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TOPIC

GENDER POLITICS AND PROBLEMS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: KWAZULU-NATAL, SWAZILAND AND NAMIBIA IN THE POST-COLONIAL/APARTHEID ERA.

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Topic

*Gender Politics and Problems in Southern Africa: KwaZulu-
Natal, Swaziland and Namibia in the Post-colonial/apartheid
Era*

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my late friend and colleague Mr G.B.S. Mathenjwa and the community of Esovane (KZN).

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANC	African National Congress
CA	Constitutional Assembly
CONTRALESA	Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DTA	Democratic Turnhalle Alliance
DWA	Department of Women Affairs
FRELIMO	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRC	Human Rights Commission
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KZN	Kwa-Zulu Natal
NEC	National Executive Committee
NP	National Party
OMM	Organization of Mozambican Women
S A	South Africa
SBS	Swaziland Broadcasting Service
SWA	South West Africa
SWANU	South West Africa National Union
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UWC	University of the Western Cape

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INTRODUCTION

The gun of sex-biased language may be rusty, but it is there, and the greatest danger is the unawareness that it is a gun, and it is loaded. (Bolinger 1980, p. 104)

The study of gender is crucial for the achievement and sustainability of the democratic ethos in Southern Africa. The substantial literature in this field attests to this notion¹. It could help us understand why certain gender stereotypes are viewed by societies as given. It could also help us explain such problems as the unequal representation in most political structures, and the gendered labour system. In addition, as the quotation above suggests, the way we talk has gender connotations of which most people are unaware. Many males however, distance themselves from public debates on gender issues on the grounds that gender is about women. This point is missed by academics and non-academics. Giving the term 'gender' an equal meaning to 'women' takes place both advertently and inadvertently.

For clarity purposes in this dissertation, there will be a working definition of this term. Here, gender is understood to be a category socially constructed and it refers to the study of both men and women and their relationships. We do not only see how men and women relate to each other, but also how members of each gender group view and treat one another.

In an attempt to define gender, Scott holds that women and men are defined in terms of one another "and no understanding of either can be achieved by entirely separate study."² If one

¹ A small sample of this literature includes: M. Hay and S. Stichter (eds), African Women South of the Sahara, Longman, London, 1984; L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History', in Journal of African History, 33, 1992; S. Urdang, And Still They Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London, 1989, etc.

² J. W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, p.29

agrees that not all men are oppressors nor are all women oppressed, then gender politics is not about women per se but about both groups. Connell argues that "'masculinity' does not exist except in contrast with 'femininity'."³

Working from the premise that both African men and women were oppressed by the colonialists, and both groups participated in the wars for liberation in many countries, one may argue that debates on gender politics should involve both men and women. This is what Linzi Manicom suggests when she says that:

(the analysis of gender is, I hold, the task of all historians as is the analysis of race, ethnicity, age, language and other significant dimensions of social differentiation and hierarchy.⁴

During the colonial rule and apartheid, racial prejudice affected both men and women. The achievement of democracy in Namibia and South Africa in 1990 and 1994 respectively, calls for concerted efforts amongst the African people. The same applies to Swaziland which achieved independence in 1968. Since democracy is grounded on uniting the nation, gender politics is a delicate issue and needs careful attention if unity and equality is to be sustained.

Different societies construct gender in different ways at different times. The way gender is constructed by a particular society determines the way in which the social hierarchy in a given state or society is organised. It is an understanding such as this one that made Scott conclude that:

³ R. W. Connell, Masculinities, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 68

⁴ L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History', in Journal of African History, 33, (1992), p. 442

gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.⁵

Different circumstances lead to gender being constructed to suit the prevailing circumstances at the time. Thus Scott arrives at the conclusion that politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics. Leaders of the independent states construct gender to justify their behaviour. Those who feel oppressed (both men and women) use gender to challenge the government. If women say that the reason for their discrimination is their being female then this brings gender politics out into the open.

When one looks at the pre-colonial and colonial periods and compares them with what is happening in most independent and democratic states in Southern Africa, one sees that in all these periods there has been gender struggle. There are two terms that are important in when understanding these periods, i.e. status and class. During the pre-colonial period one's status in society was determined by one's age. Older members of the society were respected by the youth. Sex also determined one's status in that men were seen as higher in status as compared to women." Even labour forms played an important role. Women were associated with children and consequently, they were assigned to light work whilst men did demanding jobs.

During the colonial period the colonialists reinforced gender imbalances by bringing back some of the constructed customs and

⁵ J. W. Scott, Gender and the Politics of History, p. 42

traditions used to marginalise other people (especially women and young men). The Bible for example ruled that the man is superior to a woman and to the younger members of the society. This did not change the then set-up which put men at the top in the social hierarchy, giving them power to control both women and children. Thus one could argue that the colonialists did not invent all the gender stereotypes. Some of those stereotypes had already been constructed by the Africans themselves and the colonialists consolidated them. Independence meant that the ideas that people had about gender politics had to be revisited.

Mobility was also used by the colonial governments to marginalise women. Men were urged to enter the capitalist economy and women were discouraged from doing so. On the contrary, the latter were urged to remain in the rural areas and till the land. Going to urban areas led to women being labelled as prostitutes. Unfortunately this continues to date. As Obbo says:

Negative attitudes towards the social change resulting from urbanisation have characterised both colonial and independent governments. The subject of female migration is controversial throughout Africa. Females migrating alone have always been seen as a problem by both urban authorities and migrant men.⁶

This means that the colonial state divided people in terms of their socio-economic background. Since it was men who entered the capitalist economy, then it goes without saying that men still occupied a dominant position in society. Denying women mobility is not specific to one state. It should also not be solely

⁶ C. Obbo, African Women, Their Struggle For Economic Independence, pp. 21 and 26

associated with the colonialists. African men also urged this and some continue even today despite the fact that the ideas about democracy preach equality for all. In his commentary on Namibian historiography, Ciraj Rassool refers to some cases where the colonialists and the Namibian men jointly worked against women's movement. As he puts it:

Instead, young men migrated on their own terms, preferring mine to farm labour. More importantly, women continually attempted to migrate south to pursue independent economic activities. Colonial officials colluded with Ovambo male elders to block this movement as 'immoral', with the assertion of 'responsible patriarchy'.⁷

The same point is made by Johnson who looked at the position in African societies and concluded that "both indigenous patriarchy and imposed colonial patriarchal customs and laws figure in women's oppression."⁸ Mozambique is one of the countries that were involved in the wars for national liberation. During the war the Frelimo Central Committee urged women to participate in the struggle for national liberation. According to Urdang, the involvement of women brought with it considerable resistance on the side of the population in general and men in particular⁹. It is ideas such as these that led to women being discriminated

⁷ C. Rassool, 'For the 'Father of the Children': The Production of History in Namibia.' in South African Historical Journal, No. 32, May 1995, p. 183

⁸ C. Johnson, 'Class and Gender, A Consideration of Yoruba Women During the Colonial Period', in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, Longman, London, p. 237

⁹ S. Urdang, 'Women in National Liberation', in M. Hay & S. Stichter (eds), African Women South of the Sahara, p. 163

against by members of the society. The belief is that they did not contribute to the struggle in the same way that men did.

What most men are doing in the post-independence period is an attempt to reproduce this restriction on women through the gendered labour system. Unfortunately for them, they find it hard to see this aim becoming a reality since women and young men have the necessary education which allows them movement and access to certain jobs, most of which are found in urban areas. There are now no grounds on which women may be restricted to rural areas.

One of the reasons why women were previously discouraged from going to urban areas is that allowing them to enter the capitalist economy would make them think that they shared an equal status with men, something which both the constructed traditions and customs as well as the colonial authorities did not approve. Afshar is guided by similar feelings when she says: "were women to have equality with men, this would give them greater freedom of movement and might eventually affect the nature of their responsibilities in the rural areas."¹⁰

One's attempt to understand what is happening in the post-colonial period should take the above debate into consideration. The reason why many men don't want to allow their wives to work is premised on the fact that in the past women were encouraged to remain in the rural areas while men go to seek employment.

¹⁰ H. A. Afshar (ed), Women, State and Ideology. Studies from Africa and Asia, 1987, p. 34

They fail to consider that today's jobs need people who meet the standards set by the colonial order e.g. people who have education and therefore skills to do particular jobs. Colonialism thus aimed at 'modernity'¹¹ which is what we are now witnessing in independent Southern Africa.

After colonialism and apartheid, customary law and constitutional law increasingly co-exist. Thus gender struggle takes another form. It is no longer the struggle by women to end men's patriarchy per se. On the contrary, old and uneducated men and women fight against the youth who, by meeting the newly set standards qualify to take up certain jobs. The other party feels threatened. The constitutions of the independent states preach equality before the law and this is either confirmed by some members of the independent communities or is challenged by others. One of the reasons for the challenge is the already constructed tradition and custom. Whilst most urban communities are eager to support these changes, some rural communities challenge the constitution by propagating the idea that independence should not take us (Africans) away from our traditions. To many, traditions are held to be reality.

In South Africa, there are structures like the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) which strive for the consolidation of the constructed traditional values. It is by sustaining these traditions and customs that the traditional

¹¹ Modernity meant living under an 'improved' western way of life which was aided by technological inventions witnessed in machines, implements, weapons, etc

leaders hope to retain their power and control. These leaders are not only fighting women in order to retain their power. They compete with young and educated men as well.

One of the major points for debate is that these customs and traditions are not fixed, they are continuously constructed. During the liberation struggle in those countries that fought such wars, (Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, etc.) both men and women took up arms. The sexual division of labour practised during the pre-colonial period was forgotten. As soon as the wars were over, men resumed their initial status in society. This creates frustration for the elder men who find themselves competing with these women and young men for political power. This then becomes gender struggle and not the struggle between men and women per se as the assumption is.

The region that has been chosen as a study area for this dissertation is Southern Africa. Specific countries that have been looked at very closely in terms of conducting interviews are Swaziland and South Africa. Namibia has also been included in the list but most of the details come from Becker's published book which is an informative source. There are a number of reasons why these countries were chosen. Swaziland gained her independence in 1968 but up to now she is one of the most patriarchal societies in Southern Africa. Discussions for the country's new constitution are under-way. Considering the amount of time that has lapsed since Swaziland's independence, it became necessary to see how the country has dealt with its gender politics. As

South Africa's neighbour, a need arose to see how she has been affected and influenced by the political changes that are taking place in South Africa since 1990.

As said above, Namibia is one of the countries that have been recently democratised (March 1990). As a state once ruled by South Africa, there was a need to see if ever Namibia has treated gender politics differently from South Africa. Since Namibia got her independence before South Africa's democracy, a need arose to look at the terms of her drafted constitution and compare them with what is covered by South Africa's constitution.

South Africa was chosen because, she has recently been democratised. For that reason South Africa has fresh examples to draw from. In addition to that, South Africa experienced what one would call internal colonisation. The perpetrators of apartheid operated from within, whereas in the case of Namibia they crossed the borders to exercise their influence. Unlike in other countries where independence meant that the colonialists had to pull out, in South Africa democracy meant that the people of South Africa had to be treated on an equal footing with no party giving way to the other. In the democratic South Africa, all the racial groups are represented. Even though they don't have an equal number of representatives, people in power have been democratically elected.

South Africa's Government of National Unity (GNU) is said to be more representative than most countries in the world. Thus it is

imperative to do a comparative study in order to investigate this. Of the three countries, South Africa is at the centre. It followed Namibia in getting democracy and it is Swaziland's source of reference as the latter is working towards its own democracy. Close observation shows that the strength of people like Jani Sithole (trade union organiser in Swaziland) is boosted by the influence of South Africa's Cosatu leaders such as Sam Shilowa.

One important thing that needs to be pointed out is that whilst the focus is on the three countries mentioned above, some examples will be drawn from other countries in the region (Southern Africa) to show that what is happening in the said countries is not just a particular case or cases but a reflection of the situation as it presents itself in most countries after independence. Gender struggle takes different forms not only in different societies or countries, but also in one country.

There is one thing that one could mention as a warning. Gender struggles are not always visible. Therefore, one could mention right from the outset that what this dissertation is trying to present is an analysis of both hidden and obvious gender discourses. Politicians make statements for political gains. The very person who makes a statement today makes another one the next day which is a direct opposite of the previous statement. The politician who promises equality for all goes back home after the meeting and expects his wife to do all that is expected of a woman. As she does domestic work, he reads a newspaper.

What makes it difficult for one to see if there is any oppression of one party by the other is because other things have been accepted as given. Political leaders and democratic governments seem to see women as different members of the society, consequently, this leads to the formation of a women's wing in every political structure (government or political party). This is hidden for many people because they think that everyone is being taken note of. However, a critical eye would refer to this state of affairs as the ghettoisation of women - women are being side-lined by men but at the time when this is done, no one is aware that by so doing women are being unconsciously discriminated against. In other words there is a public gender discourse and a private gender practice. Their relationship is troubled: they do not exactly reflect each other.

One more other thing that needs to be mentioned is that gender is at times used as a metaphor.¹² A woman who has done a great job (heavy job or a job demanding more physical energy) is labelled as a man. Equally, a man who fails to do hard work is labelled as a woman. Here gender is used as a metaphor because a person is called by what s/he is not, based on the work done.

Research conducted in South Africa and Swaziland shows that whilst some of the things have changed since independence others have not. There is more than one reason as to why certain things have been reproduced. Such reasons, as it will appear in Chapter Three, are not all derived from the colonial influence. They stem

¹² Examples of this are discussed in Chapter Two

from a mixture of both African and colonial influences. When talking about changes, most of the interviews have a number of comments such as the following "This is unAfrican", "Such a thing is unSwazi", "the Bible does not allow it", etc.

The discussion in this dissertation will start from what Joan Scott calls high politics and go down to localised politics. The aim is to see how gender discourses come across and what people's responses are in the modernising post-colonial state. Most of the visible gender struggles are seen in political structures such as the government, political parties, etc. For that reason the first Chapter of this dissertation will look at the question of gender and politics. The absence or lesser representation of women in the democratically elected governments emanates from amongst other things the sexual division of labour which has been reproduced at various times in the history of Southern Africa. Thus Chapter Two will look at gender and labour. Both of these Chapters show that people occupy different positions in society. Chapter Three will therefore entertain the issue of class and status and see as to what the determinant factors are for both these positions in society. The last Chapter looks at gender and location. The aim is to see if one's locality has any impact on the way in which one understands and interprets gender politics. What should be clear though is that people are not fixed in one place or locality. As they move around, some things change whilst others are reproduced pending the prevailing circumstances at the time. The kind of location that will be discussed here is both physical and cultural location.

CHAPTER ONE
GENDER AND POLITICS

Political representation is one of the spheres where gender politics present serious problems in most countries around the globe. Independent countries in the sub-Saharan region also experience uneven political representation. Whilst there is a call by most leaders of the independent and democratic states in Africa for equal political representation, the reality of what is happening shows the opposite.

There are various reasons on the basis of which the afore-said happens. Most of what happens in Africa South of the Sahara is a continuation of the legacy of the past. As Johnson maintains "Both indigenous patriarchy and imposed colonial patriarchal customs and laws figure in women's oppression."¹³

This does not mean that it is only women who experience political exclusion in the research area in question, however, it is a fact that women are the most excluded in many political structures. Such an idea is also confirmed by Davison who holds that colonialism provided different opportunities for men than for women. She concludes by saying that "men were often able to take

¹³ C.Johnson, 'Class And Gender, A Consideration Of Yoruba Women During The Colonial Period' in C.Robertson and I. Berger (eds) Women And Class In Africa, Africana Publishing Company, New York, 1986, p.237

advantage of such opportunities to the disadvantage of women."¹⁴ It thus suffices to say that what is happening today is nothing but a reproduction of the old order with just a few changes here and there. Our understanding of the politics of gender in Southern Africa should be guided by our analysis of the problem as it affects other parts of the continent(s). Irene Staunton concurs with this thought when she says that "no nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state."¹⁵ The big question that one needs to ask is *why*? Is it because such an endeavour is impossible or it is due to the influence of chauvinism which rules the minds of those in power?

It is a fact that at times the imbalances that exist in gender representation in most independent states is brought about by the societal beliefs. This emerged in my interview with the clerk (secretary) to the Swazi parliament. When I raised my concern about the wide gap between men and women in his (Swazi) parliament, he argued that most women don't stand for the elections. But one more problem arises when those women who happen to be in political structures occupy positions of lower rank as opposed to their male counterparts. This was the case in Botswana as Barbara Brown maintains.¹⁶

¹⁴ J.Davison (ed), Agriculture, Women And Land: The African Experience, Boulder Co., 1988, p.211

¹⁵ I.Staunton, Mothers Of The Revolution, p. 353

¹⁶ For more details see B.Brown, 'Women in Botswana' in J.Parpart (ed) Women and Development In Africa - Comparative Perspectives, University Press of America, 1989

That even after independence the politics of gender in Southern Africa is a touchy issue should not lead to conclusions that the said research area is lagging behind in as far as political changes are concerned. Southern Africa is part of the whole. Thus Connell's conclusions on political issues apply to this area too. Writing on masculinities in general, Connell argues that:

Public politics on almost any definition is men's politics. Men predominate in cabinet, general staff, the senior civil service, political parties and pressure groups as well as in the executive levels of corporations. Leaders are recruited to office through men's networks. The few women who do break through...do so by their exceptional use of men's networks, not women's.¹⁷

Gisela Geisler made a comparative study on women's political participation. She did this by looking at three countries, i.e. Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. She came to the conclusion that "in all countries surveyed, women's experiences in mainstream politics are similar, within parties and government."¹⁸ (Part of what she says will be discussed under the role of the government and political parties to be discussed in this dissertation). In her study (which included interviews), some officials agreed that formal politics was the business of men and not women.

1.1 THE POSITION OF THE STATE

The situation as it presents itself after independence in Southern Africa in general and in South Africa, Namibia and

¹⁷ R.W.Connell, Masculinities, p. 204

¹⁸ Quoted in K.Crehan, 'The Rules of the Game: The Political Location of Women in Northwestern Zambia', Unpublished paper based on her 1988 research. See K. Crehan, The Fractured Community (forthcoming) which is a longer version, p. 2

Swaziland in particular, forces one to believe that the new leaders in these African states who took over from the colonialists do not have the interest of the other members of the society at heart. As Fatton argues, the state is "endowed with an autonomy of its own material interests and political agenda."¹⁹ He views the state as being above the society and struggling against society itself.

In his attempt to analyze the state in general, Connell holds that the state is said to be a masculine institution. He then quotes Franzway et al as saying that:

The state's organizational practices are structured in relation to the productive arena. The overwhelming majority of top office-holders are men because there is a gender configuring of recruitment and promotion, a gender configuring of the internal division of labour and systems of control...²⁰

[Chapter Two will look in details into the sexual division of labour].

Clearly, such comments as the ones above serve as convincing evidence that the state (constituted mostly by men) does not treat the society on an equal footing. To respond to such beliefs, it would be worthwhile to look at the constitutions of the two states: South Africa and Namibia (Swaziland is presently negotiating her constitution). The contents of the constitutions will shed some light as to how the leaders of the independent

¹⁹ R. Fatton, 'Gender, Class, And State in Africa' in J. Parpart and K. Staudt (eds), Women and The State in Africa, Boulder Co., 1989, p. 47

²⁰ Quoted in R.W. Connell, Masculinities, p. 73

states treat the question of gender politics. Whether what is said in the constitutions is applicable in real life situations is a question to be entertained later on in this dissertation.

1.2 GENDER AND THE CONSTITUTION

The constitutions of most independent African states in the sub-Saharan region (South Africa and Namibia being living examples) have a promising language—they promise equality for all. According to Van Rensburg, principles for a constitution of an independent Namibia were set way back in 1989. There was to be a declaration of fundamental rights which would include "freedom from racial, ethnic, religious or sexual discrimination"²¹

When the constitution was finally drafted the proposed declaration was included. Becker ²² made a close study of Namibia's constitution and she says that article 10 of the said constitution states that all persons shall be equal before the law. It prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnicity, religion, creed or social economic status. She even notes that the use of he/she; him/her etc, is incorporative. As one may recall, this is the opposite of what happened when

²¹ B.Van Rensburg, 'SWA/Namibia Post-independence Economic Implications For South Africa', in Assocom, 21 March 1989, p. 8

²² H.Becker, 'Gender Aspects of Traditional Authorities', Workshop paper, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, University of Namibia, 15-16 Nov. 1995 See also H.Becker, Namibia Women's Movement 1980 to 1992:From Anti-Colonial Resistance To Reconstruction, (1993), p. 261

Namibia [then known as South West Africa (SWA)] was still ruled by the colonial governments of Germany and then South Africa.

The constitution of Namibia came as an answer to people's oppression (especially women). In an attempt to rectify the wrongs of the past, article 23 (3) of the said constitution states that: "it shall be permissible to have regard to the fact that women in Namibia have traditionally suffered special discrimination and that they need to be encouraged and enabled to play a full equal and effective role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the nation."²³ Article 95 even states in clear terms that in particular, the Government shall ensure the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination.

According to Becker, since independence, the Namibian parliament has enacted a number of laws which have made provision for affirmative action for women. Clearly, this constitution is prepared to change the political representation of different groups of people in terms of race, gender, class, etc. Whether this happens in practice is something to be investigated below.

Before analysing Namibia's constitution and establishing whether the contained clauses are applied by the government, it is

²³ Quoted by H. Becker, 'Gender Aspects of Traditional Authorities', Workshop paper, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, University of Namibia, 15-16 Nov. 1995, p. 9. See also an updated version of this paper in H. Becker, "This new thing that came with independence." Gender aspects of traditional authorities and customary courts in northern Namibia.' Paper presented at the Africa Semina, UCT, Cape Town, 02 October 1996, p. 12

imperative to look at South Africa's constitution and see if there is any commonality (domination by male political figures in the examples has to do with the sources available and the point made at the time). Even before independence in South Africa the idea of equality was already in the minds of the people. Nel and Bezuidenhout quote section 8 of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa (200 of 1993) which states that every person shall have the right to equality before the law and to equal protection of the law. This section holds that:

No person shall be unfairly discriminated against, directly or indirectly, and without derogating from the generality of this provision, on one or more of the following grounds in particular: race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture or language.²⁴

Commenting about the constitution, Mufamadi, South Africa's minister of safety and security, held that the constitution provides better possibilities than before for all gender groups. Writing on the police force he held that for policemen and women, the constitution gives the first opportunity ever. To date, South Africa has produced a number of editions of the New Constitution, the last two being the one on 18 March 1996 and the one adopted by parliament on 8 May 1996. Chapter 2 of the working constitution is about the Bill of Rights. The constitution retained what has been discussed in the 1993 constitution²⁵ Section 7 (1) states that "This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone

²⁴ Quoted in F.Nel and J. Bezuidenhout, Human Rights For The Police, Juta Co. Ltd, 1995, p. 162

²⁵ For details see Chapter 2, Sec 8 (3) of the Fourth Edition of the Refined Working Draft of South Africa's New Constitution, 18 March 1996

of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom."²⁶ Chapter 9 (3) talks about equality as defined in the 1993 constitution discussed above.

The promising content of South Africa's New Constitution made the Deputy President utter the following:

The constitution whose adoption we celebrate constitutes an unequivocal statement that we refuse to accept that our Africanness shall be defined by our race, colour, gender and historical origins. It is a firm assertion...that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white.²⁷

It was in the same vein that Cyril Ramaposa, Chairperson of the Constitutional Assembly (CA) announced during the adoption of the New Constitution that "I give you your new birth certificate."²⁸ There is no doubt that after reading this constitution one is left with an understanding that the end of apartheid in South Africa means the end of all the discrimination of the past apartheid era.

Though he used it in a different context, it may be a worthwhile move to consider the words of the then Second Deputy President of South Africa, F.W. de Klerk who responded to South Africa's

²⁶ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa As adopted by the Constitutional Assembly on 8 May 1996

²⁷ Cape Times, 09/05/96

²⁸ Sowetan, 09/05/96

New Constitution by saying that:

slowly but surely the Constitutional Assembly crafted a Constitution, unique to some extent, here and there a contradiction in terms, but nonetheless a final starting point for the new South Africa. The trial run is over. Now we are ready to begin the real race to our destination.²⁹

For this dissertation, 'destination' refers to a country that treats its subjects on an equal footing in all spheres of life, which still remains questionable in our independent countries (South Africa included). Following hereunder is an attempt to see if the terms of the constitutions discussed thus far are put into practice, and if not why.

From 'Theory' To Practice

A close study of both these constitutions (of Namibia and South Africa) shows that they have many things in common, i.e. ending the wrongs of the past on discrimination. Looking at the case of Namibia, Becker holds that some changes have come about. She holds that Namibian women have gained considerable power and visibility in public in the post-independence period (particularly in political power). She even states that:

The often lamented fact that women who had participated in the struggle for national liberation, had been sent back to the hearths, i.e. been rendered socially invisible after independence, certainly does not apply in the Namibian case.³⁰

²⁹ Cape Times, 09/05/96

³⁰ H. Becker, Namibia Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-Colonial Resistance to Reconstruction, IKO, Frankfurt, 1993, p.387

This is very hard to believe. For a clear understanding of the situation, one needs to look back and trace the positions that were occupied by different members of the society and the role played by both men and women in the liberation struggles. It is this understanding that will show if ever Becker's conclusion is well grounded - given the current political representation in many political structures including the parliament of the independent Namibia.

Becker herself is aware of the fact that independence in Namibia did not bring about equal representation in decision-making structures both in and outside government. It is a fact that only few women were elected into Namibia's first democratically elected government's National Assembly. As in other countries, the number of women who were promoted to top political and administrative positions is too far from satisfactory. She holds for example that in March 1992, of the 72 voting members of the National Assembly only 6 were women. Of the 13 regional commissioners, only 1 was a woman in August 1990. She then concludes by saying that considering the conditions before independence "progress made since independence is indeed amazing"³¹

One thing should be noted in this case. The reason why the people of Namibia fought for their liberation is because they were denied rights by their oppressors. If both men and women suffered at the hands of the colonialists and jointly fought for national

³¹ Ibid., pp. 269-270

liberation, how come that after independence men retrieve the old file of discrimination? Why is it the case that minor progress in women's political conditions is seen as amazing progress?

If men and women are excluded from most political structures on account of their inability or because they do not qualify for such positions, then that is fine. The problem, however, starts when women have to wage another war (against their male comrades) in order to get political recognition. The war was over in Namibia but Hamutenya (Minister of information) told three women MPs (Frank, Barnes and Ithana) that "we can talk day in and day out, but liberation comes when you take action."³² Does this mean that they had to wage another war in order to get promotions? That women are less represented in political structures, does it mean that they did not take action against the colonial governments so now it's their turn to fight?

Becker reports that in March 1992 the Labour Law was accepted by the Namibian government. During negotiations the Ministry of Labour held consultations with trade unions but according to one informant no women's organizations, not even the department of Women's Affairs (DWA) of the government, were ever approached for suggestions on gender-specific claims. If the constitution means something to the independent Namibia, then all the citizens of Namibia should get a fair deal.

³² Republic of Namibia, Vol.10:154, quoted in H. Becker Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconciliation, p. 277

Sam Nujoma, the president of Namibia, showed his concern about the gender imbalances in Namibia. Between 1990 and 1991 he appointed commissions to investigate the issue. Women opposed the 1991 commission saying that it was all - male. In other words Nujoma aggravated the problem instead of solving it. In an attempt to accommodate women, Nujoma created a Woman's Desk in his office which started in 1990. In 1991 it became known as the Department of Women's Affairs (DWA). At a glance this looks good but many things are inferred in it.

This is not different from the notion that women's political appearance is only seen in the Women's League. One may argue that this is nothing else but what one may call 'ghettoisation' of women. Women in the above example are seen as separate from the rest of the Namibian people. That women are sidelined by men is not visible to the general public. It is only a critical eye that is able to dig out the hidden politics from what is happening in most independent states in the said region (Namibia being just one example). Some of the questions that come to mind are: Why did Nujoma establish a separate body for women instead of including them in the already existing structures? Were they not part of the Namibian population? To make matters worse two men were chosen to work with the DWA "as a support staff."³³

This was not a solution to the problem as some women also noted. As one may see, by creating this office, Nujoma was deflecting

³³ H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction, p. 272

pressure to effect real transformation. What is also interesting is that, as Becker maintains, for the first six months the DWA had a single room in the State House and neither job description nor funding was given to it. If it failed to prove itself, it goes without saying that its failure would be used as justification for further discrimination. There is more food for thought in the way the Namibian government has treated the question of gender since independence. There are a number of reasons as to why the terms of the constitution cannot be applied. A workshop on affirmative action and women held that Namibia's wonderful constitution gives equal rights to all. It, however went on to ask: "But are these rights being honoured by our customs and tradition?"³⁴

The issue of customs and traditions does not affect Namibia alone as it will be seen in the cases of South Africa and Swaziland. Countries like Germany have also been influenced by societal beliefs (customs and traditions). Dr Timm of Germany seems to have been aware of such an influence. Addressing the Namibian parliament she referred to her condition saying that like many other female MPs in Germany she was elected by list (as opposed to direct). She then said that "I thought [women] needed my help especially to get better informed about politics, about how they could advance themselves, promote local party groups, etc."³⁵

³⁴ Quoted in H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-Colonial Resistance To Reconstruction, p. 327

³⁵ C. Martin, Namibia The Parliament And Democracy, Symposium, New Namibia Books, Windhoek, 18-20 March 1991, p. 5

What is happening in Namibia also applies to South Africa. The absence or lesser representation of women in political structures including the government is one of the crucial issues. History repeats itself as during the apartheid era in South Africa, women were made inferior by both the society and the government. As Manicom maintains, the term 'native' was "the masculinized category."³⁶ To talk about women they would be specific and say 'native woman' and at times women were signified as 'and his wife' (meaning that 'the native' and his wife).

In a nutshell, women did not exist in law. It is this absence of women in law that made people (both men and women) have a picture of women as people of lower status. This state of affairs has been referred to somewhere in this dissertation (see for example chapter three) as the infantilisation of women. The law or constitution is the most important document in any country. If it belittles a section of the community, the general public will follow suit.

Such notions of treating men and women differently were carried over to 'The New South Africa'. It did not come as a surprise that when the first democratically elected government was elected women constituted only 25% of members of parliament. Whilst some few changes have occurred since then, the following table shows that gender politics are still a serious problem facing our democratised states, South Africa being just one example.

³⁶ L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State And Gender in South Africa', Journal of African History, 33 (1992), p. 461

Table 1

Male to Female Ratio in the Three Houses of the South African Parliament at the end of September 1996

HOUSE	TOTAL NO	MALES	FEMALES
Cabinet	25	21	4
Senate	90	74	16
Nat. Assembly	400	292	108

SOURCE: Drawn by the writer from figures collected in parliament.

It is true that there has been some improvements if one looks at the situation as it prevailed before (in the first cabinet of the Union of South Africa in 1910 and in the 1948 cabinet which was formed by the National Party). The initial 25% of women is gradually increasing, e.g. from 105 women in the National Assembly the number has increased by 3. However, this too, is insufficient. The aim is not to pave the way for women to be included in political structures, but to see both men and women being treated equally as the constitution says.

Having more women in Parliament will not solve the problem on gender issues as this is a national problem in all other spheres. The state President, Nelson Mandela, is aware of this issue. Addressing the National Assembly early in 1996 he said that:

With the latest appointment into senior positions in the executive of the Honourable Members Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Susan Shabangu, Gill Marcus, Sheila Camerer and Eileen

Shandu, we have taken another step to address the national challenge of the emancipation and empowerment of women.³⁷

The last words are a clear indication that the problem is beyond the parliamentary buildings. If all South Africans fought for and won liberation by casting their votes on the 27th of April 1994 the big question is why does gender become an additional problem of inequality to the already existing ones like age, education, property ownership, etc? (these divisions will be discussed in detail in the Chapter 3 on gender and class). It seems to me that the president wants to put the terms of the constitution in practice but is prevented from doing so by some deeply engrained beliefs. His worry becomes evident in his parliamentary address where he mentioned that:

We can neither heal nor build, if we continue to have people in positions of influence and power who, at best, pay lip service to affirmative action, black empowerment and the emancipation of women,...We must work together to ensure the equitable distribution of wealth, opportunity and power in our society.³⁸

What happens in parliament and other political structure is a reflection of the situation as it presents itself elsewhere. In his speech the president also made reference to the few changes in managerial positions. He thanked the Public Service Commission for making the Public Service representative of society. He noted in his comment that "from less than 5%, females now constitute

³⁷ Statement of President Nelson Mandela at the National Assembly, Cape Town, 28 March 1996, p. 5

³⁸ Opening Address by President Nelson Mandela to the Third Session of Parliament, Cape Town, 9 February 1996, p. 3

10% of management. Progress, yes - but not yet enough."³⁹ This is a clear indication that the government is aware of the present gender imbalances in political representation but it cannot solve all the problems surrounding gender single-handedly.

What is happening here, it seems to me, is what one may call 'gender discourses'. Statements are made day in and day out but none of those statements are ever put into practice. This means that political leaders make such statements because they want to win the support of the marginalized people. In other words, some statements are made in order to silence people and in order to achieve political gains. These gender discourses present themselves at different levels, i.e. government, industries, homes, political parties, etc. It should also be mentioned that the gulf between discourses and practice is not always visible.

The parliament of Swaziland has a similar problem of gender imbalances in the houses of parliament. From the interview with the secretary (clerk) to parliament it came out that some changes have come about on the question of gender but, however, a number of factors contribute to the wide gaps in the political representation of men and women. The following table is a clear indication of such imbalances. Before one gets to know the factors leading to this state of affairs, one has enough reason to conclude that in all these many years (28) of Swaziland's independence no change has come about in as far as gender

³⁹ Ibid., p. 8

politics is concerned.

Table 2

Male to Female Ratio in Three Houses of the Swazi Parliament
at the beginning of July 1996

DIVISION	TOTAL NO.	MALES	FEMALES
Cabinet	16	12	4
Senate	30	24	6
Nat.Assembly	95	93	2

SOURCE: Table drawn by the writer after checking figures in
the Swazi Parliament.

As one may see, the position in Swaziland is no different from the two examples presented above in the cases of Namibia and South Africa. This is despite the fact that Swaziland has been independent for 28 years now. There is no hope that this situation will change after the proposed democratic elections and the drafting of the new constitution because the countries that have constitutions have also failed to address the issue of equal political representation.

The governments of the countries covered in this research should not be singled out as having a particular problem. Crehan's study on Zambia shows that during President Kaunda's rule women were not well represented in parliament. Again, in 1994, under

Frederick Chiluba (who took over in 1991) "women made up a grand total of 6.6% of the 150 members of parliament, roughly comparable with the situation under UNIP's one party rule."⁴⁰

Botswana too, cannot escape this problem. The Women's Affairs Unit in the Department of Home Affairs was established in 1981. Some women academics expressed their concerns about gender imbalances in political structures. In their meeting held at the university of Botswana they held that "government departments inevitably discussed women's issues in an uncritical manner, usually perceiving them in terms of welfare rather than politics"⁴¹ (the sexual division of labour will be discussed in the next chapter on gender and labour).

The list of such figures showing gender ratio imbalances can be endless. Southern Africa as a region or Africa as a continent is not to blame for this state of affairs since it is a global problem. Connell reports that in 1990 the percentages of women in parliament in other countries of the world were recorded as follows: in Italy-15%, in USA-7% and in Japan-2%⁴² If custom and tradition are the causes of this unequal political representation (as said in the Namibian case), the big question that arises is

⁴⁰ K. Crehan, 'The Rules Of The Game: The Political Location Of Women in Northwestern Zambia', Unpublished paper based on 1988 research. See K. Crehan, The Fractured Community (forthcoming) which is a longer version.

⁴¹ Reports From Four Women's Groups in Africa, in Signs, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1992

⁴² R.W. Connell, Masculinities, p.204

that do all the countries around the globe have the same customs and traditions? As this is certainly not the case, we need to investigate the specifics of gender politics in a global context.

Since the governments of the countries discussed in this dissertation are made up of a number of political parties, it would be a good idea to look at the political representation in the different political parties and see as to how the question of gender politics presents itself. It would also be interesting to see how political parties deal with the gender issue in the local governments.

1.3 LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Gender politics in most of the local governments (including the ones under research) are a reproduction of what happens in the Central Governments, with just a few changes here and there. More people (men and women) who feel more confident to take up positions in the National Governments consider education as one of the determinant factors. They seem to be more prepared to contest for the local elections because they are already enjoying the support of the people they stay with.

Referring to the Namibian situation, Becker holds that women saw the value of the local elections because policies at the local level affected them directly and were even more than national policies do. This is confirmed by Lindeke and Wanzala who maintain that the 1992 local elections in Namibia "included

efforts to deepen the democratic participation of women candidates through affirmative action provision."⁴³ The big question that quickly crops up is why were women thought of when it came to the local elections but were sidelined in the national elections, and why were women eager to stand for these elections?

What is noticeable with the Namibian elections is that similar to the national elections here, too, gender representation was not balanced. For example, Wanzala and Lindeke maintain that of the 12 women candidates, only 3 were elected at the general level and of the 371 women candidates only 116 were elected into the local authorities.⁴⁴

According to their analysis, the reason behind these imbalances is that most political parties did not want to have women as party representatives because they feared that this would lead to their defeat as the society still had no confidence in women. What this means in practical terms is that some of the reasons why most political parties seem to be having very few women in their political structures or as contesters in the elections are drawn from outside the parties themselves, i.e. they are drawn from the societal norms and beliefs. Thus ignoring the society's views puts the party (-ties) at a risk of losing the election. The following figures on the political representation of different political parties confirm this fear:

⁴³ W. Lindeke & W. Wanzala, 'Regional Elections in Namibia: Deepening Democracy and Gender Inclusion', Africa Today, Vol. 41, No. 3, 1994

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 10

Table 3

The Number of Women Representing Different Political Parties in Namibia's Local Elections.

PARTY	NO OF FEMALE CANDIDATES	FEMALE % OF ALL CANDIDATES	MANDATES WON BY WOMEN	PERC
DTA	135	38.3	44	32.8
SWAPO	121	35.5	68	34.7
UDF	58	40.6	3	13.6
SWANU	34	41.5	1	100.0

SOURCE: H.BECKER, NAMIBIAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT 1980 TO 1992 FROM ANTI-COLONIAL RESISTANCE TO RECONSTRUCTION, (1993), P. 340

Just like the central government, political parties do not see their comrades as one thing. As Becker argues, today, almost every political party possesses a women's 'wing'. SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) is one example. This is where women find time to talk about the things that affect them. One of the aims of SWC is to work as a catalyst and as an executive force for women's equality within the party, the nation and the world. She holds that SWAPO draws her support from women (they constituted about 51% of the party's membership in 1991/92) yet women's representation in SWAPO's structures says the opposite. To understand what is at work here, one would have to have a closer look at the situation.

Political parties in South Africa call for gender equity but for a number of reasons this is not applicable. The ANC is the leading party in the country and it enjoys the support of both males and females but when it comes to political representation in the party's administrative structures there is a wide gap. For example, of the 65 NEC members 47 are males and only 18 are females. There are also 21 ex-officio members of the NEC of which 3 are women and the rest (18) are men (ANC NEC, last modified on 16 April 1996).

The ANC National Working Committee tells a similar story. Of the 17 members of the Committee (last modified on 28 September 1996) only 5 are women the other 12 are all men. The same situation prevails in other parties as well. The ANC has been chosen for this analysis because it is the leading organization in the country. It is also one of the few organizations that are concerned about redressing the gender imbalances.

Gender imbalances in the administrative structures of different political parties are transferred to the provincial and local government structures. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that of all the nine provinces of the Republic of South Africa, not even a single one is under a female premier. Are women not politically legible candidates for these positions? Is it because parties fear that they might lose support as the society seems to be lacking confidence in women? Do women not contest for these positions? These are some of the questions that one feels compelled to ask. But very unfortunately it does not look like

there will be quick and clear answers to such questions. This is due to the fact that there are different reasons for this set-up.

The situation as it presents itself in South Africa's provincial legislatures makes one doubt if changes have come about in the manner in which the society views women. The figures submitted to parliament by different provincial parliaments show that the 30 member North-West provincial legislature has 20 men and 10 women, the 40 member Northern Cape provincial legislature has 30 men and 10 women. Of the 7 members in the premier's office (Mpumalanga), the only 2 women are secretaries and of the 11 members in his Executive Council only one is a female, etc.⁴⁵ The few figures shown here are just a reflection of the general position in the other provinces.

A study conducted by IDASA on the local elections in the 8 provinces of South Africa (excluding Kwa-Zulu Natal) shows that of the elected councillors nominated to the Executive Committees, 14.4% were women. Proportional figures show that of the 2920, candidates won, 815 were women (which is 27.91%). At ward level, of the 3385 candidates won, 367 were women (which is 10.84%). These figures, as one can see, show a wide gap that exists. Considering the fact that the figures come from different provinces, one is left with one question: why does an almost similar situation reproduce itself in all different provinces of South Africa? The results in KwaZulu- Natal told the same story.

⁴⁵ All the figures have been calculated from the lists submitted to the Central Government in August 1996

Table 4

Overall Results Of The Local Elections In The Eight Provinces Of
South Africa (Excluding Kwa-Zulu Natal).

PROVINCE	OVERALL TOTAL	WOMEN	PERC (%)
Eastern Cape	1035	253	24.44%
Free State	1100	193	17.55%
Gauteng	835	165	19.71%
Mpumalanga	965	194	20.10%
North West	503	97	19.28%
Northern Cape	627	93	14.83%
Northern Province	376	55	14.63%
Western Cape	852	132	15.31%
TOTAL	6305	1182	18.75%

SOURCE: Local Government Information Centre (LOGIC) Research Done For IDASA, March 1996

The figures shown in this table are a clear indication that political parties still have a long way to go in an attempt to redress the imbalances. It is also clear that the problem is not specific to only one province. It is also not only the ANC's problem as even the Western Cape, led by the National Party (NP) falls on the same track. The local elections in Kwa-Zulu Natal in June 1996 also produced the same results.

Virtue or Capability?

In all the countries under research it appears as if men do not

need to prove themselves in order to be elected into political positions. Most of them become legible by virtue of their being men. However, when it comes to electing office bearers, many things come into play e.g. age, education, etc. These issues will be developed further in the chapter on class.

Swaziland is one of the most patriarchal societies in Southern Africa. Political power is men's power. Presently, political parties are not allowed by the 1973 King's Decree which gave all the powers to the king, thus prohibiting any political party from operating in the country. The official political bodies like *tiNdvuna tetiNkhundla* and *Bucopho* operate under the king and none of them has a female member.

The only place where women have a say is in the women's organization called 'Lutsango'. As one can see the position in Swaziland is the same as in the other countries where women have little or no say at all in political structures but only get a platform in the women's organizations and clubs.

This has nothing to do with women's lack of interest in politics, they don't even contest for positions in such structures because it was planned that way that no woman can be elected in these bodies. Whether this will change after the constitution of the country (Swaziland) has been drafted and finalised no one knows, only time will tell.

Capability is not the determining factor that makes men

monopolise these positions. In June (1996) the country was hit by a number of strikes by civil servants who, amongst other things called for the 1973 decree to be repealed. They complained about the male dominated government's failure to address their problems. As one newspaper put it:

It can be safely concluded that the absence of strong leadership in this country is the major cause for the dilemma we are presently facing. Up there we have men upon whom the Lord conferred a bunch of wet spaghetti spines, if I could steal from the work of William Cole.⁴⁶

Men's poor performance in politics has forced some men to re-visit their beliefs about gender. A 59-year-old man in Swaziland gave an impressive response to the question whether he thought it is good for women to be involved in politics, and if so, why. In his response he said that:

This goes back to what I said initially that men and women should be equal. Even Britain is under a woman. Sometimes women have a strong voice than ours. A woman is a person and not an animal-sesaba kutsi bafati batosi overcoma [we fear that women will overcome us]. Buka nje nyalo kuneti trike lapha, babhicene. Pho singabashiya kanjani bona? Bahlakaniphile njengatsi. [Just have a look now we have strikes here, they are mixed. So how are we going to leave them out?].⁴⁷

Up to now, the discussion has shown that from the central to the provincial and local governments and from there to political parties, the situation reproduces itself with only few changes

⁴⁶ Times of Swaziland, 03/07/96

⁴⁷ Interview with Mr Jeremiah Magagula of Ekukhanyeni (Swaziland), 02/07/96, translated to English by the writer.

here and there. The examples cited from the three different countries under research serve as evidence that the question of gender politics exceeds the geographical boundaries. The replication of a similar situation in countries like Italy, USA and others shows that this is a global issue and not just a problem facing the countries South of the Sahara.

To answer the question whether any political changes have come about in gender representation after independence in the areas of research may not be that easy. This is due to the fact that some changes have come about when the present situation is compared with what has been the case in the past. As said earlier on, the present situation is not easy to generalise as gender discourses are not always easy to see. In South Africa for example the ANC started showing its concern about gender even before coming into power, but up to now there are no convincing changes. The big question is why?

As Walker says, initially women were neglected in political matters and as part of its changes, the ANC took note of women, "the congress' hierarchy identified women as an area for potential recruits that had previously been neglected."⁴⁸ When the ANC came into power in 1994, it tried to be more representative.

In her address, Fraser-Moleketi noted that SA has over a hundred

⁴⁸ C.Walker, Women And Resistance In South Africa, 2nd Edition, David Philip, Cape Town, 1991, p. 87

women in parliament "and has one of the highest percentages of women parliamentarians in the world."⁴⁹ However, she also referred to the fact that there is not even a single one female premier, there are only four ambassadors, etc. This is despite the fact that women constitute more than 50% of the electorate of the country. Of the three countries, South Africa has more space for the civil society due to her economic position.

It sounds nice to hear that in a press conference in mid-January 1996, Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki announced that an office on the Status of Women would be established in the President's office to serve as a vehicle for mainstreaming gender considerations. A closer look at this office raises a number of questions. This is similar to Nujoma's Women Affairs Department. Both these offices mean that men and women experience independence differently. If there is a woman's office, logically there should also be a man's one and this questions equality as suggested by the constitutions of these countries.

Many observers agree that president Mandela is concerned about the question of gender in South Africa. This became clear when the time came for him to make some changes in his parliament. The Sunday Times reported that "Mr Mandela's woman-power strategy may also have led him to overlook Marcel Golding for the Mineral and Energy Affairs Post."⁵⁰ The City Press shared similar feelings

⁴⁹ G.J. Fraser-Moleketi, An Address Prepared For The International Conference On Affirmative Action In The Public Service, Cape Town, 29/03/96

⁵⁰ Sunday Times, 31/03/96

and reported that "it is expected that Mandela will especially want to promote women - which could place Janet Love and Barbara Hogan in the line-up."⁵¹ Of course, some women were promoted to higher positions yet the question remains as to why should it come as a surprise if women get promotions. Mandela's concerns about gender imbalances do not match the figures shown earlier in this dissertation.

Most of the interviews conducted in Swaziland show that one's capability is a secondary issue when it comes to appointing people to certain key positions. A 42-year-old Simon Mngometulu responded to question whether women should be involved in politics by saying that "A wife is my child. If I say we must go she will go and if I say we should not, she will not. She is under my control."⁵² If the society has such beliefs, it goes without saying that changes in political representation will take time to come about.

One of the renowned people in the Swazi custom, Mbhokane Gama responded to the question (above) by saying that by law (Swazi) women cannot agree on political matters without men. He even went further to say that "uma live lingabhubha Nkhulunkhulu angeke alibute kubafati angalibuta emadvodzeni [if the world can be destroyed, God cannot ask from women (what happened), he can ask

⁵¹ City Press, 12 May 1996

⁵² Interview with Simon Mngometulu of Manzini, Swaziland, 02/07/96, translation from Swati to English done by the writer

from men].⁵³ What raises concerns (as it was reflected in some interviews) is that it is not only men who have these views. Some women have come to accept this as generally true and as given and thus not worth debating about.

There is an interesting point that came out of the interviews conducted in South Africa and Swaziland. Most of the youth and some elder members of the society in South Africa have changed their views on gender politics. This is reflected in statements like: "unlike the olden days, you all have education today"; "you may be equal because it is your time"; etc. They believe that men and women should be treated equally. Whilst this point is discussed in detail in the chapter on gender and location, it is worth mentioning that Swaziland seems to be more patriarchal and less prepared to change than SA.

Responding to the question 'should women fight for equality with men?' Motivate, a 28 year old man gave the following response:

No, that's absolute craziness. Men will always remain above women, even the Bible states it clearly that men are heads of their families. For everything to run smoothly, there has to be a leader, a sound leader. You can't have two bulls in one kraal and still expect everything to run smoothly, because there is no doubt there is going to be power struggle. If there is equality then lobola is meaningless and should be abolished....they (women) need not fight men because they (men) did not empower themselves but God did.⁵⁴

⁵³ Interview with Mbhokane Gama (Renowned for his expertise in the Swazi customary law in SBS), 03/07/96

⁵⁴ Response to a questionnaire by Mr Mbabazeni (28), Male Nurse, Hlatikulu, Swaziland

What makes this interesting is the fact that he responded positively to the question about women's involvement in political matters. This means that in his view, even if women are there in political structures they should always occupy subordinate positions (which is what happened during the British rule). As one can see, one's ability is not an issue here. Ability will only start working when two men contest for a certain political position.

It appears that what happens in most African states after independence reproduces much of what happened during the colonial and apartheid era. Visiting a striking example outside the focus area, one finds fascinating examples from Zimbabwe. According to the reports from research studies, prostitution in Zimbabwe has divided the nation. For example at the end of 1993 the government launched 'Operation Clean-up', which conducted raids on, amongst other things, illegal traders and prostitution. What is surprising is that the government hunted female prostitutes as people who offended the law. One of the questions being asked is that what about male prostitutes or the clients? It is an obvious fact that the prostitutes did not commit such a 'crime' alone. Salaadawi (1980:63) is quoted as saying that the state:

has been obliged to extend its control and subjugation to that of women's bodies. She has therefore lost the real ownership of her body, it having been taken over by the state which in modern society, had inherited much of the authority and functions which at one time were those of the father in the primitive patriarchal system⁵⁵

⁵⁵ S. Moyo, 'The Prostitution Question: With Special Reference To Zimbabwe', Zimbabwe Institute Of Development Studies, No.1, 1991

If the government has such attitudes towards other members of the society (female prostitutes), there are very slim chances that there will be equal political representation between men and women because they are viewed differently.

Before concluding this chapter, it may be wise to mention the fact that gender and politics is not only about women getting a place in political structures. It is however about a fight for political equality. This includes taking out those women and men who came into power by virtue of their birth or their relationship with those in power. Whilst the argument in this chapter has referred to a number of valid facts, it would be dangerous to think that in each and every political structure the ratio of male to female should always be equal. There can be more males or more females but their appointment to such positions should be in line with their performance rather than simply being sexually determined.

It is a fact that there were more men than women in the liberation struggles, so if political representation is based on one's participation in the struggle it goes without saying that more men are likely to take up such positions. However, the problem that is presented in most of the independent states is that as soon as independence was achieved women were expected to resume their subordinate positions irrespective of whether or not they did something for the liberation movements that fought the wars for national liberation.

This Chapter has raised a number of important questions based on the present political scenario in the research area in question. What is clear is that there are no cut and dried answers to most of the questions being asked. To get answers to most of the questions, one will need to go back and look at all that is happening as a gender discourse. Difficult as it is to get answers to a lot of questions in Chapter One, discussing the sexual division of labour may shed some light on why politics seems to be men's business.

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER AND LABOUR

I do more traditionally female things. I clean, I work, I cook, I wash up. [Peter Streckfuss in R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (1995)]

It is chauvinistic to expect a woman to be totally fulfilled in cleaning her house and making life easy for her man and to be always available when he happens to need her [A.Dally, *Why Women Fail: Achievement And Choice For Modern Women* (1979)]

One of the questions asked in the previous Chapter is why is there unequal representation in political structures of most independent states. Whilst several reasons can be provided, one of them is certainly the sexual division of labour that is more common in the research area in question and in the continent (Africa) in general. This division of labour states that men must do these kinds of jobs and women must do those ones. If the society believes that politics is men's business, it goes without saying that there will be more men than women in political

structures with women occupying auxiliary positions. If the society believes that only old men qualify for such positions, then young men and women will never secure any one of those senior positions as doing so would be against the social norms.

This division of labour is grounded in some reasons which are themselves not fixed (they are continuously constructed depending on the demands prevailing at the time). Writing generally on gender politics in some European countries including Britain, USA, etc, Connell maintains that at times we tend to "call some women 'masculine' and some men 'feminine', or some actions or attitudes 'masculine' or 'feminine' regardless of who displays them."⁵⁶

This is what happens even in Southern Africa. In South Africa, Kwa-Zulu Natal serves as good example. Here, if someone (a man) has done something wrong or has failed to do a demanding job that other men do, he is labelled as 'umfazi' (woman) and if a woman did something that is normally done by men, she is referred to as 'indoda' (man). This is what one may call metaphoric gender as opposed to gender that is sexually or biologically based. It is metaphoric in the sense that the action leads to the label- this has nothing to do with the person's sex.

The reason why such labels come about is because people's minds have been conditioned that way. They know that on biological grounds (which are in themselves not well substantiated), women

⁵⁶ R.W. Connell, Masculinities, p.69

have to do light work as opposed to men's hard work. Some of the reasons to back up the sexual division of labour are drawn from the Bible. Most people believe that even God Himself wants it that way when he says that men should take care of women because they are weak.

The gendered labour system dates back to the pre-colonial period and has been reproduced throughout the other periods, consequently, we still have it today- we took it with us to our independence. Writing on women in South Africa, Cherryl Walker holds that when industrialization took place in South Africa the apartheid state discouraged the movement of women from the reserves to the towns. The state reproduced customary law which saw women as minors.

She maintains that after 1945 some changes came about as some women were now entering the public sector of employment. As she puts it, in 1951 women formed 23.7% of the people in wage employment as opposed to 10% in 1921.⁵⁷ However she does not say anything about the positions that these women occupied. It is true that there have been some changes in the gendered labour system in Africa's independent states, Southern Africa being just the tip of the iceberg. Since these changes are so small, it is not easy for many to recognize them.

In their study of African politics Robertson and Berger noted

⁵⁷ C. Walker, Women And Resistance in South Africa, Second Edition, David Philip, Cape Town, 1990, p. 115

that during the colonial period women and junior males had their labour controlled mostly by senior males. They came to a conclusion that:

Divisions were heightened after World War II and even more after independence...Independence has not alleviated many of the continent's problems...Women as well as most men, are experiencing impoverishment.⁵⁸

This impoverishment, one may argue, emanates from the division of labour which gives women and young and uneducated men jobs of lower status which don't pay them enough money to look after themselves. That women were (and some are) given equal status to children, has arguably led to most people, both men and women, believing that there should be men's jobs as well as children's jobs (children here includes women who were given this status by the community). Since therefore much of the society (-ies) regards women as subordinates, it goes without saying that this gendered labour system is likely to sustain itself.

Most writers view the state as a masculine institution. This is derived from the view that the state is the highest political structure in any country. Zarina Maharaj concurs with this idea about the state and she even adds family as one of the contributory factors. This becomes clear in her article when she says that "the state, the family, and the institutions of capitalist industry, for example, are structural features acting tighter in concert to produce the gendered experiences of the

⁵⁸ C. Robertson & I. Berger (eds), Women And Class in Africa, p. 6

labour market."⁵⁹

It is through such knowledge that one can be in a position to understand why there are more male administrators in the public sector of almost all the independent countries in the research area in question. Political organizations reproduce what the society believes in and thus promote mostly males to the administrative positions. Maharaj holds that the society has ideas about masculinity and femininity. She then concludes by saying that:

these structures ideologically construct 'women' and 'men' in terms of certain work-related characteristics, a certain type of sexuality and a certain possession or lack of authoritative, decision-making capacity of the sort necessary to control the levers of power in political and other institution.⁶⁰

This is a brilliant comment because it answers the question as to how does it happen that we have so huge imbalances in the political leadership of the independent African states, with Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland serving as examples.

One of the reasons brought forth by those who want to retain the legacy of the past is that even during the colonial period there was division of labour just because women are said to be physically weak and could not do certain jobs. However, Linzi Manicom has a different view. She does not believe that women

⁵⁹ Z. Maharaj, 'A Social Theory Of Gender: Connell's Gender And Power, in Feminist Review, No. 49, Spring, 1995, p. 59

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 62

were/are incapable. On the contrary, she says that "women bear babies therefore, logically, naturally, men would migrate."⁶¹ This does not mean that if they went to the mines they would be unable to do spade work. In South Africa for example, in the past women did not work on the roads because the society believed they were not fit for that but as soon as they were given a chance, they proved themselves and they still do so today. The same could also go for other jobs as well.

Independence is not likely to change the present status quo on the gendered labour system because it is not always visible. At times it is in the minds of the people and cannot be easily wiped off. Metaphors and categories of gender in people's minds are reinforced just as with race (see Chapter Three). Looking at the South African situation, Manicom reflects on some of these issues. She quotes Pateman as saying for example that white women were treated like the natives by their male counterparts. She continues to say that "their exclusion, like that of 'the native', was rationalized and legitimized in terms of 'natural' difference..."⁶² It is a fact that the 'natives' were naturally different from the whites as well as women are naturally different from men. This means that no matter how capable the natives or women could be, they would still be discriminated against on account of their biological differences.

⁶¹ L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History' in Journal of African History, 33 (1992), p.448

⁶² Ibid., p. 462

Such notions and understandings about men and women still hold today. With the above knowledge in mind, it did not come as a surprise to me to find out that both in Swaziland and South Africa policing today is still seen as men's job and nursing on the other hand is seen as women's job.⁶³ The case of Manzini Police Station gives a reflection of the general situation of the police force in Swaziland. The police force was divided as follows: The total number of police officers was 170. Of all these officers 151 were males and only 19 females.

After analysing the figures, I spoke to the police officer (Station Commander). Whilst he showed his concern about these wide gaps, he warned that we should not use the idea of independence to put other people's lives in danger. In the interview he held that: "there are certain jobs that need physical ability more than others. Take for instance in the police organization where officers have to deal with violent and aggressive criminals, we still need male officers."⁶⁴

What came out in the conversation is that there are three main leadership positions in the station, i.e. station commander, station operations officer and support services. Two interesting

⁶³ For the history of gendering in the nursing profession, see: S. Marks, Divided Sisterhood: race, class and gender in the South African Nursing Profession, Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 1994; on the police force see: K. Shear, 'Not Welfare or Uplift Work': White Women, Masculinity and Policing in South Africa, in Gender & History, Vol. 8, No. 3, Nov. 1996

⁶⁴ Interview With Mr Joshua Dlamini, Station Commander, Manzini Police Station, Swaziland, 04/07/96

things came out. One thing is that regardless of the fact that there are so few women in the station, of the three important leaders one woman was also included. Another point is that this woman occupied the lowest position of all the three positions mentioned above. It is therefore this division of labour (women occupying lower positions) that is transferred to the political structures as discussed in chapter one of this dissertation.

The same thing happens in South Africa. One police station at Empangeni (Northern part of KwaZulu-Natal), gives a reflection of the situation as it presents itself throughout the country. According to Mr Ngobese⁶⁵ in his station 14 policemen and women constituted the management team. Of all these only 4 are women, the rest (10) are all men. The position here is more or less similar to that of Swaziland because in the management structures women are placed at the bottom.

That the police force is dominated by men also came out in the *Cape Times*. It reported that the police force in the Western Cape is affected by discrimination based on race and gender. To show their concern, it reported that the police in this region "have also promised to make a concerted effort to redress race and gender imbalances in the next round of appointments to middle management posts."⁶⁶ Whether this will be put into practice, only time will tell - politicians have timeously made such

⁶⁵ Director of Police, Empangeni Police Station, KwaZulu-Natal

⁶⁶ Cape Times, 23/05/96

comments but putting promises into practice has always been met with some difficulties.

Nursing is one of the jobs that have been gendered. There is a common belief that this is women's work as opposed to policing which is seen as men's work. In Swaziland there are more female nurses than there are males. What is interesting, however, is the fact that in most instances the few men who are in the nursing profession are more likely to be given key positions. The president of the Swaziland Nurses Association for example is a male - Mr Africa Magongo. He was quoted as saying that as nurses they should be fully involved in policy making in order to develop a strategy of facing the challenges that will be brought about by the changes that are taking place in developing countries, Swaziland being one of those.⁶⁷

To have a male president for the nursing association is not a bad thing at all but what needs to be looked at very closely is that up to now men dominate in men's jobs and they occupy key positions in women's jobs. If this continues, will the members of the independent states see any change that independence has brought about? This is food for thought.

South Africa has even worse examples. Here, too, the nursing profession is dominated by women⁶⁸ but when it comes to

⁶⁷ Times of Swaziland, 03/07/96

⁶⁸ For a detailed discussion on the nursing profession, see S. Marks, Divided Sisterhood, (1994)

leadership positions, the opposite happens. Most of the superintendents in many hospitals in South Africa are males. This is despite the fact that there are more women in the profession. One of the big hospitals in far northern KwaZulu-Natal was studied after considering the situation in other smaller hospitals like the one at a place called Ingwavuma. In the hospital (Ngwelezane Hospital) that was looked at closely it became clear that there are more men than women in the administrative structures. The hospital is controlled by a male. Of the three superintendents in the hospital there is no woman. The two women in the management are nursing service managers. The following table gives some more details on the situation:

Table 2.1

Table Showing the Male to Female Ratio in Different Categories At Ngwelezane Hospital (KZN)

CATEGORY	TOTAL	MALES	FEMALES
Professional Nurses	244	12	232
Staff Nurses	269	10	259
Nursing Assistants	163	43	120
Diploma Students	135	—	135

SOURCE: Drawn by the writer from figures collected at Ngwelezane hospital (KZN)

From this table it is clear that men do not constitute even half of the number represented by women in the profession, yet

leadership positions are held by (mostly) men. The question that comes into mind is that: if certain jobs are reserved for men and others for women on account of people's physical strength where women are said to be weak, does management also have physical strength as one of the requirements? If the answer to that question is no, then it means that the gendered labour system is grounded on something else other than physical differences.

Neither this dissertation nor any other research can hope to dissolve the issue of gendered labour. This is due to the fact that gendering labour is not a static process as it is determined by time and space. The powerless woman for example does the so called 'husband's task' if she is widowed or if she is the only one at home while the man is gone somewhere. As soon as the husband is back, the woman is 'dethroned'. This makes it difficult for one to accept the claim that gendered labour is grounded on one's physical strength. Escalating violence in places like KwaZulu-Natal has limited chances for a patriarchy. Too many families are headed by women and they do well.

A study conducted in America very recently raises some of the problems that African countries struggle with. In an article entitled 'Women Bosses Out Perform Men', Janet Irwin (who wrote the study) concluded that women do a better job than men in 28 of 31 key management categories, including keeping productivity high and generating ideas - though they do poorly at handling frustration.

She says the study was a departure from the traditional presumptions, which credit women with being nurturing team players at work but not with skills associated with top management. Ending her report, she suggested that: "if we're going to win the war for an improved economy, a strong economy, creating better jobs and more jobs, we're going to need women in top slots."⁶⁹

One point of interest from this American case is that independent African states, including the ones covered in this dissertation, also use presumptions that women cannot reason things out the way men do, consequently, they deny them access to high management structures. However, historians like Dally argue that at times the views that men voice out to the public come from women close to or related to the man behind the scenes, e.g. mother, wife, sister, aunt, etc.

Since men have the platform, it then appears as if that man is a creative thinker just because the people attending that particular meeting don't know that the man got such genuine ideas from somewhere. Logically, when it comes to appointing someone to take up a leadership position, the man who voiced out the idea(s) is likely to be chosen and the woman from whom the idea came will be seen as an unsuitable candidate.

This is true of South Africa. In the history of the Zulu nation in present day KwaZulu-Natal there are women who were kingmakers

⁶⁹ Cape Times, 20/09/96

but who were marginalised just because they were women. Liz Gunner provides an interesting example from the Zulu nation. Tracing the history of princess Magogo, she says that as a royal woman she had a different role and position which distinguished her from ordinary women. Interestingly, she was a poetess and in 1953 she praised in the Shaka celebration but according to an interview with Buthelezi "her ambiguous status as a woman meant that while some praised her performance,...others censured her."⁷⁰

It does not come as a surprise that democracy in South Africa and Namibia is credited to men who fought in the liberation struggles leaving women outside as if they did not even exist. This is despite the fact that they fed the soldiers in Namibia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, etc. Some of them were even combatants and fought side by side with men.⁷¹

Freedon shows his concern about the gendered labour system which he says interferes with other people's rights. He thus maintains that "women are human beings. If human beings have rights, so do women. All the rights that human beings have apply therefore to

⁷⁰ L. Gunner, 'Royal Zulu women and the ambiguities of 'national' belonging: Princess Magogo as composer and performer', Paper presented at the International Conference on Gender & Colonialism, University of the Western Cape, 13-15 January 1997, p. 5

⁷¹ For some examples on this see, amongst others S. Urdang, And still they dance: women, war and the struggle for change in Mozambique, (1989), J. Parpart and A. Staudt, Women and the state in Africa, (1989), etc.

women as to any other subcategory of human beings."⁷² This should also include the right to do any job that someone wants to do as long as one is able to do that job without anyone taking decisions on his/her behalf. The constitutions discussed in chapter one do not view the society differently. The bill of rights stipulates the opposite of what is happening in real life situation. No members of the society are said to be more equal than others.

More of what happens in the independent states is a reproduction of what happened during the colonial period. Laslett and Brenner hold that European stereotypes and prejudices have harmed Africa, "...even when husbands and wives both wanted to pursue careers after marriage, and their efforts were supported by the state,...it was extremely difficult to do so, in large measure because of women's low wages and blocked career opportunities."⁷³ At independence people carried these beliefs through and they struck at and threatened our independence directly.

Due to unequal treatment by societies, women see themselves as having a particular problem which they need to address as women. Most big businesses in Southern Africa are controlled by men and this does not make women happy. It is for that reason then that

⁷² M.Freeden, Rights, Concepts in the Social Sciences, Open University Press, Britain, 1991, p.107

⁷³ B. Laslett and J. Brenner, 'Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives', in Annual Review of Sociology, Vol.15, 1989, p. 388

twenty-two of Africa's most successful businesswomen met in Johannesburg and decided to form a new organization called the All Africa Businesswomen's Association by which they want "to address their unique needs."⁷⁴ If the problem of gendered labour affected only one state, there would have been no need for all these women to come to such a decision. Associations such as this one confirm that most (if not all) independent African states reproduce a number of things that were in existence during the colonial and apartheid era.

Namibia is no exception to this problem. Here, sociologists like Becker who have done research on Namibian history hold that since independence women working in typical female occupations have also combined in organizations to promote their interests. That even today gendered labour system is still in existence in Namibia is proved by the fact that the domestic worker's union has a predominantly female membership and an almost exclusively female leadership. Becker holds that since 1990 women have organized own structures within the male-dominated social organizations of workers and students. As one can see, if both men and women got a fair deal in the union structures, there would be no need for them to organize their own structures.

The legacy of the past (pre-colonial and colonial periods) still holds today. In the Namibian case, Becker maintains that affirmative action is hampered by group and individual men. Some male partners and, husbands or boyfriends try to prevent women

⁷⁴ The Swazi Observer, 03/07/96

from getting involved in social or political activities. Becker's comment that "Namibian women of different backgrounds tell similar stories when it comes to resentful attitudes of male partners."⁷⁵ makes one conclude that gendering labour is not motivated by just one factor in one area, rather it has been generally accepted as naturally so.

Bujra agrees that sexual division of labour dates back by saying that the Europeans came with prejudices to Africa and used them in employment. She holds that in colonial Tanzania for example a statement was issued saying that:

it is contrary to native custom and to general practice for native women to be employed at all, except in the transformation of domestic necessities and in agricultural pursuits on tribal or native lands...The native woman at her present stage of mental development is totally unsuitable for partaking in any industrial undertaking involving mechanical knowledge.⁷⁶

This appears to have been carried over to the post Tanzanian political economy. In independent Tanzania factory managers generally viewed women as incapable of handling machinery of any complexity. In such a situation it would not be that easy to take people away from such deeply ingrained beliefs. This consciousness has found fertile ground to thrive in almost all of Southern Africa's independent states.

⁷⁵ H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction, p. 331

⁷⁶ J. Bujra, 'Urging Women to Redouble their Efforts' in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p. 131

South Africa has had the same experience too. Linzi Manicom refers to the 1927 Native Administration Act which "recognized, nationally, the institutions of African customary law... as the central mechanism for confining women to the reserves and thereby ensuring the continuity of rural production."⁷⁷ This means that the colonialists in South Africa used people's customary law as the basis for their gendered labour. The democratic South African state (whilst being influenced by the democratic ethos) sometimes reproduces and sustains what happened in the two mentioned periods, i.e. pre-colonial and colonial periods.

The history of Swaziland tells the same story. Before becoming a British protectorate, Swaziland had a gendered labour system. This was continued by the British. When she became independent in 1968, Swaziland carried this process to date. Asked if sexual division of labour should be continued, Mbhokane responded by saying that "Indalo yaNkhulukhulu itsi umuntfu lomsikati ute mandla [God's creation says that a woman has no power]."⁷⁸ It is on such grounds that some jobs are seen as good for men and others for women because after all they are 'not equal'. Mrs Gama maintained that "iBhayibheli litsi indvodza iyinhloko [the Bible says that the man is the head]."⁷⁹ If women too believe that men are superior, there are limited chances for the present status

⁷⁷ L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History', in Journal of African History, 33 (1992), p. 447

⁷⁸ Interview with Mbhokane Gama, Dlangeni, Swaziland, 03/07/96

⁷⁹ Interview with Mrs Gama, Manzini, Swaziland, 04/07/96

quo on gender politics to change.

Traditions and religious norms have combined to carve gendered labour. More informants in Swaziland refer to both the bible and the Swazi custom to defend gendered labour. Mr Sihlongonyane did not hesitate to say that as far as he is concerned there will be no time where men and women will do similar jobs. He stressed this point saying that "Akwenteki loko. Bafati banendlela yabo yekusebenta [That does not happen. Women work in their own way]." ⁸⁰

Looking at the case of Botswana Barbara Brown holds that despite independence (1966) law and custom prevent women from doing certain jobs e.g. underground mining is by law not open for women. Construction was customarily seen as men's work. In her study she discovered that men got first preference from the employers and women on the other hand were a second option. Even if men and women did the same kind of job, there was a wage gap that persisted. After viewing the situation from different angles, she came to conclusion that the problem did not have just one source, hence she held that "since independence, there has been a dovetailing of Botswana and Western interests." ⁸¹

There is an irony in what most men and women believe in. They say

⁸⁰ Interview with Mr Wilson Sihlongonyane, Manzini, Swaziland

⁸¹ B. Brown, 'Women in Botswana', in J. Parpart (ed), Women And Development in Africa-Comparative Perspectives, p.269

that nature allows gendered labour to be continued yet during the liberation struggles in those countries where they existed [South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, etc] both men and women became combatants. Urdang looked at the labour position as it presents itself in most of Africa's independent states and concluded that despite togetherness in the liberation armies, "men have not, in general, been called upon to share women's work, and thus the burden of the double work load for women looms large."⁸²

Even if both the husband and wife are employed, they both come back home very tired yet it is only the woman that is expected to prepare food for the family. In some instances even if the man is not employed he waits for the wife to come back from work and prepare food for him. This calls for a need to look at one of the causes of gendered labour with special emphasis on domestic labour.

Domestic gendered labour is urged by, amongst other things lobola. Some men and women believe that paying lobola for a woman is tantamount to buying her and thus she must do all you as her husband ask her to do. Some men argue that they can't pay lobola and still cook and wash for themselves, let alone looking after the children. Since men pay lobola for their wives, they see them as their children and expect them to take orders and carry them out. At work it becomes difficult for men to accept female instructors and or managers because at home they (men) are the

⁸² S. Urdang, 'Women in National Liberation Movements', in M.Hay and S.Stichter (eds) African Women South of the Sahara, p. 166

bosses, so they find it taxing to bow down to this 'child'.

At times men and women reproduce gendered labour not because they are chauvinistic but on the contrary, they do so in order to protect these "children" (women). This is what Mbhokane meant when he said that:

God's creation says that a woman is weak. To give women demanding jobs will be oppression - mine work is just one example. There are jobs that are meant for men, there are also jobs that are meant for women and there are jobs that can be done by both sexes.⁸³

Such ideas also present themselves in South Africa. Responding to a questionnaire an 18 year old university student (female) approved the idea that there should be sexual division of labour. She however added that such division should not be unfairly done e.g. a woman who has children (especially young children) cannot go and work in the mines. She then continued to say that if a woman has the necessary education and qualifies for a certain job, she should be given such a job.⁸⁴

Such comments as these ones show that gendered labour will still continue even if it is propagated by the chauvinists (men- especially old men who still believe in "traditions" and "customs") who want to retain their pre-colonial and colonial superiority or by the sympathetic and gender-conscious men and women who are trying to avoid putting women's lives in jeopardy

⁸³ Interview with Mbhokane Gama, Dlangeni, Swaziland, 03/07/96

⁸⁴ Response to a questionnaire given by Gcina Mathenjwa

or who are trying to protect families from breaking up.

At times division of labour happens unconsciously. More violence in South Africa is committed by men and the people who feel the pinch are mothers and wives of the victims. Talking peace is mostly urged by women. The same thing happens in Swaziland. For some time early this year (1996) Swaziland was hit by strikes resorted to by teachers and civil servants. Dominant in these strikes were men who were organizers. People like Mr Jani Sithole and many more others, were more influential and organized people.

Reverend Mercy Mtsimkhulu who is originally from Swaziland but who is now based in South Africa saw it necessary to go back to Swaziland and give a hand in the country's crisis. Addressing the crowd, she spelled it out in vivid terms that she was in the country to urge people, especially women to pray for peace (to pray for the end of the strikes). Drawing examples from South Africa on the effects of strikes she concluded her speech by saying that "that is the main reason I would like to urge all women in the country to fast and pray for the deliverance of our children."⁸⁵

She did not ask men to pray for peace. When she said this, she was not aware that such comments could also work against the people she valued the most (women) through whom peace was possible. In this instance men are associated with war (the strike) and women with peace. Less important as this may appear,

⁸⁵ Times of Swaziland, 05/07/96

it encourages division because the husbands who spent much of their time discussing ways and means of challenging their employers and these women who were mobilized to fast so as to end the strike. After the strikes, it is obvious that more men than women will see themselves better candidates to fill leadership posts.

Even before one starts researching on gender, there are already possible answers in mind that one is likely to get. Kimble had the same experience when she looked at the colonial state of Lesotho. She holds that an answer to the question why were migrants predominantly men would doubtless refer to the heavy work of mining or railway building. She then challenges that by arguing that both men and women do heavy work in the fields "and not all supposedly 'male' heavy labour requires the exertion of mere brute strength at all times."⁸⁶ What makes it difficult for one to change people's minds about this is (as said above) due to the fact that such notions are not based on one source.

In her research in Zambia Kate Crehan found an almost similar situation like the ones discussed above in as far as gendered labour is concerned. She maintains that:

For women to challenge the accepted allocation of tasks between the sexes would have been firstly, tantamount to questioning the legitimacy of their expectations of access to the labour of husbands and male kinsmen. Secondly, it

⁸⁶ J. Kimble, 'Runaway Wives: Basotho Women, Chiefs and the Colonial State, 1890-1920', Paper presented in the School of orientation and African Studies, 17 June 1983, p. 2

would in a sense have been to deny their identity as women.⁸⁷

What this means is that people have different reasons to bring forth for their support of the gendered labour system. As one may see from the above comment, it is not only men per se who constructed gendered labour but women too. For a woman to maintain her status as a woman, she had to do what the society expected of a woman. Should a woman try to cross the boundaries, the society would call her to order.

Challenging the societal rules about the division of labour may at times put women's life at stake or in jeopardy. In Durban, Victoria Mxenge, the wife of the lawyer for human rights, was killed in 1985 following her husband who was also assassinated for the support he gave to the liberation movements. Most people who were asked to comment about Victoria's death condemned the manner in which she had been killed as this was opposed to the traditional culture of the Zulus according to which women and children were never killed even in the wars. In Victoria's case one comment was that "ironically, it was the fact that she stepped out of her traditional role as a woman that made Victoria such a high-profile figure"⁸⁸ and this led to her brutal murder. In other words, whilst she was a woman, her political activism

⁸⁷ K. Crehan, 'The Rules of the Game: The Political Location of Women in Northwestern Zambia', Unpublished paper based on 1988 research. See K. Crehan, The Fractured Community (forthcoming), which is a longer version.

⁸⁸ J. Beall, et al, 'African Women in the Durban Struggle, 1985-1986: Towards a Transformation of Roles', in South African Review, No. 4, p. 94

gave her another label - the ANC's political opponents saw her as dangerous as her husband had been. Her actions were more of a man and this qualified her death.

The division of labour has continued in most independent states in Southern Africa and this has led to a number of problems which end up hitting the newly appointed governments. Zimbabwe has one good example. Writing on prostitution in Zimbabwe, Sam Moyo came to a conclusion that one of the causes of prostitution are "limited employment opportunities available for women, especially in the city where women become more dependent on male breadwinners, be they fathers or husbands."⁸⁹ This serves as a warning to the government of Zimbabwe to revisit its policy (-ies) about the sexual division of labour.

There is a discourse of gender equality in South Africa. What is said does not always tally with what happens in real life situation. South Africa is trying to treat both men and women on an equal footing, however, up to now it is not easy to see if any change has come about after the national elections in 1994. The gender ratio imbalances that existed in the past still holds to date. Where changes have come about, they are so tiny such that one even wonders if they are worth noting.

The details in the following table gives enough evidence or reason for doubts about changes that independence has brought

⁸⁹ S. Moyo, 'The Prostitution Question: With Special Reference to Zimbabwe', Zimbabwe Institute of Development Studies, No. 1. 1991, p. 8

about for South Africa's sexual groups. What should be taken into serious consideration is the fact that these figures reflect the position at the end of the year after South Africa's first democratic elections that were held in 1994.

Table 2.2
Filling of Posts in the Departments of Public
Service at National Level - 31 December 1995

POSITION	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Director-Generals	24	22	2
Deputy Director Generals	37	31	6
Chief Directors	82	70	12
Directors	257	210	47

SOURCE: Public Service Commission, Pretoria 1996

What raises a lot of concerns is the fact that these figures reflect the situation as it presents itself after independence has been achieved. This is despite the fact that section 23 (1) of South Africa's working constitution says that everyone has the right to fair labour practices. There are more than enough promises that every politician comes up with when the platform is given.

Eastern Cape MEC, Mr Sonwabile Mangcotywa made a speech in the official launch of the Ministry for Development and Planning, Gender Equity and said that the ministry should undertake strong and pragmatic programmes to deal with gender imbalances, because "...the women of our country have played an important role in bringing about the new political situation, and they deserve a platform to address their problems as well."⁹⁰

Such words sound very nice but there is a problem inherent in them. What they mean in practical terms is that women are seen as a separate category or group of people whose problems are different from those of the other group (men). Women's ability is not the factor when it comes to the allocation of duties, rather it is just another factor. The green paper tabled early this year states that the impact of discrimination exists by both race and gender, even in groups with the same qualifications.

Both men and women in South Africa are optimistic about changes in the country. Addressing a conference early this year, Fraser-Moleketi maintained that the changes in South Africa have major implications for women's lives and open new opportunities and challenges for the goal of women's equality and empowerment.⁹¹ This is a dream which has not yet come true. Reasons behind this failure are not as obvious as one would think.

⁹⁰ Daily Dispatch, 22/06/96

⁹¹ G.J. Fraser-Moleketi, AA Conference, Somercet West, 1996

The unequal representation in the management positions in South Africa ties up with the lesser numbers of women in the leadership positions in many political structures as discussed in chapter one of this dissertation. The following table is clear indication of this unequal representation in management positions. Whilst it true that such imbalances do not only exist in gender per se but in race as well, racial discrimination has been intentionally left out in this analysis since it is not part of the project of this dissertation.

Table 2.3
Filling of Posts in the Management Echelons of
the Public Service (including provinces)
31 December 1995

POSITION	TOTAL	MALE	FEMALE
Director-Generals	33	31	2
Superintendent Generals	9	9	0
Deputy Director Generals	95	82	13
Chief Directors	219	190	29
Directors	717	599	118
TOTAL	1073	911	162

SOURCE: Public Service Commission, Pretoria, 1996

When looking at this table, one is overwhelmed by a number of questions to which no abrupt answers can be given. As the table

indicates, women do not even constitute half of the males in leadership positions. Do women lack the necessary skills and education that would make them legible for such posts? Is it chauvinism that is in action? Are women less interested in these positions as they will clash with the real social life? These are some of the questions that quickly come to mind.

The democratic ethos that governs the minds of different people from different societal groups may at times result in hazardous generalizations without any proven fact. Whilst it is true that most of what happens in the post-independence period is a reproduction of the past legacy, it is also equally true that changes have come about but due to a number of reasons the old order will take time to change.

The imbalances reflected in the above tables will continue because most of the students at tertiary institutions follow what one would term 'gendered streams'. At the university of the Western Cape for example (UWC), of the 13842 registered students there are 1468 students in the Faculty of Science of which 799 are males and 669 females. In the Faculty of Law, 877 are males and only 558 females. By contrast, the faculty of education has 488 males and 570 females. The university of Cape Town (UCT) gives the same results. Of the 15341 registered students the faculty of science has 1065 males and only 672 females. The law faculty has 401 males and only 288 females. By contrast, the faculty of education has 211 males and 368 females.

What is interesting to note is that in both institutions female students outnumber male students only in the education faculty. Whilst this does not mean that the Faculty of Education is less important, it raises concern that there will still be more male scientists and lawyers as opposed to more female teachers. This makes one think of what happened in Vietnam in the early eighties. According to Mies, "Madame Binh, who was foreign minister during the war, took over the ministry of education, a typical 'women's ministry.'"⁹²

The general assumption is that in South Africa too, there will still be men and women's jobs. However, a close scrutiny of the whole situation is not as simple as it appears to be. There may be more women in education but when one looks at the management positions in education institutions, the opposite presents itself, i.e. there are more male than female managers (principals, inspectors, rectors, etc.). Even in the South African parliament, the minister of education is a male. This is not bad, the only time when it is seen that way is when certain jobs are said to be women's jobs yet there are no women in the leadership positions.

One of the reasons that are brought forward by those who support gendered labour is that women lack skills when compared to men. The Zimbabwean Women's Bureau concurs by saying that after independence in Zimbabwe domestic work still remained women's

⁹² M. Mies, Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale, p. 190

job. It continues to say that "women's lack of skills has both limited their opportunities of employment and caused their exploitation when they are employed."⁹³

This is not easy to accept because not all men who are in the leadership positions have all the necessary skills. Just like in the governments there are more less educated men who occupy senior positions whilst some educated but less 'popular' men and women are left out. In such instances education or one's mastery of certain skills is just part of the whole. Bujra quotes the Zimbabwe Women's Bureau as saying that one woman in Zimbabwe who did the same work as her male counterpart but was paid less complained saying "we are forced to work on the farm. If you refuse to work...the farmer sends you away...I cannot think of anywhere else I could go if I were driven away."⁹⁴ It is not mentioned as to why this woman was paid less because her lack of skills was not worse than that of the male servant(s).

Writing on independent Zimbabwe, Afshar is quoted as saying that "in Zimbabwe, employment in all sectors except agriculture has, historically, been almost exclusively reserved for black men."⁹⁵ This statement raises a lot of important issues. One issue is

⁹³ We Carry a Heavy Load, Rural Women in Zimbabwe Speak Out, in Zimbabwe Women's Bureau, 1981, p. 37

⁹⁴ J. Bujra, 'Urging Women to Redouble their Efforts, Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation in Africa, in C. Robertson, and I. Berger, Women and Class in Africa, p. 128

⁹⁵ H. Afshar (ed), Women, State and Ideology: Studies From Africa and Asia, p. 34

that agriculture (at a micro level) is associated with women. I say micro because most of the larger fields (farms) are cultivated by men. In other words black men are seen as more industrious than women and the two groups are thus given different social status. Both of these two groups of people were belittled by the colonial rule and now only men have improved their social status. As Afshar argues in her 1987 study, unlike in South Africa in Zimbabwe even the poorest-paid workers and domestic workers are predominantly male.

The argument thus far has shown that gendered labour has been there for some time now and it is still going to be there as long as men and women view themselves differently. After more than 30 years in exile, Chris Hani returned to his childhood village, Cofimvaba and found that sexual division of labour was as it was many years before he left the country (S A). He then commented saying that "women are still walking five kilometres to fetch water and carrying it on their heads back to their homes."⁹⁶ Two years after independence in South Africa, fetching water is still women's work (particularly in the rural areas where water is fetched from afar).

The variety of cases that have been cited in this chapter raise some concern. If the reproduction of gendered labour affected only one country, it would be easier to trace some reasons behind that. What complicates matters is that the countries that have been mentioned in this chapter got their independence at

⁹⁶ Cape Times, 09/04/96

different times in history and some under different circumstances i.e. some fought for their liberation [South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia etc.] and others reached a negotiated settlement [Swaziland, Botswana, etc.].

Dealing with the problem of gender struggle is not something one can do today and hope to achieve the results the next day. Even the countries that got independence many years back, live with this problem to date. South Africa is thus no exception. The figures on tertiary enrolment raise one's eyebrows. They give a reflection of what the future holds for us. In other words blaming the government of the day is not a solution to the nation's problems. Such a move only takes pains to solve the problem and not the root cause. An attempt to solve the cause of the problem would be to go back and see how the problem came about in the first place. It is through such knowledge that one can hope to eliminate some of the serious problems facing our independent states in Southern Africa.

Before ending this chapter, it would be appropriate to mention that gendered labour leaves women with more responsibilities thus remaining with no time to attend meetings. This explains some of the reasons why they cannot be appointed in political structures and perhaps managerial positions. This Chapter has, in many different ways tried to answer some of the questions that came out in the first one on politics. It is for example clear by now that some of the reasons why there is unequal gender representation in the political leadership positions is due to

gendered labour.

At the same time, this chapter has also raised a number of new questions that need to be answered. One of such questions is: why did and or does gendered labour come about? Whilst there are numerous points that one could refer to as answers to this question, one answer is that members of the society do not see themselves as equal beings (only the constitutions have such views). This means that people of a particular class have to do certain jobs that others cannot do. It is in that spirit then that it becomes crucial at this juncture for one to look at gender and class. Following hereunder is thus an attempt to see as to how influential class is in gendering labour. The different factors that determine class and status will be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER THREE

STATUS, CLASS AND GENDER

Real life does not present itself in a dualistic manner but as an integrated whole, where multiple relations of domination/ subordination- based on age, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual experience - interact dialectically with class and gender relations.
[Beneria and Roldan (1987:10)]

Class or class formation is one of the crucial issues (it is part of the integrated whole) that needs to be taken into cognisance in an attempt to understand gender politics. Since different people have different meanings that they attach to class, a

definition of the term class is a sine-qua-non. According to the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, "the concept of class is concerned with social differentiation of groups."⁹⁷ In other words the term class is a social category. It arguably divides people into the powerful and the powerless. Kuper refers to the Marxist theory according to which people are classified in terms of their socio-economic background. According to this theory, he says, "the bourgeoisie is the class which owns the means of production - and consequently wields political power - by control of the state and the propagation of the ideologies which promote its domination."⁹⁸ Thus, according to this definition both men and women can be part of the bourgeoisie class.

One important point worth mentioning is that linked to class is status. Both the two terms divide the society into certain groups or categories. These groups are neither purely men nor are they purely women. There is the crossing of boundaries between the two sexual groups. Since class and status perform an almost similar function (dividing the society), Seligman and Johnson hold that these two principles of social organization - that of status and that of class - are not easily distinguishable, for historically they are to be found existing side by side and often overlapping.

Before engaging into an indepth discussion, there is a dire need

⁹⁷ E. R. Seligman and A. Johnson (eds), Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 3, 1937, p. 531

⁹⁸ L. Kuper, African Bourgeoisie, Race Class and Politics in South Africa, Yale University Press, Massachusetts, 1969, p. 3

to locate these terms for clarity purposes of this dissertation. Before colonialism and industrialisation, status was more of an issue. This is also confirmed by the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences when it says that initially, social differentiation was not of class but of status or rank. It says that "differentiation according to status was fixed; a man was born into a certain station, his membership in it was determined by law and custom and change of status was practicably out of question."⁹⁹ In other words, while status and class are intertwined and interdependent, it appears that it is status that came first and then class. Thus the first part of this discussion will entertain the issue of status.

STATUS AND CUSTOMARY LAW

According to the customary beliefs members of the society occupied different positions in the social hierarchy. There were a number of factors that determined one's status. Such factors include: sex, age, etc. In some of the independent states or countries (especially in rural areas), customary influence holds to date though in varying degrees.

Age is one of the determinant factors of status. According to the customary law, younger members of the society were expected to respect their elders (both men and women). As Nhlapo puts it "in traditional Africa elderhood was a status position which ensured

⁹⁹ E. R. Seligman and A Johnson (eds) Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 3, pp. 531-532

wealth, power, authority, privilege and leadership."¹⁰⁰
Robertson and Berger hold similar feelings on this issue when they say that:

In some instances age could be more significant than gender in determining status. Before education was introduced African structures promoted the authority of the old over the young, a pattern that Western education disrupted.¹⁰¹

As reflected in this quotation, before western influence people qualified to hold or occupy certain positions in society. However, when colonialism and westernization came, some of the people who were high in status became less important. Then what happens after independence is based on the standards set by the colonial governments (the point on the influence brought about by westernisation will be further developed under the section on class in this Chapter). Whilst old people were high in status as opposed to children, sexual differences sub-divided these old people and gave them a status that saw them as different from each other. This becomes clear when one looks at what has become known as 'infantilisation'.

Infantilisation

This term refers to the act of belittling a mature person, giving him or her a status equal to that of a child. In most instances the term is used to describe what most men do - giving their wives and women in general a low status in society even if such

¹⁰⁰ T. Nhlapo, 'Women's Rights and the Family in Traditional and Customary Law', in S. Bazilli (ed) Putting Women on the Agenda, p. 116

¹⁰¹ C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, pp. 11-12

women are of the same age or even older than other men.

Whilst the term is normally used as said above, it also applies to men. Some men were higher in status when compared to others. Those men who had more cattle for example were held in high esteem by the society than those who either had little or no cattle at all. The latter would be referred to as *indojeyana* (Zulu word for a man of low status). Such labels still hold in rural KwaZulu-Natal. This is infantilisation because the man was belittled due to his inability to possess what is characteristic of men-cattle. This was despite the fact that such a man was old enough and had an authoritative voice in his family.

What is also worth noting about the term infantilisation is that it is based on both traditional and religious grounds. It is accepted as generally true that men are physically stronger than their wives. The Bible reinforced this thought by saying that women should be taken care of by men. On the same note, men were traditionally seen as the protectors of their families (women and children). The Bible came and enhanced this idea saying that the father is the head of the family. It is this combination of ideas that gave women an equal status to children, thus infantilisation occurred during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods.

Infantilisation presents itself quite nicely in Swaziland and in rural areas in South Africa like in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Conducted

research shows that most people¹⁰² still feel that women should be looked after by men. One informant in Swaziland disapproved marriage between an uneducated man and an educated woman. To back up his argument he said that:

Kuyingoti kantzi futsi kuluhlupho. Kukhona lapho wena ndvodza lotohlupheka khona. Kuba nemihlangano lecala ngabo 07h00 kuya kubo 21h30 ebusuku. Ngokwesintfu akufanele umfati kushone lilanga angekho ekhaya. [It is dangerous and it is problematic. At some point it will create you some problems as a man. There are meetings that are held from 07h00 to 21h30 in the evening. Customarily a woman should be at home before sun set].¹⁰³

Such a response raises a lot of questions. If a man can come back home as late as twelve midnight-as it normally happens especially with politicians, why are there restrictions when it comes to women? Is this done for their safety or it is done to prevent them from falling into temptation which is what children normally fall prey to when they are alone without parents? Such questions remain unanswered.

One may be forced to agree with Dally's interesting examples on the sexualisation of women. She refers to the fact that some husbands do not allow their wives to talk to other men. This is despite the fact that men themselves do not only talk to, but they also have secret relationships with other men's wives. As Dally puts it, "if his wife goes out he will want to know exactly

¹⁰² Different people in terms of age, gender, location, etc. give different reasons for infantilising women. Some of these reasons are negative whilst others are sympathetic to women.

¹⁰³ Interview with Mbhokane Gama, Mbabane, Swaziland, 03/07/96

where she is going, what she will do and at what hour she will return"¹⁰⁴ If the man leaves, his wife is expected only to provide him with what he asks for. Whether she is told about the man's journey or not is not taken as a point worth following.

Another informant from KwaZulu-Natal supported the idea of giving women an equal status with children. However his view was sympathetic towards women. Responding to the question 'why are women degraded/belittled by society?', he held that:

Women are not belittled but they are given whatever kind of care you may think of. They are not allowed to work in the underground and even in the fore-front of the attacking army. In the good olden days women were taken in the safest places in the caves. This shows that women are being cared for better than men because they are everything marvellous.¹⁰⁵

This comment, like the one before it, looks at women as members of a group different from that of men and inferior in status. It refers to the infantilisation of old men and women in the olden days. Both groups were treated like children. In a nutshell, the comments from these two informants indicate that infantilisation will continue for different reasons, i.e. to let women know where they belong or to protect them because it has been traditionally so before independence.

It is however not easy to generalise about infantilisation. This

¹⁰⁴ A. Dally, Why Women Fail: Achievement and Choice for Modern Women. p. 99

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Sabelo Ngema, Vryheid, KwaZulu-Natal, 15 August 1996

is due to the fact that at times men marry professional women so as to get financial security. In such instances, one may argue, the woman shifts from one position (dependence) to the other. Here, the man and not the woman becomes dependent. It is such cases as this one that made Lovett (after looking at the colonial states in Africa) conclude that "...although identical processes patterned their daily lives, men and women were affected by them [experiences] in sometimes quite dissimilar ways."¹⁰⁶

What also needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that it is not only men who struggle to retain this consolidation of infantilisation. Women too sometimes accept it for a number of reasons. Responding to the question 'should women fight for equality with men?' a female nurse in Swaziland gave a 'no' answer and substantiated her point saying that the man is the head of the family. She grounded her thought on the fact that God created a man first and then a woman who would assist the man. Thus a woman was given an equal status to that of a child who is always available whenever his/her parents want to get some work done.

A female teacher in Swaziland consolidated the infantilisation of women in her response but she did that to the advantage of women. Responding to the question on whether women should bow when talking to men, she went for a 'yes' answer. Amongst the reasons she presented was that: "...so it is good for the woman

¹⁰⁶ M. Lovett, 'Gender Relations, Class Formation and the Colonial State in Africa', p. 39

to bow when talking to men because that is a sign of respect; and that gives the man power or encourages him to love his wife seeing the respect of his wife."¹⁰⁷ What this means is that a woman, like a child should bow to her husband so that the husband will see that my child is living in accordance with the societal rules which say that the young should respect the old.

Swaziland or rural areas should not be singled out as the only places where women partake in their own infantilisation, neither should age, nor education. A 24 year old B A student from urban Mpumalanga province (SA) gave a big 'no' to the question 'is it good for women to be involved in politics?' She said that "no because the woman will believe that she had the superpowers to control men in the world."¹⁰⁸

From these responses it is clear that infantilisation is grounded on different reasons some of which are biased for women and others against them, biased for men instead. Since men and women have accepted other things as given, it is sometimes not easy for women to see if they are being infantilised. They accept what they do as given. Thus "women continue dominating the house maker role, whether or not they have an outside career..."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Response to a questionnaire by a female teacher (She requested anonymity), Hlatsikulu, Swaziland, 28 June 1996

¹⁰⁸ Response to a questionnaire by Nomsa Gumbi, Mpumalanga (SA), 23 September 1996

¹⁰⁹ C. Dowling, The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence, p. 203

Infantilisation was also enhanced by traditional authorities. According to customary law, members of the royal family constituted one group (dominant) irrespective of whether they were male or female, they were respected by the society. Western ideas have changed this set up in urban areas by introducing new authorities like the town councils, mayors, etc. At least in the rural areas this customary belief is still respected. In Kwa-Zulu Natal for example the members of the Zulu royal family are still held in high esteem by the society. They are referred to as "Abantwana basendlunkulu" [Members of the royal family]. In any gathering, they are given special attention as people of a particular group.

'Customary' law is still respected in Swaziland. The royal family is held in high esteem. Here, education does not have too much influence. This is common in rural areas. It is also interesting to note that unlike in South Africa, in Swaziland even in urban areas that are dominated by educated people social status is still mostly determined by factors other than education. One interesting example is the one that appeared in one of the newspapers saying that: "...the Principal Secretary for the Ministry of Finance, Ms Musa Fakudze was told to leave during the sitting of the Public Accounts Committee for not covering her head."¹¹⁰

As one can see, covering or not covering the head had nothing to do with the report she was expected to give to the meeting. It

¹¹⁰ The Swazi Observer, 03/07/96

is the customary belief that gave her a certain position in society and she had to abide by the standards set for that particular group. Her educational qualifications did not matter in this case. All those men who attended the meeting automatically acquired a certain status that is superior to Musa's.

Before concluding a discussion on the question of infantilisation it will be interesting to look at Wambui's case. Virginia Wambui is a Kenyan woman who, through her educational influence tried to oppose the constructed Kenyan traditions. She lost her husband (Otieno) and struggled to get permission to bury him as she thought he would have wanted. Despite her education and her political activism, Wambui was left in the lurch even by other women. She was told to take the Luo (Otieno's ethnic group) as she found them.

A lot could be learned from this case. Stamp says that "Wambui's fall from wifely virtue becomes a cautionary tale for women about the boundaries they should not cross in the name of progress and modernity."¹¹¹ One woman was quick to notice this when she warned other women against swift measures to break the myth of men's power. She suggested a gradual process as the only solution, otherwise they would encounter stronger resistance (possibly from women too).

¹¹¹ P. Stamp, 'Burying Otieno: The politics of Gender and Ethnicity in Kenya', Signs, Summer, 1991, p. 841

From this example it is clear that the Luo society infantilised women. This was due to the already argued fact that the state is a masculine institution. It is not common practice to believe children because they might have misunderstood what they claim happened or they might have forgotten altogether. As a woman, Wambui was more of a child (she was infantilised) She, and her sympathizers, was not listened to by the courts of law. Writing on the same case Cohen and Odhiambo noted the following:

Men's voices were raised to represent society, Kenyan society. Whereas there were efforts to produce women's voices and authorize the witness of women - Virginia Wambui Otieno, Mama Koko, Idalia Awino - the justices of both the High Court and the court of Appeal found 'truths' in male voices that they did not find in women's.¹¹²

Both men and women struggled for the national liberation of Kenya. However, the societal rules of infantilising women governed the minds of the judges in the courts of law. Even the general public found it difficult to stand by Wambui - after all by being a woman she had qualified to belong to the subordinate position.

The Kenyan courts were dominated by men and they ruled out all that came from the women's side. As Stamp puts it, even the press photographed Wambui on many different occasions but did not give her space in their newspapers. This made Stamp conclude that: "the courts have become a vehicle for the co-optation and control

¹¹² D. Cohen and E. Odhiambo, 'Burying S.M.: The Politics of Knowledge and the Sociology of Power in Africa', in A. Isaacman and L. White (eds), Social History of Africa, p. 93

of gender relations."¹¹³ It is easy for one to buy into the thought that Wambui's experience is a reflection of the situation as it presents itself in the continent (Africa).

One of the reasons why women are infantilized by society is that men pay *lobola* for these women. As one of the key determinant factors of one's position in society, *lobola* needs to be looked at very closely. It will be interesting to know as to who use *lobola* as a yardstick for giving social status - is it men per se or women too. In the new dispensation in countries like Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland, a discussion on *lobola* will determine if there is a need to (dis) continue this practice.

Lobola and Status

Under customary law, *lobola* is one of the determinant factors of one's social status. Both men and women have divided opinions about this practice.¹¹⁴ Some find it difficult to see women as having the same status as men. The argument is that men pay (cattle or money) in order to get their wives. It thus becomes ridiculous to say that the two should have the same social status. In other words as long as people don't have a clear understanding as to why *lobola* was paid in the first place, gender struggle will continue to be one of the end-results of *lobola*. Men will continue belittling women on the grounds that

¹¹³ P. Stamp, 'Burying Otieno: The politics of Gender and Ethnicity in Kenya', Signs, Summer, 1991, p. 842

¹¹⁴ For more discussion on this issue, see C.Walker 'Attitudes to Lobola: Findings from some student research projects', in Agenda, No. 13, 1992, p. 57

they 'bought' them.

One important thing about lobola in the post-independence period is that lobola has been commercialised. People see it as a way of making money. This is confirmed by the studies conducted in Durban and its surrounding areas. As Walker summarises the reports, 9 of 11 men were asked if lobola still maintains its value and they said no "arguing that it had become too expensive and also that it has become commercialised."¹¹⁵ To make matters worse, the bride's parents 'charge' more lobola for an educated girl as if educating her is a form of investment.

Mozambique has an interesting example about lobola as a determinant factor of one's social status. The case of Mariana Cossa is a reflection of the situation as it affected other women in independent Mozambique. She says that lobola has made women suffer. Citing her own case she recalls how her mother-in-law treated her like a child just because she had been paid for. She would not kill a chicken without her mother-in-law's permission. Having killed it, she says, "...I would be sure to pick leaves to prepare for myself because I knew I wouldn't eat it."¹¹⁶ Thus one may be forced to concur with Nhlapo when he says that "the field of family relations is one in which Africans construct the

¹¹⁵ Ibid

¹¹⁶ S. Urdang, And Still they Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for Change in Mozambique, p. 201

foundations of the rest of their social lives."¹¹⁷ Any move to change this 'tradition' is challenged.

This is a good example because it shows that it is not only men who oppress their wives on the grounds that they paid for them. Their (men) mothers also consolidate social categorization. That lobola was (is) used as a reason for oppression becomes clear in a comment made by a 21 year old married girl, Lisa when she says "We as the youth of today, cannot be married with lobolo. This is a custom for the older people. It was practised during my mother's time, the time of oppression. Now we don't want to be oppressed any longer."¹¹⁸ Those who argue for lobola use their constructed traditional beliefs about lobola to understand the current situation. Thus some vestiges of the old are reproduced.

By being told to stop treating wives like they would do to their children, men feel that they are losing their status as men. Conducted research shows that men see lobola as a binding factor. Mr Sihlongonyane from Swaziland said that the reason why a woman respects her husband is because she was bought. Simon Mngometulu expressed his dismay on the issue saying "Ungatsi unemfati ungakamloboli? Utomshayela njani lomtsetfo? [Can you say you have a wife having not paid lobola for her? How are you going to set

¹¹⁷ T. Nhlapo, 'Women's Rights and the Family in Traditional and Customary Law', in S. Bazilli (ed) Putting Women on the Agenda, p. 113

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 211

rules for her?]."¹¹⁹ Other men like Mr Magagula (same place) said that lobola prevents the wife from doing 'bad' things. The different views that people have about lobola call for a need to revisit our customary beliefs about it and both the old and the new meanings that people have constructed about lobola.

The issue of customary law creates a problem for the democratic ideas to get fertile ground on which they can thrive. This became clear in a meeting between members of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa) and the Human Rights Commission (HRC). Whilst traditional leaders supported the idea of human rights for all, they pointed out categorically that human rights should in no way undermine the norms and values of traditional systems of leadership.

Looking at this situation, Wren commented, saying that "Given the subordinate status for women that is part of the 'norms and values of traditional systems', it is clear that the old impasse remains."¹²⁰ This is clear proof that the vestiges of the past influence the present ideas about people's position in society. Status and class are closely related to each other. They both determine the way in which one is viewed by society. Thus a discussion of class would be appropriate at this juncture.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Mr Simon Mngometulu, Manzini, Swaziland, 02/07/96, interpretation to English done by the writer.

¹²⁰ S. Wren, 'Equality Questions', Democracy in Action, No. 5, Vol. 10, 1 September 1996, p. 31

CLASS AND GENDER

As said earlier, class is related to status in a broader, integrated social experience, especially in modernising post-colonial states built on pre-colonial and colonial foundations, which carry old social values with them. However, what makes class differ from the first term is that it has its own determinant factors. One of the important factors that determine class is education. This means that a person can belong to a higher class despite his or her age. Unlike with the first term, here one's sex does not matter. This is what Fraad means when she says that class is not the name of a group of people "women and men participate in class processes in various ways."¹²¹ Robertson holds similar feelings when she says that "class formation is progressing rapidly in black Africa, with African elites occupying the niches formerly reserved for colonial administrators."¹²²

After independence in Southern Africa, most nationalists take pains to sideline women so as to retain the position they held during the pre- and colonial periods. Robertson and Berger maintain that foreign domination led to the introduction of new class cleavages into African societies. They say that "while earlier patterns of inequality usually intensified during the

¹²¹ H. Fraad, et al, Bringing it all Back Home, Class Gender and Power in the Modern Household, Pluto Press, London, 1994, p. 2

¹²² C. Robertson, 'Women in the Urban Economy', in M. Hay and S. Stichter (eds), African Women South of the Sahara, p. 33

colonial period, new class systems also have developed in accordance with changing forms of capitalist penetration."¹²³ As one may see there is a change from the then set up. In the past it was mainly women that were looked down upon. The introduction of the new class standards has worked to the detriment of some men who find themselves classified as people of a low social class.

There is more frustration amongst men in particular. They have been used to being authoritative. By virtue of their being male they qualified to rule over women and young men. Immediately after independence they hear more of 'equality' and they find themselves having to take commands from women and young men who qualify to do so by subscribing to the new set standards for determining class.

This state of affairs has created tensions amongst the members of independent African societies. Dally says that change threatens men who are conscious only of what they will lose or what they think they will lose. She says that as women become strong and independent, "...weak men then feel threatened...only by denigrating women can such men feel safe."¹²⁴

There are various ways then in which men struggle to regain their initial class status. The division of labour discussed in chapter

¹²³ C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p. 9

¹²⁴ A. Dally, Why Women Fail: Achievement and Choice for Modern Women, p. 98

two is just one example. Dally gives a number of interesting examples. She says that some "men fear and hate women such that others hire prostitutes in order to defecate them."¹²⁵ This has grounds as some men marry women and impregnate them, disturbing them from their academic work which would empower them.

CLASS AND EDUCATION

Education has changed the old order of giving people higher positions in society on account of their being old or being male. As Kuper puts it "Education was the original basis for the differentiation of what I describe as the African bourgeoisie, and it is still the most important factor. It plays much the same differentiating role as the economic factor in capitalist society."¹²⁶ The link between the two is that someone who has education controls the means of production thus gains political power both of which give him/her a certain class in the society. As noted above education has emanated as one of the determinants of class. This started from the colonial period and has been reproduced in the post-independence period. The powerless women and young men during the pre-colonial period got more power over their superiors (old men) during the colonial period. From the interviews conducted in South Africa and Swaziland, it became evident that education has led to people redefining their class affiliation.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 100

¹²⁶ L. Kuper, African Bourgeoisie, Race Class and Politics in South Africa, p. 73

Writing on apartheid South Africa, Walker (1991) holds that educated women challenged the existing norms. She holds that women with access to education began to rebel against the structures placed on them by the society. From this, as one may see, there was gender struggle. Initially these women did not have power to challenge the status quo. Getting education empowered them and they felt stronger to rise up and fight for their rights.

Research conducted both in Swaziland and South Africa shows that education is a threat to the family's harmony. Most people believe that it is better if it is the man who is educated. In most cases where it is the woman who is educated, the husband feels insecure. His illiteracy or lesser education instills an inferiority complex in him. He cannot be as authoritative as he would have been if it was him who was educated.¹²⁷

Most responses to the question 'would you encourage uneducated men to marry educated women?' were negative. Mbhokane from Swaziland responded by saying that it is dangerous and it is troublesome.¹²⁸ Some of the reasons brought forward were that educated women want to dominate the families. Uneducated husbands feel inferior, especially in cases where it is the woman who is employed in the family. Educated women are not easy to control

¹²⁷ Interview with Thembinkosi Mafuleka, Ingwavuma, South Africa, 30/06/96. For a further discussion on the impact of education, see Agenda, No. 18, 1993, p. 6

¹²⁸ Interview with Mbhokane Gama, Dlangeni, Swaziland, 03/07/96

because they attend meetings, workshops, seminars, etc. It goes without saying that the uneducated man will have to look after the family's needs in his wife's absence. Most men find it hard to accept this. Men regard themselves as occupying the highest position in the social hierarchy. These educated women contest with men for these positions and men find this threatening.

Age does not seem to be an issue here as both young and old members of the society share similar opinions. Most of the youth (mostly university students) that I happened to talk to say that they don't want to marry people they are studying with. Some of the reasons presented for this argument are that if the wife knows that she has same qualifications as her husbands her respect for that husband is affected- after all they are equals and they have studied the same theories. It is even worse than when the wife has higher qualifications.

Responding to the question whether uneducated men should marry educated women, a 28 year old man from Swaziland responded by saying that:

No, as well as I don't encourage uneducated women to marry educated men. When one is uneducated, the educated party will always play endless tricks to the uneducated party. These tricks even prevail when both parties are uneducated or educated. How much more when one is uneducated and the other one educated. On the long run, the uneducated will turn to be a misfit and then suffer the consequences and also suffer inferiority complex.¹²⁹

From this comment it is clear that education plays a role in

¹²⁹ Response to a questionnaire by Mbabazeni Shongwe, Hlatsikulu, Swaziland,

determining one's class in the society. It either consolidates the already highly esteemed men's position or improves the degraded women's. Mojanku Gumbi for example is one of those women who, through their education have set themselves a platform.

It is mentioned¹³⁰ how she got the job of being South Africa's Deputy President's adviser. Obviously, her position in society is held in high esteem by both men and women. Even Thabo Mbeki gives her an ear because her education has empowered her. Her case is not a particular one, there are many others.

All the countries that got independence in Southern Africa wanted to rebuild their ruined countries (especially those who got independence through liberation struggles). To do that they needed capable people. Such people were both men and women. After independence in Mozambique, as Urdang maintains, Samora Machel asked Lina Magaia to establish a new education system. Doing this meant that she was proactive as opposed to being reactive as women are believed to be by many. Her education secured her a position in the higher ranks of the society. It was for that reason that in 1982 she went to Gaza "to head the economic department of the state sugar farm and factory."¹³¹

After independence in Zimbabwe women complained saying that many years after independence they did not own the land they tilled,

¹³⁰ Mail & Guardian, 17 to 23/05/96

¹³¹ S. Urdang, And Still They Dance: Women, War and the Struggle for change in Mozambique, p. 231

consequently, they had no economic independence. As most of them had no education, they were subjected to the customary law. However education has brought some changes in Southern Africa. As Brown concluded in the case of Botswana, education led to job opportunities and offered the possibility of economic autonomy. Educated women earn their salaries and do not rely on their husbands any more.

The colonial South West Africa did not value women that much. As in South Africa and other countries in the region [Southern Africa], women occupied a lower status and they also came to accept it as given. However, as Becker maintains, younger generation of women in rural areas,

...in particular those who have achieved a certain level of formal education, are often highly suspicious of and some do call for an outright abolition of, customary law and traditional authorities, which they perceive as invariably patriarchal and discriminating against women.¹³²

Before getting formal education, these women accepted the positions they were allocated to by the society. It was after being educated that they saw themselves as belonging to another category in society.

Robertson's observation and conclusion that "...colonial governments showed greater commitment to girls' education than

¹³² H.Becker, 'Gender Aspect of Traditional Authorities', Paper presented at the Workshop, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, Faculty of Law, University of Namibia, 15-16 November 1995, p. 17

independent governments..."¹³³ raises some more important issues. It means that as young men and women (old and young) feared men's oppression, so did (do) old men. After independence both educated men and women have power and authority. There are women who employ both men and women, young and old to work for them. Independent governments have both men and women (no matter how few the latter may be). These men and women pass laws that govern the society in its different groupings. If men are oppressors, so are women too.

The political struggles in countries like South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, etc have more points of reference in as far as the role of education is concerned. During the struggle more people who were within the country had most of their time taken by toyi-toyi (political marches). Given the conditions that prevailed at the time, the situation was not conducive for fruitful education.

As soon as independence was achieved, all those people who were in exile and who got 'genuine' education as opposed to discriminatory education returned to the country to take almost all the key positions in the newly-formed governments. In Mozambique, as Arnfred maintains, after the struggle, a woman called Habiba and many others who had worked tirelessly for the women's organizations (OMM) were replaced by girls who had got

¹³³ C. Robertson, 'Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa, 1850 -1980', in C. Robertson, and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p. 93

their education at the mission schools.¹³⁴

Their age was not an issue. On the contrary, education gave them a superior position and made them legible for the leadership positions in the organization. Time for attractive statements like 'people's power' became something of the past. People were now rated in terms of their academic qualifications other than their political activism. South Africa is also one living example. Most of the people who are occupying senior political positions are those who lived in exile and got their education in those countries. They (through their education) constitute a certain class in society, i.e. the ruling class.

At times education is used as a justification for discrimination as well as categorisation. There is a generally held notion that the reason why there is a shortage of women in the leadership positions is because they lag behind in as far as education is concerned. Bujra concurs with this belief when she says that the shortage of personnel with educational qualifications "especially women" has reinforced the patterns of inequality in the post-colonial period.¹³⁵ Here education is used as a justification because it is not all men who are in power who have the necessary education. In most instances their advisers, both men and women

¹³⁴ S. Arnfred, 'Women in Mozambique: Gender Struggle and Politics', in Review of African Political Economy, No. 41 (1988), p. 7

¹³⁵ J. Bujra, 'Urging Women to Redouble Their Efforts: Class, Gender, and Capitalist Transformation in Africa', in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p. 134

are far more educated than most ministers are. However these advisers find themselves being members of the working class.

Before ending a discussion on this topic, it is worth mentioning that there is a clash of ideas about the role of education and tradition in determining class. The Kenyan case referred to earlier on in this chapter is a good example. Here Wambui Otieno managed to improve her social class through education. It was her education that made her hold different posts in the Kenya African National Union (KANU). As Stamp maintains, she was also Kenya's delegate to the 1975 UN World Conference on Women.

However, her refusal to remain silent when she was denied the right to bury her husband (Otieno), outraged the male protagonists. In the same case, due to her educational influence, Ogot complained about the exclusion of widows from Luo decision making regarding burials.¹³⁶ Whilst the society valued and respected these two women for their education, customary influence challenged education as one of the determinant factors of class. Thus education failed to give them a high social class. These clashes of ideas between education and customary law as determinants of one's class or position in society is clear in KwaZulu-Natal. The two terms tradition and democracy sometimes act against each other. A study conducted by IDASA led to the conclusion that "thus, the provincial public as a whole feel that while traditional leadership is in conflict with democracy,

¹³⁶ P. Stamp, 'Burying Otieno: The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity in Kenya', *Signs*, Summer, 1991, pp. 816 and 828

traditional leaders should be given a role in local government."¹³⁷ One reason why people oppose the idea that traditional leaders should also stand for election is because they know that young and educated men and women will rule over these leaders. Before they got this education, the youth could not see themselves worth competing with these leaders for political leadership.

One may safely say that democracy is for the educated youth (after all they are the people who understand it better) and tradition is for the elderly people who fear that they will be led by the youth thus losing their own status. However this conclusion should be arrived at with an understanding that one party may, in certain instances cross the boundaries.

It was argued earlier in this Chapter that social existence is an integrated whole made up of disparate parts. It is therefore appropriate here to consider race as one of the key elements of this constellation of forces affecting status. As Mamdani holds of colonial Africa: "Citizen status was not conferred on all within the ambit of civil society. The primary exclusion was based on race."¹³⁸ After colonialism and apartheid some whites still struggle to retain their colonial status, however, the struggle is in vain as the determinants of one's social position

¹³⁷ IDASA, Public Opinion Service Reports, No. 9, June 1996, p. 15

¹³⁸ M. Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 1996, p. 109

have now changed, but race is a category worth investigating.

RACE AND CLASS

If one is black, one is a second-class citizen...The specific interaction of sex, class and race has taken different forms for different women at various times.

[C. Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa*]

Race has played an important role in determining class in most of the independent states in Southern Africa. This emanates from the fact that the colonialists were predominantly white. They controlled the means of production and had a well-balanced social and economic background. They also controlled labour and occupied a different class. This did not matter whether that white person was male or female, s/he was better than a black man and thus held a high social class.

It is a fact worth mentioning that it was racial oppression first and then gender second. This is what Walker means when she says that "the black women in South africa suffer a triple oppression, of gender, race and class..."¹³⁹ However, considering the argument in this dissertation, Walker can be accused of too much generalisation. The conclusion she makes does not consider the fact that black women do not all belong to the same class and or status in society. It should be noted that men too are affected by gender, race and class.

¹³⁹ C. Walker, (ed) Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945, p. 2

Blacks in South Africa were seen as people of the same class (working class) by the British and then the Afrikaners. Since these whites saw their women as people of the same class (lower class) they equated them to the Africans but these white women were still better because of their race. Looking at this state of affairs Walker holds that "White women, too...are discriminated against as women, although their membership of a privileged racial group softens the impact of gender discrimination and works against their identification with black women as women, with shared problems."¹⁴⁰

These racial class divisions have been carried through to independence by most independent societies. Combining the racial stereotypes with traditional influence Southern Africa's newly-born states have reproduced the old order of classifying people. Bujra maintains that there has been "the perpetuation in many areas of Africa, of colonial salary scales based originally on racial privileges."¹⁴¹ This kind of division has led to inequalities of reward between workers at various levels in the occupational hierarchy. Men are in the upper working class when compared to women.

Zimbabwe cannot escape this division of society in terms of racial belonging. Whilst both black and white women were

¹⁴⁰ Idem

¹⁴¹ J. Bujra, 'Urging Women to Redouble their Efforts: Class, Gender, and Capitalist Transformation in Africa', in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p. 134

belittled by the society, Afshar holds that "African women were found, much more frequently than Europeans, to be in the lowest-paid, lower-ranking sectors of work."¹⁴² It should be noted that white women were even better than black men.

In South Africa racial prejudice has played a predominant role in determining class. This is the case even in the post-apartheid period. Such beliefs that whites (men and women) are better than black men and women are derived from the apartheid era. In the mines for example the boastful men in their homes left for work and found themselves addressing young white foremen as 'baas'. These whites on the other hand called them by terms like: Pikinini/kleintjie (small one), Kaffir, etc. The same boastful black men respected white women calling them 'Missus' whereas they were not that respectful when they addressed their own wives or the wives of other black men.

This is the case even today in the mining industry with objection from the few youths who have completed their matric but have since joined the mining industry due to the scarcity of jobs. Most people from the rural areas in Kwa-Zulu Natal (Ingwavuma - on the far northern part of the province being one example) work in the mines. The old and uneducated men still fear their white bosses. Young men on the other hand show respect but cannot tolerate illtreatment and the infringement of their rights. The number of strikes that are taking place in the mines are a clear

¹⁴² H. Afshar (ed), Women, State and Ideology. Studies From Africa and Asia. p. 35

indication of the change of things.

In the rural societies men are still authoritative when addressing their wives but the tone changes when they address white women. They even allow a white woman to dominate over them something which they would not dare allow their wives or even female relatives. Most men work in the firms and they are supervised by mostly young white men. They have no qualms about that but if a black man is promoted, (they don't give him the same respect that they give to the young white boy) Thus Connell says that "white men's masculinities, for instance, are constructed not only in relation to white women but also in relation to black men."¹⁴³

This means that white men do not only see themselves as superior to their wives. On the contrary, they also regard themselves as superior to black men and women. What is interesting to note is that (as discussed earlier in this chapter) black men infantilise their wives and white men and women on the other hand infantilise blacks, men included. It is for that reason that Connell arrives at the conclusion that there is a multiple of masculinities, black as well as white. He warns by saying that there are specific gender relations of dominance and subordination between groups of men.

One should take into cognisance the fact that neither men nor women belong to one class or one position in society at all

¹⁴³ R. W. Connell, Masculinities, p. 75

times. This means that as there are more than one masculinities, there are also many femininities. In other words there are oppressed women (black by white, poor white by rich white and black, etc) as well as dominant ones (old, white, rich, etc).

Namibia, like South Africa has also been (and still is) affected by racial problems. Namibian women have come together in an attempt to organize a collective effort aimed at ending their oppression. What seems to be their stumbling block is the fact that they are not experiencing oppression in the same way. White women for example do not share similar experiences with black women. As one woman put it, "before we work together to make independence fulfil its promise for the women of Namibia, we will have to deal with the issue of racism and the women's movement."¹⁴⁴

There is no reason to emphasise the evident point that due to racial differences among the Namibian women, there are different classes of belonging or identification. Apartheid divided people into white, coloured, black and Indian. Such divisions were there before independence. White men discriminated against and looked down upon their wives, but their race became a uniting factor, so was the case amongst blacks. As Becker maintains for Namibia:

Black women fought against colonialism, that is struggle against domination, political oppression and economic exploitation- "most white women sided with their male counterparts in their opposition to a possible SWAPO

¹⁴⁴ H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction. p. 258

government."¹⁴⁵

Borrowing from the previous section on gender and education one may refer to the point that after independence educated black women have found it imperative to join hands with white women who were originally seen as enemies. It is this state of affairs that makes Becker conclude that economic educational status have thus partly superseded, or superimposed on race.

Even in the nineties South Africa still has a problem on racial differences between what was identified by the apartheid rule as whites, coloureds, blacks and Indians. The example of what happens in KwaZulu-Natal is interesting. The Minister of Education in the province asked some Indians to leave their positions that were paid for by the previous government. Such positions aimed at, amongst other things, retaining the Indian culture. To this, the Indians expressed their concerns and dissatisfaction. They feel that the Indian community is being looked down upon as a racial group. This includes both male and female Indians. The said minister has education and as a consequence thereof, forms part of a ruling class and this class empowers him to make such a ruling.

During the apartheid era in South Africa the white race was dominant. After the national elections in 1994 the opposite is true. Most blacks have more authority than whites or any other

¹⁴⁵ H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction, p. 314

racial group. One interesting point is that unlike the whites who uplifted the standard of their wives over the blacks (a white woman was seen as lower in status to a white man but ranked high when she was compared to a black man - let alone a black woman), black politicians consolidate their colonial way of looking at women as auxiliaries. With a few exceptions here and there, one may argue that white women are still occupying a better class as opposed to their black (women) counterparts.

Looking at the material that has been written in South Africa, Manicom agrees that there is racial exclusion and hierarchy that structure South African academic institutions.¹⁴⁶ White women have been given chances in the past, they got education which gives them recognition even today. They have the power over academic knowledge.

There are two points worth following in this statement. One point is that race worked to the advantage of white women. It was due to their racial status that they were given all the opportunities including education. In this new dispensation in South Africa, they use education as a weapon to challenge the patriarchal system. Thus it is a combination of both race and education that makes white women constitute another class which is higher in status than that of most black women. One may talk of different forms of feminism, (women versus men/women versus women).

¹⁴⁶ L. Manicom, 'Ruling Relations: Rethinking State and Gender in South African History', Journal of African History, 33 (1992), p. 442

The determinant factors of class that have been discussed thus far challenge the generalisation that people normally make, i.e. that all men are oppressors and all women are oppressed. Bujra supports this when she says that "women cannot be thought of as a single category, even though there are important and occasionally unifying struggles in which they may engage."¹⁴⁷ She then quotes Isaacman who says that after independence in Mozambique among the few women who managed to get prestigious positions, most of them opposed any alliance with illiterate peasants whom they regarded as distinctively inferior in status.

Whilst Bujra's comments are well-grounded, one should also mention that the same goes for men too. Both men and women who are in the leadership positions in Southern Africa's independent states do not associate themselves with the ordinary men and women on the street (this point will be further developed in the next chapter on gender and location).

It is a fact for example that petty bourgeoisie wives are higher in status than most men. They even employ some men and women as their domestic servants. This gives them a higher position in society. It appears that Bujra is guided by similar thoughts when she says that "gender struggle and class formation thereby go hand in hand."¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ J. Bujra, 'Urging Women to Redouble Their Efforts: Class, Gender and Capitalist Transformation in Africa', in C. Robertson and I. Berger (eds), Women and Class in Africa, p.118

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 139

Gender struggle is common amongst almost all independent African states in the research area in question. Referring to the Namibian case, Becker says that Namibian middle-class women, both white and black alike, have a stake in the cheaply available domestic labour. If female domestic workers challenge their male employers demanding high wages, so do male domestic servants against their male and female bosses. In that sense, Becker's statement that the concrete interests of women differ by virtue of social attributes other than gender is worth believing.

From the discussion in this chapter it is clear that any attempt to understand gender politics would be incomplete if class is left out. This chapter has taken pains to give answers to the questions raised in the first two chapters. We know by now that the reason why some people participate in politics whilst others are left out is due to the fact that after all people are (or so it is believed) not members of the same class. It is this chapter that has demonstrated in vivid terms that the reason why there is gendered labour and lesser numbers of women in political positions is because women are seen by the society as inferior and as having a low social status. Thus one's position in society determines the kind of job one does.

One major contribution that this Chapter has made was to demonstrate that there is rapid social mobility possible in post-colonial countries. The class to which one belongs today, can change the next day more especially with education. A young man and women in general who are usually given a lower status in

society, have the potential to take up senior positions and control the means of production as soon as they have the necessary education. This puts them in another class. This chapter has thus challenged the generalizations that people normally make, i.e. seeing one group (men) as an oppressor group (thus occupying a higher position in society) and the other one (women) as an oppressed and a low-ranking group.

Of the different ways in which this chapter has contributed to the discussion is the pinpointing of factors that determine class. It is clear by now that whilst there were already divisions that existed during the pre-colonial period, colonialism set new standards of dividing the nation. What is happening in the independent states in Southern Africa is that a contest of both standards presents itself, the results of which is frustration, particularly to men.

An answer to the main question posed in this dissertation, i.e. has any change come about or there has been only the consolidation of the old order?, will be determined by one's class. That gender is a social construction is supported by Nolte who (reporting about conference proceedings) held that "'gender' was understood as contested terrain, a construct within, for example, notions of class, religion,..."¹⁴⁹

In places like KwaZulu-Natal some changes that have come about

¹⁴⁹ J. Nolte, 'Gender Equality: Strategies for Effective Intervention', in Agenda, No. 33, 1997, p. 72

are due to the violence that has clouded the province. A study conducted in Mpumalanga (between Durban and Pietermaritzburg) is clear evidence thereof. Ask to comment about the impact of violence, one informant said that "yes, we women did something we never thought we could do...traditional values were affected because as we have said, women have become breadwinners in Mpumalanga. They have become engines of the family."¹⁵⁰

With all that information in mind, we can now go a step further and see if ever one's location has any impact in interpreting gender politics and in answering the question. Location will range from rural/urban, country to country, etc. As a social phenomenon, the term will mean both physical and cultural location. One point that needs to be mentioned is that people locate themselves either at their own free will or they are compelled by certain forces, e.g. some leave rural areas and go to urban areas in search of employment. Their education allows them access to jobs that cannot be found in rural areas.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER AND LOCATION

One's physical and cultural location has an impact in the way one deals with the question of gender. The place where an individual grows up plays an important role in conditioning the behaviour of that particular individual. Mamdani holds similar feelings on

¹⁵⁰ D. Bonnin, 'Lwalukhulu usizi la'- Political Violence and Poverty in KwaZulu-Natal', in Agenda, No. 33, 1997, p. 65

this issue when saying that rural and urban clash and "in the linkage between the urban and the rural, the rural is the key. So long as the rural is not reformed, the perversion of civil society is inevitable."¹⁵¹ Most of the things that the society of a given place value are, in most instances accepted by individuals as given. One of the reasons why people (men and women) accept gendered labour, the absence of women in politics, etc is because they have been brought up that way. The surrounding environment conditions their thinking. Thus location becomes a cultural identity in that one does that which is socially/culturally accepted as the norm of that society. It is for that reason that most interviewees, especially in Swaziland responded to most of the questions by saying that "asikwati tsine loko" (We do not know that). The issue of kinship also comes in. An individual expects a certain kind of behaviour(s) from his/her kinsmen. A particular behaviour gives a sense of belonging.

There is also a difference between the centre and the periphery. Most of the people who are resistant to change are those who come from or who stay in rural areas. The central government in South Africa preaches equality for all and these people have neither been exposed to democratic ideologies nor do they know what is going on in parliament. They find it hard to believe that people of different sexes can in any way be treated on an equal footing.

The same thing goes for Swaziland. The Swazi trade unions, led

¹⁵¹ M. Mamdani, Citizen and Subject, pp. 297-298 (For a detailed account on the clash between rural and urban, read the whole conclusion of this book)

by mostly young people, lack enough public support. These unions challenge the 1973 decree which allows the king to monopolise power and silence political parties. They also call for a joint effort between working men and women. Rural communities are reluctant to join such unions because they have been made to believe that the social hierarchy puts the king on top, followed by men, women and lastly, children.

Mobility is one of the crucial points that need to be taken into consideration if one wants to understand this chapter better. People are not constant beings, they move from one area to the next and they are influenced by a number of factors. One reason why rural communities are more resistant to change is due to the fact that they have no access to resources. As soon as they move from rural areas to urban areas where they can attend meetings, workshops, seminars, etc, some of them become more revolutionary and want to challenge the present order.

One should, however be careful not to oversimplify and think that all the people who go to urban areas change their 'customary' *modus operandi*. 'Custom' and 'modernity' do not always clash nor do they always work together. There is a dichotomy at work here: people borrow from the past to understand the present, and at times they use the present to condemn what was done in the past. This is what one informant in Swaziland did. In the discussion, he kept on emphasising that men and women should perform certain (specified) duties because that is how things have been done in the past.

One interesting thing is that when we talked about the strike in the country, this informant argued that men and women should be treated alike. He added by saying that: "Buka nje nyalo kuneti-trike lapha, babhicene. Pho singabashiya njani bona? Bahlakaniphe njengatsi" [Just imagine right now there are strikes, and they are mixed. So how can we leave them out? They are as clever as we are].¹⁵² This old man (in his late fifties) was influenced by both 'traditional' and modern ideas. In addition to that he was influenced by his rural upbringing at Ekukhanyeni (his rural home) and urban life in Manzini.

Studies conducted in both rural and urban areas reflect on these differences as it happened in a study conducted in Botswana. Here women academics came together to discuss issues like abortion, wife beating and marital rape. According to the report the meeting went on quite well and had fruitful results but "with older rural women taking a more conservative stance than younger urban women."¹⁵³ Whilst age was one of the issues here, the most important point is that these older women grew up in an environment which did not give them a chance to voice out their opinion and oppose what the society accepted as right. According to the report, whilst young men acknowledged these women's organization, some men were opposed to women forming an organization because where they grew up (rural areas) nothing of the sort happened.

¹⁵² Interview with Mr Jeremiah Magagula, Manzini, Swaziland, 02/07/96

¹⁵³ Reports From Four Women's Groups in Africa, in Signs, Vol. 17, No. 33, 1992, pp. 849-850

People's location is not only a problem to Southern Africa's independent states, on the contrary, some European countries experience the same kind of a problem. Connell has some good examples. He refers to a couple of boys (from England) that he interviewed. One of whom was Paul Nikolaou. This boy, he says, copied a lot of what he saw happening in the place where he grew up. This includes the community's view on women. According to Connell, Paul "is about to marry a young woman of his own ethnic community, and he expects her to stay at home with the babies while he earns a living."¹⁵⁴ As one may see, the reason why Paul had such thoughts about women is not that he was oppressive, he was trying to comply with the societal norms. Though there is no guarantee, but there is a high probability that if the society condemned this, he would have not done it.

What was said in the previous chapter on class also applies here. Location reinforces class. For example due to different social classes, men and women do not all belong to one and the same class (Further classes exist amongst members of the same sex). Looking at the Namibian case, Heike Becker holds that urban middle class women have different interests than the urban, let alone the rural poor.¹⁵⁵ In other words both class (middle/poor) and location (urban/rural) had an impact in these women's thinking. As Becker maintains, they also differ on regional and cultural- historical circumstances.

¹⁵⁴ R. W. Connell, Masculinities, p. 167

¹⁵⁵ H. Becker, Namibian Women's Movement 1980 to 1992: From Anti-colonial Resistance to Reconstruction, p.315

Location has a role to play when it comes to the division of labour. Most rural women - even after independence in the research areas in question, find themselves having no option but to sustain the gendered labour system. This is not the case with other women who stay in urban areas where the influence of the category 'custom' is not that strong or has been diluted by western ideas and the democratic ethos.

Swaziland has some interesting examples when it comes to gender and location or the influence of the environment in channelling people's thinking. Asked as to why he thought lobola should not be abolished, Mbhokana posed another question that if we stop paying lobola where will it start from? He asked this question after saying that he grew up and found lobola being paid. He therefore saw no way in which this could be changed. In this case it is clear that the man's physical location influenced his thinking.

What makes this an interesting topic is that it is not only men who want what they found happening to be sustained, but women too. Asked if it is good for women to bow when talking to men, Mrs Gama responded by saying that "Asikwati tsine kutsi uyama ungumfati nawukhuluma nemuntfu lomdvuna. [We don't know that a woman can talk to a man standing upright]."¹⁵⁶ Changing this woman from her belief may not be that easy because she first saw things done this way when she was still young and she came to accept it.

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Mrs Gama, Manzini, Swaziland, 04/07/96

People who live in urban areas have a different opinion about this thing of women bowing to men. Responding to a questionnaire on whether women should bow to men one woman who is working as a secretary in Swaziland held that there is no need for women to bow when talking to men as respect is not only shown through bowing. However it should be mentioned that there are cases of this nature in Swaziland-most people, men and women are resistant to change. The different responses by these two respondents did not emanate from age as a factor - Mbhokana is 56 years old and the second respondent is 40 years old. Both of them are literate but the difference is that they are influenced by different locations.

Crehan's study on Zambia shows a great influence presented by people's location. In one of the places where she was researching (Chizela) the state translated into the day-to-day realities at the local level. The kinship notions of power presented themselves. As she puts it, women were not elected into political structures and "they seemed to accept the existing gender hierarchy as 'natural' and unalterable."¹⁵⁷

In this area, they had a meaning of what they understood by 'being a woman'. Whoever defined herself as a woman had to succumb to what the society understood to be the characteristics of a woman. Looking at the gender politics in Northern Namibia

¹⁵⁷ K. Crehan, 'The rules of the game: The Political Location of Women in Northwestern Zambia', Unpublished paper based on 1988 research. See K. Crehan (forthcoming), which is a longer version.

Heike Becker concluded that:

Different women and men take on different identities. These identities are both collective and individual as they are mediated through social attributes such as age, class, ethnicity, and so on, but also through, both conscious and subconscious, individual aspirations and desires, though social attributes certainly influence individual conceptions.¹⁵⁸

In other words the kind of attitude one has on gender derives its meaning from what the society accepts as generally good. Since gender is in itself a construction, the way the society constructs it in a particular area conditions the mind of the individual whilst he is in that area. As soon as he moves to another place which has a different construction of gender, such an individual is exposed to different experiences. Under such a situation, he either sustains one form of behaviour or a mixture.

One example is what happens when people move from rural areas to urban areas. What they do in the rural areas to conform with the social norms is challenged in the urban areas and gets another meaning. In most rural areas (including Ingwavuma in KZN) it does not look good for a girl to put on trousers because that leads to girl being labelled with bad names. As soon as the same girl arrives in the location or tertiary institution that sees no problem with girls putting on trousers, she buys more trousers than other types of clothes. This is because she has changed her location. The state also allows this to happen by including the

¹⁵⁸ H. Becker, "Shikumbu!" Premarital Female Sexuality and Customary Law in Northern Namibia', Paper presented at the seminar on South African and Contemporary History, UWC, 01 October 1996, p. 3

right of an individual in the constitution - the South African constitution is no exception.

This is also the case with sports. Most rural areas have gendered sporting activities. Soccer is seen as men's sport and netball as women's sport. However, the triversity games held at the university of the Western Cape on August the 9th challenged the held notions about gender and sport. First in the list of the sporting activities of the day was a women's soccer match between UWC and UCT. This was not seen as strange by the students because the place (university) is not as conservative as most rural areas are. Almost all the girls who are playing for the South African Women's National Soccer Squad come from urban areas. In the rural areas girls have other things to do other than play soccer.

Location leads to people responding to democracy, urbanisation, etc in divided ways. This became clear in a discussion between the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (Contralesa). Speaking on behalf of the chiefs who were gathered there, chief Nonkonyana stood up and said that:

We firmly believe that the entrenched values and norms in traditional communities must be acknowledged, promoted and protected. Our values and norms must not be regarded as inferior to Western norms and values, as seems to be the trend in some quarters in South Africa, especially urban areas.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Wren, S. 'Equality Questions' Democracy in Action, Vol. 10, No. 5, 1 September 1996, p.31

This means that even though democracy propagates the idea of equality which everyone has been fighting for, these chiefs find it clashing with what they have made to be the norm in their communities. On such basis they are likely to have mixed feelings about the democratic ethos. From the above comment it is clear that these chiefs are of the opinion that rural communities should be treated differently from urban communities. By so doing they are resisting change which the government is trying to bring about. One would argue that rural authorities are trying to establish a *cultural state* which is opposed to the *democratic state* which the GNU is representing in South Africa.

There is one interesting thing about gender and location when one looks at South Africa and Swaziland. In South Africa most of the educated youths see nothing wrong when people greet by kissing each other. It is mostly rural older members of the society who disapprove this way of greeting. In Swaziland people from different localities gave almost similar responses to the question whether it is good for people to greet by kissing each other (especially people of different sexes).

Responses reflected comments such as "I would feel angry...", "I would be very annoyed...", "Another absolute craziness indeed. This is unSwazi. I don't even think it can happen.". The word 'unSwazi' here is more crucial. It shows that there are certain things that are determining features of people living in this geographical area. The word also means that constructed Swazi culture gives Swazi identity. Whoever does not live according to

the set norms and values of Swazi people is obviously seen as being 'unSwazi'.

One major reason that they brought forward was that they never saw such a thing happening in their place. This means that even those who now live in urban areas they have brought along with them most of what they have got used to. Even if they are in the urban areas, it is still the environment that makes them oppose this way of greeting because they rarely or not at all see such a thing happening in their localities. What is also noticeable in Swaziland is that even people who live in the locations do not live as differently from people in the rural areas as the South Africans do. In South Africa there is a wide gap between rural and urban reflected in clothing, spending leisure time, respect, etc.

South Africa's provinces have more examples to draw from when it comes to people's location. Of the nine provinces, Kwa-Zulu Natal is the most conservative. Whilst the other eight provinces are prepared to let democracy take its course, KZN (of late with the support of Contralesa) finds it difficult to accept some of the things that democracy has brought about. One of such things is the substitution of traditional leaders by the democratically elected councillors and mayors.

A study conducted by IDASA in the said province came up with the findings that "a wide majority (69%) of eligible voters in the province felt that traditional leaders do have a role to play in

the new South Africa, while four-in-ten (41%) saw a conflict between traditional authority and democracy."¹⁶⁰ As one may see here, the reason why most people are so conservative is because from what they have known in the past, traditional leaders have played a crucial role in governing people. They have never seen women/young men having a social status higher than that of elder members of the society.

It is this strong local influence that make King Goodwill Zwelithini Zulu to remain a recognised king even after the democratic elections have put certain structures and individuals in key positions as people who have been authorised to govern. This should not be simplified to the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)'s struggle to retain its Zuluness because even ANC members and members of the other political organizations value the king. This is despite the fact that the ANC for example is leading the democratically elected government. All these people have a common understanding about being a Zulu in spite of their differences which range from political ideologies, religious beliefs, etc.

Considering all that has been said thus far, it is clear that one's location has a great impact in the manner in which one views the issue of gender. The interviews conducted both in South Africa and Swaziland show that most people who are in the rural areas find it difficult to accept some of the things that democracy has brought about. In many instances democracy clashes with and challenges the old order based on 'customary' beliefs.

¹⁶⁰ Public Opinion Service (POS), No.9, June 1996, p.15

What one should be quick to mention though, is that as something neither static nor real, 'custom' is timeously being defined, redefined, more reified, constructed, etc in order to suit the conditions prevailing at the time.

What is not within the scope of this dissertation to answer all questions about the similarities and differences that exist amongst the researched areas, it is however fascinating to note that Swaziland seems to be more conservative than South Africa is. This conclusion is arrived at after considering that even people in the urban areas both old and young see other behaviours as being unSwazi. Even when they go to stay in urban areas, they bring some of these beliefs along. A bigger research project could investigate this issue further.

This Chapter thus links up with the earlier debates in this dissertation. It makes one understand why some people show certain behaviours even if they are educated. It also furnishes some reasons as to why even young people at times take a conservative stance on gender issues. If they grew up in places where the society had certain views about men and women they are also likely to inherit such views.

From what this Chapter has demonstrated, it is clear that generalisations sometimes do not help. The Chapter has also shown that ideologies about gender can either be collective or individual. The examples drawn from different countries have reflected on both common and particular cases that are more

dominant in some countries and less dominant in others. This Chapter has also shown that there is the making of social and political spaces (by traditional structures like Contralesa) away from centralised power controlled by the government which have a determining impact on local gender norms.

CONCLUSION

Whilst it has not been the task of this research to put the three periods (pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial) in indepth scrutiny, one must acknowledge that they are crucial to any research that attempts to reflect on the changes that have come about over the years. These periods are a sine-qua-non to whoever dares try to understand the current position in the Southern African region or in the areas that have been researched for this dissertation. To see if ever any change has come about, one needs to study the previous periods as well. The origin of the gender politics and problems suggested by the title of this dissertation would need years of close study. What this particular research has tried to do, however, is give an indication as to how one needs to analyse gender politics and the gender discourse as it presents itself today through many forms.

To some, it may appear as if this dissertation has crossed the boundaries, i.e. a male writing about women. However, gender politics is [as defined in the introduction of this dissertation] a category socially constructed and it refers to the study of both men and women and their relationships. The discussion thus

far has raised some important questions and has put a number of points on the table for further debate. Some of the questions that this dissertation has tried to address are: where does the problem of unequal representation (of different gender groups) in political structures emanate from? Why is there sexual division of labour? Are all men oppressors and all women the oppressed? etc.

There is one interesting thing that one can quickly refer to. Colonialism did not mean one and the same thing to all the people of Southern Africa. It should be noted that in certain instances the colonial governments reinforced or reproduced some of the things that were already there. One example is the subordination of women by men. However, it should be noted that colonialism also introduced things like education which have in many respects shaped up the post-colonial period and at times changed the old order (those who were powerless now have power to challenge the 'traditional' authorities).

Post-colonial experiences sometimes reinforce and sustain what happened before colonialism. It is the sexual division of labour during the pre-colonial period that makes people in the post-independence states think that certain jobs (especially in politics) are good for men and women should play an auxiliary role. What is missed by many is that education which colonialism brought along with, armed both men and women, but at the same time it disarmed both parties. Those who have education (regardless of their sex), qualify to take up certain jobs. Those

who lack education are obviously left out when appointments to key positions are made.

Evident in the process of change from one period to the next is the crossing of boundaries. This challenges the idea held by many historians that women experience triple oppression (colour, race and sex). Neither women nor men should be seen as one group. During the pre-colonial period, members of the royal family (men and women) were given a higher social status. During the colonial period, colonial administrators had recognition of the chiefs whilst they undermined all other African people (men and women).

During the post-colonial period young men and women in general are empowered through education. It is such powers that minister Stela Sigcawu used when addressing 120 men from Denel. She gave orders like a commander and they responded as soldiers would have done. She told all men with grey hair to stand up. They could not do otherwise. As one man put it: "we felt like little children, but we all stood and waited for the minister to speak...we did not know what was happening. Some of us thought she might order us to leave then and there."¹⁶¹ This could not happen in the past. Neither the constructed traditional beliefs nor the Biblical teachings gave women power over men.

Gender discourse in the post-independence South Africa and Namibia has its roots in both the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Driven by the democratic ethos that is prevailing after

¹⁶¹ Sunday Times, 20/10/96

independence, politicians preach equality for all. They are supported by the democratically drafted constitutions which also speak about equality for all. The most crucial point worth noting is that this equality is not put into practice, it is only in the mouth. The big question is why? What makes it difficult to deal with this kind of a situation is that it is not only male chauvinists who want to oppress women and the youth of both sexes. On the contrary, members of the African communities accept certain things as given and thus unchallengeable. As seen from the interviews, Swaziland takes the lead in this. In South Africa and other countries like Botswana, rurally located communities are more submissive than those in the urban areas.

It may not be ruled out that there are a number of changes that have come about in Southern Africa in general since independence. Pre-colonial political structures and families put the man at the highest position in the social hierarchy. The Bible which the colonialists brought along with, reproduced this hierarchy by saying that the man is the head of the family and a woman should be obedient to her husband. In the post-independence period democracy is the language of the day. What is noticeable though, is that the stigma left by the previous periods still holds, thus making it difficult for one to see those changes that have come about. Both men and women are elected into positions but women are given subordinate positions. This is what is referred to in this dissertation as the ghettoisation of women. This refers to the fact that at a glance it appears as if democracy has taken its course but the old order still has an influence. One's

ability seems to be a secondary issue, one's sex comes first.

What this research has shown is that whilst it may at times be easy to notice things that have been reproduced or reinforced, in certain instances it is only a person with the sixth sense who can identify hidden discrimination. South Africa and Namibia have living examples. President Nujoma formed a women's desk in his office that would look into the needs of the Namibian women. President Mandela also proposed a women's office which would perform the same function as that of Namibia's women's desk.

From research conducted, it is clear that no short answer can be given to the question that this dissertation has tried to answer. On the contrary, a specific answer can only be given for a specific place at a specific situation. This is, as said above, due to the fact that some changes (and at times reinforcements) are clear enough whilst others are not. The women's desks for example (referred to above) seem to be gender conscious whereas in reality they are themselves discriminatory. One positive institution that one could refer to in the case of South Africa is the South African Gender Commission which looks into the gender issues very closely.

It is high time that men revisit their understanding about women as subordinates. It is this understanding that results to the gendered labour system. Women should also refrain from looking at men as the only oppressors. There have been a number of changes in the modernising world, of which the countries

researched are also part. Men are crying about oppression as women do. Any academic who is studying gender politics will have to listen to all these voices. To do that s/he will not write about women. On the contrary, s/he will be writing about gender politics. Thus the definition that was presented in the introduction is well grounded and it entertains the above debate (one sex group is understood in relation to the other, therefore gender politics is not a study about women per se).

One may sound a warning that gender politics should not be seen as a struggle for women's liberation as not all members of each sex group are affected by gender in a similar way. Affirmative action should not be used as the means to fight or axe men. If men were wrong in oppressing and suppressing women, suppression should not come back in its reversed form. America has an interesting case. As one newspaper put it: "In politically correct California, white males have come to view themselves as an endangered species. Now they are suddenly in demand as the state admits it has been overzealous in applying reverse discrimination in favour of women..."¹⁶²

The mere fact that when the political structures (including the government) satisfy one party the other one cries out is clear indication that the two sexes are two sides of the same coin and they should be treated that way. Their relationship is the core in any study on gender politics. There are a set of questions that one needs to pose at this juncture. One of such questions

¹⁶² Sunday Times, 20/10/96

is that: in the new dispensation in the region (Southern Africa) and with the youth of both sexes gaining more power through education, and understanding one another better than their parents did, what does the future hold for practices such as *lobola*? Do 'traditions' and 'customs' have any future? If so, what makes it possible for such social constructions to be sustained despite the western influence? The list of such questions may be endless. Getting answers to such questions is a challenge facing every academic historian and every person who has a mind that is eager to know things better.

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APPENDIX

MAP



QUESTIONNAIRE

- * Gender :
- * Age :
- * Place :
- * Urban/Rural :
- * Job/Institution :

1. Do you think it is good for women to be involved in politics? Why?

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2. Should women fight for equality with men? Motivate.

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3. Do you think it is good for people of different sexes to greet one another by kissing? Why?

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4. Should women bow when talking to men?

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5. Would you encourage uneducated men to marry educated women? Why?

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6. Do you think lobola should be continued? Motivate

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7. Is there a need for sexual division of labour? Why?

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THANK YOU