which women's organising has been framed. This review examines theoretical frameworks on how identity constructs different relationships to power, specifically looking at power with regard to knowledge production, labour and citizenship rights, and social and political currency in organising.

Chapter 2 charts the histories of some of the prominent women's organisations, movements and historic moments in South African from the 1950s through to the early 1990s. Here, I examine how earlier women's multi-racial and multi-cultural organisations developed discourses around which they mobilised and organised participants. These discourses reveal the ways that commonalities were identified and championed and how difference was managed and discussed. Important in this chapter is the analysis of how women's needs, interests and rights were framed, understood and communicated by different bodies in different periods, and how these understandings of rights influenced the ways different bodies imagined women's relationships to different institutions, systems and actors in South African society. This chapter is in no way a comprehensive history of the organisations included here or of women's organising in South Africa, it is rather an introduction to some of the frameworks and discourses that were in circulation in women's organising in South Africa and from which the Coalition drew inspiration. This chapter is intended to offer some contextual background to women's organising in South Africa and to draw links between the WNC and different moments of women's political organising before it.

In Chapter 3, I use archival material to analyse the internal organisation of the WNC, specifically examining factors that enabled the Coalition to succeed in uniting women across such diverse and disparate backgrounds. I focus on the writing of the Women's Charter to highlight ways that the WNC employed gender sensitive methods in reaching out to women, soliciting input on all women's experiences and conscientising women about their rights and the need to ratify these rights in the new Constitution. This chapter examines the internal workings of the WNC as well as its efforts in grassroots mobilisation through which it gained a broad base of support for its campaign to "put women on the agenda"[15] in the new democracy. In this chapter, I explore the dominant discourses employed by the WNC in mobilising support and challenging oppressive patriarchal powers. Here, I also engage with voices that spoke outside these discourses, often challenging these discourses and revealing complex negotiations of power within the Coalition. Providing a framework for understanding dominant framings and negotiations of power through discourse in the Coalition, this chapter lays the foundation for Chapter 4, which explores how relationships to and negotiations of power were experienced at the individual level.

In Chapter 4, I examine the internal organisation of the Coalition through interview material. This chapter speaks to many of the gaps present in the archival records and provides more texture to many of the discussions from Chapter 3 by reflecting some of the different voices in different political, social and other locations within the Coalition. While often the archival material reflected the Coalition's official positions or final resolutions, omitting the processes and discussions leading up to these, the interviews allow an opportunity to engage with a multiplicity of views and voices, revealing more nuance to different positions and offering insights into how difference was managed and work was carried through. The interviews also reveal contradictory information in places, illustrating the different ways that individuals experienced the Coalition as well as some of the material challenges of forging a group as diverse as the Women's National Coalition.

[15] Bazilli, Susan, ed. *Putting women on the agenda*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991.

METHODOLOGY

As an organisational body, the WNC wrestled with relationships of inequality on multiple levels, in different dimensions. Most visibly, it challenged the patriarchal powers that excluded women from the constitutional negotiations and rejected women's knowledges as politically legitimate or viable as legislation. At other, often less visible levels, the Coalition also struggled against race, class, political and many other oppressions both externally and within the organisation. To meaningfully engage with these complexities and challenges around intersectionality, I use a feminist approach that recognises differences in power relations between women and seeks to unpack the significance of these power inequalities in different spaces, reading for the ways that they influence relationships between different groups of women. This approach understands women as a diverse, heterogeneous group and recognises that oppressions and exploitations exist among women along different axes of identity.

Because of the complexities around reading relationships of difference and inequality, and in understanding the varying ways that dominance is asserted and that oppressive systems and structures are subverted, I use frameworks of power articulated by Foucault that understand power as a dynamic force, not belonging to or exercised by a singular entity nor taking shape in a singular form, but rather exerted in different ways to produce different relationships and effects in varying contexts. This framework for understanding power allows for reading mediations of power by different individual, collective and institutional bodies through a variety of modes of expression. While I focus on gender primarily, I recognise that intersectionality complicates readings of identity and power necessitating that multiple identities be read and acknowledged simultaneously. My focus on gender also does not signal a hierarchy of identities, in this thesis an individual cannot divorce herself from her other identities to discuss experiences, needs and realities as a woman.

Explaining the value of making central questions of gender and power in feminist historiography, Cherryl Walker explains, "until very recently these were not questions that occurred to most historians; making the invisibility of women in history visible is a political achievement of the broad women's movement. What needs to be made clear is

that asking such questions is not at all the same as imposing feminist answers on the material, in the sense of insisting on a feminist consciousness where there is not one."[16] In line with Walker's sentiments, while I understand my own analytical framework as feminist, I am not looking to construct feminist histories where they did not exist. This approach recognises that not all women's organising is inherently feminist, and that it if it was not, I do not need to rewrite it as feminist for my text to be a feminist text.

I recognise that women can be influential upholders of patriarchy and can significantly contribute to the oppression and abuse of other women. I also recognise men as important partners in the feminist movement and in undermining patriarchy. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I focus on women's organisations that worked towards gender equality within the anti-apartheid movement and also on the patriarchal actors and institutions, most often represented by men in the examples that I explore, that opposed women's advances. Given the historical marginalisation and exclusion of women, and issues constructed as 'women's issues', from public policy and politics as well as the historical privileging of men and masculinity in this area, I believe that women's struggles against patriarchy in politics and in society are important to examine, analyse and document.

This thesis is based on qualitative research focused on reading discourses and understanding how these discourses provide insights into different expressions and negotiations of power. The texts on which I base my discourse analysis are from various formal historical archives and interviews. The archival material used in this thesis is from the Robben Island Mayibuye Archives, the South African Historical Archives, the South African Historical Papers, and Debbie Budlender's personal collection. The archival texts I engage with in this thesis are all written texts, primarily organisational constitutions and guidelines, minutes and reports from meetings and workshops, and correspondence between actors in their capacities as organisational representatives and as individuals. While I am aware of the limitations and the potentially problematic nature of the privileging of written text in many archives,[17] these remain the primary sources of information publicly available on the women's organisations in South Africa that I

[16] Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: xxv.
[17] Mottsemme, Nthabiseng. "The Mute Always Speak: On Wonen's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Current Sociology*. 52. 9. 2004.

examine. While recognising that the reliance on, and privileging of, written texts is often the result of epistemological and physical violences, I adopt the approach that "a universal archive, one that preserves *the* memory of a culture is an impossibility as memory is necessarily an individual thing: there are many memories."[18] Starting from an understanding that archival records provide only part of a larger picture[19], I immerse myself in the available records to explore the different textures of experience that they represent.

In examining negotiations and representations of power within different women's organisations represented in the archival texts, I engage with both the physical archive and the Foucauldian concept of archival discourse. This Foucauldian reading of the archive recognises a "positivity of discourse", or a *historical a priori*, that "has to take account of the fact that discourse has not only a meaning or a truth, but a history, and a specific history that does not refer it back to the laws of an alien development."[20] This *historical a priori* allows a reading of the archive through the mapping of epistemological routes that reveal the constructions of different norms and standards of knowing and understanding. Reading these norms provides insights into how power was framed, how different actors constructed their relationships to power, and how these actors exercised different types of power. While located in discourse, Foucault demonstrates the materiality of this *historical a priori* explaining that it is "not of truths that might never be said, or really given to experience; but the *a priori* of a history that is given, since it is that of things actually said."[21] This reading of the archive affirms the materiality of discourse, locating it historically, politically and socially, and using it to give meaning and context to different expressions of power.

In all post-colonial archives,[22] and in South Africa especially, silence was a tool of repressing, disciplining and delegitimising knowledges. During apartheid, evidence of opposition to, or organising against, apartheid was met with brute and inhumane force

[18] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61, :220
[19] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61, :221
[20] Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 2000:127
[21] Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge, 2000:127
[22] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61, :221

aimed at producing and maintaining silence. Even with its desperate last gasps, apartheid tyranny continued to use silence as a weapon of repression with evidence indicating that "in the weeks immediately preceding the inauguration of the first democratic government, in excess of four tons of highly incriminating records of Security Police operations were destroyed."[23] The extreme violence used by apartheid powers to create silences speaks to the power and significance of voice and the production and circulation of subaltern knowledges.

Nthabiseng Motsemme explains that as actors oppressed on many levels, for many black feminists and womanists giving voice to their knowledges and "breaking silence is viewed as a gesture of defiance that heals and makes a life of sanity, dignity and selfhood possible to reclaim for black women."[24] Simultaneously, under the severe brutality of apartheid, Motsemme explains that voluntary silence could be an expression of power by black and other subaltern women. This voluntary withholding of information allowed silence to "become a site for reconstituting 'new' meanings… a tool of enablement for those oppressed," forcing repressive silence "to loosen its hold, thus making it possible to thwart hegemonic power itself."[25] Creating silences for protection against oppressive powers therefore allowed women to express their own form of power; deciding which information to make public. These many layers at which silences were produced and maintained reveal the complex difficulties in turning to archives to read and to produce history.

Given the significant knowledge gaps in the archives of liberation organisations under apartheid, focussing on discourses in the archive is valuable in creating spaces for reading silences. Reading with sensitivity to the ways that discourses form knowledge routes and trajectories makes visible the ways that dominant discourses construct some fields and expressions of knowledge as legitimate or 'natural' and others as unspeakable or absurd. As Rodney G.S. Carter explains,

> Speech and silence are dependent and defined through the other. There is no speech without silence, otherwise there would just be unmodulated cacophony;

[23] McEwan, Cheryl. :Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in the Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 3. 2003: 742.
[24] Motsemme, Nthabiseng. "The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Current Sociology*. 52. 9. 2004: 916.
[25] Motsemme, Nthabiseng. "The Mute Always Speak: On Women's Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Current Sociology*. 52. 9. 2004: 917.

> likewise there would be no silence without speech, just a universal meaningless, emptiness… so one must acknowledge a surrounding environment of sound or language in order to recognise silence.[26]

Engaging with the positivity of a discourse allows access to the "surrounding environment of sound", and through an understanding of this environment a reading of the inverse silences becomes possible. Awareness of the types of speech that are framed as normal and the types of power associated with them, gives insights into speech that is framed as absurd and the meanings and implications of this construction of absurdity and unspeakableness.

Carter 's understanding of the relationship between speech and silence offers a valuable angle through which to imagine the ways that power can be read through the communication and ability to access different ideas and the inverse inaccessibility of other ideas. With this said, there are significant differences between written text and speech that complicate the ideas of speech and silence as presented by Carter. Because of the different ways that speech and text exist and are employed, the absence of text does not necessarily indicate silence, but in many cases can rather be indicative of inaudibility due to access to text mediums and process through which texts are recorded and made part of public archives. Similarly to the relationship between speech and silence presented by Carter, audibility and inaudibility also speak to actors' relationships to power and to the ways that this power shapes dominant concepts of intelligibility. The absence of text in a certain field therefore does not necessarily indicate the absence of voice, communication or engagement in and with that field, but could rather be indicative of any of a host of dynamics including access to text mediums, different norms of communication, and perceptions of the value in recording certain types data.

Recognising that "the power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive" and that "inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archive,"[27] I do not claim to represent any totality of voices or perspectives in women's organising in South Africa, but rather use the available material to start mapping dominant discourses and (re)constructing the landscape in which these discourses were

[26] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61: 223.
[27] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61, :216

produced. Because of the limited scope of this thesis, I am not able represent the full complexities of power negotiations in women's organisations in South Africa and cannot capture the breadth and range of discourses in the fifty-year range that I examine. Mindful of Cheryl McEwan's comments that in the post-colonial archive "it is important to keep multiple versions of history alive and 'not to privilege… a few master narratives that offer sense of unity at the cost of ignoring the fracture and dissonance,'"[28] I offer the disclaimer that my work intentionally focuses on a macro view of women's organising, highlighting the major themes and discourses that shaped the field and that directed much of the course of its history.

Like working with the archive, working with interview material presents a host of challenges, demanding reflexivity and a theorising of my approach to reading and analysing this material. One of the primary challenges to working with interviews, especially when relating to an event many years prior, is the functioning of memory. In exploring the ways that the past and present interact with each other in the shaping of memory, Heidi Grunebaum asks, "where do the fault lines that separate the pasts from the invisible moments of the present lie? What historiographic and commemorative practices are located along these arbitrary punctuations of continuity?"[29] These questions are important in engaging with memories of the past, especially in recalling events many years after they took place. The period of the early 1990s presented many uncertainties in the South African political landscape. Many individuals experienced changes in their relationship to the state and national governing structures, and women engaging in the WNC expressed diverse views on what a post-apartheid society might look like and how they might exist in this society.[30] The combination of women's expectations or hopes of the 'new' society, their experiences of the transition to democracy and their lives under the new dispensation all influence how they understand, engage with and remember the past. The relating of memories is therefore a complex representation of experiences from the Coalition and before, and also lives and experiences since that time that inform how

[28] McEwan, Cheryl. :Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in the Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 3. 2003: 755.
[29] Heidi Grunebaum. "Re-placing Pasts, Forgetting Presents; Narrative, Place, and Memory in the Time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Research in African Literatures.* 32, 3. 2001: 208
[30] *Bazilli, Susan, ed. Putting women on the agenda. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991*.

interviewees understand themselves and their subjectivity in different spaces at different times. Grunebaum explores these intricacies of memory saying,

> In the complex and contested memorial landscape of the "new" South Africa, the negotiated foundations of its constitutional democracy—and the history of these foundations— intersect with modes of silencing and displacement effected by discourses of reconciliation and healing; nation- building and reconstruction. The stories that make official memory are rewritten in relation to the "new," to beginnings, and to the bounded, imaginary body of the nation.[31]

Grunebaum's reflections on the constructions of memory, specifically in post-apartheid South Africa, point to memory as a complex compilation of 'the old' and 'the new', perceptions of what these are, or should be, and the constant remaking of these through different frameworks.

Some of the complexities embedded in working through memory are explored in Helen Scanlon's work in which she cites the Personal Narrative Group which notes that "when talking about their lives, people sometimes lie, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused and get things wrong yet they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truth of our experiences."[32] These insights are valuable when engaging with material based on memory as they remind that the truths expressed through memory are inextricably connected with personal subjectivities. They also highlight the value of individuals' perspectives and experiences, speaking to the idea that what individuals believe to be truth is important to understanding the ways they see and experience the world around them and the significance they attach to different systems, structures and relationships. Although this may not represent "the past as it actually was," it is valuable information that helps in painting a political and social landscape and locating different actors within this landscape.

In conducting interviews and engaging with former WNC participants on an intimate face to face level, the Maya Angelou quote "people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel"[33] often came to mind. In some instances, interviewees could not recall the specific details

[31] Heidi Grunebaum. "Re-placing Pasts, Forgetting Presents; Narrative, Place, and Memory in the Time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Research in African Literatures.* 32, 3. 2001: 208
[32] Scanlon, Helen. *Representation and Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape 1948-1976.* Cape Town: HSRC. 2007: 14
[33] Kelly, Bob. *Worth Repeating: More Than 5,000 Classic and Contemporary Quotes* (2003) p. 263

of discussions or resolutions, but they remembered the feelings associated with that moment or interaction. Although such recollections did not offer details for understanding the situation, the emotion that they communicated spoke to the ways that interviewees had experienced themselves in relation to different movements and political bodies, to different groups of women and individuals, and to the Coalition as a political, work and social body. These perspectives therefore offer valuable insights into how differently located individuals read and experienced the same processes, systems and structures differently within in the Coalition. These different readings work to complicate the somewhat singular view represented in the WNC's archives, offering more nuanced views of how the positions represented in the archive were experienced and viewed from different locations.

Aware of the power involved in producing accounts of history, and the potentials for empowerment and exploitation in this act, I recognise that in my role as a historian it is important "not further marginalize the marginalized, we must resist the urge to speak for others, we must not romanticize them and we must attempt to avoid reinforcing the marginalization by naming it."[34] My aim in this thesis is to identify different negotiations and expressions of power and the meanings and implications of this power at different levels. I do not seek to, nor do I believe it is my place to, present any sort of moral yardstick by which to judge different actions and decisions. As a young South African woman having grown up, and come into my scholarship, in the post-apartheid era, all I can do is imagine the enormous courage and sacrifice it took for women in the organisations written about in this thesis, to challenge apartheid powers and to fight for the rights, freedoms and protections to which I am entitled today. As such, I approach my critiques of the different discourses within women's organisations from a sympathetic point, while also being aware not to overlook different women's agency in taking positions and in making decisions. Sensitive to both the context in which different actions were taken and the implications that these actions had at different levels, I examine what different discourses reveal about how power was accessed and expressed by different women in the WNC's processes, and in some of the critical organisational roots which

[34] Carter, Rodney G.S. "Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence." *Archivaria*. 61: 226

led to this, which power inequalities and abuses were named and formally challenged, and which power inequalities and abuses were made 'unspeakable' and not formally challenged within major women's organisations in South Africa between the 1950s and 1990s.

Many of the questions I ask in my research about how women located in different spaces within the South African socio-political, racial and economic landscape navigated the WNC and engaged with women they identified as different from themselves came up for myself as a researcher. I have made the conscious effort to be aware of how the ways I read and related to women from different backgrounds influences the ways I interpret different dynamics and communicate them in my research. Mindful of Joan W. Scott's argument for "insisting on the discursive nature of 'experience' and on the politics of its construction," I adopt her position that "experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* something that needs to be interpreted. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political."[35] Building on this view, I seek to be upfront about my position as an individual whose worldview and ideologies have been influenced by experiences of race as a black person in South Africa, of class as a privileged person in a grossly unequal society, of geography as a fourth-generation Johannesburger, and of politics as someone sympathetic to decolonial, anti-capitalist movements. In being honest to my objective of better understanding and mapping the internal working dynamics and motivations of the WNC, I work to listen to and engage with the expressions of experience presented along the political spectrum, sensitive to the lessons embedded in these experiences about the meanings, limitations and opportunities of and for organising across difference in the complex South African context.

Similarly to my approach to the archival material, I work with the interviews with the understanding that they offer a snippet of a larger frame, and cannot capture the full complexity or view represented in the moment of the WNC's work. While recognising that each individual's experiences communicated to the interviewer constitute a snippet, I also engage with the idea that my own positionality as an urban, middle class South African woman, as a researcher, a student, and whatever other identities interviewees

[35] Scott, Joan W.. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry*. 17, 4. 1991: 797.

read on me, further influenced the snippet of the frame available to me. Both in terms of creating space for frank and revealing conversations and also in the ways the tools and frameworks that I have available to me influence how I interpret, make intelligible and communicate different ideas. Reading other researchers' presentations of their interviews with WNC participants, I was struck how in some instances the ideas communicated to different interviewers are identical- sometimes almost verbatim- and other instances they radically different as though interviewees were describing different groups and processes. I was particularly interested in interviewees' frankness when reading the representation of interviews in Loraine Maritz's research,[36] based on her 2004 PhD thesis from Stellenbosch University.[37] In this research, Maritz, who signifies as white, and self-identifies as an Afrikaner woman[38], spoke to other Afrikaner women about their experiences of the WNC. In very candid communications, Maritz expressed the ways that her interviewees viewed their position in the WNC as Afrikaner women, how they understood the purpose and objectives of the Coalition, and how they experienced and engaged with the changing political landscape of the time. In reading Maritz's research, I wondered whether her interviewees would have discussed their experiences in similar racialised and politicised terms with me, and how readings of me as a black, young, non-Afrikaans speaker might have influenced similar conversations.

Impressed by the honesty captured in Maritz's research, which communicates firsthand views that I had not come across before in my research, I decided to incorporate information from her interviews, as represented in her research, in my own research. I also incorporate in my analysis of discourses in the WNC interview material from S. Kristine Abrams' 2000 Master's thesis which examines the formation and work of the WNC, paying significant attention to interpersonal relationships within the Coalition and different women's perceptions of how the WNC carried out its work and functioned

[36] "Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, 61. 2011.
[37] Loraine Maritz. "Afrikanervroe se Politieke Betrokkenheid in Historiese Perspektief met spesiale verwysing na die Women's National Coalition van 1991 tot 1994." *Stellenbosch University*. PhD thesis. 2004.
[38] Prinsloo, Dioné, and Loraine Maritz. "LitNet Akademies-onderhoud: Dioné Prinsloo Gesels Met Loraine Maritz Oor Die Rol En Ervaring Van Afrikanervroue in Die Women's National Coalition." *LitNet* |. N.p., 24 Nov. 2010. Web. 28 Aug. 2012. <http://www.argief.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item>.

within the political landscape of the time.[39] Abrams signifies as an American, white, female researcher working from Oxford University, among many other identities. Between age, race, language and nationality, among others, Maritz, Abrams and I all signify in different ways in different spaces in South African society. This difference in the ways we signify could allow us each access to different types of relationships with different interviewees, and allow us different tools and frameworks for communicating questions and interpreting information, amongst other differences. This all works to influence the content that each of us is able to access through interviews.

I recognize that the identities that I have highlighted above cannot in anyway represent or define the sum of a person or the direction of an interview, which are influenced by countless tangible and intangible factors and identities at different times in different contexts. I have chosen these markers of difference between the three researchers because they are identifiable markers that historically carry significant weight in the South African context, influencing individuals' ability to move in, and through, different spaces.

Abrams', Maritz's and my interviews are all similar in that they were conducted significantly after the WNC achieved its mandate of conducting research and adopting a charter, and after South Africa's adoption of the 1996 Constitution. This lapse of time between the Coalition and the interviews means interviewees had time to reflect on the period, on the value of the Coalition in a national context, and on their personal experiences of the WNC. It also means that at the time of the interviews, interviewees' perspectives of the early to mid 1990s and of their experiences in the Coalition could likely be influenced by their perceptions of the new dispensation, of the ways the current order has lived up to different expectations, and by the different directions that they have taken their lives since the Coalition. Because I engage with the idea of memory as dynamic and influenced by a variety of factors, including those in the present, I also look at Abrams, Martiz and my interviews as offering different insights based on the different moments in South African history in which they were conducted. Abrams and Maritz

[39] S. Kristine Abrams. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000; Loraine Maritz. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree,* 61. 2011.

conducted their interviews around a similar period with Abrams conducting all of hers in 2000 and Maritz conducting hers between 2001 and 2002. In contrast, I conducted my interviews in 2012, roughly a decade after Abrams and Maritz. This lapse in time could influence interviewees in any number of directions which are difficult to predict.

Abrams, Maritz and I all draw from the same WNC's physical archive housed at the UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives. Because in this area we all have access to the same texts, presented in the same format, I have the same access to information as the other two researchers. I therefore do not engage with their use of archival material but only with the materials that they obtained through personal interactions in interviews, which, as explained above, I might not have access to in the same ways.

My interviews engage with women who were in top leadership positions in the Coalition. These interviews were with Anne Letsebe[40], the WNC's co-convenor, Sheila Meintjes[41], the WNC's research director of the charter campaign, Pregs Govender[42] the WNC's project manager, and Debbie Budlender[43] the WNC's research manager. All of these individuals' names and voices are dominant in the WNC's archives, appearing frequently and offering weight on many of the Coalition's most significant developments. These interviewees all held influential positions in the WNC which determined much of the shape, character and content of the Coalition's charter and research campaigns. Speaking with women who occupied these positions therefore provides insight into how different processes, systems, and structures were originally imagined and conceived in the early stages and how they took shape over time in the Coalition's life. Because of the prominence all of these individuals have in the archives, interviews with them allow for a degree of consistency and opportunities for communication with texts from the archives. Despite several email and telephone communications with Frene Ginwala, the WNC's convenor, we were not able to establish a time to meet to conduct an interview. She was an incredibly important and influential figure in the Coalition, but it is because of

[40] Anne Letsebe was an academic and head of the Black Social Worker's Association. She worked around gender and youth concerns at community levels, and worked underground with the ANC and PAC.
[41] Sheila Meintjes was an academic, anti-apartheid and gender activist, feminist researcher and member of United Women's Organisation (UWO).
[42] Pregs Govender was a teacher, a trade unionist, community organiser and gender activist. She was a member of the ANC, COSATU, and the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW.
[43] Debbie Budlender was a researcher, trade unionist and anti-apartheid activist. She worked with a number of different labour and research organisations.

difficulties in scheduling and with time constraints that an interview with her was not possible for this thesis. There are several significant members of the WNC's leadership who I did not engage with in interviews because of the time constraints of this research. Because of these restrictions, I focused on individuals whose inputs in the archive speak most directly to the questions that my research asks.

All of my interviewees identify strongly as having engaging in the anti-apartheid struggle before the transition period and supporting a progressive agenda during the transition. Although I think they might define progressive in slight different terms from each other, as is explored later in this thesis, they all supported the abolition of apartheid, the to move to majority rule and supported the advancement of women's rights in terms that I understand as feminist. Although there are numerous limitations in engaging with a movement or organisation exclusively from the top, because of the limited scope of this research and my desire to engage in-depth with in a specific area, this thesis reflects the WNC from its highest levels where policy and organisational structures and frameworks were conceptualised.

Abrams' interviews cover a broader range of interviewees than mine, with the majority signifying as white and all occupying some sort of leadership position within the WNC. The majority of Abrams' interviewees had also actively engaged in the anti-apartheid struggle and supported the transition to democracy and the promotion of women of women's rights in terms that I understand as feminist.

Maritz's interviews are primarily with women she identifies as Afrikaner, and with some English speaking white women. Maritz's interviewees represent a range of Afrikaner organisations from moderate to conservative, covering political, cultural and social organisations. Her interviewees cover a variety of positions on the political spectrum, from those opposed to the end of apartheid and reluctantly engaged in the Coalition only to have some influence on the new dispensation, to those fully engaged in the work of the WNC and supporting the move to democracy. Martitz's interviews reveal voices not represented in Abrams' or my interviews that openly express discomfort with the multi-racialism and multiculturalism of the WNC, and that communicate opposition to the changing balances of power in South Africa at the time. A challenge in working with Maritz's work was that her PhD thesis is written in Afrikaans, a language in which I

have limited command. I therefore primarily draw on a paper that she published in English in *New Contree* in May 2011, which is based on research from her thesis and uses material from her interviews, either through direct quotes or paraphrased with citations linking to a specific interview. In all instances where I use material from either Martiz or Abrams interviews, I reference the interviewer who conducted the interview and the interviewee to whom they attribute the information.

None of the three sets of interviews is representative of the broader racial or geographic composition of the WNC, and the findings from this research is therefore limited in its ability to present a diversity of voices and experiences in this regard. These interviews do however give significant insights into diversity within the Coalition's leadership, with many of the interviewees having served in prominent leadership positions within the WNC and coming from different political, professional, racial, geographic, among other, backgrounds. This view into the Coalition at leadership level allows for an understanding of some of the influences directing the WNC's theoretical positions, its policy and strategic formulations, and the different perspectives and voices behind the Coalition's vision(s) and the implementation of this.

The three sets of interviews are different in many ways. They engage with different individuals, employ different methodological and theoretical frameworks, and try to draw out different types of information about the Coalition and the experiences of women in it. Through these differences though, some dominant discourses emerge, revealing some of the themes and frameworks around which participants framed their experiences of the Coalition, albeit from different perspectives. These discourses reveal different angles from which similar events and dynamics were perceived and experienced by differently located individuals, and how these were engaged with to maintain the Coalition's unity. The different interview sources also explore ideas of women's epistemic privilege differently, examining ways that women's experiences of society, their needs and knowledges were framed and navigated by different women in the Coalition. They also explore how these diverse knowledges shaped different women's priorities and influenced areas of commonality as well as points of departure within the Coalition. The diversity of views captured in the three sets of interviews reveals more nuanced texture and complexity than any one of them alone. This diversity of voices and

representations of experience in the WNC works to provide a broader and more complicated understanding of the Coalition, its work, and the glue that kept it together through to the adoption of the Charter even when it seemed most unlikely.

An important and difficult consideration in my engagement with both archive and interview material was where to stop and where to draw the boundaries of my research. Because of the limitations in time and the scope of this research, even as new archival and interview sources became available, which continued happening until a late stage in the research, I was unable to incorporate it all while remaining within the parameters of this research. Therefore, while it might have been possible to include more sources in this research, to meaningfully engage with the material, I have limited my scope to records on and from the WNC's national office and interviews with the Coalition's national leadership. Rather than a broad brushstroke approach which covers broader area, this more focused approach allows me to examine an area of the WNC in greater detail, reading more closely for dominant streams of thought and conversation.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

By the early 1990s, when the WNC was formed, women in South Africa had been formally organising around their rights since the early parts of the twentieth century.[44] The organisations that came together to form the WNC brought with them different institutional legacies and memories, lessons from experiences of mobilising and organising women at the grassroots, and of negotiating power and legitimacy in different social and political structures. These diverse experiences provided a wealth of resources from which the WNC drew lessons on best practices specially tailored to South African realities.

In this chapter, I review literature on the ways that the construction of different identities influence the ways that different women are able to express power in South African society, and how these different identities influence the ways that women organise politically. I begin by exploring the meanings and implications of gendered power relations and different ways that gender is complicated by other identity categories such as race and class. I discuss the relationships between these different identities through intersectionality to explore ways that women experience society in dramatically different ways. I then interrogate dominant constructions and articulations of political organising to examine how gender is incorporated in or excluded from these conceptualisations, and how these constructions influence the ways that women are read as political actors. I follow this with a discussion on how gendered understanding of political actors and political participation influence the ways that women engage in politics. I use these theories to contextualize some of the struggles that the WNC encountered and to illustrate ways that the South African situation drew from the experiences and knowledges of past movements, but also how it developed its own strategies to suit the unique context.

[44] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

Given the complexity and wide range of women's organisations in the anti-apartheid movement, I will not attempt to draw concrete conclusions about all women's organisations. Instead, I examine trends between organisations that highlight commonalities in experiences, obstacles, and opportunities for women in different women's organisations within the antiapartheid movement.

In this thesis, I build on two of my earlier works. The first, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution," was published by Macalester College in 2010. Here, I located the WNC within literature on global experiences of women's roles in developing and struggling for representation in national legislation during transitions to democracy. This focused on the virtually universal marginalisation and exclusion of women in post-colonial and post-war national democracy formations and examined how the WNC avoided the ghettoisation and exclusion experienced by earlier women's movements around the world. In this work, I argued that the WNC became a key actor in the development of the Constitution by drawing from a tradition of women's organising in South Africa that emphasised women's legitimacy in and value to public politics. Starting from this point, the WNC rejected masculinist framings of politics, democracy and rights, instead demanding that political structures change to be inclusive of and sensitive to women's needs.

The second work that this thesis builds on is my 2011 Honours thesis from the University of Cape Town, "Struggles Against the Self: Negotiations of power within the Women's National Coalition." This work focused on the internal organisation of the WNC, and used archival material to construct a discourse analysis of different dynamics and power relationships within the Coalition. This work examined the WNC's success in theorising and challenging women's oppressions through the state, industry and patriarchal society, and looked how the archive reflected the processes of theorising and challenging oppression between women in the Coalition.

Through this research I became familiar with literature on the WNC, on constitution writing and democracy formation, and also on literature on South Africa's transition to democracy and the many obstacles around representation, the protection of rights, and securing peace and democracy between the different political parties and actors in the negotiations. In writing this thesis I drew heavily on my training in history,

political science, and women, gender and sexualities studies, using the knowledges I gained from all three of these disciplines to influence my reading and analysis of the literature and my writing of the thesis.

In this thesis on the WNC, I seek to move from the broad analysis that examined the WNC within the context of the national negotiations to a more specific analysis in which I focus on internal dynamics within the Coalition. This focus on the WNC itself, rather than the WNC within the negotiations, will allow me to explore negotiations of power between different organisations and individuals within the WNC and to identify and understand dynamics that supported the growth and strength of the WNC and also dynamics that created tensions and revealed the complexities in uniting women from such different organisations. This analysis examines how the WNC emerged as a political possibility and how it framed its objectives broadly enough to have wide appeal but specifically enough to be able to influence meaningful change.

Gender and Politics

Many feminist scholars writing on democracy have challenged assumptions that democracy is neutral, impartial and provides equal opportunity and protection to all citizens. Instead they, especially postcolonial feminist scholars, argue that democracy is inevitably informed by existing gendered power relationships in which constructions of femininity and masculinity shape the roles, positions, and opportunities of citizens.[45] In writing on the relationship between gender and democracy, Anne Phillips argues that the discussion of rights within a universalistic framework has created assumptions and expectations that all citizens are treated equally within democracy because they are bound to the same laws and offered the same protections. Pointing to economic, social and political disparities between men and women, Phillips argues that assumptions of neutrality fail to account for the pervasive inequalities in society that provide access and privilege to hegemonic masculinity and men and disadvantage femininity and women.

[45] Ranchod-Nilsson, Sita. "'This, Too, Is a Way of Fighting': Rural Women's Participation in Zimbabwe's Liberation War." Edited by Mary Ann Tétreault. In *Women and revolution in Africa, Asia, and the New World*. Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1994..; Hooper, Charlotte. *Manly states: masculinities, international relations, and gender politics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

She argues that without addressing these inequalities it is not possible to realize equality and many of democracy's promises that are premised on ideas of equality.

Philips' argument suggests that assumptions of neutrality ignore the institutional barriers and social and cultural expectations that force women into specific roles and positions and that bar access to many sites of political, economic, and social power. Factors such as pregnancy and childcare, domestic work, lower wages for equal work, and historically embedded power dynamics that privilege masculinity in the work force, disproportionately affect women and are not factored into dominant ideas of equality and equal opportunity. Because patriarchy is so pervasive, if gender inequalities are not named and addressed then they constantly reproduce themselves and assumptions persist that all people benefit from masculinist systems, structures and policies. Effectively, in democracies assumptions of neutrality work to mask gender oppressions and uphold patriarchal norms.

In line with Philips' argument, Georgina Ashworth argues for the need to incorporate gendered analyses of *what* democracy *might entail*, highlighting the ways that women's invisibility in and/or absence from political forums is read and understood as consent to masculinist structures. Ashworth problematises the idea of democracy and pro-democracy organisation as gender neutral, insisting that the different ways that men and women experience society necessitate a consideration of their different positionalities. She explains,

> There is a presumed commonality of interest between women and men by which governance decisions and actions are taken in the name of women but without consultation with them. But most women, if asked, have different priorities than most men. The legitimacy of existing governance structures and processes must be questioned when the interests and voices of over half the population are not reflected in the decisions that are made.[46]

Ashworth describes how women are silenced in democratic systems and structures, and this silence is then assumed to mean support of policies and systems that subordinate women. Even before entering national governing bodies, women must navigate internal party politics where "boys' club" cultures are dismissive of their concerns and quieten their voices through "the coercion to conform to the central interests of the parties, the timing of meetings and sessions, the pervasiveness of patronage, (and) the distance of

[46] Ashworth, Georgina. "GENDERED GOVERNANCE." National Institute Of Rural Development. http://nird.ap.nic.in/clic/rrdl100.html (accessed March 07, 2010).

politics from daily realities."[47] Ashworth's argument proves that while the 'rights of man' are assumed to mean the 'rights of all people', they are still at the end 'the rights of man' and as long as woman is excluded from the conceptualisation of these rights she will not be protected by them.

Women and Race

The apartheid government's gross obsession with race has been documented and its effects analysed by many scholars writing about women's organising during apartheid. Scholars have written about the ways that racialised identities influenced the ways that individuals could live their lives and have provided macro analyses of the impacts of apartheid policies on different racial groups. Cherryl Walker writes about the ways that race influenced every part of South African life under apartheid and created such great divides between women that constructions of womanhood, and the expectations associated with it, varied drastically between women of different races. As such, there was no essential South African womanhood or essential women. Describing how race impacted every part of daily life Walker explains,

> It determines where one may live, whom one may marry, the schools one may attend and the wages one receives. It determines whether one can vote for the central and provincial governments, whether one has freedom of movement within one's country and between jobs, or not. If one is white, one belongs to a minority of privileged people in whom economic and political control is vested. If one is black, one is a second class citizen… The broad polarity between white and black in society has corresponded roughly, but not entirely, to that of class.[48]

Walker's description of the ordering of South African society around race illustrates why even people who were sexed the same way had radically different experiences of society, providing insights into why women of different races experienced life and apartheid differently. Walker continues,

> The position of women in South Africa has been far from uniform: the nature of the cleavages among them is complex. White women have been separated from black women by a very wide gulf, one located in the basic structures of white supremacy. For most women this colour-based divide cuts through any experience of any common womanhood they might share. Furthermore, for the majority of women who are black, the disabilities they suffer as blacks rather than as women have been felt to press most heavily upon them. At the same time, the experience

[47] Ashworth, Georgina. "GENDERED GOVERNANCE." National Institute Of Rural Development. http://nird.ap.nic.in/clic/rrdl100.html (accessed March 07, 2010).
[48] Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: 4.

> of their 'blackness' has varied considerably among different sections of black women.[49]

Walker's analysis illustrates the complexities of identity construction under apartheid, revealing different women's relationships to power and the ways that these relationships divided them. Walker describes how women's differences often outweighed their similarities, and why discussions of privilege and subordination could not be limited to gender, but also needed to include race and class. Walker explains that the premising of race in South African society meant that black women were not only made subordinate to men, but also to white women. Therefore while patriarchy served as a tool for the oppression of all women, race served as a tool of oppression for Black, Coloured and Indian women. Women could be, and were, oppressors of other women, at individual, community and institutional levels.

Walker's analysis also highlights the systematic ways in which race was deployed to organise class in South African society. The meanings ascribed to different races were reinforced by economic and class divisions seen through the intricate weaving together of the ideas of legitimate political, economic and social dominance and whiteness. Inversely, hegemonic knowledge constructed blackness through ideas of lack, illegitimacy and inferiority, representing what whiteness was not. These constructions of blackness provided justifications by the white minority, to themselves and to the African majority, why political and social power belonged to and was legitimately expressed through whiteness and why white economic dominance was a 'natural', incontestable right.

Also theorising about intersectionality, post-colonial scholar María Lugones argues that it is important to historicise relationships between race, class and gender because through the historicisation and interrogation of these relationships the coloniality of power becomes more apparent. She explains that, "without this history, we keep on centring our analysis on the patriarchy; that is, on a binary, hierarchical, oppressive gender formation that rests on male supremacy without any clear understanding of the mechanisms by which heterosexuality, capitalism, and racial classification are impossible to understand apart from each other."[50] Lugones' analysis highlights the idea that

[49] Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: 7.
[50] Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia*. 22, 1. 2007: 187.

individuals and groups have different relationships to power through the institutions of heteronormativity, class and race, as much as they do through gender. Therefore relationships between women of different groups cannot be read as the same because while they all suffer under patriarchy some women are further oppressed by race, and class and heteronormativity, while others are privileged through some or all of these institutions.

Lugones further develops her argument about the differences between groups of women saying, "colonialism did not impose precolonial, european gender arrangements on the colonized. It imposed a new gender system that created very different arrangements for colonized males and females than for white bourgeois colonizers. Thus, it introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing."[51] By tracing contemporary categories of identity to their origins in colonial structures, Lugones argues that the inequalities created through colonial constructions of differently raced, classed, gendered and sexualised bodies have created multiplicities in gender, meaning there is no uniform construction or experience of femininity, but rather many different ones corresponding to different race and class constructions. She continues explaining that these different experiences of gender allow women to 'know' society differently, and therefore produce different knowledges about society. The intersections of different identities meant that black women experienced subordination on multiple levels in different spaces.

The diversity of women's experiences, identities and ideological frameworks problematises the idea that there is an essential expression or experience of womanhood or femininity. Within the category of women, there are divisions in terms of race, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation, to name a few, that alter the ways that women experience, and are read by, society. Discussing the significance of difference between women, bell hooks comments,

> It radically calls into question the notion of a fundamentally common female experience which has been seen as the prerequisite for our coming together, for political unity. Recognition of the inter-connectedness of sex, race, and class highlights the diversity of experience, compelling redefinition of terms for unity.

[51] Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia*. 22, 1. 2007: 187.

> If women do not share 'common oppression,' what then can serve as a basis for our coming together?[52]

This question serves as a critical point for all women's organising, requiring that women define objectives and a common purpose in uniting. The tremendous differences and inequalities between and among women create very sensitive dynamics and situations where complicated power relationships need to be negotiated, so as to recognise systemic and normalised economic, cultural, and political oppressions without being paralysed by them, but instead drawing on common objectives and visions to use identities as a catalyst for collective reform and improvement.

Helen Scanlon's observations of the interactions and relationships between women of different races in South Africa demonstrate the level at which power inequalities between women of different races and classes were entrenched and normalised in South African society. In writing about the Communist Party of South African (CPSA), one of the major multi-racial organisations under apartheid, Helen Scanlon notes, "while many progressive white women identified with black politics, they nonetheless remained in a socially advantaged position. Thus white members of the CPSA could employ African CPSA members as domestic workers without any sense of irony or contradiction."[53] Scanlon's observations reveal that divisions between different groups of South African women were not only material but were deeply ideological, influencing the ways that women saw and related to each other. Scanlon's points illustrate that even when women were fighting for a common cause under a single banner, the systems and institutions created to divide them remained intact.

Scanlon's observations also highlight the challenges elite women, those most able to access, challenge and/or produce hegemonic knowledge, have in relating to subaltern women and in substantively understanding the meanings of the differences between them. Although superficially elite women might be able to relate to the challenges subaltern women experience, as illustrated by white women working alongside black women in the Communist Party, on a more meaningful level elite women's privilege makes them blind to the extent of the dehumanisation caused by economic and race inequalities in which they participate, benefit from and work to reproduce.

---

[52] hooks, bell. *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989.
[53] Scanlon, Helen. *Representation and Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape 1948-1976*. Cape Town: HSRC. 2007: 237.

Knowledge and Power

A common theme in post-colonial studies is the creation of silences, the idea that silences do not just exist but are intentionally and systematically produced and reproduced. Through unequal power relationships between different groups, hegemonic knowledge constructs itself as truth and reason, structuring dominant political, economic and social institutions around this reason. In discussing the power associated with knowledge production and the legitimisation of certain knowledges over others, Edward Said highlights the reality that identities are not inherent, but are historically produced and reproduced to represent different ideas and to signify different relationships to power. He explains how the coloniality of identity construction produced different types of subjects and ensured that the knowledges that they produced were not read as equal, but that the Occident was always read as the knowledge producer for and about the Orient. While recognising that "the Orient is not an inert fact of nature. It is not merely *there*… men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made." In further developing this argument Said warns that "it would be wrong to conclude that the Orient was *essentially* an idea, or a creation with no corresponding reality."[54] He highlights that while identities, and the meanings tied to them, are socially constructed, the systems, institutions and attitudes they inspire are very real and shape the ways that power is negotiated.

Said's observations are important because they speak to the power that identities have on the ways that individuals experience society and the knowledges that they are able to produce within that society. While race and class are socially constructed categories, they are constructs made real in the ways individuals and groups interact with each other and in the opportunities available to different groups. Therefore identifying and tracing the creation of identities and discussing their impacts does not make them go away. The inequalities linked to identity are written into daily experiences and relationships. Said illustrates that while it may be useful for groups with unequal power relationships to find points of commonality, this commonality does not minimise the

[54] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978: 5.

impact of the material differences influenced by the divisions created along identity lines.[55]

Related to theories of knowledge production and power, many feminist scholars identify positionality as key in acknowledging the processes of producing knowledge. This identification and engagement with the ways that knowledge producers' and knowledge consumers' identities influence the ways that they interact with and relate to different knowledges is championed by feminist scholars such as bell hooks and Angela Davis.[56] This reflexivity is aimed at creating awareness about the ways that different identities influence individuals' experiences of society, and how these experiences then colour the ways that knowledge is produced and consumed. Taking positionality seriously involves individuals interrogating the ways that their identities, and the privileges associated with these different identities, influence their ability to produce different knowledges about different experiences of society and the responsibility involved with producing these knowledges.

Significant discussion on the theorising of positionality centres around different knowledge producers' ability to give voice to different experiences, and the power negotiations involved with producing knowledge about an alien experience, especially when coming from a position of privilege. Discussing the challenges of representing and giving voice to subaltern experience, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that hegemonic knowledge producers are often corrupted by the privileged position from which they write while subaltern knowledge producers are constrained by their subjectivity being located within the discourses that construct them as subaltern.

Asking the question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak explores the particular position of subaltern women saying,

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effected. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow…[57]

[55] Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978: 5..
[56] Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, and Class.* New York: Vintage, 1983.
[57] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988: 26.

Spivak's examination of the particular subjugations experienced by subaltern women tackles both the challenges of representation and of voice, highlighting the ways that coloniality and patriarchy limit opportunities for independent production and expression of subaltern women's knowledges. Spivak's analysis of the production of different knowledges highlights the ways that individuals and groups' positionality and their relationships to power influence their ability to speak and to be heard. She highlights the constraints for knowledge production highlighted in the subaltern as female, but even within this group there remain elites and those whose historically constructed identities make them less able to speak and be heard.

Spivak's uses the language of hegemonic and subjugated knowledges to make clear the relationships that different knowledges have to power. In the context of reading negotiations of power within women's organising, this language makes central the argument that not all women's experiences represent the same types of knowledge and there are power relationships influencing the different types of knowledge that differently located women produce. Reading the ways that subjugated knowledges are located in opposition to hegemonic knowledge, and have historically been discounted as knowledge, reveals how in their production and circulation these knowledges disrupt normative narratives of knowledge by representing the experiences and realities of subaltern women. Additionally, acknowledging and reading subaltern knowledges makes visible the constructed nature of hegemonic knowledge and the processes through which it is made normative and ascends to dominance.

Examining the premises through which hegemonic knowledge constructs its legitimacy, Michel Foucault explains, "the fundamental codes of culture- those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of it practices- establish for every man (sic), from the very first, the empirical order with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home."[58] Hegemonic knowledge defines the acceptable "codes of culture" which convey that one is a thinker, and a trained thinker, and also defines the point at which the thinker "will be at home." These boundaries are created to normalise and promote the growth of hegemonic

[58] Foucault, Michel. The *Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* London & New York: Routledge. 2002: xxi.

knowledge, while also stifling subjugated knowledges. Because subjugated knowledges often challenge the very premises of normative "codes of culture" and problematise construction of the space in which one feels "at home," they are swimming against the tide and therefore do not enjoy the privilege of having their legitimacy read as a given.

In mapping historical routes and social and political developments through discourses, the importance of making central the role that power in knowledge production plays in the development, priorities and accessibility of different discourses is revealed in the ways it enables a reading of the ways hegemonic knowledge defines and constructs itself. Challenging the idea of apolitical or ahistorical knowledge, Nick Shepherd argues, "there is nothing natural or inevitable about the production of knowledge… At the same time, of course, the vast majority of knowledge represents itself as exactly that."[59] Elaborating on the constructed nature of knowledge and its role and value in furthering different actors' interests Shepherd explains "the notion that… knowledge is constructed leads us, in turn, to a further possibility: the notion that knowledge might be differently constructed."[60] Examining the ways in which knowledges are constructed allows for readings of the ways in which different actors' interests are furthered in their production and similarly how other actors are marginalised and oppressed through their knowledges being delegitimised and made inaudible. These readings of the currency of different knowledges reveal the ways in which power is exercised through the (re)production and circulation of different knowledges and the ways that knowledge is related to different social, political and economic forces.

Paying attention to the ways that power is located in different historical and political spaces and the ways that power is exercised through the production of knowledge also raises questions about the ways that different actors are affected and impacted by the production of different knowledges. Taking power seriously in knowledge production brings to the fore ways that both producers of hegemonic and subjugated knowledges are impacted by their interactions with each other and are constantly in communication with each other. Examination of knowledge production

[59] Shepherd, Nick. "Disciplining archaeology; the invention of South African prehistory, 1923-1953". *Kronos:* 129.
[60] Shepherd, Nick. "'When the hand that holds the trowel is black…' : Disciplinary practices of self-representation and the issue of 'native' labour in archaeology. *Journal of Social Archaeology*: 350.

within its various political, social, historical and economic locations challenges ideas that only subjugated knowledges are affected by hegemonic knowledge, and rather enables a reading of the conditions through which both are changed through their relationship. Describing different expressions of coloniality and the roles they play in constructing colonial experiences and understandings of knowledge, Arturo Escobar defines the coloniality of being as "the ontological dimension of coloniality, on both sides of the encounter" saying "it points at the 'ontological excess' that occurs when particular beings impose on others and, beyond that, the potential or actual effectivity of the discourses with which the other responds to the suppression as a result of the encounter." Escobar's explanation of the coloniality of being makes clear that hegemonic knowledge is not produced in a space of neutrality, removed from subjugated knowledges and people, rather it is part of, and responds to, the dialogue in which subjugated knowledges are produced. Hegemonic knowledge is therefore not 'post-historical' or apolitical, existing outside of and apart from history and social forces, but it is constantly changing and the producers of hegemonic knowledge are impacted by and react in response to their "ontological excess."

Engaging with the idea of knowledge production as political, Michel-Rolph Trouillot explores the ways that hegemonic knowledge rigidly defines the parameters of possibility, deciding which types of knowledge, and actions related to knowledge, are intelligible and which are impossible, even as they are created. Exploring how colonial knowledge was employed as a tool for justifying and bolstering the colonial enterprise, Trouillot argues that this knowledge was "based not so much on empirical evidence as on an ontology, an implicit organization of the world and its inhabitants."[61] Trouillot's analysis highlights the ways that colonial knowledge was not based on a reality but on a system of organising the world that benefited its knowledge producers and worked to legitimise and maintain the injustices they created. Describing hegemonic knowledge producers' reactions to expressions of subjugated knowledges Trouillot continues, "when reality does not coincide with deeply held beliefs, human beings tend to phrase interpretations that force reality within the scope of these beliefs. They devise formulas to

[61] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event." *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.* Boston: Beacon. 1995: 82

repress the unthinkable and to bring it back within the realm of accepted discourse."[62] Trouillot argues that subjugated knowledges were constructed as unthinkable by colonial, hegemonic, knowledge which rejected their ability to exist as a legitimate form of knowledge and in so doing rejected possibility that actions related to subjugated knowledges might ever be fully realised. He explains that, "the unthinkable is that which one cannot conceive within the range of possible alternatives, that which perverts all answers because it defies the terms under which the questions were phrased."[63] By defining the parameters of possibility, hegemonic knowledge defines the terms of legitimacy and demands that knowledge be communicated through the terms it defines to be intelligible and to have value as currency.

Motherism and Strategic Essentialism

A dominant theory in scholarship on women's organising against apartheid is that women mobilise and organise around their identities as mothers, as this is a common identity amongst many women and one of few which cuts across racial, class and geographic lines.[64] Explaining the significance of motherism, Shireen Hassim explains that it appealed to "a celebration of women as mothers, a link between women's familial responsibilities and their political work, and an emphasis on this aspect of women's roles as cutting across class and race barriers."[65] Hassim explains that part of motherism's effectiveness was its "emotive appeal to women's natural caring instincts."[66] Although Hassim does not problematise the assumptions that certain characteristics are innate to women, she explains that these assumptions served a strategic political function, and that in a climate where finding common ground for building non-racial alliances was often difficult, motherism served as a valuable common denominator between women. She

[62] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event." *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.* Boston: Beacon. 1995: 72
[63] Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event." *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History.* Boston: Beacon. 1995: 82.
[64] Gaitskell, Deborah, and Elaine Unterhalter. "mothers of the Nation: A Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikanrt Nationalism and the African National Congress. *Women-Nation-State*. Macmillan: London. 1989; Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991.
[65] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 76.
[66] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 76.

argues that "this politicization of traditional roles was part of a revolutionary nationalism in which woman, mother, and nation were part of a continuous discourse."[67] Hassim demonstrates the ways that women used already existing and accepted constructions of their identities as caretakers and nation-builders through motherhood to insert themselves into political processes and narratives through which they could challenge apartheid's hegemonic power.

Providing a practical illustration of the use of motherism as a tool for organising women, Jacklyn Cock explains,

> On occasion the identity of 'mother' was used to deepen connections between black and white women involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. For example, addressing a meeting in the Regina Mudi church in Soweto in 1986 the chair of the Transvaal region of the Black Sash, Judith Hawarden, emphasised her pain as the mother of two sons likely to be conscripted into the SADF, a pain which resonated with the mothers of sons who volunteered to leave the country for military training with MK.[68]

Cock highlights the ways that womanhood, specifically motherhood, were politicised to both encourage women to enter the liberation struggle and to legitimise their role in political spaces and bodies. Traditional gendered understandings of mothers as caregivers and often self-sacrificial familial protectors and providers, provided a popular framework through which to appeal to women and through which to support women's participation in political organising. The government's attacks against children worked to politicise parental identities and propelled many women into action in defence of their children.[69]

Also writing on the role of motherhood as a political force, Anne McClintock problematises the idea of motherhood as an essentially uniting category for women, arguing that it has also been used as a tool for dividing women. She argues that in the construction of Afrikaner identity, motherhood was a tool for reinforcing social divisions because mothers were constructed as the bearers of culture, whose responsibility was to instil in their children values of separatism and racial hierarchy. McClintock argues that Afrikaner women embraced their roles and identities as cultural educators and used this role to advocate for white supremacy. She explains,

---

[67] *Ibid.*
[68] Cock, Jacklyn. "'Another mother for peace': Women and peace building in South Africa,1983–2003." *Women in South African History*. HSRC Press. 2004 : 267.
[69] Meintjes, Sheila. "Winnie Madikizela Mandela: Tragic figure? Populist tribune? Township tough?" *Southern Africa Report* 13, 4. 1998: 14. http://www.africafiles.org/article.asp?ID=3791 (accessed December 09, 2009: 14.

> Erasing Afrikaner women's historic agency erases their historic complicity in the annals of apartheid… White women were jealously and brutally denied any formal political power, but were compensated by their limited authority in the household. Clutching this small power, they became complicit in the racism that suffuses Afrikaner nationalism. This is a major reason why black South African women are justly suspicious of any assumption of universal, essential sisterhood. White women are both colonized and colonizers, ambiguously complicit in the history of African dispossession.[70]

McClintock's argument that motherhood was used as a tool for maintaining division among women, rather than uniting, stands in contrast to the idea that motherhood automatically serves as an ideal identity around which to organise because women experience and construct similarly. McClintock's problematising of the idea that motherhood serves the same political objective among different groups reveals the complexities in identity construction in South Africa, and cautions against generalisations across groups.

Providing an alternative, but not always contradictory, view to motherism, Gayatri Spivak discusses the possibilities of organising and mobilising around a common identity, even if expressions of that identity may differ widely. This critical use of essentialist categories, or strategic essentialism, argues for the adoption a framework that supports the "strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest"[71]. Explaining the rationale behind this framework, Spivak says, "if one is considering strategy, one has to look at where the group- the person, the persons, or the movement- is situated when one makes claims for or against essentialism. A strategy suits a situation; a strategy is not a theory."[72] Unlike blanket essentialism, Spivak argues that strategic essentialism does not make claims of sameness or even of a core shared experience, but rather it uses an identity, like womanhood, as a strategic platform around which to organise to further an agenda.[73] Strategic essentialism remains critical of essentialist categories while employing them to further an agenda. This critical awareness of difference and the constructions of sameness in strategic essentialism allow power

[70] McClintock, Anne. "No Longer in a Future Heaven: Women and Nationalism in South Africa." *Transition 15*. 1991: 110.
[71] "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." In *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics.* New York: Methuen, 1987: 205.
[72] Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Polity, 2007.
[73] Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge : Polity, 2007.

relationships to remain visible and to be problematised within the group and creates space for subversive expressions of essentialised categories.

Militant Women's Rights Activists or Conservative Upholders of Patriarchy?

Much of the early literature on women's organising has attempted to categorise women's organising in South Africa in two groups: the first, conservative upholders of patriarchy and domesticity and the second, militant rebels who rejected traditional constructions of feminine roles and identities.[74] Many scholars writing more recently, however, have worked to problematise the dichotomy between oppressed traditionalists and radical militants, arguing both for the reconceptualisation of the categories conservative and radical and also for greater contextualisation of many of these women's lives, to allow for richer understanding of the conditions and identities that they challenged and those that they defended.

Challenging the dichotomy between discourses on progressive gender consciousness and conservative protection of patriarchal roles highlighted in much of the literature on women's organising around their identities as mothers, Walker argues that what analysis of women's constructions of their political identities "requires an understanding of the complex, often fractured nature of ideology as well as an appreciation of women's own, gendered interests". She continues, "women and men perceive their political priorities and interests in different, gendered ways. Women invest in motherhood (and family) and this needs to be recognised and understood- understood not simply as the product of their socialisation or patriarchal ideology but as something mediated by their own experience of this role."[75] Walker challenges the idea that identities are simply imposed on women and serve the function of being either oppressive or libratory. She argues that identities become personalised and agency is expressed in the ways that that women live these identities. Walker's critique highlights the idea that many women may choose to be mothers, not only because of social pressures and expectations, but because they want to be mothers and they find meaning for themselves

[74] Wells, Julia. *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa*. Witwatersrand University Press. 1993; Britton, Hannah Evelyn. *Women in the South African Parliament from resistance to governance*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2005.
[75] Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: xxii.

in this role. This personalising of motherhood means that it is not inherently conservative, but that it is mediated by numerous factors which influence the ways that women experience motherhood and the ways that they are read because they are mothers.

Arguing for the need for greater contextualisation of women's organising and the framing of their political priorities Cheryl Walker argues, "the way in which our very understanding of the nature of politics and, by extension, what is or is not conservative, has been structured by an essentially male interpretation of the world." She argues that instead what is needed to more meaningfully understand this organising is "a view that recognises women's agency and begins to take their demands seriously, on their own terms, as an expression of their particular location in society and their active engagement with that."[76] Walker's argument highlights the point that as readers we are not neutral subjects but that we approach historical material with frameworks influenced by our own context and understandings. Her challenge is therefore for readers to not superimpose their own constructions of political identity onto the subjects they read, but rather to locate these women and their struggles within their own contexts and read the meanings of their positions and actions from this point.

Also contextualising women's organising, Shireen Hassim argues that "in addressing 'everyday' concerns, women's organisations were confronting the 'everyday' power of the apartheid state, and the local consequences of apartheid social engineering."[77] Hassim illustrates how by confronting the localised oppressions they experienced in their immediate lives, women also exercised agency in opposing the apartheid system. Hassim continues, "(the) politicization of traditional roles was part of a revolutionary nationalism in which woman, mother, and nation were part of a continuous discourse."[78] Hassim reveals the ways that women challenged powers of patriarchy by organising and mobilising around their daily needs. Although this organising was primarily located in women's homes and their local neighbourhoods and communities, and therefore could be read as traditional because it remained within traditionally

[76] Walker, Cherryl. *Women and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: xxii.
[77] Hassim, Shireen. "Race and Power in the Women's Movement: 1980-1994". *The Burden of Race?: 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa*. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. University of the Witwatersrand. 5-8 July 2001: 6.
[78] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 76-77.

feminine constructed spaces, it represented women claiming agency, making their voices heard and identifying and fighting for their rights.

Hassim further contextualises the motivating forces behind much of women's organising in the townships explaining, "the 'people's needs' that women acted upon were a response to the most visible consequences of social fragmentation, poor social services and economic marginality."[79] Here Hassim illustrates how so much of women's organising was borne out of the daily experiences of being denied basic needs and rights. This localised organising grew significantly in the 1970s with the emergence of civics organisations, the precursors to the influential regional women's organisations that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many civics organisations rallied around issues like high rent prices, lack of services, lack of facilities such as nurseries and preschool, and corrupt officials.[80] These civics organisations organised boycotts, protests and provided strength in numbers for applying pressure for demands to be met.

The localisation of civics organisations also facilitated with mobilising women around causes and in growing support. Hassim quotes a woman from Phoenix, an Indian township near Durban, as explaining the growth of women's civics organisations saying, "to get more women involved we decided to have meetings on each street, and to go door to door to invite women to the meetings... We held street meetings covering more than 500 houses."[81] The description of strategies for mobilising women illustrates the grassroots nature of the civics organisations and reveals the emphasis on accessibility and inclusivity advocated for within the organisations. By meeting in domestic areas, traditionally feminine spaces, women were able to draw together large groups of women and to make clear the connections between organising and improving conditions under

[79] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 76-77.
[80] Hassim, Shireen. "Race and Power in the Women's Movement: 1980-1994". *The Burden of Race?: 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa*. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Reearch. University of the Witwatersrand. 5-8 July 2001: 6; Govender, Pregs. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Auckland Park: Jacanda Media. 2007: 78.
[81] Hassim, Shireen. "Race and Power in the Women's Movement: 1980-1994". *The Burden of Race?: 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa*. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Reearch. University of the Witwatersrand. 5-8 July 2001: 50.

which women lived. Hassim highlights the importance of organising around basic needs in conscientising women by revealing the structural roots of inequalities.[82]

In the 1980s, independent women's organisations grew out of the mass community organising, education and mobalisation movements in different parts of the country.[83] Three such major regional organisations were the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), the Federation of Transvaal Women (FEDTRAW), and Cape Province based United Women's Organisation (UWO), established in 1983, 1984, and 1981 respectively. These organisations all organised across race and class lines, focusing on, and drawing the majority of their support through, grassroots campaigns around issues such as rent and food prices, healthcare and childcare and other local issues that had earlier been championed through the civics groups.

Also central in these regional women's organisations were union influences, with many women in leadership positions belonging to unions and through these connections emphasising working class struggles, encouraging connections between regional organisations and unions and adopting union based organisational structures and emphasis on participatory decision making processes.[84] With many women having membership to multiple organising bodies such as unions, churches, stockvels, and regional simultaneously political organising was layered with influences from different spaces, broadening the reach and influence of these political bodies and enriching the content of their work.

During the 1980s, women also gained platforms for organising and developing education and conscientising efforts through the independent trade union movements.[85] As with civics organisations, women in unions often organised around issues that they experienced on a daily basis and entered political, masculine constructed, spaces and processes through this avenue. Women in unions largely organised around low pay,

[82] Hassim, Shireen. "Race and Power in the Women's Movement: 1980-1994". *The Burden of Race?: 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa*. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Reearch. University of the Witwatersrand. 5-8 July 2001*:* 57.
[83] Patel, Leila. "South African Women's Struggles in the 1980's." *Agenda Feminist Media*, 1988. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4065688 (accessed 12 May, 2011).
[84] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2005: 64.
[85] Berger, Iris. "Generations of struggle: Trade unions and the roots of feminism, 1930–60". *Women in South African History*. Cape Town: HSRC. 2004: 185.

unequal pay, maternity leave, sexual harassment and assault, and unsafe working conditions. While there was overlap between women's demands and men's, there were significant oppressions and struggles in the work place that were particular to women and around which women rallied and organised as a separate group.[86]

Women in unions also often organised in their own specific groups within larger unions because although in many factories the majority of union members were women, women were largely excluded from leadership and decision making positions within unions. They also often experienced silencing from male union members who dismissed their concerns and demands as personal, inappropriate or not as significant as other demands. This created a situation where women union members struggled against patriarchy on double fronts. While struggling against discrimination and subjugation from employers and state structures, women also struggled against silencing and marginalisation from male colleagues within the unions. Pregs Govender describes her experiences of patriarchal oppression as a union member explaining, "both apartheid's soldiers and the men in our movement shared the belief that their job was to change the world while women's role was to care for children and home."[87] Govender reveals how under apartheid and within resistance organisations women's roles were understood as passive ones, under both patriarchal models women were constructed as recipients, at most supporting acts to men.

Many married women also faced further patriarchal oppression in the home where they were expected to fulfil feminine constructed duties of domestic labour in addition to their labour outside the home. Explaining how many women began to make connections between gender-based oppressions they were experiencing in different spaces in their lives, Hassim quotes a woman who was a member of the National Union of Metal Workers as explaining,

> We are oppressed at work and we are oppressed at our location and in our houses. We are sick and tired of this. At work we work hard... At the same time you must come home and cook and do this and do that... Now why should I fight at work

[86] Nomvete, Nomatamsanqua. "The Participation of the Female Working Class in the Trade Unions and in Labour Struggles in South Africa from 1950." M.Sc. Dissertation. Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University. 1984.
[87] Govender, Pregs. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Auckland Park: Jacanda Media. 2007: 98.

> against hard labour and for maternity leave and not fight at home? If we women do not fight for ourselves there is nobody who is going to fight for us.[88]

This woman's expression of her frustration of enduring patriarchal oppression in the different major spaces in her life illustrates the ways that women in unions were conscientised through their organising and were explicitly making connections between their oppressions. These comments also suggest that unions offered a space where women could express their grievances with each other, and through doing this grow awareness about the scale of women's oppressions and the need to fight against all oppressions and not just some of them.

Through the unions, women created spaces where they could share experiences and begin collectively making links between different forms of patriarchy that they experienced in their lives. This provided opportunities for conscientising women about gender and the different and intersecting ways that oppressions worked in their lives. This conscientising was an important step in women's organising as it created space for women to identify and theorise the rights that they were being denied and then later to move forward in organising to demand these rights for themselves.

The Independence of Women's Organisations in the Liberation Struggle

Many women within resistance organisations argued for the need for independent women's structures that could represent women's interests and explicitly make connections between gender, race and class oppressions. Describing women's frustrations at being marginalised within resistance organisations, Govender explains, "many of us believed that women had to be organised against limitations imposed by the state as well as those prescribed by their own comrades in their organisations and homes. Few male leaders on the other hand, recognised patriarchy as an enemy within our own ranks."[89] Women's experiences of having their rights ignored within resistance organisations illustrates the ways that many men's patriarchal privilege obscured their view of oppression and allowed them to denounce one form of oppression while exercising another form, and refusing to acknowledge the relationship between the two.

---

[88] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 51.
[89] Govender, Pregs. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Auckland Park: Jacanda Media. 2007: 80.

Also critiquing the marginalisation of women within larger national liberation organisations, Nomboniso Gasa argues that women fought to "challenge the idea that women were mere appendages to support men in their political work."[90] She explains that women were instrumental in mobilising and organising support for these organisations, however these contributions did not translate into women being afforded equal status alongside their male colleagues, and for the most part, women's rights remained 'supplemental' to these organisations. Based on these continuous challenges to put women 'on the agenda' and to have women in leadership positions where they could substantively influence the direction and priorities of the organisations Gasa explains, "the separate organisation of women was an indicator that women believed that the only way that they could articulate their needs and interests was in mobilising as women, but at the same time joining broader political parties and political movements."[91] While remaining committed to the national liberation struggle, and remaining located within its main organisations, women demanded their own organisational structures, which could afford them the space to identify and table their specific priorities and demands.

Much of the debate around forming separate women's organising bodies centred around ideas of epistemological knowledge, and the different ways that men and women experience, and therefore 'know', society. Arguments for women's independent organisations primarily centred around the idea that women could best identify their needs, offer each other support, and effectively organise themselves within enabling spaces that allowed them voice and leadership opportunities. Discussing the impacts of women's situated knowledge, Nancy Hartsock argues that it does not create a dualism between those who understand and those who do not, but rather that it "posits a duality of levels of reality, of which the deeper level or essence both includes and explains the 'surface' or appearance, and indicates the logic by means of which the appearance inverts and distorts the deeper reality."[92] From this explanation, it can be understood that drawing on the understandings produced through localised knowledge presents unique

[90] Gasa, Nomboniso. Women in South African history: they remove boulders and cross rivers. Cape Town: HSRC. 2004: 365.
[91] Gasa, Nomboniso. Women in South African history: they remove boulders and cross rivers. Cape Town: HSRC. 2004: 365.
[92] Hartsock, Nancy. "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism." Edited by Sandra G. Harding. In *Feminism and methodology: social science issues*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1987: 160 .

opportunities to develop strategies that meaningfully address the complexities of inequality and oppression. Examining systems and structures of oppression through the perspectives of people who are disadvantaged by them provides new ways of understanding their impacts and measures necessary for overcoming them.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, women were actively involved in many of the major anti-apartheid organisations, and constituted a significant makeup of organised resistances. Even within the liberationist frameworks espoused by resistance organisations, women did not enjoy equal status or recognition.[93] Pregs Govender describes the relationship many women had to resistance organisations explaining, "in the discourse in opposition politics of that time women were seen as 'a sector', like youth or workers. Often this approach blurred the fact that while it was strategic to organise women to unite against their own oppression, it was equally important to challenge the sexist practices women experienced as members of political, youth or workers' organisations, which, too often, became characterised as male organisations."[94] Govender illustrates how anti-apartheid organisations did not change to reflect women's needs as women became active within them, but rather they subsumed women without becoming sensitive to their rights or to their experiences which exceeded the hegemonic assumptions about 'experience' of apartheid within the particular organization.

Even within the United Democratic Front, where promoting women's rights had been identified as an organisational priority, and the UDF Women's Congress was set up to ensure women's rights were on the agenda, women still reported that "male comrades within the UDF did not take women or women's issues seriously enough… The role of women in the reception of our leaders (newly released from Robben Island) has been restricted to the preparation of meals at the rally's (sic) and cooking at leaders' homes."[95] This critique about structures of patriarchy within national liberation organisations highlighted by Hassim is supported by Walker's argument that "women's struggles against domination were always subordinated to the claims of national liberation.

[93] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005,
[94] Govender, Pregs. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Auckland Park: Jacanda Media. 2007: 80.
[95] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 75.

Women's struggles against male domination, whether in their families or political life, were for the most part private and riddled with ambiguity. Few have acknowledged them as 'political'."[96] The challenges that women faced in having their rights and demands acknowledged as political and personal in being taken seriously as political agents within liberation organisations illustrate the multiple levels at which women had to challenge patriarchal oppression. While organising against the state's patriarchal repressions, women were also marginalized and silenced by male colleagues, with whom they were supposed to be fighting the same battle.

Conclusion

The historical contextualisation of women's organising is important to my research because it illustrates the wealth of experience, knowledge, and political awareness among South African women produced by earlier movements that the WNC later drew on in its formation and the execution of its tasks leading to the writing of the Constitution. This review illustrates that South African women had been organising amongst themselves for decades before the WNC and had gained tremendous political experience fighting in the liberation struggle. This experience was invaluable to the WNC as many women already had identities as political actors, understood their contributions to the struggle as integral to its success, and were aware that as women they bore unique burdens in society that provided them with the insights to make contributions to democracy formation that a person without a woman's experiences could not make.

The texts examined in this review reveal the importance of engaging with identity, and the power relationships associated with it, in discussions of political organising and work. Review of different constructions and experiences of South African women reveal that essentialist framings of women fail to capture the diversity women's experiences and deny the realities of historically produced and materially reproduced divisions. This contextualisation of relationships and differences between groups of women is important because it highlights the complex and sensitive environment in which the WNC was formed, and provides insights into some of the root causes of tensions between groups in the WNC. This historical framing also locates women's

[96] Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991: xiv

organising within the broader context of the anti-apartheid struggle to reveal the multiple fronts on which women had to struggle. While fighting against apartheid powers, women had to battle against patriarchal oppressions from male colleagues and also against tensions with women from other groups. Women had to balance fighting for both gender and national rights and prove that the two movements were not oppositional, but rather supplemental in their lives.

This chapter's historic overview illustrates South African women's rich history of organising to resist oppressive state powers and to defend their rights, their children and their families' rights and to demand participation in all resistance activities. Women's willingness to organise in their communities, to take up arms in warfare, and to organise in regional and national women's organisation, illustrates their commitment to challenging the state's repressive power. This history illustrates a tradition of South African women's organising both as a support and ally to men's political organising and as independent groups specifically articulating their position and interests. This history of participation demonstrates South African women's organisational ability to mobilise and identify and lobby around concrete demands. It also reveals proactivity, that portrays women's ability to organise without men and also before men. The lessons learned during these decades of organising and active political participation proved invaluable to the WNC, and served as a source both for referencing and proving women's capacities as political actors and for drawing knowledge, skills and networks for later fighting for women's rights in the Constitution.

The history of organising reviewed in this chapter helps to explain why South African women were able to mobilise and organise across the country with such effectiveness and force. When the negotiations started, several political parties already had women with experience in organising, in mobilising at the grassroots, and in negotiating with and making demands from men in political parties. These experiences meant that women were in a position to effectively lead and organise themselves during the negotiations. The history of women's political participation meant that many women were already politically conscientised and when the WNC was formed. It built on the foundations of existing networks and supports of previous organisations and movements.

CHAPTER 2

History of Organising: Major Women's Organising from the 1950s

Basing its goals and objectives in notions of women's experiences and needs, the WNC rejected dominant masculinist framings of politics and affirmed the importance of women's epistemic privilege in democracy formation. Historically in South Africa, women reconceptualised politics and political participation to make them accommodating, responsive, and accountable to women by reimagining the terms of political legitimacy. Drawing from the momentum and lessons of this tradition, the WNC was able to mobilise a movement that used women's collective experiences of exclusion to develop an ethos of inclusion under which women challenged masculine dominance in democracy.[97]

The historical contextualisation provided in this chapter is important to my central argument because it illustrates the wealth of experience, knowledge, and political awareness produced by earlier movements that the WNC later drew on in its formation and the execution of its tasks leading to the writing of the Constitution. Although the WNC made many significant advances of its own, it was created in a political culture where women had long been fighting for their rights, for the recognition of their contributions to society, and for their place in public political life and decision-making structures. This culture of women's organising and active political participation served as a key strength in the Coalition successfully articulating and realising an agenda for women's formal equality in South Africa.

Explaining the significance of looking back at history to draw lessons on women's organising and best practices, Anne Letsebe described the development of some of the processes in the WNC saying,

> We couldn't do it without looking at previous work that was done, and the experiences. For me it was a continuum, you draw (on) the participatory nature of the processes… you draw on work and how people actually succeeded in doing it and getting those rent boycotts going, how they actually did the work to get women to march on Pretoria. It was all from local, to regional, to national.[98]

[97] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

[98] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

Here, Letsebe makes clear that the WNC was not formed in a vacuum. It drew on existing networks for support, it sought lessons from earlier experiences of women's organising, and it listened for the concerns and interests that worked to successfully mobilise women in earlier periods.

In this chapter, I discuss major women's organisations and conferences in South Africa between the 1950s and the early 1990s that shaped the course of the anti-apartheid struggle and the social and political climates in which women's organising and political participation matured to become an integral part of the liberation struggle. I begin with a theoretical review of the constructions and relationships between racial and gender identity groups under apartheid. This theoretical analysis provides a conceptual overview of the social, economic and political power relationships among and between different groups that defined the landscape of South African society and rigidly dictated the positions of specific groups and individuals within this society.

One of the challenges, and limitations, of working primarily through archival material is the availability of only accounts and records that individuals and organisations at the time found worth recording. Only events, decisions and conversations that were formally recorded are available for analysis through the archive, meaning that much is lost and only snippets of these histories can be sourced. Helen Scanlon engages with this limitation when she explains,

> Women's marginalisation has meant that they are often unrepresented in historical records, and, as Walker points out, this often weights research towards organisations, events and the lives of individuals who are better documented. This in turn creates a historical bias in favour of those institutions and organisations that have maintained records of major events, and those women whose lives have been considered important enough to document.[99]

Largely as a result of this historical limitation of working through the archive, this chapter reflects discourses within dominant women's organisations in South Africa. While this approach might lose some of nuances and complexities in women's organising more broadly, it captures many of the dominant discourses in circulation during different periods as these organisations represented some of the broadest and most influential bodies of women in resistance to patriarchal, racist, classist oppressions.

[99] Scanlon, Helen. *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape, 1948-1976*. Cape Town: HSRC, 2007: 20.

I start the historic review in 1954 with formation of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). This event highlights some of the core issues around which women organised and some of the early themes that united women from across economic, racial and social spectrums to challenge established political power. I continue with broad reviews and analyses of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, examining how the major events of these decades shaped the course of the liberation struggle. Specifically, I focus on the roles that women played in the liberation movement, how and around which issues women organised, and the types of strategies that they employed in responding to the consistent escalation of apartheid's restrictive and repressive policies. I conclude this chapter with an overview and analysis of some of the major events leading up to the development of the WNC between 1988 and 1992 when the WNC was formally launched.

This chapter discusses the impact and importance of several notable exchanges between women in South Africa, women in exile, and women from other countries who had experienced exclusion and marginalisation of their interests in the formalisation of democracy in the context of their national liberation struggles. These formal and informal exchanges between women at different levels are important in contextualising the discussions between women about their expectations from and demands of the new political order; influences from outside the country about other women's experiences that would shape how South African women proceeded in securing their rights; and ways that South African women were beginning to conceptualise their roles in the development of a new South Africa. This chapter lays the foundation for my discourse analysis of the WNC, revealing how the history of women's organising in South Africa influenced many of the WNC's later strategies, values, and methods of outreach and mobilising. I examine how the struggles and successes of women's organising during the periods reviewed in this chapter provided crucial lessons and insights for the WNC and significantly influenced the shape, content and methods of the Coalition.

While this chapter engages with several of the major women's movements and organisations in South African history, it in no way represents the totality of women's organising or even all of the major women's organisations in the anti-apartheid movement. A notable absence in this chapter is the ANC Women's League (ANCWL),

which was a major actor in shaping women's political organising and which for a significant period represented the largest organised body of African women.[100] The ANCWL's history is rich, complex and on going. Unlike many of the organisations and movements discussed in this chapter, its activity is not focussed in a specific time and varies significantly between different periods, making it difficult to analyse in a limited review of discourses such as this research. Even more significant in my decision not to engage with discourses in the ANCWL is the limited public information available on the League and the information gaps in the recording of the League's history. While all archives present limitations in the pre-selected, and often intentionally excluded, information they offer, as explored in the methodology chapter, because of the complexity and weight of the ANCWL's history I am hesitant to include what could easily become a superficial review of this history. Conducting a meaningful engagement with discourses employed throughout the ANCWL's history would require more time, space and resources than those available for this research.

FEDSAW

The Federation of South African Women (FEDSW), was launched in April 1954 at an inaugural conference in Johannesburg where 164 delegates representing 230 000 women from across the country met to adopt the Federation's Constitution[101]. Created to amplify the voices of women in South Africa, FEDSAW aimed to unite women, to "secure equality of opportunity regardless of race, colour or creed," and to "remove social, legal and economic disabilities… (and) protect South African women and children"[102]. Among the rights and protections outlined by FEDSAW were equality of opportunity in employment; equal pay for equal work; equal rights in relation to property, marriage and children; and "the removal of all laws and customs that denied women such equality."[103] While FEDSAW was a multi-racial organisation supporting non-racialism, it

[100] Walker, Cherryl. *Women and resistance in South Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991: 88-92.
[101] Federation of South African Women, Constitution,1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Aa. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[102] Federation of South African Women, Constitution,1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Aa. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[103] Federation of South African Women, Constitution,1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Aa. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

also argued that "African women as the overwhelmingly largest racial group must always form the main basis of a multi-racial women's organisation." Based on this sentiment, the Federation maintained that "any women's organisation that stands outside this (the national liberation) struggle must stand apart from the mass of women."[104] Despite this position, FEDSAW was sensitive to ensure multi-racial representation in its leadership and in public events where women of different races spoke of their specific racialised and gendered experiences of apartheid South Africa, representing a diversity of women's realities , needs and struggles across the country.[105]

FEDSAW's prioritising of race and class in discussions of rights and the protections necessary for the enjoyment of rights, illustrates the construction of a discourse that acknowledges and actively engages with intersectionality and the impact that different identities have on individuals' and groups' ability to access power, privilege and protection. This sensitivity to intersectionality created space to challenge constructions of women as a homogenous group and also for recognising the diversity of women's experiences of society.

As the first national, multi-racial women's organisation fighting for women's rights and against apartheid oppression outside of a political party, the discourses constructed in FEDSAW are significant because in many ways as they 'set the tone' for women's organising in South Africa. Both in terms of human resources relating to producing women leaders and conscientising and politicising women throughout the country, and in terms of constructing discourses that made central issues of women's rights in establishing norms in women's organising and organisational priorities. Although FEDSAW was not the first space in which South African women organised politically, I begin mapping discourses on women's organising here because of the scale of the organisation and the enormous impact that it had nationally in making visible women's political organising and demands for rights.

FEDSAW was dealt a major blow by the Treason Trial between 1956-1961 and again in 1960 with the banning of the ANCWL. Although FEDSAW itself was not

[104] Federation of South African Women report to the WIDF,1956.Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Db2. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[105] Federation of South African Women, inaugural conference, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Ac1. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

banned during this period, it suffered tremendous loss as many of its key leaders were banned, detained, and forced underground or into exile. Although it was never dissolved, by the mid-1960s, FEDSAW had ceased being a major player in the national political landscape.[106]

UDF

As discussed in the literature review, the 1980s saw a rise in regional women's organisations, focussed largely on grassroots organising and working to challenge the daily oppressions of apartheid repression. In 1983 when the UDF was formed, UWO and NOW joined UDF, representing women's interests in the organisation and working to ensure that women's rights and needs were priorities on the national agenda. At this time, with almost thirty years having passed since the founding of FEDSAW and twenty since the organisation started to disintegrate due to state repression, women in the UDF did not have a single, unified organisation to draw on, but rather several regional organisations each located in and accountable to a specific area. In April 1987, the UDF Women's Congress was formed representing NOW, FEDTRAW, UWCO, the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation, the Port Alfred Women's Organisation, and Gompo Women's Congress.[107] The UDF Women's Congress is important to analyse because the discourses that it adopted reflected a dominant tone and mood in women's organising nationally as the various regions and institutional bodies represented brought with the discursive frameworks under which the operated.

Attempts to revive FEDSAW

The initial concept of reviving FEDSAW in 1985 was based on the idea of uniting the various regional organisations that were active at the time, specifically FEDTRAW, NOW, and UWCO, and initiating regional organisations in areas where they did not exist. An official account of FEDSAW's history at the Historical Papers explains the hurdles women experienced trying to revive FEDSAW, saying,

> In the intervening 30 years times had changed and many women had other loyalties than to FEDSAW. There had been a division in the ranks as not all

[106] "History of the Federation of South African Women." *Records of FEDSAW, AD 1137*. viii..Catalogue: AD 1137. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[107] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 73.

> women could subscribe to a total redistribution of wealth as demanded by some organisations. Many women preferred to join organisations like the African National Congress Women's League.[108]

Although there were numerous challenges that prevented FEDSAW's revival, many of them were reflective of changes in the political climate nationally. Although often presented as existing independently and apart from larger national politics, women's movements and organisations are born, exist in and are a part of broader political, social and cultural changes of their surrounding communities. These changes reflected differences such as choices in economic models and armed struggle versus non-violence amongst many. One of the main hurdles when the original FEDSAW leadership tried to reorganise was communication, with women in some regions expressing concern that their voices were not being given the same weight as those of women from other regions. The subsequent State of Emergencies enforced by the apartheid government made communication across regions even more difficult, and eventually impossible.[109]

The diversity of positions within the anti-apartheid movement spoke to the complexity of the political climate of the moment. Although women's organising was often focused around gender rights and protections, many of the central political and social issues and dynamics within the organisations reflected the political, social and economic climate of that time and bore similarities to dynamics within organisations dominated by men. The different approaches and priorities adopted by national organisations within the anti-apartheid movement were reflected in a growing diversity in women's organising and in varying positions and approaches on the most efficient attack on apartheid and vision for a post-apartheid dispensation. Many women in women's organisations also participated in larger regional and national organisations while also participating in women's organisations and sub-sectors. The framing of women's organisations as existing outside of broader regional and national politics assumes that women experience their identities as women independently of their other identities and rejects women's ability to occupy, experience and perform multiple roles and identities simultaneously.

[108] "History of the Federation of South African Women." *Records of FEDSAW, AD 1137*. viii..Catalogue: AD 1137. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[109] "History of the Federation of South African Women." *Records of FEDSAW, AD 1137*. viii..Catalogue: AD 1137. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Malibongwe

Before the unbanning of the ANC in February 1990, women in the ANC Women's League and other organisations began discussing the roles that women would play and the status that they would occupy in the next phase of national liberation. This was first explicitly expressed in a public forum at the Malibongwe Conference held in January 1990 in Amsterdam. The conference's theme was "Women united for a unitary, non-racial, democratic South Africa," and it succeeded in bringing together women activists based within South Africa, those in exile, and those from different countries to debate the status of women in South Africa's future.[110]

In this space women discussed the relationships between national liberation and gender equality, particularly how to ensure that women were not excluded from the agenda in the new dispensation. Speaking about this period, Thenjiwe Mtintso recalls, "the central question was - What kind of new democratic SA did the women want? The response to such a question would elaborate the notions of non-sexism, substantive equality and real democracy for women."[111] An active participant in the articulation of women's demands in the early 1990s and a representative of the South African Communists in the negotiations over the Constitution, Mtintso highlights the central question motivating women's organising during this period and some of the broad answers developed in response to this question. This question about the kind of democratic South Africa women wanted reveals women's underpinning assumptions about the protections and benefits owed to them under democracy, and the centrality of their role in ensuring that the democracy would commit to meeting their needs. The answers to this question highlights the many ways that women saw themselves as central to the development of the democracy and understood one of the democracy's key functions as being responsive to women's needs and adapting protections that adequately represent the unique challenges, responsibilities and vulnerabilities that women face in society.

[110] "Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive.

[111] Mtintso, Thenjiwe. "Umrabluo Series on Building the South African Women's Movement Part 1: The Women's National Coalition." African National Congress: South Africa's National Liberation Movement. http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/10/umrabulo10d.html (accessed March 25, 2010).<http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/10/umrabulo10d.html>.

At the Malibongwe Conference, women were not framed as a monolithic whole but it was discussed how different positionalities arising from race, class, and gender oppressions affect women differently in different locations within the country. Underlying these discussions was the growing affirmation of the need for women to organise themselves into collective bodies to further their different material needs. There was also a growing awareness of the need to recognise and address issues specific to women, and gender equality more broadly.[112] Following Malibongwe, the idea of a national women's organization embracing women from outside the ANC was raised in several forums inside the country.[113]

While different in the times in which they existed, the geographic areas in they were located, and the women that they represented, some of the similarities between the organisations and movements discussed above are the discourses that they employed to mobilise women, to frame the objectives of their work and organising, and to discuss the interests and needs that they were fighting for. Below is an examination of the three primary discourses that I draw out from these organisations and movements. Here I look at how different bodies used these discourses in different moments to gain support and how these discourses weave common threads between the different moments and bodies.

Law and Culture as Regressive

A dominant trend in several of the major women's organisations from the middle of the twentieth century is the framing and discussion of law and culture as regressive and needing reform because of their failure to meet the needs and reflect the realities of women's lives. This discourse worked to illustrate the ways that existing laws, and political and cultural norms and values actively disempowered and disadvantaged women. This discourse challenged women's subordination and exploitation through legal, cultural and societal systems, structures and practices and in so doing allowed

[112] Meintjes, Sheila. "The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy." *Transformation* 30 (1996): 47-65. http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/html/itemdetail.cfm?recordID=638 (accessed December 2, 2009).
[113] Singh, Mala. "Malibongwe Conference." *Agenda Feminist Media*, 1990. http://www.jstor.org/pss/4065537 (accessed November 28, 2009).

women to claim an active role in culture and law by demanding that these institutions be responsive to their needs. While recognising that men most often benefited from the norms that subordinated women, this discourse did not vilify men. Rather, it worked at structural levels to challenge patriarchal institutions and to motivate for the need for women to participate in the political processes because of their epistemic privilege offered through understandings of the experiences of society gendered as female.

In the 1950s, through discussions of the negative impacts that many laws and cultural norms had on women, FEDSAW constructed a discourse that framed the women's movement as progressive and reflective of women's changing realities. This framing of the women's movement worked to juxtapose women's articulations of their transforming roles and responsibilities in society with rigid and regressive legal and cultural frameworks that failed to respond to the dynamism of women's realities. This discourse argued that patriarchal, oppressive legal and cultural practices needed to be reformed because they failed to reflect women's lived realities and the represent changes in the socio-cultural and economic landscapes. This framing illustrates the construction of a discourse that understands culture as dynamic and fluid, shaped by the people who subscribe to it, rather than a static institution governing and oppressing unwilling and powerless followers. This discourse on culture is significant because it does not vilify culture or argue for it to be abandoned, rather it argues that culture and law change to be sensitive to their needs and experiences and reflective of the realities of the people over whom they govern. This emphasis on change rather than outright rejection of culture and law created space for women to exercise agency and to express power over their lives, their communities and the norms that govern society.

FEDSAW's 1954 *Women's Charter*, adopted by a majority at the organisation's inaugural meeting, reflects on women's relationship to law and culture saying,

> We also recognise that large numbers of our womenfolk continue to be bound by traditional practices and conventions, and fail to realise that these have become obsolete and a brake on progress. It is our duty and privilege to enlist all women in our struggle for emancipation and to bring to them all realisation of the intimate relationship that exists between their status of inferiority as women and the inferior status to which their people are subjected by discriminatory laws and colour prejudices[114].

[114] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

This statement unapologetically draws connections between varying forms of oppression that women experience, revealing an intersectional reading of women's socio-political, economic and cultural landscape in South Africa. Referencing the "intimate relationship" between different forms of oppressions, the Charter makes clear that it is "traditional practices and conventions" that are failing their intended purposes and forcing "a break on progress". This reading finds fault with the traditional practices and conventions themselves and not with women's ability to perform the expectations associated with these. To provide greater depth and perspective to this argument, this discourse roots analysis of the oppressions associated with traditional practices and conventions in discussions of the institutions through which discrimination is propagated, providing a concrete framework for reading and understanding the forces influencing women's oppression. By focussing on institutions, this discourse locates itself in the material, pointing to specific bodies that need reform.

This discourse goes further in unpacking the institutionally rooted nature of many oppressions that women face by emphasising the importance of historically contextualising laws and customs. FEDSAW's Women's Charter noted that,

> We recognise that the women are treated as minors by these marriage and property laws because of ancient and revered traditions and customs which had their origin in the antiquity of the people and no doubt served purposes of great value in bygone times[115].

This critique of law and culture is significant because while it is effective in communicating the irrelevance of the laws of the time, it does not dismiss the institutions that they represent or argue against their value of these institutions. Instead, this discourse points to the redundancy of these institutions and the need for their updating.

Decades later. women in the UDF identified anti-apartheid, non-racialism, non-sexism and democracy as the four guiding principles underpinning their work and unity, to which all member organisations had to subscribe[116]. These principles provided the foundation for political cohesion in the organisation, and the standard by which organisations had to adhere. These founding principles bear a link to FEDSAW's

[115] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[116] "Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.

principles outlines in its Constitution, that commit to opposing apartheid, racism and discrimination against women. Although framed in different language from FEDSAW, the UDF women's Congress supports the core principles outlined by FEDSAW, and built on these developments.

Race, Class, Gender, Nation: Interdependent Struggles

In its focus on intersectionality, FEDSAW employed a discourse that framed different struggles as interdependent and through this emphasised the significance of race, class, gender and national liberation. This discourse was significant because it rejected hierarchies of oppression or priority pointing instead to the ways that women faced multiple oppressions simultaneously and therefore needed to fight multiple struggles simultaneously. In later decades, this intersectional approach was adopted by other women's movements and organisations, all arguing that identities cannot be divorced from each other and need to be read in conjunction.

FEDSAW's central discourse of the interdependence of different liberation struggles highlights the ways that the organisation worked to build as broad and inclusive a movement as possible, actively seeking alliance with different groups and framing race, class and gender struggles as part of a single, unified movement. This unity in struggle is reflected in the Women's Charter which states,

> We women do not form a society separate from the men. There is only one society, and it is made up of both women and men. As women we share the problems and anxieties of our men, and join hands with them to remove social evils and obstacles to progress[117].

The Charter continues,

> It is our intention to carry out a nation-wide programme of education that will bring home to the men and women of all national groups the realisation that freedom cannot be won for any one section or for the people as a whole as long as we women are kept in bondage[118].

Important to this discourse of alliance and interrelated oppressions is the understanding that alliance is not based on solidarity alone but on a fundamental understanding of different liberation struggles as interdependent. The idea that none could fully enjoy

[117] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[118] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

freedom or achieve liberation unless women were free and liberated affirmed the central role that women played in the liberation movement and in society more broadly. This discourse made clear that women are not appendages to men, but instead important actors in their own right and their work in, and contributions to, society had value in and of themselves. Speaking at FEDSAW's inaugural conference, Fatima Meer explained "The Position of Indian Women in South Africa," highlighting their racialised and gendered oppressions and experiences of society. Although her speech was located specifically in the experiences of Indian women, the major themes that she addresses also speak to the realities and needs of women outside the Indian community, revealing overlap between different women's experiences and commonalities that unite women. Explaining the need for alliance across different struggles Meer explains,

> We as women must never forget that in our struggle for women we have to struggle side by side with men and youth. Where the men are freest, the women are freest too and have the greatest amount of equality with the men. The various Non-European organisations have realised this fact fully well and thus in all their constitutions they give equal rights to women.[119]

Meer's highlighting of the importance of women working together with men and youth illustrates a discourse that does not create a hierarchy of struggles, but recognises the interconnectedness of different struggles, and the possibilities of non-competitive, mutually beneficial alliances. While FEDSAW's lists of demands and priorities[120] demonstrates the challenging of a system that privileges men and works to exploit and undermine women, Meer's comments illustrate that FEDSAW's discourse did not treat challenging a system of male dominance and building and maintaining meaningful relationships and alliances with men as mutually exclusive projects. Rather it framed them as complementary objectives. Meer's statement affirms the relationship between racial, class, and gender liberation, constructing them as related projects around which she called women in FEDSAW to rally. Meer supports her claims of the interconnectedness between national liberation and gender liberation, pointing to the adoption by "various Non-European organisations" of constitutions that give equal rights to women. Here Meer demonstrates that in anti-apartheid organising it is not only women

[119] Federation of South African Women, inaugural conference, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Ac1. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[120] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

supporting the liberation of men and who see their liberation as mutually dependent, but also men adopting the same discourses and recognising the importance of recognising and advancing women's rights in fights against oppressions.

Reflecting the emphasis of women's organisations in the 1980s on grassroots mobilising and civics organisations, one of the UDF Women's Congress' strategies for building alliances with different women's organisations was through supporting campaigns such as those against increases and bread and milk prices. By supporting such initiatives, the Congress was able to reach out to wider groups of women and build support through appealing to women in their localised fights against apartheid's gender oppression[121]. This support of localised, grassroots campaigns illustrates how while building on discourses of earlier movements that prioritised non-racialism and anti-apartheid in fighting gender oppression, women in the UDF adapted their approaches to be responsive to the trends of that time and accordingly adapted their discourse to also reflect these changes and to reflect the priorities that were coming from dominant struggles of the time.

In a 1990 workshop between women from the UDF and COSATU, delegates highlighted the objective of "moving beyond the triple oppression,"[122] the phrase used for decades before to describe the intersection of race, class and gender oppressions, and exploring the multiple other levels at which women experience oppression. This move to explore the different identities that made women vulnerable to exploitation and oppression marks a broadening in dominant discourse on women's needs to include more variables and categories. The choice to "go beyond" rather than to replace demonstrates that this discourse was building on previous ones, and not a departure from earlier framings of women's rights, needs, and demands. While employing the popular phrase of triple oppression from FEDSAW organising, and in doing this drawing discursive links between the two movements, the women from the UDF and COSATU highlighted their

[121] "Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.
[122] "Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.

broadening of earlier categories and frameworks for understanding oppression, illustrating changes in the women's movement since the 1950s.

The Importance and Complementariness of Public and Private Spaces

From early in its life, FEDSAW developed a discourse that emphasised women's roles and contributions in and to public and domestic spaces, working to problematise the normalised dichotomy between the public and private and making clear the relationship between the two. This discourse rejected the idea that one space is more important than the other or that women need to choose one space over another. Instead, it reflected the realities that women occupy important roles in both spaces that need to be simultaneously acknowledged and recognised for their significance.

Drawing connections between domestic and public spaces also worked to challenge the privileging of the public over the domestic, highlighting the interconnectedness between the two. Framing domestic and public work as crucial to the functioning of society created the space in which FEDSAW was able to highlight the injustice of denying women access to political power because of their gender and also of denying African, Coloured and Indian women full citizenship rights despite their enormous contribution to the functioning and growth of South African society. FEDSAW's discourse on women's entitlement to rights was significant because it went beyond discussing the material contributions that women of all races made to South Africa and highlighted the ways that they deserved recognition of their humanity as mothers, wives, family members and themselves human beings.[123]

In an address at FEDSAW's inaugural conference in 1954, Ida Mtwana, one of FEDSAW's leaders, gave a speech contextualising the Federation's purpose and goals and urging for support of the movement. She motivated the women present there that day saying,

> We realise bad working conditions, low wages, have more and more become the struggle of the oppressed people in South Africa**,** whether they be men or

[123] "The Demand of the Women of South Africa for the Withdrawal of Passes for Women and the Repeal of the Pass Laws" Petition presented to the Prime Minister, Pretoria, 9 August 1956. Federation of South African Women. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Cb2.3.4. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

> women. We realise that oppression and poverty brought about by the apartheid policy of the Government is effecting both men and women. We are also aware that the struggle against Bantu Education has become more and more the responsibility of women. We are therefore determined to fight against this scheme. We know that it is meant to poison the minds of our children. We cannot sit down and fold our arms when attempts are being made to hold our progress and that of our children. We have to sacrifice all we have for our freedom. If we do not fight now, it will be too late and our children will curse us for our callousness. We know that as women we have many problems which hold us back from taking part fully in the struggle and it is precisely for that purpose that we have come to break down these problems[124].

Mtwana's motivation to women to subscribe to FEDSAW's priorities illustrates an understanding of the complexities of women's multiple and intersecting identities and the ways that a construction of liberation needed to speak to the realities of these different roles and challenges. By beginning with a focus on men and women's struggles under poverty, Mtwana challenges both masculinist framings of class oppressions as a burden of the 'working man' and also the separation of women and men's struggles against economic, labour exploitation and degradation. This reflects a discourse that recognises complexities and simultaneity in women's roles and identities argues that laws, cultural norms and organisational practices be aware of and sensitive to these multiplicities.

While acknowledging that poverty is damaging to men and women, Mtwana recognises that because of the expectations associated with feminine constructed identities women experience additional responsibilities as illustrated by her reference to childcare. In doing this, she unpacks the implications of gendered social norms on women's experiences of and responsibilities in society, noting that while women suffer the effects of poverty alongside men, in addition they experience "many problems which hold us back from taking part fully in the struggle."[125] While noting the additional responsibilities that women face because of gendered norms, Mtwana also appealed to women through these norms calling on a dominant identity as mothers to join the struggle so as to afford their children a better future. This appeal to women as mothers reveals a discourse that recognising the structural inequalities reproduced through race and class, while also recognising that women face the brunt of these burdens in both public and private spaces.

[124] Federation of South African Women, inaugural conference, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Ac1. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[125] Federation of South African Women, inaugural conference, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Ac1. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Speaking to the many levels of women's lives, and the common struggles that women and men face together, Mtwana reveals a discourse sensitive to intersectionality that acknowledges that liberation cannot be defined in limited terms but needs to address the different oppressions women face in their lives simultaneously. By speaking about different types of oppression, and different actors affected by these oppressions, at the same time, Mtwana challenges approaches that compartmentalise liberation and rather argues for the recognition of interconnectedness. This discourse of interconnectedness emphasises alliance building and frames a 'win-win' approach that sees men and women as part of a whole.

In line with supporting localised resistances to gender oppression, at another UDF and COSATU women's workshop priorities adopted reflected an emphasis on day to day ways of increasing women's political participation. Some of these included appeals to men to share domestic and childcare responsibilities with women, to free more for their time for attending political meetings and events.[126] These suggestions recognised that men benefited from the status quo that assigned primary childcare responsibilities to women, and called on men to promote equality by sharing these responsibilities. Through such initiatives, women sought to directly challenge power inequalities and oppressions through their alliances with men, recognising that alliance did not mean ignoring inequality, but rather that it presented opportunities to share power and find mutually beneficial responses.

Recognising and taking into consideration women's gendered responsibilities, the UDF adopted the policy of arranging meetings at " a convenient time" for women and ensuring that childcare facilities were available at meetings at enable more women to be able to participate in the meetings and to participate fully in them.[127] This recognised that while taking care of parental responsibilities, many women also had identities as economic actors and political actors and that none of these roles ought to be sacrificed for another. This discourse of inclusiveness worked to disrupt narratives of hierarchy and

[126] "Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.
[127] "Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.

competition between different struggles. This argued that liberation was not a zero-sum game that needed a loser for there to be a winner but rather there could be multiple, concurrent winners (or losers). By discussing the interdependence of different liberation struggles, this discourse worked to build as broad and inclusive a movement as possible, actively seeking alliances with different groups by revealing the relationship between systems of oppression and framing race, class and gender struggles as different parts of a unified movement. This discourse highlighted that a gendered analysis did not undermine the objectives of democracy but rather it enriched its content, positioning women's rights in broader discourses of human rights.

Women at Malibongwe adopted the resolution to "ensure that the issue (of) women's liberation receives priority on the agenda of the ANC and all progressive organisations and that there is an on going discussion about the relationship between national liberation, women's liberation and working class victory in these formations."[128]

Making clear its connections, discursively and politically, to earlier women's organising in South Africa, women at the Malibongwe Conference located the conference within women's historical anti-apartheid organising and within the liberation movement more broadly. Identifying the central role that women played in resisting apartheid, and the crucial inputs that they had to offer in (re)imagining the national political order under democracy, the preamble of the opening day of the conference explained,

> Drawing lessons from heroic struggles and sacrifices in which women have participated, like the rent boycotts, hunger strikes and the historic mass defiance campaign, the Malibongwe Conference sought concrete ways of paralysing apartheid, whilst strengthening our own structures… To facilitate this unity in action, our desire for a national organisation of women should be made a reality, encompassing all women in our society … Through our concentrated efforts to forge unity and to build one national women's organisation, we shall be able to place firmly on the agenda of the National Liberation Movement, the Mass Democratic Movement and all our organisations, the process of integrating women's emancipation into the national liberation struggle.[129]

Drawing from the dominant discourses in women's organising highlighted in this chapter, the women at Malibongwe drew on the lessons and experiences of past organising, but

[128] "Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive

[129] "Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive

unlike much of the organising before it, Malibongwe took place in a historic moment where the end of apartheid was visible and women's organising was not only focused on identifying present conditions but also looking to influence a new political order.

Records from Malibongwe reflect a dominant discourse that emphasised that women's liberation could not be realised without liberation from apartheid, as expressed in the statement, "we believe that our emancipation can only be addressed as part of a total revolutionary transformation of the South African social and economic relations."[130] Women at Malibongwe went beyond the discourse linking racial and gender oppression adding, "national liberation in South Africa does not automatically guarantee the emancipation of women."[131] With the advantage of just under forty years, women at Malibongwe had witnessed the subjugation of women in post-colonial states and had the benefit of drawing from past women's movement's experiences to draw key lessons on how to avoid the marginalisation experienced in other states.[132] Understandings of the ways that gender norms were used to politically disenfranchise women in these other contexts enabled women at Malibongwe to frame a discourse that did not privilege national liberation at the expense of women's liberation.

Similarly to women's organising in the 1980s as seen through the UDF Women's Congress, the themes at Malibongwe highlighted apartheid's daily impacts on women's lives, and the many levels at which women experienced subjugation. In a background meeting leading to the Conference, women demanded that the ANC make its commitment to non-sexism "overt, unequivocal and irreversible", that structures beyond the Women's League take responsibility for childcare to free women to fully participate in politics.

Challenging Masculinist Politics

[130] "Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive

[131] "Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive

[132] Manzini, Mavivi. "Keynote Address." In *Women and Power: Implications for Development.* Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. Johannesburg: World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13- 15, 1992. Debbie Budlender, personal collection.

The common thread that weaves between these three discourses and reveals a clear unity in purpose is the women's organisations' rejection of masculinist framings of politics and rights and its prioritising of women's epistemic privilege that demanded that political structures change to be inclusive of and sensitive to women's needs. This view explained that because of their varying experiences of subordination under patriarchal systems and structures, women are able to view and understand the impacts of gender oppression differently from men whose views of these relations are obscured by their privilege. The framework of epistemic privilege stressed the need for "women as women" to give insight into the vulnerabilities and needs that only they could articulate based on their experiences of society as people gendered as female. This idea of "women as women" rejected the dominant expectations of women to perform masculinity to gain political legitimacy[133] and demanded that as the majority of the population, women's experiences, views and demands be recognised as legitimate and valuable in their own right.

Dominant women's organisations unapologetically acknowledged that for patriarchal oppressions to be overcome they needed to be identified, theorised and engaged with in meaningful ways that challenged their reproduction and the foundational assumptions upon which they were built. A crucial component of challenging the oppressions that women faced, was women speaking from their various positions in society and arguing from these positions the value of equality and the recognition of women's rights.[134]

Negotiating power around identities

A limitation to the discourse of unity among women across difference, especially as seen in the 1950s, was the space it created for an unproblematised discourse of sisterhood that allowed privileged women to 'know' disadvantaged women's suffering but did not create a space for differently located women to interrogate the power inequalities and oppressions between them. At the historic 1956 women's march to the

[133] W., Connell, R. *Masculinities.* Berkeley: University of California Press. 1995: 205.
[134] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

Union Buildings in opposition to the extension of pass law to African women, FEDSAW's petition to the President explained, "We African women know too well the effect of this law upon our homes, our children. We, who are not African women, know how our sisters suffer."[135] While this stance of solidarity was important in building the movement and in expressing the power represented by the women gathered there in protest, the terms in which this solidarity was expressed also created opportunities for blind spots in identifying and challenging forms of oppression between women. The rhetoric of sisterhood made invisible, or at least unspeakable, the ways that white women benefited from African women's exploitation and in different ways contributed to this exploitation themselves. The emphasis on challenging oppression at the macro level neglected challenging the pervasiveness of apartheid oppression expressed at more micro levels between women. While challenging macro apartheid oppressions was the major challenge of the day, and one which FEDSAW tackled upfront, challenging the day to day inequalities and oppressions between allies was important in addressing the scope of impact of these alliances, allowing them to challenge oppression and exploitation at all levels.

The limitations of discourses of sisterhood and commonality are revealed explicitly in the development of the Malibongwe Conference as women representing different groups, and interests, interacted with each other. Responding to an invitation to participate in the Malibongwe Conference, K Lehoko COSATU's Education Secretary writing on behalf of COSATU's Women's Subcommittee, wrote to decline the invitation explaining,

1. COSATU has no knowledge of the existence of a Malibongwe Preparatory Committee in South Africa and has not participated in any meetings of such a committee. If such a committee does exist it is not, in our view, properly constituted.
2. The under-representation of COSATU and its affiliates as compared to representation of other organisations was raised in the meeting as a matter of serious concern.
3. There has been no formal and structured communication between COSATU and the supposedly existing Malibongwe Preparatory Committee in South Africa. As a result we have still not received a copy of the programme/agenda of the

[135] Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.
[135] "The Demand of the Women of South Africa for the Withdrawal of Passes for Women and the Repeal of the Pass Laws" Petition presented to the Prime Minister, Pretoria, 9 August 1956. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Cb2.3.4. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

conference or any documentation which would provide us with information on the aims, themes and structure of the conference.

4. In the absence of such documentation the meeting expressed strong reservations about the ability of union delegates to participate effectively in the conference due to lack of adequate preparation.[136]

Based on these concerns, COSATU concluded "in light of the above and recognising the importance of a conference of this nature, we request that the conference be postponed to a later date."[137] No further correspondence between the Malibongwe organisers and COSATU are noted in the archive. Based on the dates o

n which the conference was held, it appears that the dates of the conference did not change. The above interaction between COSATU and the organisers of Malibongwe highlights power inequalities, or at least perception of, between different women, and problematises blanket statements of sisterhood that invisiblise such inequalities.

By highlighting Malibongwe's location overseas, and its limited contacts in South Africa, COSATU women bring to the fore issues of accessibility and privilege that divide women. As a body representing one of the largest organised groups of women in South Africa, mostly workers, COSATU's challenging of Malibongwe's procedure in planning the conference speaks to concerns about input, contribution, representation and accountability in South African women's organising. By emphasising their challenges in accessing Malibongwe's representatives in South Africa, COSATU highlights a tension in access to power and voice in the conference, pointing to wider tensions between women located in different spaces. COSATU's statements question how a conference aimed at uniting South African women could be reflective of the conditions of South African women if those very women could not access it from where they were located.

The COSATU women's concerns highlight tensions within a discourse that emphasises women speaking with a united voice by pointing to the ways different women have access to speech and others do not. Although discursively the Conference was aimed at all women, COSATU's critiques argue that a level of privilege is necessary even to contribute to this voice. Although this does not mean that the gains made at

[136] COSATU letter to co-ordinator Malibongwe Conference Committee, 11 December1989. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. Catalogue: AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African Historical Archives.

[137] COSATU letter to co-ordinator Malibongwe Conference Committee, 11 December1989. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. Catalogue: AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African Historical Archives.

Malibongwe were not important and does not nullify the significance of the Conference, it does bring to light the ways that power and privilege were experienced differently by different groups within women's organising. It also highlights that even when women are working towards a similar, if not the same, goal, this does not erase power inequalities between them and or create perceptions of equality in voice and influence. Discourses that do not identify or speak to these inequalities make it possible for processes, procedures and relationships to ignore the material impact that these equalities have on the ways that different women experience organising, creating space for tensions between these groups.

Conclusion

The WNC drew from a long tradition of women's organising in South Africa that emphasised women's legitimacy in and value to public politics. From the formation of FEDSAW the 1950s, South African women were organising nationally around their rights and challenging the oppressive state, organisational, and corporate structures to acknowledge and respect women's rights. These organisations focused their efforts in resisting hegemonic power and knowledge production expressed through apartheid racism, patriarchy, economic exploitation and other forms of apartheid oppression. The exploitations and oppressions took different forms in different spaces and in different moments, and in responding to this complexity major women's organisations from the 1950s through to the 1990s challenged women's subjugation in public and private spaces and from the individual through to societal and state levels.

From the 1950s through to the 1990s, discourses in national women's organising have focused on intersectionality, acknowledging the impacts that race, class and gender have on each other and the ways that they all influence how women experience society. From FEDSAW onwards, women's national organising sought to organise across race, class and geographic barriers, to unite women to speak with a united voice. This approach of focussing on women's commonalities allowed organisations to grow in numbers and in support, influencing some pivotal moments in national protest and solidarity.

The organisations reviewed in this chapter all identified oppressions that women face in society because of patriarchal norms, but instead of constructing men as an

enemy, they identified them as allies in overcoming these norms. These discourses identified men and women's national liberation as intertwined and mutually reinforcing. In contrast women identified each other as allies, and 'sisters', without acknowledging and working to address the power inequalities between them that benefited some women and disadvantaged others. Although they acknowledged that women were differently located in society, they did not discuss the impacts of these different locations the way that they did with patriarchal ones and ones linked to state racism. While in the short term this was an effective model, it allowed tensions to sit below the surface, as illustrated by the COSATU correspondence to the Malibongwe organisers. While the discourses developed under the organisations examined here were incredibly progressive and effective in their understandings of identity as constituted by multiple factors, especially for their time, they missed key opportunities for tackling power inequalities by only focussing their critiques outwards and not looking at how national dynamics or race and class privilege played out within their organisations. I would argue that the WNC built on the discourses developed in women's organising over the decades to attract support and develop approaches that spoke to women's lived realities and challenges in society. Like the organisations before it, however, it focused outwards to challenge oppression, leaving many inequalities between women unaddressed and creating opportunities for growing tensions.

Drawing from the achievements of earlier women's movements, the WNC was able to direct the momentum and lessons from this tradition to mobilise a movement that used women's collective experiences of exclusion to develop an ethos of inclusion under which women from all backgrounds organised to challenge masculine dominance in democracy and to fight for the protection of their rights in the Constitution.

CHAPTER 3

Dominant Discourses in the WNC through the Archive

In this chapter, I examine the internal organisation of the WNC exploring the dominant themes and discourses around which women in the WNC framed their organising, their objectives and their purpose as a coalition. I use these discourses to examine how the Coalition navigated relationships with different groups, how they conceptualised and expressed power and how they understood themselves as a Coalition of women coming from vastly different locations organising around specific goals. Engaging with these discourses reveals the many levels at which the Coalition intentionally worked to challenge and undermine masculinist political norms that subordinated women, and to provide inclusive, representative, and accessible alternative political processes. Following the work that framed and corresponded with the dominant discourses in the WNC reveals how the Coalition became so effective in challenging many of the traditional barriers to women's participation in public politics and in reimagining understandings of representation and protection. By examining the different levels at which the WNC worked to hear what women identified as political, social and economic barriers in their lives, it becomes possible to read the ways that the WNC created interventions to break through these barriers in their own political outreach and engagement, and developed a list of demands and expectations of the new political order that could address these barriers.

While exploring the ways that the dominant discourses of the WNC shone light on different power inequalities stemming from patriarchy, and by doing this created opportunities to respond to and address them, I also examine the types of power inequalities that were made inaudible by the dominant discourses and the ways that they became audible and worked to disrupt the uncritical reproduction of these inaudibilities. Particularly, I examine the ways that within the Coalition, power inequalities along identity lines were not formally engaged with or identified as needing special attention, even though in various moments throughout the course of the Coalition identity proved to be a significant factor in the ways women related to each other, to different actors outside the Coalition, and to the work that they carried out through the WNC. Examining the

ways that the WNC was intentional in identifying and imagining responses to patriarchal oppressions at different levels of society provides insight into how the WNC then became so effective in identifying changes necessary for women to be able to access and enjoy the full benefits of democracy and citizenship and ultimately in securing these protections in the Constitution. Similarly, examining the areas and issues that the Coalition did not formally identify and engage with, although evidence suggests that they were very present and played a significant role in daily interactions, provides insights into some of the challenges of negotiating power amongst women in the WNC and why certain tensions continued to be reproduced.

The Coalition unapologetically acknowledged that for patriarchal oppressions to be overcome they needed to be identified, theorised and engaged with in meaningful ways that challenged their reproduction and the foundational assumptions upon which they were built. However, within the Coalition, many of the divisive dynamics relating to power inequalities and abuses were repeatedly referred to as "tensions" at various points over the course of the development of the Charter Campaign, allowing these inequalities to remain unnamed and formally unaddressed. Although discussions around power inequalities relating to identity appear to have been largely constructed as unspeakable within the Coalition, in various moments they came to the surface highlighting the exceptional challenge the Coalition faced in bringing together women who were located in such different spaces in society and also the challenge in working together without exploring and speaking to difference.

I begin this chapter by reviewing the chronology of the WNC and the Charter Campaign around which it organised its work. This chronology begins with the formation of the Coalition in 1992, and follows the exclusion of women from the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations, through the development of the Charter Campaign and finally through to the adoption of the Women's Charter for Effective Equality in 1994. Establishing the chronology of the organisation and its work is important in contextualising the different discourses that I explore in this chapter and in providing an understanding of how the Coalition developed and grew into such an influential body. I follow this historical overview with a discussion of the relationship constructed in the Coalition between theory and praxis, seeking to understand the

relationship between the objectives and documents that the Coalition developed and the work it carried out with women in their communities and in the development of the Charter and later the national Constitution. This discussion highlights the significance of reading the discourses employed in the WNC by revealing the important relationship women in the Coalition imagined between the work they did in developing objectives and demands for the new dispensation and the work they carried out in communities engaging with different groups of women and seeking to positively and materially impact their lives. I follow this discussion with examinations of the three dominant discourses employed in the Coalition. First, the understanding of law and culture as regressive and needing to change to reflect the realities and meet the needs of women; second, the interconnectedness between different liberation struggles; and finally, the problematising of the dichotomy between public and private spheres and the demand for the reimagination of political norms to reject masculinist political, social and economic norms. Following the examination of these discourses, I provide a reading of voices that attempted to disrupt inaudibility around the identity and power dynamics within the Coalition, exploring how the issues raised by these voices point to the ways that power inequalities were present and influenced relationships even when they were not acknowledged.

Chronology

The Women's National Coalition was formed in April 1992 as an umbrella of about 70 women's organisations ranging from political parties, to religious and occupational groups, service and special interest groups, and community organisations. Its mandate was to work across the country mobilising women to participate in a research process aimed at identifying their primary needs and priorities. This research would then be used to produce a document that could be deployed to make demands for women's advancement at constitutional, legislative and policy levels.[138]

The development of this document, which turned into the Women's Charter for Effective Equality, was also intended to serve as an organising and education tool, raising

[138] The Charter Campaign. Charter Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

consciousness among women and encouraging increased political participation.[139] The Coalition titled its Charter a Women's Charter for "Effective Equality" with the understanding that effective equality "entails political, economic, cultural and social equality of women." They further explained the significance of this qualification of equality saying "if what is in the constitution is to be effective, we need to engage in the processes that are currently restructuring women's lives, at all levels."[140] In this spirit, the Coalition's movement of empowering women began with what Frene Ginwala described as "a conspiracy of women," in which women united "in formulating and adopting a Charter… (to) entrench effective equality in the Constitution of South Africa."[141] With its primary mandate the creation of a Women's Charter, the WNC was created with a clear purpose in mind and limited lifespan. The WNC's narrow mandate allowed it to focus on issues specific enough to illuminate shared experiences that were meaningful to women's lives while still generating a framework flexible enough to apply in different local contexts to different groups. This balance allowed the WNC to appeal to women across political, race, class, geographic, religious and ideological backgrounds, and mobilise around a common objective: the formal protection of women's rights in the political order.

The significance of the historic moment in which the WNC was formed is expressed in the WNC's General Secretariat Report from a December 1993 Steering Committee Meeting which explained, "as our country's first ever democratic elections get closer, an intense atmosphere of anticipation and anxiety fills the air. Will South Africa survive the complex transition to a free society, or will it be plunged into war and civil strife?"[142] The sentiments expressed in this communication reveal the complexity of uncertainties surrounding the period, and the mood in which the WNC was formed and

[139] Ginwala, Frene. "The Charter for Women's Equality: Discussion Document." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[140] "Report on Strategising Workshop, Saturday 12 June 1993." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[141] Ginwala, Frene. "The Charter for Women's Equality: Discussion Document." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[142] "Women's National Coalition National Steering Committee Meeting held in Johannesburg, Mariston Hotel on the 3rd December 1993. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

undertook its work. This sensitive and extraordinary period is important to consider when engaging with the work produced by the WNC and in reading the discourses it employed in mobilising support and developing the Charter Campaign. The cautious enthusiasm and the spirit of cooperation reaching across deeply historically and materially entrenched divisions needs to be located in this particular historical moment.

In September 1991, twenty-seven political organisations and national and homeland governments came together to sign the National Peace Accord, a document drafted to "to signify our common purpose to bring an end to political violence in our country and to set out the codes of conduct, procedures and mechanisms to achieve this goal."[143] This Accord paved the way for Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA), a national forum for the negotiations of the dismantling of the apartheid regime. CODESA did not ultimately bring a breakthrough in the negotiations towards ending apartheid and ushering in democracy. It did, however, prove to be a crucial period in women's organising and mobilising in national politics, and played a significant role in increased participation in the WNC from a wide range of women's organisations.[144][145]

When CODESA I began in December 1991, the political parties involved presented almost entirely all-male teams to represent them, resulting in women making up fewer than fifteen of the more than 200 representatives at the negotiations. At the time, the WNC noted that of the women participants in CODESA I, "the majority of these are advisers and not full delegates, who alone have the right to speak and serve on the Management and Steering Committees."[146] The virtually universal exclusion of women from the first stage of negotiations sent a message across the political spectrum that women's interests and needs would not be prioritised in the new dispensation unless they demanded that they be included in the process of democracy building.

[143] "National Peace Accord." African National Congress Home Page. http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/transition/npaccord.html (accessed November 25, 2009).
[144] Rantete, Johannes, and Hermann Giliomee. "Transition to Democracy through Transaction?: Bilateral Negotiations between the ANC and NP in South Africa." *Transition to Democracy through Transaction?: Bilateral Negotiations between the ANC and NP in South Africa* 91, no. 365 (1992): 515-42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/722988 (accessed December 5, 2009).
[145] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

[146] "Charter Campaign". Campaign Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Throughout the country, women responded to this exclusion from CODESA with outrage, taking to demonstration in a variety of ways. A wide range of groups and individuals across the country from different professional fields and political parties bought advertising space in newspapers demanding greater participation of women in the negotiations. There could be little doubt that women's marginalization from politics was being challenged as never before. This groundswell of anger fed into the meetings across political party lines to discuss the formation of a coalition, making the possibility of a national women's coalition a reality.[147]

The WNC's two main objectives in establishing the Charter Campaign were to "acquire and disseminate information about women's needs and aspirations" and to "unify women in formulating and adopting a Charter or other document and entrench effective equality in the Constitution if South Africa."[148] In undertaking these two goals the Coalition identified six primary phases that specifically outlined the Coalition's tasks and objectives and how it planned to meet these objectives.

The first phase, "education and conscientisation," focused on setting up workshops, seminars, sit-ins, marches, picnics, and a variety of other opportunities for WNC participants to meet with women in their different environments and speak to them about the Coalition and about women's rights. At a National Strategy Workshop in 1993, the WNC identified five primary themes around which to build its national campaign. These themes were: Women's legal status; women's access to land; resources and water, violence against women; health; and work.

The second phase, "ascertaining the demands of women," concentrated on ensuring that the WNC was accountable to and representative of the diversity of South African women and that in the negotiations WNC representatives would not say "this is what we have to demand" but rather "women say this is what we want."[149] This phase

[147] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

[148] "Women's Charter Campaign: Aims and Objectives of the WNC." Campaign Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[149] "World University Service Women's Development Programme: Utilising the development and political process to entrench the rights of women." In *The need for an 'Apex' or Umbrella Body for women and the role of the women's coalition*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. World University Service Women's Development Programme,

involved outreach efforts such as participatory research, seminars, workshops, and door-to-door campaigning. This phase included WNC fieldworkers going into different communities for face-to-face engagement with women to solicit their inputs in spaces that were safe, convenient and accessible to women.[150]

In the third phase, "processing the various demands," the WNC consolidated and processed the demands that had been collected in the preceding phases. Inputs ranged from those submitted by individuals, by groups and institutions, and through mass meetings of women convened by regional affiliates, some of which had as many as 800 participants.

The fourth phase, "educational programmes at local, regional and national levels," worked to educate women at all levels of society about the demands that the Coalition collected, the significance of these demands in the new Constitution and the importance of supporting the Coalition's advancement of women's rights.[151] This phase emphasised women's ownership of the process and empowerment in articulating and expressing their rights with the understanding that "ultimately, change will lie in the hands of women themselves. Our campaign cannot deliver manna- but we can be a catalyst for change."[152] The emphasis in this phase on raising consciousness and promoting women's buy-in and ownership of the process made it a crucial one in anchoring the sustainability of the movement the WNC was encouraging.

The fifth phase, the "crystallisation of demands," used the information and inputs gathered in the previous stages to identify and articulate women's demands in the new political dispensation. This phase was largely conducted by a small group of women in

August 13-15 1992: 58. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[150] "World University Service Women's Development Programme: Utilising the development and political process to entrench the rights of women." In *The need for an 'Apex' or Umbrella Body for women and the role of the women's coalition*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13-15 1992: 58. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[151] "World University Service Women's Development Programme: Utilising the development and political process to entrench the rights of women." In *The need for an 'Apex' or Umbrella Body for women and the role of the women's coalition*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13-15 1992: 58. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[152] Govender, Pregs. "Campaign Report." March 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

the WNC, but worked to include the diversity of inputs collected in the preceding phases. This phase involved consolidating the data collected from throughout the country and also translating this data into meaningful interventions and demands. This sentiment was communicated at the January 1994 WNC Steering Committee and Council Meeting where the General Secretary's Report, reflecting on the WNC's major achievements through the Campaign explained,

> The real challenge that this movement is facing is neither to proclaim the beautiful results of our research nor other types of campaigns which informed us on what women want, but the need to create practical strategies that will engage as many people in our communities as possible to start dealing with issues of gender equality. Most importantly, such strategies should ensure that it enables women to continue expressing and developing their own values that will emancipate them and the entire society from patriarchy.[153]

The emphasis on material results communicated from this Report highlights the intimate relationship in this phase, and in the Coalition more broadly, between the texts produced and the material outcomes these texts could influence.

In the sixth and final phase, the "formulation and adoption of the Charter," the WNC adopted its end product, created to represent women's voices in the development of the Constitution. Although divided into different phases, in the transition between different the phases there were not always clear demarcations and there was often significant overlap between the phases.[154] [155]

In February 1994 the *Women's Charter for Effective Equality* was unanimously adopted at a national convention, with the exception of minor clauses, and was translated in all 11 official South African languages. Through the adoption of the Charter, the WNC's success in reaching out to women across the country and in capturing their needs and aspirations was made visible. The Women's Charter is divided into the following 12 Articles: Equality, Law and the Administration of Justice, the Economy, Education and

[153] "General Secretary's Report to the Women's National Coalition Steering Committee and Council Meeting at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel on 15th January 1994." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[154] "World University Service Women's Development Programme: Utilising the development and political process to entrench the rights of women." In *The need for an 'Apex' or Umbrella Body for women and the role of the women's coalition*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13-15 1992: 58. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[155] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

Training, Development Infrastructure and the Environment, Social Services, Political and Civic Life, Family Life and Partnerships, Custom, Culture and Religion, Violence Against Women, and Health and Media. Following its adoption, many workshops were held to promote the contents of the Charter in different communities.[156] [157]

The relationship between theory and praxis: Making the WNC's objectives real

One of the WNC's primary objectives was that it would be informed by the realities of women's lives and speak to the challenges they faced on a daily basis. In building on this vision, the Charter Campaign was designed to produce a "living document", engaging with women at the different levels at which they experienced society and impacting on their lives in material, meaningful ways.[158] This prioritising of the materiality of the Charter Campaign reveals the intimate link imagined in the Coalition between the theories on which it was grounded and the work that it produced. The understanding that the concepts, ideas and demands advocated for by the WNC needed to be deeply connected to, and reflective of, women's lived realities and work to empower women through its development and in its influencing women from the WNC's inputs in the Constitutional negotiations.

The emphasis in the Coalition on the relationship between theory and practice reveals the value in reading texts produced by the Coalition and also in mapping the discourses employed through these texts. Because the WNC's texts were not understood as existing in a vacuum or having value as texts alone, engaging with the texts creates an opportunity to read how the WNC imagined its work and the impacts it could have in communities. This sentiment about the link between texts and practice was communicated in a WNC Charter Campaign document which explained,

> Those who see the goal of our campaign as simply drawing up a list of demands are missing the core of our objective- which is to participate in the transformation of South Africa in order to make real the rhetoric of a non sexist, non racist democratic South Africa. If women do not get involved- if they do not learn to

[156] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 270.
[157] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.
[158] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005: 270.

> break the culture of silence that binds women across all cultural backgrounds- we will only be further disempowered. Our campaign for a Charter is not simply about securing a document listing demands- it is the process of involving women across the country and teaching ourselves that we can unite, organise and act to end gender oppression… In order to realise our power as women we must involve the largest number of women possible, in every sector.[159]

This statement reveals the extent to which the Coalition imagined its primary objective as meaningfully impacting the lives of South African women and understood the Charter and other texts produced as a means to achieving this goal. These texts, while important in outlining the Coalition's vision, and means of achieving this, were not privileged over work that built capacity and increased women's conscientisation and politicisation, but was rather seen as complementary to this work.

The significance of the power in knowledge production in the WNC is emphasised by the relationship imagined between theory and praxis in the WNC's work. The intimate connection imagined between the knowledge produced through the Charter and women's status under democracy highlights the importance of reading the knowledges produced and circulated within the Coalition to understand how the WNC imagined itself challenging oppressive powers, which oppressive powers it challenged and how it framed women's relationships to these powers.

Speaking directly to the relationship between theory and praxis in the development of the WNC's research methodology, Pethu Serote explains the need to engage with women's knowledge, acknowledging women as authorities on the lived experiences that they communicate saying,

> We must accept that the women we want to interact with have knowledge and experience… Unfortunately we come from a culture that is intolerant of and doesn't recognise any knowledge that is not packaged in the 'acceptable' box with the 'right' labels in place. We have a strong theoretical base that we need to link to women's actual experience. For us to have an encounter in which other women would be enabled to share openly, we need to accept and respect their experiences/knowledge without seeking to interpret it for them.[160]

Serote's suggestions for meaningful ways for the WNC to conduct its research highlights an awareness that empowering women through research does not only mean talking with women and having other women conducting the research, but in challenging masculinist

[159] Charter Campaign. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[160] Serote, Pethu. "How to get women to speak." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 18.

norms that silence women by prescribing the terms in which knowledge is understood as legitimate. This call for the WNC's researchers to undermine oppressive norms through their practice illustrates a concerted effort to link the progressive theory underpinning the Coalition's woman-centred research with an equally progressive practice that listens to and takes seriously women's demands, on their own terms.

Because the three dominant discourses discussed in the following section were all aimed at the same goal of empowering women and developing a Charter that could effectively represent their needs in constitutional negotiations, they do not represent distinctly independent or unrelated discursive fields or areas of work. Rather, they represent three of the most common ways in which objectives, work and purpose were framed and communicated, with significant overlap existing between the three discourses. Because they were all focused at the same outcomes, there was significant overlap between the discourses, and the separation into three discourses is therefore more a way of organising analysis of the text than rigid borders that dictated how the Coalition communicated its objectives.

Law and Culture as Regressive

In advocating for the necessity of women's participation in the political processes determining the shape and values of South Africa's new dispensation, the WNC worked to reveal the ways that existing laws, and political and cultural norms and values actively disempowered, marginalised and disadvantaged women. The Coalition raised awareness around the ways that this exclusion retarded the nation's development by robbing political structures of women's valuable insights contributions. This discourse around the failure of political, social and economic structures to meet women's needs was important in bringing to light the multiple levels at which women are oppressed and exploited through legal, cultural, societal systems, structures and practices. Highlighting these oppressions allowed the WNC to identify and call attention to the patriarchal structures and institutions that perpetuated and reproduced gender oppressions.

A significant characteristic of this discourse was the targeting of systems, structures and practices that upheld patriarchy and undermined women, while intentionally differentiating between attacks on patriarchy as a system and men as a

group. While recognising that men most often benefited from the norms that subordinated women, this discourse did not vilify men. Rather, this discourse was employed to challenge patriarchal institutions and to disrupt narratives of objectivity, neutrality or naturalness often claimed by these institutions to advocate for the development of norms, practices and systems that were not premised on exclusion or subordination but meaningfully changed to be inclusive, representative and sensitive to the needs of men and women.

In a poignant critique that illustrated the ways that political norms oppress women, Frene Ginwala pointed to the damaging effects of women's exclusion from CODESA I saying,

> Black and white women have struggled with men in the liberation movements, but our experience has been that the more powerful the committee, the fewer the women. The exclusion of women in the Codesa process is both a symbol of our present society and a grim warning of the future. If we do not take heed of this warning, we are going to be left out. They will talk of non-sexism, they will not practice it.[161]

Using the exclusion of women from CODESA as an example, Ginwala highlighted the ways that the normalised patriarchal oppressions of the past were threatening women's futures by limiting their voices in the imagining of democracy and at best offering lip service to their interests. By making visible the invisibilised mechanics of patriarchy, Ginwala emphasised the urgency with which women needed to act to disrupt the established order and refuse to accept the legitimacy of the status quo.

Taking seriously the challenge that "each political party must be pushed by the 'Women's conspiracy' to push women and women's issues"[162] after the 1994 elections, women from the WNC engaged with male leaders of the dominant political parties encouraging them to adopt more gender sensitive policies, practices and norms. In these engagements, women from the WNC worked to convince male leadership of the importance of women's needs and inputs and to articulate why 'business as usual' was not good enough under the new dispensation.

[161] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.
[162] "Proposed Agenda for the Second Council Meeting of the Women's National Coalition held on the 11 July 1993 at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel, Johannesburg." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

In a May 1994 letter to the then president-elect Nelson Mandela, Modiegi Dlamini-Kumalo and Anne Letsebe, writing on behalf of the WNC, congratulate the President on his victory and on the success of the first democratic elections, but continue,

> We, however, have extremely strong reservations concerning the appointments of only two women cabinet ministers, so far named. Given the fact that women represent over 50% of the voting adult population, we have long been part of the struggle for a democratic South Africa- and thus women demand that they play a full part in the restructuring of the future of this country as equal decision-makers and not merely as implementers of decisions taken by men on their behalf… We, the WOMEN'S NATIONAL COALITION of South Africa, demand as repeatedly promised, a truly non-sexist, democratic government.[163]

The WNC's communication of why women needed to play a central role in the new government is important because it makes clear that women make up a significant voting constituent group and need to be acknowledged and treated as such. Emphasising women's representation relative to the total population, the WNC highlights the fact that increasing women's representation in senior government positions is in no way a favour or an indulgence, but rather a move towards a more accurate reflection and representation of society. The WNC's reference to women's roles in the fight for democracy speaks to the reality that women proved themselves as capable and committed to liberation and equality in South Africa, and therefore should not be treated as minors unable to make decisions for themselves, or dismissed as a marginal or special interests group. This statement argues that rather, women should, and deserve to, be engaged with as equals to men and as a group that was central in fighting for the realisation of democracy.

This letter to the newly formed government is important because it communicates the WNC's rejection of traditional, masculinist political norms that justified women's political exclusion, and makes clear the belief that such norms fail to meet the needs of society's needs. This letter forms part of a discourse that communicates the failures of normative political culture to adequately speak to women's lived realities and challenges political structures to change to be able to respond to these realities and the needs that correspond with them.

In an October 1994 presentation to F.W. de Klerk, Deputy President of South Africa at the time, and to the National Party, Amanda Botha, representing the WNC,

[163] WNC letter to Mr. Nelson Mandela, president-elect. 7 May 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

explained the significance of the language used in the Charter saying "the Women's Charter reflects the voice of reason, and when we say 'we demand' it is because we have waited so long for what is rightfully ours." [164] This explanation of the significance of the words "we demand" communicates the authority with which the Coalition spoke and the acknowledgement and respect it expected in engaging with male political leaders. The argument that the WNC's Charter communicates reason speaks to a discourse that challenges the relevance and legitimacy of hegemonic political structures arguing that their masculinist foundations blind them to the political, social and economic realities that women face. The phrase "what is rightfully ours" again challenges the legitimacy of normative political systems, practices and structures arguing that these deny women what they are justly owed and entitled. Like the earlier letter to the President, this presentation communicates that allowing women political participation and rights is not a favour but is rather in accordance with representation and access expected under the new democracy.

The WNC's presentation continues explaining the significance of the Charter saying, "its value also lies in the fact that it is the embodiment of reconciliation and the healing that we need in our nation."[165] This appeal to ideals of reconciliation and speaks to perceptions of the spirit of that historic moment and the expectations of inclusivity embodied in it. It also alludes to the previous system as exclusionary and suggests that in breaking with the past and embracing the ideals of the new dispensation the NP needed to seriously engage with the WNC demands and expectations represented in the Charter.

Both of these communications with men in the ANC and the NP show the WNC actively engaging with and challenging masculine political dominance through women's exclusion from positions of power and from processes of policy formation. Both interactions confront the idea of political neutrality as masculine, arguing that existing conditions were in no way representative or impartial but rather exclusionary and oppressive. They both also express the view that women's political participation is not a concession on men's part, but rather women accessing their democratic rights to which they are as entitled as men. Although challenging party exclusions of women, neither

[164] "Presentation of the Women's Charter to the Deputy President FW De Klerk and the National Party." October 4, 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[165] *Ibid.*

suggest or promote antagonistic relationships with the parties, but rather call for women's participation, inclusion and contribution to these bodies. This indicates a position that recognises the right and ability to challenge oppressions in masculine constructed spaces while recognising the significance of those institutions and maintaining relationships with the men leading those institutions.

It is interesting to note that the ways that identity influenced representation in the WNC's communications with these two major political parties. While two African women represented the Coalition in its communication to the ANC, an Afrikaner woman represented the Coalition in its communication with the NP. Whether intentional or not, the choice of representation along racial lines speaks to the weight that race carried in the transitional period and in appealing to different audiences. The choice of the different representatives to communicate with the different parties reveals that identity, although not formally written about, played a significant role in the way that different women communicated with, related to, and assumed different positions with different audiences. This moment where the role of identity becomes visible disrupts ideas of sameness between women and reveals that although they belonged to a single coalition, women from different groups were consciously signified differently and had access to different types of power in different spaces. The choice of different representatives for the WNC for different audiences reveals the materiality of difference between women in the Coalition, even when this difference was not formally documented or engaged with at an organisational level.

The Women's Charter was designed to serve as a concrete representation of women's demands from the government and an illustration of women's ability to speak with a unified voice in articulating and demanding their rights. This imagining of the Charter demanded a reconceptualisation of ideas of political participation, access to political structures and purposes of political engagement. As Ginwala noted, "most importantly, we must press for fundamental changes and deal with the causes of gender oppression in our society and not just some of the symptoms."[166] Instead of basing the charter on the experiences and perspectives of a few powerful leaders, as is often the case

[166] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" p. 5. Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

in the development of political frameworks, the WNC worked to be as inclusive as possible. This meant that instead of waiting for women on the ground to contact the WNC, as is often the assumption in discussions of political participation, the WNC went into the communities and homes of women to engage with them on their terms and in their spaces of comfort. This approach recognised the many challenges that prevent women, especially poor women and women in rural areas, from participating in formal political processes and going to or making contact with political representatives. As primary caregivers in homes and families, women were at times unable to participate in public political processes that men might have been able to, because of their added responsibilities. Contacting women directly in their homes and local meeting areas made accessible political participation that might otherwise have been inaccessible because of distance and cost. In some situations cultural practices of patriarchy limited women's participation, as politics were understood as male processes and practices in which wives followed the lead of their husbands.

An important feature of the development of the charter was its complete ownership by women. As part of its commitment to empowering and building the capacity of women, women took responsibility for handling all parts of the development of the charter, from researching, organising and writing the charter. Although different agencies offered to conduct the research for the WNC, the WNC declined all of these offers deciding instead to undertake all levels of research and writing itself. This meant that the WNC had to train hundreds of women throughout the country to be able to perform the needed tasks within a relatively short space of time. The importance placed on the Charter Campaign as a process of empowerment is expressed in the General Secretary's Report communicates that, "for us the most important issue is that women have realised that they are not just victims but they are giving ample evidence of their capacity to be forces of change, not just for women but for the whole society."[167] At the grassroots level, women from the WNC met with women in their local environments throughout the country, allowing the Charter to serve as a conscientising tool through which women could express their struggles in and hopes for their lives, and in many

[167] "General Secretary's Report to the Women's National Coalition Steering Committee and Council Meeting at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel on 15th January 1994." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

cases articulate what measures the new political order could take to improve their conditions. The Charter therefore served multiple simultaneous purposes by mobilising, conscientising, and building the capacity of women at the grassroots level and also preparing a document representing women's needs.[168]

Describing the significance of the development of the Charter, the WNC's "Programme of Action for Women's Equality" notes,

> The process of developing the Charter will be as important as the product itself. A document drafted by lawyers and other experts would have little meaning in the lives of the majority of women in South Africa. Urban elite women cannot prescribe to the majority what their concerns and needs are. The process will elicit in women's own words their concerns, demands and aspirations. It will be bottom up and not top down and must be consultative and participatory. Not only is such a process more democratic, but it will also serve to educate and raise consciousness of men and women. Awareness that in the "new" South Africa their own circumstances should change, will help women gain confidence and empower them to address their subordination and begin to claim and exercise the democratic rights that their long struggles have gained for them.[169]

The emphasis placed above on the significance of a diversity of women's input in shaping the character and content of the Charter highlights the ways that the WNC worked to reimagine normative models of research and political participation. Recognising the limitations and silencing inherent in conventional political participation and policy formation.

While an emphasis on the importance of a participatory research approach is reflected throughout the records, it also emerges from an Evaluation Report that,

> The commitment to a participatory process was easily adopted. It was the application of this to the goals that shaped the Coalition, because in implementing this participatory process it meant that all participants had to come to the same understanding of the workplan (sic) in order to move ahead. More importantly, the members were to relate as peers in moving forward. Different working styles had to blend in order to move the campaign."[170]

These insights reveal the complexities in making real the WNC's vision and aspirations. It highlights the realities of difference that presented challenges to implementing research and organising models that brought together a diversity of women and promoted

[168] Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

[169] Women's Natioanal Coalition Programme of Action for Women's Equality Motivation. Campaign Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[170] Kornegay, Ellen and Jean D. Triegaardt. "Women's National Coalition, Evaluation Report." 8 December, 1995. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 11

inclusive and processes. These insights reveal the important role that the discourse of alternative political processes played in shaping the vision and purpose of the WNC, and also the challenges involved in realising this vision.

In acknowledging the ways that legal and cultural norms failed to represent women's interests, the WNC also examined the ways that definitions of different institutions and relationships reflected women's needs and realities. In mapping demographics of women around the country, Debbie Budlender noted the complexities in categorising marital status, saying, "statements about martial status are confusing on several counts. Firstly, there are many different conjugal relationships which vary on traditional, cultural and legal bases. We are not always comparing like with like."[171] Budlender's comments on the labelling of relationships speak to several important levels on which the Coalition challenged hegemonic titles and understandings of relationships.

Budlender's comments challenge the idea of a standardised model for relationships, recognising diversity in the types of relationships that women engage in. She also highlights the limitations in trying to understand these relationships through a framework that discounts a variety of relationships and therefore only allows for a narrow view that provides a limited understanding of the ways women experience formal relationships, therefore potentially offering a skewed perspective on these experiences. Budlender also problematise the equating of sameness to different types of relationships and, related to this, the assumption of women's common understandings, expectations and experience of formal relationships.

This problematising of normative categories and frameworks for understand relationships reveals an important awareness in the WNC of the need to challenge, and not to assume as acceptable, systems, structures and identities that are not based on and do not reflect the realities of a diversity of women's lives and experiences. Budlender's reflections on the significance of recognising different types of relationships illustrates how the WNC worked to develop methods that challenged oppressive hegemonic norms so as to better reflect a diversity of women's experiences and to conduct research that could inform a Constitution that would meet their needs.

[171] Budlender, Debbie. "Statistical Profile of South African Women." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

Interdependent Struggles

The WNC's discourse around the interconnectedness and interdependence of different liberation struggles worked to disrupt narratives of hierarchy or competition between different struggles, arguing that liberation was not a zero-sum game where there needs to be a loser for there to be a winner but rather that there could be multiple, concurrent winners. By discussing the interdependence of different liberation struggles, the WNC worked to build as broad and inclusive a movement as possible, actively seeking alliances with different groups by framing race, class and gender struggles as different parts of a single, unified movement. This discourse emphasised the relationship between different systems of oppression, revealing the ways that they are connected and feed off each other. This discourse privileged alliance and solidarity between different movements, discussing the ways that the reimagining of political order in South Africa created opportunity for the broadening of rights to protect, represent and meet the needs of more people.

An important component of the WNC's discourse of interrelated struggles was the emphasis on the role that structures play in producing and maintaining inequalities and oppressions. This attention to structures and institutions created space for challenging the different types of oppression promoted through these structures, making the scope broad and not narrowly focused on one area. This also highlighted the ways that structures and institutions promoted multiple types of oppression simultaneously, revealing the relationships between different types of oppression. Describing this structural and institutionalised inequality, Frene Ginwala explained,

> The problem we are confronting is that we are not dealing simply with discrimination against women i.e. a social and economic order and institutions that are acceptable except that they exclude women from equal treatment in their practices. Rather, the problem lies in the specific order and the nature of the institutions. It is the organisation of society itself and the structures of its institutions which are premised on male dominance and female subordination, and hence are incapable of delivering equality to women.[172]

Ginwala's statement highlights how the WNC cast a broad net by tackling the institutions, systems and structures that upheld women's oppressions, allowing for

[172] Ginwala, Frene. "The Charter for Women's Equality: Discussion Document". National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

interventions to be made at multiple levels, and from different angles simultaneously.

In building alliances between different groups of women and appealing to men to support the protection of women's rights, the WNC worked to highlight the relationship between different struggles, arguing that liberation struggles need not be in conflict with each other but can rather be complementary, flourishing simultaneously. In working with male dominated groups and structures, the WNC worked to prove that providing a gendered analysis does not undermine the objectives of democracy but rather it enriches its content.

One of the central themes throughout national women's anti-apartheid organising was the relationship between racial and gender liberation struggles and the need to address both struggles for a meaningful democracy to take shape. The theme of interconnectedness between the two movements was continued in the Coalition, which not only discussed their relationship but also the need to intentionally work on securing both. The WNC's movement for the incorporation of non-sexism as a core feature of South Africa's democracy came as an acknowledgement by women that national political transformation did not equate to improved women's rights or the furthering of women's interests in society. Instead, a democracy's commitment to the advancement of gender equality depended upon persistent, strategic, and at times forceful measures by women and men to challenge existing orders. Building on this position, the Coalition warned against privileging national liberation over gender equality commenting that,

> While a new constitutional framework is being created which is aimed at eliminating racism, it can simultaneously provide for the removal of legal and institutional basis for sexism. Both forms of oppression can be dealt with at the same time, rather than leaving women's oppression on the back-burner to be attended to at some later stage. Indeed, just as the elimination of structured racism is a prerequisite for the creation of a democratic society, so too is the elimination of gender oppression a prerequisite.[173]

Recognising the incredible potential for positive change at the time, the WNC stressed the possibilities for advancing different movements simultaneously, without compromising either but rather using both to build and affirm each other.

[173] "Charter Campaign". National Steering Committee. Box 3. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

The independence of organisations within the Coalition recognised that while there were intersections between women's different struggles, and women shared many similar struggles, not all women experience the same struggles or subscribed to the same positions on how to overcome their struggles. This recognition and respect of difference acknowledged that while women may have many differing priorities, there were still commonalities within this difference. Speaking about the objectives and purpose of the Coalition, Frene Ginwala explained,

> The WNC is not the women's movement with overall responsibility for the emancipation of South African women. It is a coalition of national organisations, who do not necessarily share a common perspective on the nature and extent of gender oppression. The member organisations have their own objectives, but were able to unite in a common objective of providing the most effective constitutional framework for women.[174]

Ginwala's observations highlight the ways that even in their diversity, women recognised a common future in and through each other and came together to influence a positive outcome for this future. Her comments also recognise the WNC's limitations and that while trying to be as inclusive and representative as possible, the Coalition could not be everything to everybody. Ginwala's communicates a recognition that long-term, the future of the women's movement would be driven by the WNC's member organisations in their specific locations and capacities and not by the Coalition with its limited time span. What Ginwala suggests would continue to unite women is an enabling constitutional framework, from which all member organisations could benefit in their respective areas. Ginwala highlights this common investment in motivating around the WNC and its work.

The importance of not imposing uniformity in the Coalition was reiterated by Debbie Budlender who noted that "each of the participating organisations in the Coalition will continue throughout the period of the Campaign to perform their other usual functions. Each of these organisations will be free to take up and campaign on any specific issues they see fit, as well as to campaign against issues where they disagree."[175]

---

[174] Ginwala, Frene. "The Charter for Women's Equality: Discussion Document." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[175] Budelnder, Debbie. "Profile of the Women's National Coalition" in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 1

Discussing the implications of this independence within the Coalition, Budlender explained that it meant that "the national office has very limited authority in determining what participating organisations and regional coalitions do. The national office can suggest action, but not enforce it."[176] Budlender's views on the role relationship between different bodies in the Coalition, written in the context of developing the Coalition's research methodology, highlights the value of difference that was written into the WNC blueprints. Budlender's highlighting that different participating bodies could campaign against issues they disagreed with speaks to the level of autonomy within the Coalition, and the WNC's policies not to silence or filter participating organisations' voices.

While recognising that it was working to move away from the categorisations that had marked the apartheid state, the Coalition did not seek to ignore these categories and the significance that they have in shaping the ways women experienced society. In recognising these differences, the Coalition also acknowledged that oppressions are not singular or hierarchal, but intersecting, working together creating complex experiences not easily compartmentalised. This awareness motivated the Coalition to adopt research models that recognised intersectionality both in approaching women for their experiences and analysing data. In developing a research methodology Budlender explained,

> Colour ('race') is used as a basic mapping criterion. While the WNC aims for both a non-racist and non-sexist South Africa, the reality of South African history means that apartheid differences, as categorised by colour, correspond in large part with other differences of power, privilege and disadvantage. One of the purposes of the mapping, and the research as a whole, is to disaggregate the category 'women' and explore both women's differences and their commonalities.[177]

Budlender's comments highlight an acknowledgement within the WNC that while addressing gender inequalities, these were not the only inequalities that women faced, and that to affect meaningful change, the WNC needed to engage with other inequalities stemming from South Africa's apartheid history and recognise the ways that they interacted with gender inequalities to influence's women's lives.

Again reflecting its sensitivity to intersectionality, the WNC's model engaged with the multiplicities of identity and the ways that different identities create layers for

[176] Budelnder, Debbie. "Profile of the Women's National Coalition" in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P.4
[177] "Mapping exercise." P. 3. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

reading and understand experience. This approach challenged one dimensional readings and encouraged research that engaged with complexities and the nuanced understandings revealed through these complexities. Ginwala explained,

> We will also have to sift the answers: For example women may say they do not have land. This could be because Africans have been denied land; or because they are too poor to buy land; or because in that area land is not allocated to women, or women are by custom prevented from owning land. It is the latter issues that will help form the content of our charter.[178]

Ginwala's comments highlight the different levels at which the Coalition's approach sought to challenge normative research approaches to read and engage with nuances and complexities rather than accepting simplistic answers that gloss over complexities and reveal partial views of a larger picture.

In a document outlining an exercise for running WNC workshops, a landscape is drawn to map privileges that different individuals are able to access in society and the impacts that these privileges have on the ways that different individuals often participate in workshops. This document identifies "owning a vehicle; owning a house; having English as a first language (in an English workshop); having a degree; earning more than R2 00 a month; classified white (in a racist society and; male (in a sexist society[179]" as some of privileges which influence the ways that individuals often participate in workshops. It explains, "some people have privileges which make them feel empowered to speak more than others in a workshop. You can use different types of privileges… to empower those who don't have that privilege in real life[180]". With the categories of privileges changing to reflect the specific context of each workshop, the document tasks the workshop facilitator with offering varying numbers of tokens to workshop participants, offering more tokens, which relate to speaking opportunities, to individuals who self-identify least with privileges outlined in the list, and inversely offering fewer tokens to individuals who self-identify more with the outlined privileges.

This approach to running workshops makes central issues of privilege and identity, forcing participants to be aware of the different privileges that they bring into the space, and the ways that these privileges influence their participation and they ways

[178] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" p. 5. Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.
[179] "The token game." Debbie Budlender personal collection.
[180] "The token game." Debbie Budlender personal collection.

they relate to other participants in the workshop. While recognising the importance of diverse inputs from women across society, this approach also recognises the importance of acknowledging difference within a complex web of intersecting identities and engaging with the material realities of these privileges and oppressions. The range of identities mentioned in the list also recognises that privileges do not necessarily function within a strict hierarchy, but rather work in relationship to each other, allowing individuals access to power in different ways.

Relationship between Public and Private Spaces

The WNC's disrupting of the discourse separating private and public spaces was central to its campaign to ensure women's participation in the formation of the new dispensation. This discourse overlapped significantly with the two previously discussed discourses revealing the multiple levels at which women experienced subordination and exploring the interconnectedness between the different structures through which patriarchy operated in women's lives, illustrating the ways that the private and public spheres in women's lives are intimately connected. Explicitly addressing the significance of the devaluing of the private sphere and the association of women with private spaces Ginwala explained, "let us not aim for superficialities or tinker with the problem… We should not be afraid of being termed radical. Let us address the issue that lies at the root of our oppression: that of unpaid labour."[181] By exploring the ways that the division between public and private spheres is deceptively constructed and reproduced, the WNC created space for examining the relationship between oppressions in public and private spheres and the ways that the undervaluing of women in both spheres supports patriarchal institutions at familial, societal and state levels.

Challenging the absolute divisions between the public and private spheres allowed the Coalition challenge the norms, practices and systems that argued these divisions were natural and that worked to make invisible the intentional, systematic measures set in place to marginalise, exploit and disempower women. Revealing these masculinist norms created space for women in the WNC to reimagine political norms that actively worked

[181] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" p. 5. Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

to include, empower and reflect the needs and realities of women. In a challenge to masculinist understanding of the ordering of society the WNC's Women's Rights Campaign stated,

> Throughout history women have been relegated to the private domestic domain and excluded from significant areas of influence. Their concerns continue to be seen as 'women's issues' alone and not as part of the national process. In the economy they remain marginalized. Political groups and most powerful institutions are still dominated by men. It would be naïve to expect that such entrenched patriarchal forums would initiate the transformation to a non-sexist society.[182]

Acknowledging the different roles that women play in different spaces and engaging with the realities and challenges posed by these different roles, and the expectations associated with them, the WNC was able to move beyond reductionist, masculinist imaginings of political participation, representation and rights to more comprehensive ones that spoke to the multiple, conflicting realities women experienced in South Africa. In problematising the divisions between private and public spaces, the WNC also challenged hegemonic conceptualisations of femininity as domestic and subordinate, claiming femininity as political and equal to masculinity, and rejecting narrowly defined categories of womanhood and femininity.

One of the Coalitions questionnaires developed for circulation to women around the country asks the following questions,

(1) Should women and men share housework and childcare equally?
(2) Should the police intervene if a woman is battered by her husband or another man (boyfriend, father, brother or son)?
(3) Do you think that more women should be members of a new democratic Parliament?
(4) Should there be punishment if a father does not pay child maintenance?
(5) Should your religion treat men and women equally?
(6) Should women workers be guaranteed their job when they have a baby?
(7) Should employers and the government provide childcare for working parents?
(8) Should women have the right to choose whether or not to have an abortion?[183]

The answers available to these questions were "Yes, No, or Don't Know" with respondents able to tick a box corresponding to each option, and to offer feedback with their answer in a section titled "Additional comments" under each question. This survey challenged the dichotomy between public and private, politicising spaces and relationships traditionally understood as private to frame them within a conversation that

[182] National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[183] "Questionnaire". Debbie Budlender personal collection.

discussed the dynamics and situations that influenced women's experiences of society. By framing these questions in the context of political organising and rights being tackled in that moment, the WNC brought "private" issues into the "public" space, demonstrating the importance of both spaces and blurring the lines between showing the relationships between the two.

The WNC's Charter was able to substantively advance women's agenda because it discussed national politics from women's perspectives, which reflected the realities of women's multiple and intersecting identities, roles and vulnerabilities in society. The Charter acknowledged that public politics were a masculine dominated field, however, it did not change to represent itself in more masculine terms or to argue for women's ability to perform masculinity in the same way as men. Instead, it demanded that the political process change to include women and to recognise the value and importance of women's perspectives and contributions. This was explicitly acknowledged in the development of the Coalition's research methodology which noted, "it is pertinent to consider what obstacles to access exist in order to arrive at appropriate forms of access. Again, certain forms of obstacles are more relevant to certain groups of women than others. Obstacles are both gender specific and broader societal."[184]This position of women working to protect and advance women's rights, and not of women proving that they could be like men, enabled the WNC to reconceptualise discussions about equality and gender in the development of the Constitution, proving that women and men experience society differently and therefore need different protections to be able to realise equality. The WNC's members' refusal to give up their identities as women to participate in the political process changed the way that gender equality was framed and understood in political debate. These women used their experiences and perspectives as women to enrich political discussion and to produce substantive equality that affirms human dignity and freedom by recognising different layers of inequality and working to address these.

In the WNC's April 1992 National Workshop, Frene Ginwala described some of the experiences that unite women across the country, and in doing this revealed some of the thinking behind the WNC's research approach and organising strategies. She

[184] Motala, Shireen. "Gaining access to women for the Women's National Coalition research project, some initial ideas." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.p. 14.

explained, “each of us experience it differently, each of us may talk about it in different ways, but there is something that brings us together, that all women in our country share. We are all part of a patriarchal society. As women our spheres are defined as domestic, our concerns are ignored or trivialized, our status subordinate, our horizons limited.”[185] Ginwala’s comments reveal a discourse that emphasises the role that patriarchy plays in shaping women’s lives and the ways that they engage with the world and experience political and other opportunity. This critique on patriarchy’s limiting effects on women’s lives highlights motivations behind the WNC’s organising and research approach that put women’s experiences at the centre.

Voices Outside the Dominant Discourses

While the three dominant discourses examined in the above sections covered a wide range of relationships and negotiations of power, one of the areas they largely failed to speak to were the experiences, expressions and representations of identity within the Coalition. The dominant discourses in the Coalition explored the ways power is mediated in relationships between women and men, between women and the state, between women and different industries, and between women in the WNC and those outside it. They did not, however, examine the ways that power was mediated between different groups of women within the Coalition. These discourses explored the inequalities produced between men and women broadly, and highlighted ways that women and men could work together in challenging the structures that produce these inequalities and deny women opportunities. With regard to relationships between women, these discourses worked to identify commonalities between women and the benefits of alliance across difference, however, they did little to promote critical examination of the power inequalities between groups of women that allow some women to oppress others and to enjoy privilege and access to power at the expense of other women within the WNC.

In this section, I examine communications from different women that disrupt uncritical representations of alliance between women, highlighting experiences of difference and the points of tension created in relationships between women because of

[185] Women’s National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. “Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?” Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

this difference. Often these interjections and disruptions to dominant discourses came through less formal avenues than the official organisation documents that I use to map the dominant discourses. This relative informality of voices speaking against the grain speaks to the position that these voices held in relation to views expressed within and in support of the dominant discourses which were often expressed and recorded in formal channels such as position statements and NEC and Steering Committee meeting minutes.

In some cases the views that challenged the dominant discourses become even more difficult to hear when the formal recording of discussions in WNC settings intentionally became more limited. Such an instance was at the 10 July 1993 Steering Committee Meeting, where the decision was made "that a consistent policy be adopted regarding the use of names in minutes" and "that minutes specify decisions, not discussion."[186] This decision to stop formally recording discussions within the Steering Committee meetings makes it more difficult to access and read the exchanges that were taking place between groups of women. It also creates gaps in reading the extent to which women brought attention to the ways that identity, and the power inequalities related to it, mediated their relationship with each other or the extent to which they supported the frameworks that emphasised alliance at the expense of critical engagement with difference.

One of the challenges of the immense diversity within the Coalition was the different traditions of communication that women from different groups and organisations brought with them. While many white dominated organisations such as Black Sash emphasised communication through written text, allowing for text records and documentation of decision making processes and the representation of different interests, many African dominated organisations primarily employed oral processes of communication and decision making. The majority of voices recorded as speaking against the grain of the dominant discourses explored in this thesis and raising concerns about the tensions around identity within the Coalition are those of white women. Recognising the complexities of privileging written text and the text archive, I am cautious not present the views and voices explored in this section as the only ones that

[186] "Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held on Saturday 10th July 1993 at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel, Johannesburg." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

existed outside the dominant discourses on identity in the WNC. They are, however, the voices represented in the official archives and therefore the voices and perspectives to which I have had access. I imagine that the landscape within the Coalition was significantly more complex and nuanced than represented in the archive and believe this is an area worth more exploration via interviews and other communications with women who were part of the WNC.

The moments when inaudible dynamics were brought to the fore and were made audible provide glimpses into a larger picture, however they are often fragmented and do not provide a whole or conclusive understanding of what relationships looked like or how women in the WNC experienced each other. They do still provide some important insights into how within the Coalition the dominant discourses failed to challenge norms and structures that perpetuated inequalities between women and the ways that they demanded a reimagining of relationships where patriarchal oppressions were at play. They also reveal the ways that failing to identify and address inequalities between women created challenges within the organisation, at times even undermining the cohesion of the Coalition.

The WNC's February 1993 Council Meeting report provides some reflections on the magnitude of the project that the Coalition set out for itself and the challenges that it encountered in carrying out the Charter Campaign and running the Coalition. This report explains,

> The convenor recognised that the WNC has set itself a monumental task which it did not fully appreciate at the outset. There have been frustrations on many sides ranging from the need to work across vast differences, the stimulation of regional activities without using a top-down approach, to the inadequate administrative infrastructure. The WNC had unrealistic expectations and 'was based on hope rather than reality.'[187]

In a July 1993 WNC Council Meeting, the WNC's co-chair, Anne Letsebe reflected on some of the major challenges the Coalition had experienced in working as a united group explaining,

> Taking on leadership positions has been more difficult than anticipated. Managing the diversity of the Coalition has also been difficult- lots of tension is created by this level of diversity and by interpersonal relationships. Understanding and

[187] Women's National Coalition Council Meeting Report 5 February 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

> managing power dynamics has been another factor. Accountability has been difficult to establish where people come from different organisations to which they felt more of less directly accountable. Frene got put into a gatekeeping role which put her in the firing line. Then others also had to take responsibility for gatekeeping. Political differences made conformation more problematic. Managing process versus product involves further gatekeeping to ensure inclusively at every step along the way. So there were both tension and opportunities at every point. The diversity is both our weakness and our strength. Interaction between process and diversity, if carefully managed, leads to incredible opportunities.[188]

Letsebe's reflections on the Coalition's growth and its challenges provide candid insight into the ways that the Coalition's diversity made carrying out work under a single banner with a single purpose difficult but how it also presented opportunities for growth. As with several other documents from the WNC's archive which discuss tensions within the Coalition arising from its diversity, Letsebe's discussion of the "tensions" within the Coalition does not name them. Not naming these tensions allows them remain abstract and vague, not caused or reproduced by any specific group or institution but still wielding significant influence. This failure to name the tensions also made it difficult to formally identify their roots and challenge their perpetuation because the tensions themselves became unspeakable while remaining ever present.

These sentiments on the challenges of bringing together such a diverse group of women under a single banner are also reflected in the WNC's December 1995 Evaluation Report. Writing on the Coalition's experiences leading to that point, the Report noted that "bringing a wide spectrum of women together brought tensions… the people in leadership roles in their own organizations wanted to locate themselves in a particular way and this created tensions. The procedures of employment within the WNC was an unexpected difficulty.[189]" The discussion here of the some of the causes of "tension" within the Coalition offer insights into some of the levels at which differences presented challenges in bringing women in the Coalition together. Offering further insights into some of the differences that that created challenges in the WNC, the Evaluation Report continues, "it was important to adapt to people's and organisation's (sic) cultures- one had to work at their level… One needed to strategise around the political ploys from

[188] "Proposed Agenda for the Second Council Meeting of the Women's National Coalition held on the 11 July 1993 at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel, Johannesburg." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[189] Ellen Kornegay and Jean D. Triegaardt. "Women's National Coalition, Evaluation Report." 8 December, 1995. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 13

certain political organisations. Tolerance was an important lesson to be learned because of the tensions, power plays and fractions amongst women's groups.[190]" This insight into the different dynamics behind managing difference in the WNC reveals the multiple levels at which difference influenced the working of the Coalition. This discussion of the significance of different organisational traditions and approaches reveals the complexity of a coalition model that brings together different political and other bodies. Beyond the differences of race, class and geography most often discussed as markers of difference, political party difference presented significance challenges to organising around a single voice and working as a unit.

What is not reflected in the archival records is how the tensions surrounding diversity and difference were managed in the Coalition. How the organisation maintained unity under what appear to be difficult circumstances and how the negotiations of power between different actors impacted the Coalitions effectiveness in its work, the direction of this work and working relationships between women from different backgrounds. These present significant limitations in understanding the internal dynamics of the WNC as the plans and theories for managing diversity are developed and reflected in the WNC's documentation, and some of the challenges in managing this diversity are also addressed, however the processes through which this diversity was engaged with and managed are not reflected. The WNC's success in developing and adopting its Charter, and later in influencing the development of the Constitution, suggest a level of cohesion amongst participants. While discussing challenges within the WNC, the 1995 Evaluation Report also noted, "networking works despite deep political divisions. When women are united around a common issue, everything else is secondary. It was easier to run a focused campaign.[191]" The extent to which the power of "a common issue" worked to influence dynamics within the Coalition in the face of challenges of difference is unclear and the degree of cohesion is difficult to determine from available recorded materials.

In a February 1994 letter Anne Routier, representing women from the National Party (NP), wrote to Dr Frene Ginwala communicating the National Party's resignation

[190] Ellen Kornegay and Jean D. Triegaardt. "Women's National Coalition, Evaluation Report." 8 December, 1995. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 13
[191] Ellen Kornegay and Jean D. Triegaardt. "Women's National Coalition, Evaluation Report." 8 December, 1995. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 13

from the Coalition. Routier explained the motivation for this move saying, "the coalition appeared for all intents and purposes as an ANC front organisation." One of the specific examples she offered in support of this view was when she explained, "National Party members of the WNC in Pietersburg were gravely offended when a WNC meeting was held in the ANC Pietersburg office where posters of our State President were displayed saying "WANTED… CRIMINAL. FOR POLITICAL OFFENCES."[192] Routier's questioning of the WNC's neutrality and objectivity highlights some of the challenges presented by the Coalition's diversity and difficulties in participating in a political process without becoming aligned to a specific political organisation.

Women from the NP concluded, "The National Party is the political opponent of the ANC. Both parties are involved in an election campaign. As the coalition appears to act as a front for the ANC, it is clearly impossible for the National Party to be involved any longer in the activities of the Women's Coalition." The NP women's resignation letter reflects the ways that differences between women fundamentally influenced their interests in different directions, and revealed that while women were united around gender there remained significant differences that influenced the ways they experienced society.

In her report to the WNC's National Committee, Sandra Botha discusses some of the challenges she experienced in the Coalition and reflects on the ways she understands identity as influencing the Coalition's ability to carry out its work and the relationships between its members. Botha explains,

> For some reason the Coalition has been vilified as being run by white (Afrikaner) women. This in itself should not have to be a negative if we had not come from our long history of racism and sectional privilege. The Coalition has to be representative of all women in South Africa if it be true to its Constitution but it also has to consider the fact that its biggest constituency is black rural women. If it is to succeed in communicating with them, it must be through someone who represents and understands them. Therefore a special effort should be made to employ such a woman as regional or organisational liaison officer but other posts should be filled without racial criteria. Rather, the coalition should concentrate on training where possible.[193]

[192] Letter from National Party Federal Council to Convenor Women's National Coalition. 15 February 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[193] Botha, Sandra. Report to National Committee. 3 December 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Botha's discussion of the roles that race plays in the ways people are read, the positions in which they might be most effective, and the relationships that these experiences and perceptions have to South Africa's history of racial segregation opens a host of avenues to start engaging with ways that race influenced work and perceptions of power in the Coalition. Botha's opening to her engagement with race is dismissive of claims of white control in the Coalition, suggesting that this is a sensitive area where the relationship between whiteness and power has been challenged. Although she raises several concerns in this report, there is no recorded response or follow-up to it, so it is unclear how it was received and what types of responses it elicited from other members. The tone in which Botha shares her opinions on the impacts and roles she perceived race as having in the Coalition suggests that these are not new issues, and that they have been discussed, whether formally or informally, in the Coalition before.

Botha's comments suggest that she understands racial preference as necessary in hiring when it served an identifiable utility, but otherwise saw no need for it. The fact that she felt the need to express this point suggests that other members of the Coalition might have argued for racial preference to be recognised for many appointments, and others for it never to be a factor. Botha's attention to the point of when she believes race to be a relevant factor and when she believes it not to be brings to the surface some of the different views women in the Coalition held on the role race should play in a woman's selection to do specific work, and in which positions race could be justified and in which it could not. Botha continues,

> It is also necessary for the Office bearers to address the racial tensions which is sapping the energy and enthusiasm of its member organisations and for them to ensure that the coalition becomes a prototype of the kind of South Africa in which we all feel ownership. If these tensions cannot be successfully addressed at committee level then I fear for the continued existence of the coalition.[194]

This candid expression of the impact Botha felt that racial tensions were having on the Coalition speaks to the significance of race as a category and the impact that it had on the ways women experienced the Coalition and their work in it. Botha's discussion highlights race as a negative force in the Coalition, detracting from positive potential. Her

[193] Budlender, Debbie. "Women's National Coalition Problems Experienced in the Coalition". 19 June 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

[194] Botha, Sandra. Report to National Committee. 3 December 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

discussions of race do not point to efforts to critically and constructively engage with the material, historically rooted, realities of difference amongst women, but rather a refusal to acknowledge race and to pretend that it holds no bearing outside of limited contexts. Botha highlights how this refusal to meaningfully engage with race threatened the cohesion of the Coalition and perhaps even its existence. Botha's comments are important in understanding the central role that race played in the ways that women in the WNC saw themselves and also saw each other, and also important for understanding the impact that not engaging with the experienced realities of race had on the Coalition.

Also discussing the negative effects that silence around race had on the Coalition's ability to function, in her resignation letter from the WNC Debbie Budlender says "it appears that everyone is so terrified that the Coalition will break up, that we have paralysed ourselves."[195] In providing some context to this position, Budlender speaks about her experience of leading the Coalition's research programme with Pregs Govender, recalling,

> One of the problems which was raised, and which no-one on the Working Committee argued against, was that there was a problem of 'image' if an Indian woman and a white woman were seen to represent the Coalition. I felt at times that I was being hidden away, perhaps a white embarrassment… I hope I am sensitive to the race issue, but cannot accept that I must continuously apologise for being white.[196]

Budlender's expression of her experience of "the race issue" highlights many important ways in which race shaped the different relationships women felt that they had to power and with each other through negotiations of power. Budlender's reflections communicate other members' apprehensions with how she was signified in South African society and how this signification might impact the ways that the Coalition was read and received in different communities.

Budlender's response to what she appears to read as a restriction on her ability to perform her work suggests poor communication between different races in the Coalition and a lack of attention to the highly charged and emotive areas of race and power, and

[195] Budlender, Debbie. "Women's National Coalition Problems Experienced in the Coalition". 19 June 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.
[196] Budlender, Debbie. "Women's National Coalition Problems Experienced in the Coalition". 19 June 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

how they impact relationships. The failure to address, or at least formally engage with, major racial tensions in the Coalition appears to be a significant weak spot in a Coalition, which was formed to identify women's lived realities and use this information to reimagine unequal power relationships to best protect and meet the needs of women.

Although with regard to patriarchy, the Coalition was intentional and unapologetic in identifying and engaging with women around areas where they experienced oppression, within the Coalition the same rigor was not applied to tackling issues of inequality between women. This was seen in the ways that different women expressed concerns about the ways that race shaped the ways women experienced their work within the Coalition and experienced the Coalition as a space for women coming together.

Conclusion

Reading the dominant discourses employed in the WNC and the voices that in different moments disrupted these discourses provides insight into the relationships between different knowledges and the ways that they were accessed and challenged to meet different interests. The WNC's challenging of masculinist knowledge and norms and its advocating of alternative knowledges that reflected women's experiences of society reveal the ways that hegemonic political knowledge was disrupted. The Charter Campaign's success in reaching women throughout the country and in collecting their perspectives to influence the constitutional developments illustrates the multiple levels at which the WNC challenged hegemonic masculinist knowledge, reaching from the grassroots to the negotiating tables for the new dispensation.

The initial exclusion of women from CODESA I exposed the epistemic violences that are normalised under hegemonic masculinist political norms and highlighted a shared experience of marginalisation amongst women. This common experience provided the platform from which women framed their motivation for political alliance and the vision of a shared future across difference. The discourses employed by the WNC appealed to broad values and goals, promoting inclusivity and representation. In building broad appeal, these discourses effectively targeted systems, structures and practices that

marginalised women, however did not look within the group to the oppressions amongst women.

The voices in the archive challenging expressions of power within the Coalition primarily represent women who historically had access to the most power and privilege and who historically were most able to exercise power over other women. These disruptions to the dominant discourses make visible the ways that different knowledges represented different interests and were related to different types of power. The written protest by women from the NP about their perceptions of a lack of political objectivity within the WNC, explicitly exposes the ways that women in the Coalition held deeply oppositional views from each other, with some supporting visions of political multi-racialism and others supporting the powers in and through which apartheid had been concentrated and expressed. The knowledges represented through these voices, although not the dominant in the Coalition, were not formed outside of the political and social contexts of the moment, but rather in different locations. They were not knowledges emerging from an "alien development" but reflective of the different political, economic, and social positions women occupied, and the reality that women did not share the same interests in all areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

Dominant Discourses in the WNC through Interviews

> *Our task in the campaign is to give a <u>woman</u> focus to human rights. This means also acknowledging and dealing with the very significant differences in the needs of women from different groups. We need to identify what prevents different categories of women from sharing equally with men their human rights.*
>
> Sheila Meintjes[197]

In this chapter, I engage with interview material to examine some of the discourses former WNC participants have employed in framing their experiences of the Coalition, locating themselves as individuals, and as parts of collectives, within the WNC, and communicating their experiences of working with women from dramatically different backgrounds in the unique moment of transition. This interview chapter works with and builds on the archival chapter which focused on the ways discourses were mapped by collectives, whether institutions, or groups united around identities of race, class or political affiliation, among others. Unlike the archival research which largely reflected final decisions and positions taken within the WNC, and therefore communicating more consistent discourses, the interview material reveals multiple simultaneous discourses, which sometimes affirm or contradict each other, and other times speak right past each other. This chapter focuses on the discourses employed by individuals within various collectives, using these individuals' voices to provide greater texture and complexity to the discourses employed at institutional, macro levels.

An important starting point in this chapter is the understanding that no one comes in blank. Each individual whose interview informs this chapter brings with them complex histories that reflect their experiences of South Africa, of the transition to democracy and of being gendered, raced and classed in the communities in which they exist(ed). This starting point is in line with Patricia Hill Collins argument that women from different backgrounds access, and can produce, knowledge differently because within their "communities thought is validated and produced with reference to a particular set of

[197] Meintjes, Sheila. "Papers from the Women's National Coalition Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holidau Inn. 23-4 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection. P. 25.

historical, material, and epistemological conditions.[198]" Because individuals are influenced by different sets of "epistemological conditions" the ways they internalise, process and (re)produce material and experiences can differ significantly resulting in different knowledges around similar, or even the same, material and events.

While reflecting individuals' experiences and realities, these interviews provide valuable insights into the ways that discourses in different spaces within the Coalition created opportunities for alliance and unity, limited possibilities for identifying and organising around commonalities, and kept women together in the Coalition even during the most challenging moments. This examination of concurrent discourses within the Coalition also provides insights into how different discourses were in conversation with each other, how they shaped different individuals' and groups' attitudes towards the Coalition, and what different individuals and groups believed might at stake by participating in or abstaining from the Coalition. Joan W. Scott describes the significance of discourse in reading individuals as well as the collectives they are part of saying,

> Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience can both confirm what is already known (we see what we have learned to see) and upset what has been taken for granted (when different meanings are in conflict we readjust our vision to take account of the conflict or to resolve it) that is what is meant by 'learning from experience,' though not everybody learns the same lesson or learns it at the same time or in the same way.[199]

Importantly, the discourses employed by WNC participants also reveal what the Coalition represented to women from different parts of South African society, what transition meant to women located in different spaces, and what women in different spaces hoped and/or feared the new dispensation might mean for them and other women with whom they identified.

Many of the interviews point to interpersonal politics as significant points of tension within the Coalition. While these are significant because of the ways they impacted the environment within the Coalition and the ways individuals felt they were able to do their work effectively, these are not discussed in depth in this examination. Rather, where interpersonal tensions are communicated, I listen for cues relating to different leadership styles, different ideas of political participation, and different

[198] Collins, Patricia Hill. "*From* Black Feminist Thought." In *Feminist Theory, A Reader*, ed Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski. 2005

[199] Scott, Joan W.. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry*. Vol. 17, No. 4. 1991: 793

ideological projects all born out of different traditions of organising and different ideas of meaningful political processes. This approach is in line with focusing on discourses that influenced the relationships that individuals within the Coalition had with each other and with the work of the Coalition. While listening for discourses, I remain mindful of Helen Scanlon's caution that "while personal narrative is often a valuable device for recovering women's stories, it creates a number of methodological problems. The recorder has to question his or her own interaction with the subject.[200]" Bearing this in mind, I make the conscious effort not to impose messages that interviewees do not themselves communicate and to recognise that "what people believe to be true may be more important to them, and have more impact on their world, than the objective truth.[201]"

Many of the discourses discussed in this chapter are interconnected and in many ways cannot be separated from each other while being honest to the messages communicated. While recognising the interdependence and interconnected nature of these discourses, for the purpose of this thesis, I have divided this chapter into five discourses that recur in the different interviews and that capture underlying messages communicated in different interviews. Each of these themes captures different sentiments and conversations in the Coalition and reveals different discourses that were in circulation in different parts of the Coalition. Organising the interview material around discourses therefore allows for space to represent the different discourses that were employed by women located in different groups and provides some insights into the relationships between the different discourses.

The first of the discourses covered in this chapter is "the moment". This discusses the role that the limited window of opportunity presented by the transition to democracy played in galvanising support for a coalition. This theme also explores a range of motivations for joining the Coalition that are linked to the uniqueness of the period, from the sense of a national mood of goodwill and newness, to the fear of exclusion and the implications of failing to influence the terms of democracy. This range of motivations for

[200] Scanlon, Helen. *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape, 1948-1976*. Cape Town: HSRC, 2007: 14.
[201] Scanlon, Helen. *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape, 1948-1976*. Cape Town: HSRC, 2007: 14.

participating in the WNC speaks to the Coalition's diversity and to the different hopes, fears and expectations that different participants brought to the Coalition.

The second discourse, "purpose, vision and leadership" explores how different women in the Coalition conceptualised the purpose of participating in the Coalition and imagined the role of the WNC in shaping the South African political landscape. Included in this section are discussions of leadership stemming from several interviewees' sentiments about how a vision for the Coalition was communicated through and from the leadership, and how the Coalition's leaders worked to organise women around the goal of influencing the Constitution. This discourse engages with a broad range of views that different women within the WNC held about what the Coalition should look like and do, and what they believed it was doing in reality, speaking to the diversity and complexity of a group bring together women from such different spaces.

The third discourse, "race, class, and parties" examines how different women understood their role and felt a belonging in the Coalition and how they read the significance other women's positions in and contribution to the Coalition along the lines of race, class and political party affiliation. These three categories are combined together because they are the categories interviewees most frequently used to describe themselves and other women, both in terms of commonality and difference. These categories are also listed together because often they were used as placeholders for each other. At times interviewees spoke about class or political party affiliation when it sounded as though they were also about race. In other situations interviewees discussed race and implicitly linked it to political affiliation, whether along party or ideological lines. Race, class and parties often appeared as interconnected categories in interviews, sometimes difficult to tell apart from each other in the frameworks through which they were communicated. The discourses through which these categories were communicated provide insights into the ways different women saw identity as influencing the cohesion, work and significance of the WNC.

The fourth discourse, "common ground" explores areas that the WNC framed as commonalities between women across difference, and examines how women from different groups believed these areas related to themselves and to women from other groups. This theme is significant because it engages with ideas of unity in purpose and in

being around perceived shared experiences. In many ways this speaks to one of the Coalition's core assumptions of common experiences and struggles that unite women and that provide platforms around which to organise and draw support across difference. The discourse of "common ground" explores the extent to which women located in different spaces identified with experiences framed as common among women and how they viewed these experiences as relevant to their lives and meaningful for organising around.

The final discourse, "work of the Coalition" explores how different members of the WNC understood and experienced the Coalition's work, and how they imagined this work influencing the democratic dispensation. Specifically, it focuses on the WNC's research and charter campaigns exploring how different participants in the Coalition experienced this work and viewed it as a vehicle for contributing to the democratic state. The discourses here speak to the ways that women's different political orientations and locations within South African society influenced their priorities in the Coalition. The different voices here also reveal how external pressures influenced what the Coalition was able to do, how it was able to do it, and what compromises allowed the WNC to fulfil its objectives of leading a national research campaign and drafting a charter on women's needs.

The Moment

The period leading to democracy in South Africa was extraordinary in its complexity, the shifting balances of power created space for unprecedented participation in formal political structures for many historically marginalised groups. In the final Women's Charter for Effective Equality, the WNC announces that "recognising our shared oppression, women are committed to seizing this historic moment to ensure effective equality in a new South Africa.[202]" The WNC's success in "seizing this historic moment" is highlighted in the coming together of women from not only different, but also historically, materially and ideologically conflicting backgrounds. The Coalition's success in bringing to the same table women from the National Party and the right-wing Transvaal Agricultural Union, two conservative pillars of the apartheid regime, with women from the ANC and Pan Africanist Congress speaks to the dynamism of the

[202] "The Women's Charter for Effective Equality". *Women's National Coalition.*

moment, and in many ways the newness of a the moment that only a few years before then might have seemed impossible.

A significant amount of the literature on the WNC discusses the moment in which the Coalition existed through the discourse of "a limited window of opportunity," emphasising the role that the limited time available to influence the Constitution in favour of women had in galvanising support for the Coalition and in its success in carrying out its mandate[203]. While this came through as a major theme in the interviews, a more complicated picture also emerged of women from different groups, especially from the right, joining to try balance political interests they perceived as not serving their needs, and also women joining because of fear of 'getting left behind' in the quickly changing political landscape. This more complex reading of the ways different women experienced this historic moment speaks to the diversity of the Coalition with women from different spaces bring with them a range of hopes, fears, apprehension and excitement stemming from different readings of, and relationships to, the country's move towards democracy. This moment of change signalled possibilities for gaining and losing different rights and privileges for women coming from different historical positions in the country, especially as uncertainty gripped the country when violence escalated in different parts of the country and the national negotiations went through periods of disintegration and reformation. Some of the dominant discourses that come out from the interviews are of the period as a moment of national goodwill and hope; a moment of potential political progress; and a moment of potential of political loss.

Discussions of the political opportunity represented in the transition period featured significantly in discourse around the moment. In these discussions of political opportunity, two dominant frameworks emerge. The first, frames the moment in positive terms with political opportunity representing positive potential for change and influence. The second, frames the moment in terms of fear with political opportunity representing the possibility for exclusion and loss. The former was largely articulated through a women's rights discourse that discussed the moment as one in which substantive interventions could be legislated to mitigate the negative impacts of patriarchy in

[203] Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 2005.

women's lives. The latter was largely articulated from a position of minority rights, specifically Afrikaner women's perceptions that the Coalition might prioritise majority rights at the expense of minority rights and that participation in the Coalition was a way of mitigating these potential negative impacts.

For the many people who resisted apartheid, and who actively took up roles challenging the regime, the dramatic collapse of the apartheid system and the subsequent transition to democracy marked an incredible moment where what had seemed impossible for so many decades was not only being proven possible, but was being realised. Several interviewees describe the moment as one characterised by hope and goodwill, both of which influenced the ways individuals and groups approach different situations and people coming from different positions. These interviewees also identified hope and goodwill as major motivations for joining the Coalition, some identifying these primarily for themselves, and others as applying them more broadly to the groups and communities with which they identified.

Speaking of the atmosphere surrounding the formation of the WNC, Debbie Budlender explained to me that for many, "people came because they wanted to be part of the change that was happening. There was an enormous amount of goodwill." She continued, "everybody was swept along by (the goodwill), we were doing this great thing as a country… it was also a time where ideology was to some extent swept under the carpet… it was a very special time in history ."[204] This reflection focuses on the historic moment as a driving force behind the WNC and frames this as a starting point for understanding the unlikely coalition of women that came together for this limited time.

Also discussing the moment in positive terms, Anne Letsebe spoke to me about the WNC as the result of a combination of the extraordinary moment and of ideals of coming together as women. She explained that, "it was this moment that actually provided the opportunity to get us coming together as women and doing things together for each other, and for the country and for the future of the country, and of women in particular… there was a lot of forward thinking."[205] She continued, "I think it was 'let's not be left behind in terms of gender, but also politically'. You were actually using

[204] Interview with Debbie Budlender. March, 2012.
[205] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

gender as a vehicle to draw people into the process." [206] Letsebe's emphasis on the moment as an impetus for women to act together locates the Coalition in the specific context of a rapidly changing society and speaks to the role that this context played in the formation and the success of the Coalition. Letsebe's reflections highlight the Coalition's formation and life as inextricably linked to this specific moment of transition and highlight the impossibility to reading the WNC outside of, or apart from this moment. In this same interview with me, Letsebe continued,

> You were really departing from, trying to depart from, where you were and looking to the future in a very different way... We thought that if you participate in the political process at the time you were actually creating something new that had not happened before in the sense that women would become part of this whole process.[207]

Here Letsebe again, emphasises the role that the moment of change and newness played in bringing women together under the WNC, speaking about how participation in the Coalition presented an opportunity for women to influence the shape of the new dispensation and to own the process themselves. This framing provides a context for reading the WNC by locating it in a particular historical moment and in doing do revealing how different actions within the organisation were informed by events, changes and movements in the broader national political landscape.

Also emphasising the significance of the political context of the moment, in an interview with Abrams, Jennifer Kinghorn reflected that

> We knew it was temporary, and could stomach it because it was our window of opportunity, and if we didn't get this together, women would never be part of liberation. The cause was much bigger than the individual. And that was what kept us all together.[208]

Similarly to Letsebe, Kinghorn emphasises the crucial role that the moment played in uniting women, framing this in the positive context of providing the opportunity for women to gain rights. Kinghorn's comments also highlight the ways that the moment worked to balance out factors that in another period might have divided the group. These insights reveal how the defined end-date, and the realisation of the negative impacts of failing to act before this date, allowed many women in the Coalition to focus on a

[206] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[207] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[208] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 29.

common good and overcome challenges that otherwise might have prevented such a coming together.

In her research, Martitz presents a significantly different discourse on WNC participants' relationships to men in their parties than either my or Abrams' interviews reveal. Citing a conversation with Estelle Jordaan, Maritz explains that many Afrikaner women,

> Did not only look to the NP for guidance but also relied on it to be the spokesperson for the Afrikaner organisations. This guidance was tentative, however, since the strained relationship between the NP and the ANC around the negotiating table affected the WNC. Every time the NP Vroueaksie indicated that they were going to withdraw from the WNC, 'there was a flurry of rumours and the decision makers of the Afrikaner women's organisations could not leave fast enough'. Since Afrikaner women were uncomfortable in the WNC they were only too ready to leave.[209]

This communication highlights a number of significant insights into the ways that some of the Afrikaner women that Maritz spoke with viewed their relationship to the WNC and some of the motivations behind their participation. Significantly, this interview with Jordaan discusses NP women's participation in relation to the NP rather in relation to a political agenda around gender equality or women's rights. The emphasis on the NP "as a spokesperson for Afrikaner organisations" suggests the party as central to NP women's framing of themselves within the WNC and paints a picture of their reluctant participation in the Coalition.

Maritz's communication of Jordaan's comments are also significant because they highlight that while the NP was a significant figure in the NP Vroueaksie's participation in the Coalition, it was not an absolute power. Reading the political climate and the impacts of NP and ANC relations, the NP Vroueaksie used its own discretion in deciding its participation in the Coalition. Emerging from this communication is a discourse that emphasises Afrikaner women's discomfort in the WNC and a willingness to leave the Coalition at the earliest possibility.

Purpose, vision and leadership

[209] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, 61. 2011: 112

Many of the WNC's official statements present the image of a coalition united around a common vision and purpose of challenging patriarchy, promoting women's rights to allow women active and full participation in all parts of South African society, and affirming the value and significance of women's roles and needs in all parts of private and public life. These public communications, like the *Women's Charter for Effective Equality*, acknowledge that difference and disagreements existed between women in the WNC, however, they still communicate a core vision and purpose for the Coalition, culminating in the development of a Constitution that promotes "a non-sexist, non-racist democratic society[210]". This section engages with the ideas of vision and purpose within the Coalition, exploring the ways that different women understood and framed their ideas of the WNC's vision and how they experienced its purpose.

The diversity in the Coalition meant that participants were coming from different traditions of organising and were bringing with them different political priorities and visions for the future that stemmed from different ideological backgrounds. Unlike organising centred around a specific ideological tradition or epistemic framework, the Coalition brought together women from across the political spectrum, making it difficult to reach consensus around the meaning of some foundational concepts such as national liberation or gender equality[211]. A dominant discourse that emerged from the interviews around purpose and vision was the urgency surrounding the need to include women's rights in the Constitution, despite the diversity of views, and the need for women to influence the development of the Constitution in their favour. Speaking about the diversity of political priorities represented in the Coalition, Sheila Meintjes explained in an interview with me that,

> There wasn't complete understanding, joint understanding, of what even gender equality meant. But I think there was an understanding that it needed to be there in the Constitution, in the Bill of Rights, across the board. And it was that, that held them (the Coalition) together.[212]

Meintje's description of the force motivating and keeping together the WNC highlights several key points about her perceptions of the Coalition in terms of its purpose and vision. Her communication illustrates a discourse that recognises diversity and difference

[210] "The Women's Charter for Effective Equality". *Women's National Coalition.*
[211] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[212] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.

and recognises that these differences could not necessarily be reconciled. This discourse also maintains that a common struggle existed between women and that this struggle needed urgent attention. Meintjes continued explaining in this same interview that the diversity in the Coalition was not debilitating because WNC participants recognised the importance of securing women's rights in the Constitution. She explained,

> The point is that the Coalition comprised so many diverse interests within it, from political organisations on the left to quite conservative women's social networks on the other side, both African and Afrikaner… and I think that they were incompatible. They could only really, come together with this single objective which was to ensure that gender equality was in the Constitution itself.[213]

Meintjes' comments highlight the single-mindedness of WNC participants and their focus in limiting the organisation's objectives to gender related issues, around which it could organise the broadest support base.

In an interview with me, Anne Letsebe also framed the Coalition's unity through a discourse of the urgency of ensuring women's rights during that limited window of opportunity. She explained,

> People said 'this is what we need to get through this process. This is a moment in history that we shouldn't lose.' The issues of race would pop up all the time, but you needed to say all the time 'as we deal with these issues of race, the most important thing at this moment is to ensure that issues of gender are paramount'. You had to impress this all the time on people's minds. It was complex, but it had to be…[214]

Letsebe's comments speak of a single-minded vision and drive that did not allow the Coalition to be deterred by other struggles and dynamics, relevant and important though they were, because of the prioritisation of influencing the Constitution to substantively reflect non-sexism.

The WNC's single-mindedness is also echoed in Maritz's interview with Annemarie Nutt, where Nutt explains, "with the breakdown of CODESA the WNC was under immense pressure, but there was never a split". She continues that this was because of "the responsibility with which the ANC Alliance, the NP, DP and others handled the moot points.[215]" Nutt's comments are significant because they highlight how even when in the broader national context talks between parties were not successful, the Coalition

[213] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[214] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[215] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*. 61. 2011: 109

was able to maintain its unity by focusing on its mandate and not becoming derailed by "moot points". Also affirming the significance of the WNC's strength in moments that "actually raised the possibilities of the negotiations failing," in an interview with me, Pregs Govender noted that "through that entire period the Coalition survived, which I think said quite a lot for the ability of women to actually withstand such a test to unity.[216]" Speaking about the Coalition's goal of gathering women's voices to influence the Constitution and challenge patriarchal norms in the imagining of the democratic order, Govender highlighted her experience of the WNC's purpose and also of her vision of its purpose as a leader within the organisation.

Also speaking about moments when the WNC's unity seemed most in jeopardy, in an interview with Abrams Anne Routier recalled, "I then discussed with members of the Coalition, the fact that if it broke up, this would be *proving* to the world, that women couldn't stick together, no matter what the cause, and that it was vital for the cause of women in South Africa, that we maintained our unity."[217] Routier's reflections reveal a motivation not only to influence the negotiations in women's favour, but speak deeply to a desire to challenge negative stereotypes about women's political competency and to demonstrate women's ability to be politically capable, effective and powerful. Routier's comments reveal the power that gendered perceptions of political identity held in broader society and illustrate the multiple levels at which the Coalition challenged conventional thinking about political participation just by its very existence.

Several interviewees pointed to the Coalition's leadership as a source of the WNC's vision and sense of purpose. From this feedback emerges a discourse of the leadership as a driving force in articulating what the Coalition represented and what it sought to do. Another discourse that emerges around leadership was struggles of leadership styles, which seem in part to reflect different models and expectations of leadership and participation coming out of different organisational traditions. These discourses point to ways that interviewees experienced the Coalition's leadership as

[216] Interview with Pregs Govender. August, 2012.
[217] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 46.

crucial to its existence and its survival, and also as presenting obstacles to their ability to carry through their work independently.

A common thread of discussion that emerged through several interviews was of Frene Ginwala, as Convenor of the WNC, as a driving force behind the Coalition and a major figure in articulating a vision for the Coalition. In an interview with me, Meintjes describes Ginwala's role in the Coalition saying, "I think that someone like Frene Ginwala had an enormous vision and she realised that without some kind of movement to push the men who were in the negotiations, that the needs and interests of women and the idea of gender equality would simply not become part of the new Constitutional dispensation.[218]" These reflections speak to the role that the leadership, specifically Ginwala, played in pushing for the Coalition and forming an idea of the role of the Coalition could play in the national political landscape. Meintjes continued reflecting on Frene Ginwala and Anne Letsebe's leadership in the Coalition saying, "their role has been underplayed a bit in the writing that has been produced on the Coalition.[219]" In this conversation, Meintjes highlighted that both women had played crucial roles in the shaping and the life of the Coalition, suggesting that more attention should be paid to the role of leadership in future work produced on the Coalition.

In an interview with Abrams, Sandra Botha reflected on the role the Coalition's leadership played saying,

> I think Frene Ginwala without the shadow of a doubt was the driving force behind this idea, not the Women's League. I don't see it as a Women's League venture. The Women's League often tried to take over so to speak, to direct the Coalition, but Frene never actually allowed that, and she made sure that all organizations remained on board, to give it I think credibility, and also in the spirit of the times, where they wanted a reconciliation…[220]

Botha's comments tackle what she saw as perceptions of the Coalition and what she experienced as its realities from within. Botha's emphasis on Ginwala's role in keeping different parties active in the Coalition, speaks to the vision being offered from the leadership in terms of ensuring that the Coalition could be a credible and persuasive force in influencing the negotiations and could work towards representing "a conspiracy of women."

[218] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[219] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[220] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 27.

While a strong discourse emerges from the interviews about the Coalition's leadership providing a crucial voice in terms of defining and supporting a clear vision of the WNC's purpose, a discourse also emerges of difficulties in the leadership's expectations of participants and participants' expectations of the leadership. Several interviews speak of clashes with leadership, especially Ginwala. In an interview with Abrams, Kinghorn expressed this saying, "Frene was so powerful and she had such magnificent vision. But her power was overwhelming."[221] Speaking in an interview with Abrams, Ginwala describes the different expectations of leadership as coming from different organisational traditions. She explained,

> You see, ANC in exile, we were a military unit, and yet, we were a political body with a tremendous tradition of consultation. And that always posed a challenge. The United Democratic Front… was consultative, but didn't necessarily have the discipline, that the military tradition of the ANC had. I think the National Party had an authoritarian tradition… and not enough consultation…[222]

Reflecting on the ways that the organisational tradition she was coming from influenced her leadership style, Ginwala explained,

> I do make tremendous demands on people. And the only thing I say is I put the demands on myself as well. But… you find this among a number of the exiles… We came out of this tradition, where, our whole lives, we just work, work, work, work. And we had great difficulty, in adjusting, to work with people who had families. We also had families, but families that accommodated all of that, or they'd broken up. You know, the reality is that…[223]

Through these reflections, Ginwala develops a discourse of clashes in leadership style stemming in part from the different organisational traditions that different women were coming from. This discourse places emphasis on the different norms and expectations associated with different organisations and groups, and attributes different expectations to these norms. While recognising that the norms to which she is accustomed are not shared across the Coalition, Ginwala justifies them by locating their significance in the context in which she previously operated.

[221] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 28
[222] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 27-28
[223] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 27-28

Again in her interview with Abrams, Ginwala describes how these differences in leadership and operation styles were eased by working with someone who understood the dynamics behind this style of operating. Describing her relationship with Anne Lestsebe she explains, "…I had fought, in the ANC… you had to be constantly battling, constantly battering… But Anne understood that. And she would sometimes say, 'Who you fighting? Me?!' And I'd stop and I'd say, 'No sorry Anne. I'm not! I don't need to!'"[224] Here again, Ginwala develops a discourse around leadership style being related to organisational culture and norms. Her statement suggests that because Letsebe was able to understand that her responses were coming out of a specific culture, they were able to resolve situations faster and move on.

In an interview with me, Govender supported this view that the different organisational traditions that women in the WNC came from influenced their expectations of, and priorities in, the organisation and that these different modes of operating created challenges within the Coalition. She explained,

> Looking back at the organisation, looking at how we were able to work together, there were people with different backgrounds, different styles of organising, different understandings of leadership and we all had to come together and work in one organisation. There were bound to be tensions. And in some ways it's healthy, it's quite a healthy thing to have differences which we then have to struggle around and find ways through. It's not necessarily a negative thing, because often then it results in a much clearer understanding of how we conduct, for example, the research campaign.[225]

While engaging with the complexities of bringing together vastly different traditions of organising, Govender rejects the idea that challenges and tensions were inherently negative or debilitating arguing that through these struggles emerged dialogue and opportunities for appreciation of other sides. Locating some of the tensions and challenges in the WNC in histories of difference around political strategy, organisational style, and ideology, Govender reveals the roots of struggle within the Coalition and the positive potential of this struggle.

Both Ginwala and Letsebe frame their understandings of their roles as the Coalition's top leadership in terms of service to the Coalition and rather than to themselves. Speaking of a moment of difficulty in the Coalition, they both spoke about

[224] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 29
[225] Interview with Pregs Govender. August, 2012.

considering resigning from leadership positions so as not to hold back the WNC's development. Reflecting on this moment in an interview with Abrams, Ginwala recalls,

> I think we felt there was not enough confidence in us, and we did not want to hamper the work of the Coalition… we felt therefore we should withdraw… It wasn't a sort of, 'I'm resigning, goodbye.' But it was saying that if there *were* these differences and if they were irreconcilable—and we were seen as the obstacle to the work of the Coalition—then it was very important for us to withdraw.[226]

Speaking of the same experience in an interview with me, Letsebe described,

> I remember the meeting where we were saying 'maybe we're not the right people to lead this process, perhaps we should actually get some other people to come and we will continue to participate but not in leadership roles'… But ultimately, after our discussions… we agreed 'no, it's not about us, it's actually about the Coalition and we need to put our differences aside.' And then we continued with the work.[227]

These reflections from the WNC's Convenor and Co-convenor highlight a discourse from the leadership of the leading of the Coalition being about the organisation and its success, rather than being about individuals. Both leaders acknowledged the difficulties in leading a body as diverse as the WNC, and the challenges in overcoming difference to realise the Coalition's vision and purpose. Both also acknowledged realising this vision and purpose as their primary objectives, and communicated a willingness to move out of power to realise these objectives.

Race, Class and Parties

An interesting feature in the different sets of interviews is the different frameworks interviewees used to discuss difference. While difference was created and reinforced on many different levels, for different purposes, interviewees in the three sets of interviews most often framed them within the context of race, political party association and class. Race and political party affiliation came up frequently in interviews as points of division and tension within the WNC and as three of the most significant differences separating different groups of women in the Coalition. In several interviews, race and party affiliation were conflated and used interchangeably to express similarity and alliance between different women, and also to express difference and opposition in

[226] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 44.
[227] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

other instances. Similarly, in other interviews race and class were conflated, and used interchangeably, sometimes avoiding specific reference to race and using class as a framework for understanding difference. The numerous references to race, class and party affiliation speak to South Africa's history of systematic division and exploitation through race and class and also to the different political traditions that emerged from this history. Because in some cases women in the Coalition perceived their interests as different along race, class and party politics, these categories were often difficult to work through, making it difficult to build trust across difference and to agree on a mutually beneficial way forward. The dominant discourses that emerge in this section are the representation of different groups of women in the WNC and their feelings of belonging in the Coalition; the ANC's role in, and relationship to, the WNC; Afrikaner women's relationship to the WNC and the role of the NP in the Coalition; and the ways that race, class and gender were perceived to influence priorities in the WNC.

An important feature of the Coalition for many interviewees was their personal sense of belonging and acknowledgement in the WNC, and the extent to which they perceived their interests being represented in the work and vision of the Coalition. This theme of belonging came up in several interviews, with interviewees giving it meaning at individual and group levels, often linking their own interests with those of other women who they perceived to be like them in a specific way. In her research, Maritz concluded that "Afrikaner women that represented their organisations were uncomfortable in the WNC." She came to this conclusion in part because of about 50 Afrikaner women she contacted who played a role in the Coalition, only 20 responded to her and of this number the majority described feeling hostility towards them, which "eventually made it impossible for them to believe in the integrity of the WNC and left many with a residue of negativity."[228]

Drawing from her interview material, Maritz explains,

> To attend WNC meetings was problematical for white women. The venues were convenient for black and coloured women and in areas where white women often felt unsafe. Meetings were badly organised and often started hours late. In the meetings, the consensus style of decision- making was foreign and time consuming for the Afrikaner women. The result was that many women lost

[228] Loraine Maritz. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61 (May 2011). P. 104

interest and stayed away.[229]

Emerging from Maritz's interviews with Afrikaner women is a discourse of victimisation, with Afrikaner women feeling excluded from the core business of the Coalition and feeling marginalised by their African counterparts. This discourse engages with race within the frameworks set out under apartheid, in which all racial groups work around the needs and convenience of white people, affirming the primacy of whiteness in society.

Speaking of the challenges of bringing Afrikaner women into the Coalition, and promoting belonging across difference, Meintjes explained to me, "it required to have people like me with a good ol' Afrikaner name talking to the Afrikaners. There was a lot of… personal interaction with people. That I think made a difference."[230] In a discourse that is in conversation with the one expressed above by Maritz's text, Meintjes develops a discourse of inclusion through the building of personal relationships. Meintjes acknowledges that perceptions about her identity allowed her to play this role of welcoming and promoting inclusiveness. This is another indication of the challenges and limitations women in the WNC faced in accessing and trying to build relationships if and when there was no perceived commonality.

In the same interview with me, Meintjes highlighted that often more important than race in terms of influence in the Coalition, were political and ideological persuasions. She described,

> At the centre of the Coalition and the discussions was a strong cohort of African women who were based not just in the ANC Women's League but also in the Emancipation Commission… who met frequently to discuss strategy in relation to the Women's National Coalition. It was, in a sense, a very statesman-like committee in that it was very mixed. There was me, a white academic, there were a couple other academics, not everybody was aligned to the ANC so it was a mix… it was people who were known to be progressive, feminist thinking, forward thinking, gender activists if you like, who were in that grouping.[231]

Through this statement, Meintjes reflects a discourse that discusses the Coalition as privileging progressive politics in its inner circles and framing belong and representation in these spaces along political orientation rather than other identities. As a white woman and an academic, Meintjes identified strongly as playing a role in the Coalition's inner circles, challenging perceptions that influence in the Coalition was race-based.

[229] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011: 103
[230] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[231] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.

Speaking again about the influence that the abovementioned grouping had in the Coalition, Meintjes explained to me, "the Afrikaner women, I suppose, were right to fear. But on the other hand the interests that were being discussed in that committee… were the interests of women in South Africa in general."[232] This statement reflects a discourse on the interests served within the Coalition's inner circles, and within the WNC more broadly. Although this grouping represented a limited number of women and was not necessarily democratic in its representation, Meintjes described it as serving an important function in pushing the national needs and interests of women.

Although describing the discomfort many Afrikaner women experienced in the Coalition, Maritz explains that this was not a uniform experience, citing an interview with Amanda Botha in which Botha argues that she "moved close to the inner circles of the WNC and… (was) part of the mainstream." Maritz continues that Botha admits "that there was political influence, but that it was kept in check."[233] Botha's interview also challenges the conflation of race with influence (or lack of influence) to present a more complex picture of representation and belonging than along arbitrary lines of race or political affiliation. This discourse paints a more nuanced and complicated picture in which roles and influence were not predetermined but were negotiated in the Coalition, leaving room for personal choice and agency at different levels.

Describing the agency involved in choosing to actively participate in the WNC and to engage as an equal with women with whom she had never had such relationships, Anne Routier revealed to Abrams that,

> I can tell you that from my point of view, it was an extraordinary experience, to work with black women. Because, I had never known it! Our societies were so totally apart, because of the system in this country. But to actually encounter, people that you liked, and that you could work with, and who were *efficient*, often more intelligent than you were yourself, was a shock! It was absolute culture shock! You know, you were brought up to believe, that somehow, somewhere you were superior. But suddenly you find you're not superior, you're lucky if you're equal. That's an amazing experience!"[234]

Routier's reflections reveal the profound effect that the brutality of apartheid racism had on the psyche of many South Africans. She admits that much of her surprise at realising

[232] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[233] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011: 106.
[234] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 70.

the fallacies of white supremacy were the result of the extreme separation of races enforced under apartheid, that limited meaningful engagements across race. Out of Routier's reflections emerges a discourse that affirms the opportunities for women to find each other through the Coalition and to build political alliance through learning to know each other. Routier's comments also reflect a discourse that discusses finding belonging in the Coalition through an adoption of vulnerability in which one leaves the comfort and security of the familiar to venture into unknown and uncertain relationships with women with whom such relationships were previously denied. Routier's reflections also illustrate the potential for transformation, personally and institutionally, represented in the forming of relationships across difference in the Coalition.

Also speaking about the positive potential for building bridges across difference through the Coalition, Pregs Govender described to me some of the different positions and interests different women, especially those from historically privileged positions, came into the Coalition with. She explained,

> There would be fear and anxiety about this time, it was a time of transition. It actually is happening, Mandela is actually released, there is this negotiation, how do we protect what we have… but I think the opportunity for people to actually get to know people beyond race was a huge growing experience from many, I think even many Afrikaner women.[235]

In this discussion, Govender highlights that while the changing political and social landscape might have caused apprehension for some women who risked losing some of their historic privilege, the Coalition presented the opportunity for different groups of women to meet in ways that had not been easily accessible before. From these meetings came the opportunity for personal growth and racial progress as different women came to know each other beyond historically overdetermined categories of difference.

Also describing some of the roots of the different priorities that women coming from different locations brought to the Coalition, Letsebe argued that many of these differences were related to inequality. She explained to me that

> (We) were in a process of transition that could, or that should, lead to equality, and in the process there would be loses. People would lose in terms of power and privilege, and this is what people did not want to lose. You want to hold onto it, while you realise it's right to do A B C and D. In practical terms when it came to your own life situation, it would be difficult to actually hand over or to give up some of your privileges… Now, given the history of apartheid… white women

[235] Interview with Pregs Govender. August, 2012.

> had privilege in that black men and women were subservient to them by law. Now engaging in those processes would be challenging those things and the power dynamics that are inherent in that.[236]

Letsebe's analysis of the dynamics between different groups of women offer frank insights about some of the material challenges influencing the different priorities in the Coalition. She highlights a discourse of opportunity and loss, primarily addressing the challenges of accepting, and in this context even arguing for, personal loss.

Offering an example of a moment where different priorities blatantly came to the fore, Letsebe recalled to me a time when the Coalition was discussing customary law and how to influence it. She explained that the discussions continued for a while, and because of time constraints, some white women in the Coalition argued that the issue be put on hold to allow the Coalition to discuss other issues and then to return to customary law at a later date. Letsebe explained that black women refused this as an option, arguing that if debates around customary law were not addressed at that time, then they would never receive the attention that they deserved. She explained to me that "there were lots of tensions around that because then you could see the schisms…, black women feeling that their counterparts did not understand their situations."[237]

In an interview with Abrams, Letsebe also addressed this debate around customary law in the Coalition adding that "that almost actually broke the Coalition." But that the Coalition was able to move into a healthier space of conversation when it convened a meeting in which rural women spoke of their experiences under customary law. Letsebe explained the rational behind this meeting to Abrams saying that she and other women argued,

> We're sitting in urban areas, we're not experiencing this. Some are white women, some are elites—Black women—we cannot do that, we actually have to get their voices heard, and that's how we would do it. And when they did that, it was when people began to understand the depth of their experiences.[238]

Letsebe's comments highlight directly the ways that different women's realities influenced their priorities. This debate highlighted that an issues that is urgent for one group of women might be not be a priority for another group. This offers a tangible example of discourses of difference and the impacts of this difference on individuals'

[236] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[237] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[238] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 63.

priorities. The second part of Letsebe's reflections on these debates highlights a discourse that affirms the importance of epistemic privilege, as communicated through Letsebe's argument about the value of hearing about the implications of customary marriage from women who lived under customary law. This prioritising of epistemic privilege located the WNC's work and priorities in different women's material realities, valuing issues of daily life over abstractions.

Related to WNC participants' contrastive priorities, was the challenge of participants speaking past each other because their life experiences equipped them to read, process and respond to situations so differently. Letsebe recalls the challenges that some women who were part of the research process had in engaging with people in rural areas because they did not understand the significance of specific rituals and expectations. Whether reading these as patriarchal, and therefore inapplicable, or as unnecessary, or whatever else, these limitations in understanding the context and the expectations related to norms in that space prevented some researchers from fully communicating and building relationships with women in these spaces. Because of such miscommunications, Letsebe noted that in reading reports for research analysis "there were times when you knew that the interpretation was totally different from how it was actually intended. Because the person doing the analysis was not in the culture, they didn't understand it."[239]

Also discussing the limitations of working across difference, although from a different angle than Letsebe, Budlender communicates in an interview with Abrams, the same sentiments that she expressed in an interview with me too, about her initial apprehension about the idea of a national coalition of women. Budlender explained, "I said, what was all this, cross-class, all-in nonsense? You've got different interests and it was a completely mad idea… (that) we all have the same problems."[240] The discourse emerging from Budlender's comments explicitly challenges the idea of essentialism, that there is a common or universal experience of womanhood or femininity. This discourse emphasises the influence that women's different life experiences has on their priorities, expectations and aspirations in, of and for society.

[239] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[240] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 37.

As the political body from which many of the Coalition's primary initiators emerged, the ANC played a significant role in the initial imagining and push for the WNC. Throughout much of its life, WNC participants in different spaces questioned the role of the ANC in the Coalition and the extent to which ANC interests were represented in the WNC. Two of the primary discourses that emerged around this question of the ANC's role in the WNC were of the Coalition as a non-partisan body representative of all women's interests, and in opposition to this as an ANC led and dominated body that pushed the interests of the ANC under the guise of women's rights.

In her research, Abrams quotes Botha as saying,

> It was quite clear that the driving force behind it (the WNC) was ANC, and many of the actual activists were ANC, but we were sufficiently interested in what it was going achieve, for that not be accepted as the path of the future. You know, so we had to work within that. There was no other route to take.[241]

Botha's comments reflect a discourse that recognised the role that the ANC played in pushing for the Coalition, but that did not discount the value or necessity of women from other political backgrounds participating in the WNC because of this influence. This discourse affirmed the value of women from outside the ANC remaining in the WNC to influence its development, and even went so far as to describe this as a necessity from which "there was no other route."

Employing a discourse that challenged discussions about the primacy of the ANC in the WNC, Letsebe explained to me that Ginwala "took a stand, but that was an ANC thing, that we should be seen to be impartial… in doing these things it's important to make sure that you're seen to be doing the right thing."[242] Here Letsebe communicates that as the most senior leader of the Coalition, Ginwala worked to establish the Coalition as a non-partisan body, a position which was a continuation of the ANC's stand.

Political party affiliation came to the fore in the WNC particularly with women from the NP as illustrated in the navigating of political and social dynamics and in interactions with women from other party backgrounds, especially women from parties and organisations that opposed apartheid and sought a dramatic reorganisation of South African society. As an official opposition party to the ANC, and the party behind the

[241] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 27.
[242] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

thrust of apartheid, the NP had a complex role in the WNC and many women representing the NP in the WNC framed their experience of the Coalition through a discourse of marginalisation and unease[243]. Although this was the dominant discourse communicated by NP interviewees, it was not the only as a discourse of challenging personal racial prejudices and building relationships across difference through participation also emerged. Many of Loraine Maritz's interviews reveal a relationship between race, class and political affiliation. At times racial and class structures and divisions are described as a point of tension, however, these are framed within a discussion of party differences and power inequalities.

In her research, Maritz concludes that "almost all the Afrikaner respondents expressed the view in one way or another that the WNC was a political 'smokescreen'," a phrase she lifted from an interview with Jenny Malan who described the WNC as a "foefie". Building on this feedback from Afrikaner participants in the WNC, Maritz describes an interview, in which she withholds the interviewee's name, which discusses the dynamics between Afrikaner women in the Coalition. Her interviewee explains, "Afrikaner women who did not pick up the political undertones were accused of being like the English-speaking white women, the so-called 'pink liberalists.'"[244] This characterising of Afrikaner women who supported the Coalition as somehow being less Afrikaner, points to a discourse of exclusiveness and exclusion among Afrikaner women in the Coalition. While the description of the WNC as an ANC smokescreen suggests feelings of marginalisation and inability to influence the direction of the Coalition, the chastising of women who did integrate themselves into the Coalition and work successfully across party lines suggests an exclusiveness and a conservative monopoly on the understanding of Afrikaner identity. The discourse emerging from this quote is one that supports the apartheid status quo that people perceived as different ought to be treated with suspicion and those perceived as being the same stick together, exclusively.

This discourse of suspicion from Afrikaner organisations was also experienced by women from outside this community, as Meintjes explained to me, "the Afrikaner

[243] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011.
[244] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*,. 61. 2011: 107

organisations were very sceptical… they were also very suspicious of the agenda that the ANC women were promoting and they were very suspicious that the Coalition was really just a means for the ANC women to promote their own needs and interests. And there's some truth in that, I think."[245] While confirming this discourse of suspicion was in circulation in the Coalition, Meintjes also confirms that it was not an entirely baseless suspicion.

While significant challenges between different groups of women affected work and cohesion within the Coalition, challenges also emerged from managing relationships with men from different political parties. Several interviewees expressed the challenges of building alliances with women from different political spaces while also balancing these relationships with those with men from their own political parties. On the flip side of this, another discourse emerged of women in the Coalition benefiting from using their relationships with women from other political parties to push men in their own parties not to be outdone by the other parties on 'women's issues'. These discourses reveal the complex terrain that WNC participants who were members of political parties traversed in pushing for women's interests through the WNC and also maintaining party loyalty and promoting the interests of their respective parties.

In an interview with me, Anne Letsebe recalled that there were tensions within the Coalition that "were engendered by political parties where the men in the parties were saying to women from their respective parties, 'you are being influenced by the ANC, you know that they'll take you over."' She continued with a story illustrating this point explaining that realising these dynamics of party influence, when women from the NP resigned from the Coalition she and some other representatives from the Coalition went to meet with F.W. DeKlerk directly. She describing this moment she said, "this was another area where tensions were so high that we thought 'this thing will actually break.' We went back, spoke to the women, but also spoke to the party."[246] Letsebe's comments highlight a discourse that recognised the balance between women's roles in the WNC and also in their respective parties. This discourse paints a complex picture in which participants have multiple identities and interests to balance and represent

[245] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[246] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

simultaneously. It challenges the idea that once in the Coalition women focused solely on the WNC's needs and gender rights. While participating in the Coalition indicated a support of women's rights, this support did not negate participants' other loyalties. While the interviews speak to diverse loyalties in terms of political parties, this balancing act would likely have also been true for women coming from religious and faith based organisations, professional organisations, and social-case based organisations, among others.

Speaking about the importance of maintaining ties with men in their political parties from another angle, Letsebe explained to me that women in the Coalition "needed allies within their parties and organisations. Men who would stand up and say 'gender is important'… You needed allies within the organisation itself to be able to achieve that so that when they sit with other men they're able to speak your language."[247] These comments reflect a discourse in which women were empowered, not looking to men for guidance but recognising men as partners in ensuring the realisation of gender rights in the Constitution. This discourse affirms the importance of men and women working as partners towards a common goal, and recognises that maintaining relationships with men within parties allowed for this partnership.

Also discussing the role that partnerships with men played in the Coalition, Mavivi Manzini, one of the ANC's two women negotiators, communicated in an interview with Abrams how the Coalition made men need their women counterparts who were in the WNC. She explained,

> The Women's National Coalition was a very powerful lobby… No other parties wanted to cross lines with such an organization. They thought we were forming a women's party, and women are 52% of the population, the women's vote was very important. No party wanted to be at loggerheads with women.[248]

Manzini's reflections highlight a discourse on the power that being in the Coalition gave women. This discourse emphasises the significance of 'the women's vote' and the legitimacy and influence it offered women in participating in the Coalition and in arguing for their rights. It presents the power between men in political parties and their women counterparts in the Coalition as dynamic, with both sides exercising different types of

[247] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[248] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 71.

power and both sides needing each other. Most significantly though, it speaks of the Coalition as a body unlike any other in the breadth of its diversity, and speaks of the power that the WNC commanded because of this.

Also discussing the power that women gained in their respective political parties because of their involvement in the Coalition, Ginwala explained to Abrams that,

> We would sort of negotiate amongst ourselves. You know, one of them would phone me, "Frene"—like the IFP woman [Faith Gasa]— "you know, this is what they prepared, how far they're prepared to go on this one." So I'd walk into the ANC and say, "Do you know what the IFP is prepared to *do*?" I said, "you *can't* let the IFP go beyond *us*!" This would happen, Anne [Routier of the National Party] would phone; we were actually *networking*! And, I'd make no bones about it! We were using this to push up more and more into the women's agenda. You see. Working together to push our parties. But we had created the network out of the Coalition. That allowed us to do that… Because where did we meet each other? Where did we work, where did we come to understanding? It was in the Coalition![249]

These insights offered by Ginwala highlight a discourse of the Coalition not only being powerful because of the significant constituency that it represented, but also because of the networks that women within it formed with each other. This highlights the value of the relationships that women in the Coalition invested in, and reveals the power that was made available through working across the divides and differences that so often presented challenges in the WNC. This discourse again portrays men in political parties as needing their counterparts in the Coalition, this time to know what to expect from other parties and how to respond to these, or as in the example offered by Ginwala, how to out do them.

Common ground

The Women's Charter for Effective Equality concludes by stating that,

> This Charter gives expression to the common experiences, visions and aspirations of South African women. We are breaking our silence. We call for respect and recognition of our human dignity and for a genuine change in our status and material conditions in a future South Africa.[250]

This confident assertion of "common experiences" reflects a discursive trend in the WNC's official statements that frames experiences of subordination and exclusion under patriarchy as common between women across difference. This section explores how different women in the Coalition understood and framed their experiences of patriarchy

[249] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 70.
[250] "The Women's Charter for Effective Equality". *Women's National Coalition.*

and the extent to which commonalities under patriarchy influenced WNC participants' ability to unite across other differences. The dominant discourses examined in this section are the building of bridges across difference in the WNC; and violence and perceptions of vulnerability among different groups of women.

Central to the discourses on race, class and political affiliation was the question of where common interests between women lay across difference. Fundamental to the Coalition's existence was the assumption that there were areas of common ground between all women around which they could organise. While the discourse coming from the Coalition's leadership emphasised commonalities, in other parts of the Coalition discourses challenged this idea speaking of women as having vastly different experiences, needs and priorities.

One of the most important factors in the forming and keeping together of the Coalition was the building of bridges between women from historically divided, and in some cases oppositional, positions in South African society. This building of bridges created the space for women from different spaces to form meaningful alliances with each other through exchanges and relationships that affirmed each others' personhood.

Discussing how such a diverse group of women even came to sitting around the same table together, Anne Letsebe explained in an interview with me,

> It took a lot of time, it took a lot of thinking… to talk to women across the spectrum, political women, women in religious organisations and NGOs, to say to them 'we need to talk as women'. And because of the common experiences that women have as women, both in the home environment but also in organisations at a micro level and at a macro level, there was a lot that actually drew women together. I think the way in which they actually did it, which was a consultative process initially, which took a long time.[251]

Here, Letsebe highlights the human element of the Coalition. She reveals a discourse that plays up the importance of establishing person to person contact and working to build relationships from there. Her emphasis on experiences at the micro, individual level speaks to a discourse that explores the impacts of structural inequality and oppression as experienced in day-to-day life. This discourse's emphasis on daily life and the insidious workings of patriarchy in virtually every part of women's lives, argues that the continual impacts and effects of patriarchy on women's lives created space for identifying commonalities and building solidarity and alliance from these commonalities.

[251] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

Also emphasising the value of human interaction and exchanges in building bridges across difference, Ginwala shared her experiences with Abrams of reaching out to a group of Afrikaner women in the Coalition's early days. She recalls,

> …I was talking and I was not communicating... So I kept short what I was saying, and I said, let's throw it open to questions… And then, a young… woman got up and spoke in Afrikaans… [about] the way their lives had been effected, by patriarchy. And the responsibilities for bringing up their children, and so on. And, after that, there was communication… Now one of the things I had mentioned about the ANC… was that for example, we always had a crèche… And towards the end, a gray-haired old lady stands up and says to me—because… Mark [who was chairing] had asked them, do you want more meetings? And they said yes, they would like more meetings—And then an old lady got up and said, could [the organizers] then arrange a crèche, because she knew a number of women who would have liked to come… And another woman got up and said, and at that meeting, could he Mark look after the children and could a woman chair the meeting?! At this point I said, 'Hallelujah! I was right.'…it established that you could break through to white women. It established that white women were not sort of so alien… it was confirmation of what I believed, that patriarchy effected them to the point that we had the basis of working together. I was convinced at that meeting.[252]

Ginwala's recollection offers a lovely example of the ways that a discourse of commonality took shape and encouraged different women to follow the common threads that were woven between all of their lives, whether that be through identity as a parent, a spouse, or any other identity that was seen as a common experience of womanhood.

Locating the WNC in the context of organisations that bring diverse groups of people together, Letsebe raised the point to me that some of the challenges and tensions faced in the Coalition were similar to those one could expect in any diverse grouping. She explained,

> there's no way you can work in organisations without tensions. Conflict and conflict resolution are part and parcel of these processes, all the way. Especially where you act… you've got to find mechanisms of actually (addressing these tensions)… pulling people together out of those conflict situations, but understanding that conflict is part and parcel of life, of organisations… It's how you resolve them, how you deal with them that is key.[253]

Letsebe's comments argue that while the Coalition was extraordinary in many of the challenges that it faced there were also challenges that come with being in an organisation and bringing together diverse groups of people. This discourse presents the

[252] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 18.
[253] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

Coalition as being like any other organisation in terms of managing different interests, personalities and working styles.

Speaking of the challenges of building relationships across difference, Annemarie Nutt explained to Maritz that the "process of building relationships, given the various background from which we came, has also taken time… The WNC had unrealistic expectations that were based on hope rather than reality."[254] Nutt communicates a position rooted in realist discourse that argues that difficulties in coming to together across difference represent the default, what should be expected. This discourse challenges the discourse around idealism and exceptionalism that were in circulation at the time, arguing that the divisions and separatism that defined much of South Africa's recent past persisted into the negotiations period and could not be ignored or willed away.

The challenges of identifying and organising around common ground are revealed through discussions of violence against women, an area which research suggested affected women across divisions, but which was still perceived by some groups of women as an area that was associated with 'the other.' In my interview with me, Sheila Meintjes described how through leading the WNC's research for the charter campaign she found that the most significant issue that united women across space and difference was violence. "It was intimate family violence, violence against women's bodies that spoke of a war against women's bodies that traversed their whole lives. Their whole experience, young women, old women, white, black, every class spoke about violence.[255]" She continues, "it was the most painful part of acknowledging that South Africa was this truly violent society. And that that was a consequence of all sorts of things, including apartheid, but it was certainly a consequence of gender, the way in which gender was conceived in South Africa.[256]"

In contrast to Meintjes' view of violence as a force that permeated through women's lives across racial, class and other differences, in her research Maritz cites Sheila Camerer as explaining that although women generally shared in an oppression through being "subject to legal and structural discrimination as a result of the lack of

[254] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011: 110
[255] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.
[256] Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012.

representation" that "black women were particularly subject to family violence" and therefore measures addressing domestic violence were perceived by Afrikaner women as being "aimed at attracting the votes of the black women in particular."[257]

These divergent views on different women's perceptions of violence speak profoundly to the ways that some WNC participants read and understood as 'other' the needs and experiences of women they perceived as different, even in areas where research would suggest commonality between women. Located within the National Party, Camerer expressed a view of black women as being more severely affected by domestic violence than women from other racial groups. Although Maritz's research does not engage with the information that informed Camerer's views, Camerer's position speaks to perceptions of difference, specifically raced, classed and cultural difference. Her position speaks to perceptions of black women being more oppressed, presumably by male figures within the home, than other women. Given South Africa's history of the racialisation of virtually every sphere of life, views of vulnerability within the home are in many ways related to the constructions of masculinity and femininity, of class, and of family structures related to racialised subjectivities.

Camerer's view of black women as being more vulnerable to domestic violence, in contrast to the Coalition's research suggesting women's common vulnerability, highlights some of the difficulties at the time of identifying and building around commonalities between differently located women's experiences. In a historical context where socially constructed divisions between women had been reinforced by the material conditions around them, even where common interests existed, these were not necessarily easy to identify and organise around. Although the WNC's research eventually revealed violence as a force experienced on a wide scale across vast difference, views by prominent women, such as those expressed by Camerer, reveal the power of perception in interpreting and influencing South Africa's social and political landscape.

Work of the Coalition: Research and Charter

[257] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*. 61. 2011: 112.

With a vision towards influencing the Constitution, WNC's two primary projects, the research and the charter campaigns, were both intended as tools to build a platform from which to argue for women's rights under the new dispensation and to empower women to identify and fight for these rights. In describing the significance of these campaigns, the Women's Charter states, "as women we have come together in a coalition of organisations and engaged in a campaign that has enabled women to draw on their experience and define what changes are needed within the new political, legal, economic and social system.[258]" The WNC's work was not easily defined in its early life, with some significant disagreements on what the most meaningful and productive ways of engaging with women across the country might be and what the most important outcomes for the Coalition would be.

Deep ideological differences divided women in the WNC and tensions grew about whether focusing on influencing the Constitution was the most productive and meaningful use of the WNC's resources. Some members of the Coalition, especially those who had been actively involved in resistance through the unions, argued that concentrating efforts on the formal acknowledgements of rights might detract from the ability to change lived power dynamics at the grassroots level. In an interview with Abrams, Budlender noted, "I didn't recognize the importance of the Constitution. I didn't think that writing a whole lot of things on paper necessarily meant change… I didn't see the constitutional thing as the goal, I was [focused on letting] people be heard."[259] Budlender's recollections reflect the different directions from which individuals in the WNC approached questions of change and progress for women, and the different understandings of empowerment that motivated participation in the Coalition.

Initially there was debate within the coalition about whether a charter was an effective and inclusive means of communicating women's needs as it followed the ANC's tradition of expressing political voice through charters. Women from some organisations, especially from minority parties, feared that a charter would increase ANC influence in the WNC and exclude groups that did not come from the liberation struggle background. After debates within the WNC, it was decided that a charter would serve as

[258] "The Women's Charter for Effective Equality". *Women's National Coalition.*
[259] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 10.

an effective way of communicating needs, especially because of the diversity of South African women's experiences, and the need to produce a document expressing a unified women's voice. The charter, which was known as "Big Ears" within the WNC because of the goal that it would serve as an instrument capable of hearing the needs and challenges of women throughout the country, became a concrete objective around which the coalition organised. Realising the limited window of opportunity presented in the transition to democracy, debates about the significance of a charter became secondary to efforts to use the charter as a concrete way of expressing women's diverse experiences and ensuring that the needs expressed in these experiences became incorporated in the Constitution.[260]

Debate was not only limited to the political implications of adopting a charter campaign, but also extended to the research campaign, and what the most meaningful engagements at the grassroots would look like. Describing some of the tensions around the shape and nature of the research campaign, Budlender explained to me how some saw the grassroots engagement as an opportunity for conscientisation and awareness raising, which others people feared had the potential to become an exercise to "go in and tell the groups what they should think."[261] In contrast to this view of grassroots engagement, others in the Coalition, including Budlender, adopted the view that "we're not telling we're listening. And based on what we hear from that listening we might later go back and realise people are ignorant about that, their views on that, and want to change it. But you can't muddle the two things."[262] These different understandings of the purpose and value of grassroots engagement speak to different conceptualisations of the purpose of the research campaign. On one hand, the research campaign was imagined as a tool for making women aware of their rights and mobilising around concentisation efforts. On the other hand, it was imagined as a way of gauging women's experiences, realities and needs as they understood them. While these two positions are not necessarily oppositional, and in fact could be complementary, the illustration above of ways that they

[260] Hassim, Shireen. "'A Conspiracy of Women': The Women's Movement in South Africa's Transition to Democracy." *Social Research* 69, no. 3 (2002): 693-732. In University of the Witwatersrand, http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20hassim.PDF (accessed December 5, 2009).
[261] Interview with Debbie Budlender. March, 2012.
[262] Interview with Debbie Budlender. March, 2012.

were communicated appears to reflect a disconnect between the two visions and the priorities embedded in these visions.

Also speaking about the different roles and outcomes that were imagined for the research and charter campaigns, Ginwala explained to Abrams,

> I think there was one fundamental difference which was never resolved. And was perhaps the core of my difficulties. You see, I believed that the Coalition should have strengthened the women's movement in the country, and should have strengthened the individual organisations. Instead, the Coalition, partly because of pressure of time, and [partly] because people who wanted to do it themselves, and were very good at it, were doing the work. Now this meant that the member organisations didn't integrate the work into their work programs… The result is that at the end of it, we didn't have a stronger women's movement. And so… when I was arguing with comrades and I was saying 'no, not that'… it was seen as curbing initiative, whereas I was saying, 'put that effort into empowering the organisations to do the work.[263]

Ginwala's reflections speak to the ways that what participants in the WNC imagined of the research and charter campaigns was not necessarily realised, because of a variety of factors relating, including the internal organisation and work within the Coalition.

As highlighted by Ginwala above, and in several other interviews, a significant influence on both the research and the charter campaigns was the constant race against the clock and the limited time available to meet the deadlines in the development of the Constitution. Speaking of the relationship between the research and the charter campaigns with me, Budlender explained that one of her concerns at the time was that "the research was behind in some ways." Also speaking about these campaign with me, Anne Letsebe explained,

> We needed to do both. We had a very short time period between then and the elections. We needed longer time, but we needed to make sure that we ran the two together… theoretically, I would have thought that we'd actually do the campaign and then do the research, but it just didn't work out that way. So we had to run them more or less parallel. And I think there was complementarity in the way it was done ultimately. When we finished with the research and we had to do the analysis, there was so much material!… we had to build into our processes mechanisms that would carry the Charter forward in the process so that we didn't lose the momentum and that the research also informed what we needed to have in the Charter[264].

Further explaining how the WNC was able to meaningfully run both campaigns simultaneously, Letsebe described the role that women who had previous experience in

[263] Abrams, S. Kristine. "Fighting for Women's Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women's National Coalition." M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000: 41.
[264] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

various women's organisations and movements played in these processes. Specifically she highlighted how the Coalition relied on these WNC participants' knowledge from past experiences of working around women's organising and also being able to access different networks. She explained to me,

> You needed… a lot of forward thinking, forward planning, as advocacy work goes… and you had a lot of people with experiences in that. People who had participated in political processes in their own political organisations, in the UDF and… (other) campaigns that they had done. So it was easy to draw on those experiences and bring them into our own campaign. [265]

The different views Letsebe and Budlender express around the pacing and ordering of the research and charter campaigns suggests that there may have been different understandings of the development of the processes as they were taking place within the Coalition. These differences could be related to a number of factors, such as the different positions they held within the Coalition, their relationships to the different campaigns or their personal expectations of how the campaigns would take shape and what they would look like. What does come across clearly in several places is that time constraints put enormous pressure on both campaigns and influenced the ways that they developed.

Speaking directly to the ways that different expectations of what the research and charter campaigns ought to look like, Maritz describes perceptions amongst Afrikaner women of the WNC as a vehicle for the ANC. Maritz communicates views expressed in an interview with Truida Prekel from which she concludes, "there is no doubt that some of these women who were sent out to gather information for the WNC also gave voter education and did party canvassing. One of the reasons for the split between the NP and the WNC early in 1994 was the accusation that the ANC was using the organisation for political canvassing."[266] Supporting Prekel's observations, Maritz offers a view from Estelle Jordaan for whom "it was an established fact that the ANC/ South African Communist Party (SACP)/ Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) alliance tried to use the WNC as part of its own political agenda."[267] The discussions highlighted in Maritz's text speak to perceptions of the WNC's research campaign as illegitimate and failing to reflect the diverse realities of South African women. These views also go to the

[265] Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.
[266] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011:, 106
[267] Maritz, Loraine. "Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women's National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization." *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011: 106

heart of experiences of tension, as they reflect not only differences in approach and strategy, but a fundamental distrust of other participants and the motivations behind their work.

Conclusion

Engagement with interviews from the different sources in this chapter highlight the different discourses that were in circulation in the Coalition, framing the ways that different women experienced the WNC and perceived its role as a political body in the South African landscape. This engagement with different discourses also highlights the ways that different discourses were in conversation with each other, sometimes supporting and speaking to each other, and other times speaking past or in opposition to each other. Reading these discourses allows insight into some of the broad themes, conditions and factors shaping internal dynamics within the Coalition, both in terms of the "tensions" that were largely not named or theorised in the physical archive and in terms of the glue that kept the WNC together and saw it overcome many of the internal tensions to successfully influence the development of the Constitution. The interviews are significant in their ability to give insight into individual experiences of the Coalition. The different views expressed in this chapter reveal snapshots of different moments and experiences, which although mediated my time, memory and other influences, offer insights into the different internal and external factors that influenced work and relationships within the WNC and created the context in which the research and charter campaigns were produced and influence on the Constitutional negotiations successfully achieved.

CONCLUSION

Born in the late 1980s, all of my conscious years have been in the post-apartheid era, where along with the previously unimaginable freedoms of democracy, I have experienced on a continual basis a "fashion of cynicism"[268]which has become a common feature in discussion of obstacles of this "post" period. As an escape from this, I have often indulged enthusiastically in the recollections of people who experienced the transition period, recollections which describe reckless optimism and hope by people across the country who lived to see the fruits of their toil realised as impossibilities became realities in times worse than today. Studying the unapologetic objectives of the Constitution and the rights and protections that it promises to all South Africans only worked to affirm the stories I had internalised over the years of an almost magical period where a national wave of goodwill overtook the land, motivating collective work towards a common good. In my early research on the Coalition, reading speeches from the WNC's founding ceremonies and foundational texts, the familiar narratives from the period of overcoming difference to unite around a common identity and around a common objective seemed most apparent. It was only with closer readings as I engaged more deeply in the Coalition's archives that the complexities of the bringing together women from different traditions of organising, leadership and conscientising, women with different political interests, and women with vastly different experiences of apartheid began to emerge.

Although some of the challenges of coalescing a group as diverse as the WNC came through in the archives, the intricate texture of these complexities came through most clearly in the interviews, where individual voices spoke of personal experiences of the Coalition and revealed common points of departure within the Coalition as well as key points of divergence over the course of the WNC's work. All of the interviews that I conducted spoke to the positive spirit of the transitional period as a motivating factor in the formation of the Coalition, as did many of Abrams' interviews. The clearest break from these narratives of the goodwill of the moment appear in Maritz's interviews, where

[268] Mbeki, Thabo. "I Am an African - Thabo Mbeki`s Speech at the Adoption of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill." *African National Congress.* African National Congress, n.d. Web. 28 Aug. 2012. <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4322>.

she moves outside dominant narratives of the triumphant feat of defeating apartheid governance to the less represented voices of hesitance and resistance to majority rule and the discomfort and fear surrounding these responses. These different perspectives on the Coalition offer a wealth of insights into how notions of being woman interacted with other identities to influence different WNC participants' understandings of and approaches to political participation in that moment.

The diversity of voices articulating different experiences of the same organisation speaks to the realities of the different political, economic, and social positions that women within the Coalition occupied. These different positions are reflective of the deeply divided nature of South African society and the multiple interests that arise from these many political, economic and social locations. This diversity of voices also affirms the methodological approach of this research revealing how these different voices were not from knowledges emerging from an "alien development" but rather from knowledges produced in different spaces and locations within South African society, each reflecting a different history and a different set of practices linked to that history.

Reading the dominant discourses in the Coalition reveals a broad picture of the landscape within the Coalition and some of the defining features of the organisation. It explores how the Coalition presented itself publicly and also how women within the organisation discussed their objectives, motivations and understandings of the WNC's role in shaping the new dispensation. From the archival records some of the Coalition's foundational theories and frameworks emerge alongside some of the formal processes through which these theories and policies became WNC policy. The interviews work to fill in some of the more informal discussions, debates and differences women in the WNC experienced, providing context to the different formal development along the life Coalition's work. These make some of the silences and omissions from the archive audible, painting a more detailed and complicated picture of the WNC's that makes visible the human faces and lives driving this organisation.

The Women's National Coalition sought to realise the seemingly impossible task of turning a cacophony of political, social and racial voices into a singular, coherent organisational force that could secure women a place in the new political order. Even in the archives, where conscious efforts were made to present a singular voice through the

presentation of only final positions and resolution, voices of dissent made themselves audible, challenging perceptions of the uncomplicated accord of a seamless melody. As individuals spoke through the interviews, it emerged how experiences of personhood and of womanhood were developed in distinctly different political, economic, and social locations in society, influencing different interests and approaches to political participation. Despite these challenges and differences, the WNC remained intact, realising the research and charter campaigns, and importantly, successfully influencing the development of the Constitution. Throughout this period, participants of the WNC realised that if they were to gain a place for themselves in the Constitution and in the governing structures of the new democracy, they had to coalesce and identify common goals and purpose. As Frene Ginwala explained,

> Women have been knocking on the door for generations, politely asking to be let into a non-sexist society. We cannot wait for even more generations hoping for someone to open those doors. WE have to break them down. Our battering ram must be the voices of the millions of women in our country- voices that no one dare deny. Together, no government, no political party, no liberation movement- no group of patriarchal men can stand in our way. We are the majority in this country. Our collective voice is a formidable weapon. Let it ring loud and clear across this country. Together we will win.[269]

These motivational and triumphant words speak to an ethos motivating many to join, to believe in and to support the WNC. Locating the Coalition in a historic movement for women's rights and liberation in South Africa, Ginwala's words highlighted a hope that through the Coalition women across the country might realise the freedoms and access to the rights and protections necessary for them to enjoy the full fruits of democracy.

The apartheid system perpetuated itself through imposed divisions between groups of people and the constant reproduction of exploitations and oppressions. These divisions created deep chasms between different groups of women, reinforced by their different relationships to institutions of power and their differing abilities to access power through these institutions. Because of the extraordinary period in which it was formed, analysis of the WNC offers insights into some of the key issues in women's organising in South Africa, revealing the issues that when pushed to the limit, women have agreed on and united around. Similarly, it also reveals the issues, which even under the most

[269] Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" p. 6. Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

exceptional of circumstances, have caused divisions and tension among women and exposed power struggles and inequalities between different groups of women.

My examination of different texts on the WNC has explored the ways that dominant discourses recognised the importance of making audible women's different experiences of society based on their different intersecting identities, and used these located knowledges to inform the work and direction of the Coalition. I have also explored the ways that these discourses did not, however, formally interrogate the systems, structures and practices that perpetuated inequality and exploitation in relationships amongst women the ways that dominant discourses challenged patriarchal oppression. Discourses of unity in purpose provided short-term utility in bringing women together to fight for a common cause. However, lack of attention to the inequalities and abuses of power between women in women's political organising left tensions formally unnamed and unaddressed, allowing them to undermine cohesion in the organisation over time. The exclusive attention to formally challenging oppressive power externally, whether as represented through state capitalism, apartheid racism or social, cultural, and political patriarchy, prevented introspective identification and analyses of oppressive expressions of power amongst women.

I have explored the ways that while women experienced the materiality of power inequalities between them daily, the WNC's records indicate that dominant discourses did not formally work to challenge these inequalities within the WNC. The dominant discourses in these records show women identifying men as partners in national liberation and in overcoming patriarchy, while also recognising men as the primary exercisers and beneficiaries of patriarchal norms, systems and structures that exploited and oppressed women. However, these discourses did not show women identifying and engaging as partners while also naming, theorising and addressing, at organisational levels, the power inequalities between them, and the ways that some women benefited from, and worked to uphold, the exploitation of other women. This silence invisibilised the significance and impact of these inequalities allowing them to reproduce themselves and to create tensions between groups.

Notably, the Coalition discussed difference between women at virtually all stages of its work. And as the documents on strategies for the research campaign illustrate,

conversations of privilege and disadvantage between women influenced many of the Coalition's strategies for targeting and engaging with women at different levels of, and locations in, South African society. What is absent in the records is an interrogation of how the impacts and implications of these realities of privilege and disadvantage could be tackled in the Coalition's internal work, how they ought to be reflected in the WNC's policies and positions, and a theorisation of how these power inequalities could be mediated within the Coalition.

The WNC existed as an organisation comprised of individuals from diverse communities across the country, with each individual who participated in the Coalition offering a glimpse into her life and its realities. Through these glimpses, the WNC sought to paint a picture of the rights, needs, and protections necessary for women to enjoy the full benefits of democracy. Such a picture made up from individual voices could not feasibly represent the realities of *all* South African women or cover the challenges of *every* experience of being gendered as female in South African society. What it did offer is a foundational mapping of the minimum requirements necessary to meaningfully start imagining and working towards substantive gender equality.

In this thesis I draw from snippets of moments, discussions and experiences within the Coalition, and from these snippets I attempt to construct a representation of the WNC. Because this research draws from a variety of sources that offer different perspectives on the period and on the organisation, this representation at times appears disjointed and fragmentary. It reveals different pieces that do not always appear to fit together neatly, but nonetheless are all parts of a whole. These texts that come from different spaces within the Coalition represent differently located interests and voices from South African society and speak to the complexity of the configuration that the Coalition itself was trying to form. The moments of disjunction in this research are not divorced from experiences of disjunction within the Coalition, or from the different silences and gaps in records and in memory that resulted from these experiences. The representation of the Coalition drawn together in this thesis offers a lens through which to read the Coalition and some of the dynamics that influenced major developments within the organisation.

Focusing on dominant discourses within the WNC rather than on events and personalities has created the space for me to read the ways the different epistemic routes and framings shaped the ways that different women imagined and related to their work, to each other, and to the Coalition. This approach allowed for deeper insights into the dominant frameworks that motivated different women to join and to continue with the WNC. It also offered a perspective into some of the different imaginings of womanhood, personhood and political identity that circulated within the Coalition and influenced the atmosphere within and direction of the Coalition.

The WNC was created in a unique moment in South African history when the dramatic reconceptualisation of the state, the government and the citizen meant that women had the opportunity to dictate to the state, to define the protections and responsibilities the state owed to women, and to articulate the role women would play in the governance of the new democracy. This examination of discourses within the WNC reveals some of the complexities that underpin the imagining of empowering and enabling social and political relations within women's organisations and movements. From the archival material, the voices speaking out about the "tensions" within the organisation reveal the ways that women experienced power inequalities amongst themselves. Although these "tensions" were not formally recorded as being theorised or addressed in the WNC, the interviews reveal that they arose from a multiplicity of differences and were often navigated cautiously because of the delicate alliances between different participants. The interviews also reveal that while this was a period of enormous strain and difficulty, there were defining moments of triumph where women who had never experienced each other as equals worked together around a common objective and, even if only for a brief period, found allies in each other.

As I reached the conclusion of this research, after years of engaging with material on the Coalition, I found myself no less inspired by the transitional moment and by the WNC than when I started. In many ways, the visceral challenges that the Coalition faced make its story all the more compelling, revealing that while the narrative on the Coalition and its achievements may still appear magical, the WNC itself was not the result of magic. It was difficult, at times held together by a network of uneasy alliances, but despite this it survived through the turbulent negotiations and succeeded in producing the

Women's Charter for Effective Equality and influencing a comprehensive set of rights and protections for women in the Constitution, including non-sexism as a cornerstone of the democracy. The difficulties in directly speaking to and engaging with the pain of power make the story of the WNC more relatable, part of a South African experience with which I can identify. In unpacking the exceptionalism of the Coalition and reading the many ways through which the impossible was made real through practical, tangible efforts between different individuals and groups, I see how the potential for magic, again, is not dead.

Works Cited

Interviews

Interview with Debbie Budlender. March, 2012.

Interview with Pregs Govender. August, 2012.

Interview with Anne Letsebe. April, 2012.

Interview with Sheila Meintjes. April, 2012

Archival Material

Botha, Sandra. Report to National Committee. 3 December 1994. National Steering Committee.

Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Budlender, Debbie. "Women's National Coalition Problems Experienced in the Coalition". 19 June 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Budlender, Debbie. "Statistical Profile of South African Women." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

Budlender, Debbie. "Women's National Coalition Problems Experienced in the Coalition". 19 June 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Budlender, Debbie. "Mapping exercise." Debbie Budlender personal collection.

"The Charter Campaign". National Steering Committee. Box 3. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

COSATU letter to co-ordinator Malibongwe Conference Committee, 11 December1989. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African Historical Archives.

"The Demand of the Women of South Africa for the Withdrawal of Passes for Women and the Repeal of the Pass Laws" Petition presented to the Prime Minister, Pretoria, 9 August 1956. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Cb2.3.4. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Federation of South African Women, Constitution,1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Aa. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Federation of South African Women, inaugural conference, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Ac1. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Federation of South African Women. Women's Charter, 1954. Catalogue: AD1137. Folder: Ac1.5.4. Women's Charter. 1954. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

Federation of South African Women report to the WIDF,1956. Catalogue: AD1137, Folder: Db2. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

"General Secretary's Report to the Women's National Coalition Steering Committee and Council Meeting at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel on 15th January 1994." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Ginwala, Frene. "The Charter for Women's Equality: Discussion Document." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Govender, Pregs. "Campaign Report." March 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4.

Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"History of the Federation of South African Women." *Records of FEDSAW, AD 1137*. viii.. Catalogue: AD 1137. Historical Papers. University of the Witwatersrand.

"Joint Workshop of the UDF Women's Organisations and COSATU Affiliates held on 17-18 March 1990 in Durban". The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.3. South African History Archive.

Kornegay, Ellen and Jean D. Triegaardt. "Women's National Coalition, Evaluation Report." 8 December, 1995. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

Letter from National Party Federal Council to Convenor Women's National Coalition. 15 February 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"Malibongwe Conference on Women's Struggle in South Africa. Amsterdam, 6-18 January 1990." Preamble. The United Democratic Front (UDF) Collection. AL2431. Folder: A1.15.2. South African History Archive.

Manzini, Mavivi. "Keynote Address." In *Women and Power: Implications for Development*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. Johannesburg: World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13- 15, 1992. Debbie Budlender, personal collection.

Meintjes, Sheila. "Papers from the Women's National Coalition Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holidau Inn. 23-4 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

"Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held on Saturday 10th July 1993 at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel, Johannesburg." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Motala, Shireen. "Gaining access to women for the Women's National Coalition research project, some initial ideas." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"Presentation of the Women's Charter to the Deputy President FW De Klerk and the National Party." October 4, 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"Proposed Agenda for the Second Council Meeting of the Women's National Coalition held on the 11 July 1993 at the Karos Johannesburg Hotel, Johannesburg." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"Questionnaire". Debbie Budlender personal collection.

"Report on Strategising Workshop, Saturday 12 June 1993." National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Research for Campaign for Effective Equality. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Serote, Pethu. "How to get women to speak." in "Papers from the Women's National Coalition: Research Methodology Workshop." Milpark Holiday Inn. 23-24 January 1993. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

"The token game." Debbie Budlender personal collection.

"Women's Charter Campaign: Aims and Objectives of the WNC." Campaign Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Women's National Coalition Council Meeting Report 5 February 1993. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

WNC letter to Mr. Nelson Mandela, president-elect. 7 May 1994. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Women's National Coalition, National Workshop: April 25-26 1992. "Non-Racial democracy--- soon. Non-sexism--- how?" Speech by Frene Ginwala. Debbie Budlender personal collection.

Women's Natioanal Coalition Programme of Action for Women's Equality Motivation. Campaign Committee. Box 7. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"Women's National Coalition National Steering Committee Meeting held in Johannesburg, Mariston Hotel on the 3rd December 1993. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

"World University Service Women's Development Programme: Utilising the development and political process to entrench the rights of women." In *The need for an 'Apex' or Umbrella Body for women and the role of the women's coalition*. Proceedings of Women and Power: Implications for Development, Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg. World University Service Women's Development Programme, August 13-15 1992: 58. National Steering Committee. Box 4. Records of the Women's National Coalition. Catalogue No. 22. UWC- Robben Island Mayibuye Archives.

Secondary Sources

Abrams, S. Kristine. “Fighting for Women’s Liberation during the Liberation of South Africa: The Women’s National Coalition.” M.Phil, Oxford University. 2000.

Alvarez, Sonia E. *Engendering democracy in Brazil: women's movements in transition politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. 1990.

Ashworth, Georgina. "GENDERED GOVERNANCE." National Institute Of Rural Development. http://nird.ap.nic.in/clic/rrdl100.html (accessed March 07, 2010).

Bazilli, Susan, ed. *Putting women on the agenda*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991.

Berger, Iris. “Generations of struggle: Trade unions and the roots of feminism, 1930–60”. *Women in South African History*. Cape Town: HSRC. 2004.

Carter, Rodney G.S. “Of Things Said and Unsaid: Power, Archival Silences, and Power in Silence.” *Archivaria*. 61.

Cock, Jacklyn and Alison Bernstein. “Gender Differences: Struggles around ‘Needs’ and ‘Rights’ in South Africa.” *NWSA Journal* 13, No. 3. 2001.

Cock, Jacklyn. “‘Another mother for peace’: Women and peace building in South Africa,1983–2003.” *Women in South African History*. Cape Town: HSRC. 2004

Collins, Patricia Hill. “*From* Black Feminist Thought.” In *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Edited by Kolmar, Wendy K., and Frances Bartkowski. . Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005.

Davis, Angela Y. *Women, Race, and Class*. New York: Vintage, 1983.

Ebrahim, Hassen. *The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa*. Cape Town: Oxford UP, 1998.

Foucault, Michel. The *Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*. London & New York: Routledge. 2002.

Franceschet, Susan. "Women in politics in post-transitional democracies." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 3, no. 2. 2001.

Gaitskell, Deborah, and Elaine Unterhalter. “mothers of the Nation: A Comparative Analysis of Nation, Race and Motherhood in Afrikaner Nationalism and the African National Congress. *Women-Nation-State*. Macmillan: London. 1989; Walker, Cherryl. *Wonen and Resistance in South Africa*. Monthly Review Press: New York. 1991.

Gasa, Nomboniso. *Women in South African History: They Remove Boulders and Cross Rivers = Basus'iimbokodo, Bawel'imilambo*. Cape Town: HSRC, 2007.

Geisler, Gisela G. *Women and the remaking of politics in Southern Africa: negotiating autonomy, incorporation, and representation*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. 2004.

Govender, Pregs. *Love and Courage: A Story of Insubordination*. Auckland Park: Jacanda Media. 2007.

Grunebaum, Heidi. "Re-placing Pasts, Forgetting Presents; Narrative, Place, and Memory in the Time of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Research in African Literatures*. Vol. 32. No. 3. 2001.

Hartsock, Nancy. "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism." Edited by Sandra G. Harding. In *Feminism and methodology: social science issues*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1987.

Hassim, Shireen. "'A Conspiracy of Women': The Women's Movement in South Africa's Transition to Democracy." *Social Research* 69, no. 3 (2002): 693-732. In University of the Witwatersrand, http://wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20hassim.PDF (accessed December 5, 2009).

Hassim, Shireen. *Negotiating Spaces: Women in South Africa?s Transition to Democracy*. University of the Witwatersrand. wiserweb.wits.ac.za/PDF%20Files/wirs%20-%20hassim.PDF (accessed December 5, 2009).

Hassim, Shireen. "Race and Power in the Women's Movement: 1980-1994". *The Burden of Race?: 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa*. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Reearch. University of the Witwatersrand. 5-8 July 2001

Hassim, Shireen. *Women's organizations and democracy in South Africa contesting authority*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

hooks, bell. "Sisterhood: Political Solidarity between Women." *Palgrave Macmillan Journals* 23 1986.

hooks, bell. *Talking back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston, MA: South End Press, 1989.

Kelber, Mim. *Women and government: new ways to political power*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994.

Kelly, Bob. *Worth Repeating: More Than 5,000 Classic and Contemporary Quotes* (2003).

Kolmar, Wendy K., and Frances Bartkowski. *Feminist theory: a reader*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2005.

Letsebe, Anne. "The Women's National Coalition and the Charter for Effective Equality: Republic of South Africa." Proceedings of The Democratic Republic of Congo/ South African Women's Peace Forum. March 2003.

Lugones, María. "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." *Hypatia*. vol. 22, no. 1. 2007.

Marasinghe, Lakshman. "Constitutional Reform in South Africa." *International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 42. 1993.

Maritz, Loraine. “Party politics jeopardised the credibility of the Women’s National Coalition for Afrikaner women in the organization.” *New Contree*, No. 61. 2011.

Maritz, Loraine. “Afrikanervroe se Politieke Betrokkenheid in Historiese Perspektief met spesiale verwysing na die Women’s National Coalition van 1991 tot 1994.” *Stellenbosch University*. PhD thesis. 2004.

Mbeki, Thabo. "I Am an African - Thabo Mbeki`s Speech at the Adoption of the The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill." *African National Congress*. African National Congress, n.d. Web. 28 Aug. 2012. <http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?id=4322>.

McClintock, Anne. “No Longer in a Future Heaven: Women and Nationalism in South Africa.” *Transition 15*. 1991

McEwan, Cheryl. :Building a Postcolonial Archive? Gender, Collective Memory and Citizenship in the Post-Apartheid South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29, 3. 2003.

Meer, Shamim. "Freedom for Women: Mainstreaming Gender in the South African Liberation Struggle and Beyond." *Gender and Development* 13, no. 2. 2005.

Meintjes, Sheila. "The Women's Struggle for Equality during South Africa's Transition to Democracy." *Transformation* 30 (1996): 47-65. http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/africanjournals/html/itemdetail.cfm?recordID=638 (accessed December 2, 2009).

Motsemme, Nthabiseng. “The Mute Always Speak: On Wonen’s Silences at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.” *Current Sociology*. 52. 9. 2004.

Morton, Stephen. *Gayatri Spivak: Ethics, Subalternity and the Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge: Polity. 2007.

Mtintso, Thenjiwe. "Umrabluo Series on Building the South African Women's Movement Part 1: The Women's National Coalition." African National Congress: South Africa's National Liberation Movement. http://www.anc.org.za/show.php?doc=/ancdocs/pubs/umrabulo/10/umrabulo10d.html (accessed March 25, 2010).

Murray, Christina, and Catherine O'Regan. "Putting Women into the Constitution." In *Putting women on the agenda*, edited by Susan Bazilli, 33-50. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1991.

"National Peace Accord." African National Congress Home Page. http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/transition/npaccord.html (accessed November 25, 2009).

Nomvete, Nomatamsanqua. “The Participation of the Female Working Class in the Trade Unions and in Labour Struggles in South Africa from 1950.” M.Sc. Dissertation. Centre of African Studies, Edinburgh University. 1984.

“The origins, history and process of the Women’s National Coalition: Report of the Women’s

National Coalition Research." *Women's National Coalition*. Johannesburg. 1994.

Patel, Leila. "South African Women's Struggles in the 1980's." *Agenda Feminist Media*, 1988. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4065688 (accessed January 3, 2010).

Prinsloo, Dioné, and Loraine Maritz. "LitNet Akademies-onderhoud: Dioné Prinsloo Gesels Met Loraine Maritz Oor Die Rol En Ervaring Van Afrikanervroue in Die Women's National Coalition." *LitNet* |. N.p., 24 Nov. 2010. Web. 28 Aug. 2012. <http://www.argief.litnet.co.za/cgi-bin/giga.cgi?cmd=cause_dir_news_item>.

Rantete, Johannes, and Hermann Giliomee. "Transition to Democracy through Transaction?: Bilateral Negotiations between the ANC and NP in South Africa." *Transition to Democracy through Transaction?: Bilateral Negotiations between the ANC and NP in South Africa* 91, no. 365 (1992): 515-42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/722988 (accessed December 5, 2009).

Razavi, Shahra. "Women in Contemporary Democratization." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 15, 1. 2001

Reagon, Bernice Johnson. "Coalition Politics: Turning the Century." Edited by Barbara Smith. In *Home girls: a Black feminist anthology*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

Scanlon, Helen. *Representation & Reality: Portraits of Women's Lives in the Western Cape, 1948-1976*. Cape Town: HSRC, 2007.

Scott, Joan W.. "The Evidence of Experience." *Critical Inquiry*. 17, 4. 1991.

Shepherd, Nick. "Disciplining archaeology; the invention of South African prehistory, 1923-1953". *Kronos*. 28. 2002.

Shepherd, Nick. "'When the hand that holds the trowel is black…' : Disciplinary practices of self-representation and the issue of 'native' labour in archaeology." *Journal of Social Archaeology*. 3, 3. 2003.

Singh, Mala. "Malibongwe Conference." *Agenda Feminist Media*, 1990. http://www.jstor.org/pss/4065537 (accessed November 28, 2009).

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography." In *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. New York: Methuen, 1987.

"The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa." The Soul of a Nation: Constitution-making in South Africa. http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/online%20books/soul-of-nation-constitution/chapter6.htm (accessed January 5,

2010).

Thipe, Thuto Seabe, "A Rock Strikes Back: Women's Struggles for Equality in the Development of the South African Constitution" (2010). *Honors Projects.* Paper 25. http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/poli_honors/25.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. "An Unthinkable History: The Haitian Revolution as a Non-Event." *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. Boston: Beacon, 1995.

Walker, Cherryl. *Women and resistance in South Africa*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1991.

Wells, Julia. *We Now Demand! The History of Women's Resistance to Pass Laws in South Africa*. Witwatersrand University Press. 1993; Britton, Hannah Evelyn. *Women in the South African Parliament from resistance to governance*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005.

"Women's National Coalition of South Africa, South Africa." International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). http://www.iisd.org/50comm/commdb/DESC/d18.htm (accessed January 14, 2010).