

Masters Dissertation

**Gender Politics and Activism: A comparative study of African National
Congress Youth League branches in Seshego (Limpopo)**

Name: Itumeleng Mafatshe

Student Number: 313535

Department: Political Studies

Supervisor: Dr. Antje Schuhmann and Professor Noor Nieftagodien

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University of the Witwatersrand

Department of Political Studies

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Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the requirements of the Degree of Masters in Political Studies, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Itumeleng Mafatshe

February 2015

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Abstract

The question of gender inequality in South Africa has still not received the platform that it deserves. This reality may be attributed to numerous factors including the masculine attitudes that continue to prevail in South African politics. This dissertation therefore analyses the construction of gender roles in youth political organisations in South Africa, and investigates how hegemonic gender formations challenge and shape the activism of women within these organisations. It focuses on the largest and oldest youth political formation in the country, the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL). It draws from the rich history of the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) to understand better the framework of current gender politics. Feminist theory is used as the underpinning theoretical framework throughout this research, thus providing a new perspective of women's activism that goes beyond the traditional practices employed in research about political organisations. This dissertation is informed by a qualitative research approach with a focus on interviews with individuals who are members of the ANCYL in the Seshego township in South Africa's Limpopo Province. The main argument made in this dissertation is that women in mainstream political organisations like the ANCYL continue to experience difficulties in the assertion of their activism because of the historically dominating masculine characteristics of such organisations. A nuanced analysis of young women's activism in South Africa is the major contribution that this research offers. By bringing forth the narrative of ordinary female activists, this dissertation deliberately confronts the celebration of the supposedly already realised gender equality, arguing that this is a premature celebration that is not cognisant of the daily experiences of female activists of the ANCYL.

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Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
ANCWL	African National Congress Women's League
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ANCYSS	African National Congress Youth and Student Section
APF	Anti-Privatisation Forum
ASM	African Student Movement
BC (M)	Black Consciousness (Movement)
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
FSAW	Federation of South African Women
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe
NAYO	National Youth Organisation
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NDS	National Democratic Society
NEC	National Executive Committee

NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SASM	South African Students Movement
SANNC	South African Native National Congress
SANSCO	South African National Students Congress
SASCO	South African Students Congress
SASO	South African Students Organisation
SAYCO	South African Youth Congress
SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
UDF	United Democratic Front
WNC	Women's National Coalition

Introduction

South Africa has a rich history of political activism. During the apartheid era, there was an upsurge in political activism among the Black¹ youth particularly from around the 1970s. It is widely acknowledged that Black youth played a leading role in dismantling the oppressive apartheid state, this evidenced in the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and their involvement in political formations both in South Africa and in exile (Ndlovu 2006). The celebration of twenty years into South Africa's democracy calls for robust conversations about the lessons which can be drawn from the country's political history, particularly how this history can be useful for understanding the wavering political climate in the country.

It is important to acknowledge the attempts by the youth of today to claim space in the national discourse as seen with the dominance of platform by the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) in the early 2000s, through its call for economic freedom (ANCYL A clarion call to economic freedom fighters: Programme of action for economic freedom in our lifetime 2011). This was followed by the emergence of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF)² in 2013, alongside other political organisations which represent young people's interests as central to broader political concerns of the country. Although attempts are being made by the ANCYL and other youth formations to make young people's interests central by entering the national discourses. There is little evidence of a focus on gender inequality and the vulnerabilities experienced by women in the country by these formations. The main focus

¹ Capitalised 'Black' in the context of this dissertation refers to people of African descent subjected to racial discrimination on the basis of their skin colour during South Africa's colonial and apartheid periods. Word capitalised to signify being Black as a racial category.

² A breakaway organisation from the ANCYL started by former ANCYL President Julius Malema and other ANCYL leaders. The EFF is made up of mostly young people as such posturing itself as an organisation for young people.

of this dissertation is to use a gendered lens to analyse youth politics in South Africa after 1994, drawing also from the evolution of youth movements during the apartheid period.

Contemporary youth politics in South Africa have become more diverse than they were under apartheid where most progressive movements fought for the end of that regime. The freedom from racial segregation has allowed room for other issues such as youth unemployment and education³ to be seen as more central (and not linked to the struggle against racial oppression), and has also diversified insofar as the types of society envisaged by the different youth organisations present. This is not to suggest that youth political formations like the ANCYL, Democratic Alliance Youth (DA YOUTH), the Inkatha Freedom Party Youth Brigade (IFP Youth Brigade) and others have become perfect embodiments of the country's much acclaimed diversity. However it is important to acknowledge these changes, because they serve as impetus for dealing with the historically ignored matters like gender inequality in the country. Although peacefully co-existing, these political formations have different stances on what South Africa is to look like in the future. These differences are underpinned by the theoretical frameworks and policy positions that govern each organisation. It is these theoretical frameworks and policy positions that serve as a guide for these organisations' strategies to dealing with matters such as gender transformation and broader gender politics. Moving from a premise that considered race as the primary form of segregation among youth in South Africa, this dissertation focuses on gender politics, which is the inclusion and equality of experience and expression between women and men within the framework of the ANCYL.

³ This however not to suggest that these issues were never addressed by young people during apartheid, as shall be discussed in chapter three.

The ANCYL is indeed an interesting organisation to focus on because it has a history that is unmatched by any youth political organisation in the country today. It is a relevant organisation to study because it is the youth wing of the South African government's ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC), and is also characterised as having a long history of male dominance. As a result of this, the ANCYL provides an interesting premise for the analysis of interactions between women and men in mainstream political organisations that have historically been associated with men. This dissertation pays close attention to women as a historically marginalised group in society and focuses on their experiences as activists, with the intention of understanding their challenges in a male dominated context.

Underpinned by the pursuit of a National Democratic Society (NDS), which envisages a society that has done away with class, race and gender contradictions the ANC and its concomitant structures like the ANCYL take pride in their pursuits of achieving a society that has no gender inequalities (ANCYL Gender Discussion Document 2001). In spite of this, dealing with gender inequality, representation and the inclusion of women in organisations like the ANCYL is often difficult a task to undertake. This is so because political organisations like these have a history that is entrenched in hegemonic notions of masculinity, both in its discourse as well as in its practices.

In her work on youth organisations in the early nineties, Marks (2001) broadly looks at politics in the ANCYL, and also gives some attention to the involvement of women in this organisation. Marks (2001) highlights that participation among women is indeed significantly lower than that of men, she like other authors and the ANCYL itself, focuses on resolving gender contradictions from a perspective of the inclusion of women with a focus on how

many women and men participate. While also important, this approach is an inadequate measure of how women become incorporated into mainstream politics such as those of the ANCYL. It is thus necessary to consider whether interventions by the ANCYL contribute substantially to altering gender relations, or if they indirectly reinforce problematic concepts of hegemonic perceptions of gender. This is a key aspect that is addressed in this work by juxtaposing the lived experiences of activists in the ANCYL with the resolutions that have been provided in the league's constitution and policy documents.

The need for a guided discussion on gender politics and women's activism in particular is one that is long overdue. However, this is not to suggest that the subject has been completely unattended to, but rather to say that it has not been dealt with adequately. The question of gender equality in South Africa has been significantly subsumed by the politics of national liberation and the struggle for socialism. As a result gender inequality and issues affecting women have been considered as what Hassim et al. have called '*a bit on the side*'⁴ (Hassim et al. 1987, p. 1). The premise of this thesis therefore is the analysis of women's oppression, and how women experience their participation in mainstream political organisations like the ANCYL. In doing this, this dissertation also brings to the fore the challenges that women face and how these differ from those of their male counterparts. Prioritising matters such as gender based violence, exclusion from power and the workplace, and the disregard of women by men was considered irrelevant in the context of apartheid, and as delaying the main struggle against racial oppression. Drawing attention to these matters which affect women more than they do men was seen as an influence of western feminism which had no real place in South African politics during apartheid (Hassim et al. 1987). The emergence of a democratic dispensation in the country provides room for a conversation on whether the

⁴ This also the name of the title by Hassim et al. (1987) herein mentioned.

dissolution of apartheid meant the resolution of the race question and as a consequence the provision of platform to prioritise women's concerns.

Aims and Objectives

This dissertation aims to analyse how gender roles and relations are expressed and experienced in the ANCYL. It discusses the experiences in two ANCYL branches in separate wards in the Seshego township in the Limpopo province. It is particularly concerned with what political activism means for women, and how women's activism is understood and experienced within a context that prioritises heteronormatively masculine ways of political activism. This dissertation engages with how the ANCYL deals with the shifts taking place in post-apartheid society, such as the focus on Affirmative Action and the inclusion of women in spaces that they were previously absent from. In looking at the history, organisational culture, discourses, political agendas and everyday practices of the ANCYL, this dissertation seeks to assess the extent to which women have been incorporated in the ANCYL as equal members to men.

Research Question and Sub-questions

- How do the experiences of women in the ANCYL in Seshego help us understand the configuration of gender politics and women's activism in the organisation?
- What are the expected and accepted norms and practices for women in the ANCYL?
- How does the character and context of Seshego as a largely peri-urban settlement shape activists views on women's participation in political organisations?
- To what extent do the practices of local members of the ANCYL conform to the organisation's stated policies of achieving a non-sexist and equal society?

Rationale

Why the ANCYL?

Firstly, the ANCYL is the largest youth movement whose long history is rooted in the struggle for South Africa's democracy. After the unbanning of the liberation movements in 1990, the ANC and the ANCYL saw a significant entry by young people into formalised political organisations. It became even more accessible to youth in the country once political activism was de-criminalised. The ANCYL played an important role in mobilising young and old around the day to day issues affecting the community from safety to service delivery. The ANCYL in this period was also inclusive of young women who began to participate in the realm of politics (which they previously avoided), even though they remained the minority (Marks 200, p. 69).

It is important to keep this historic context in mind because it provides a broader perspective for the analysis of gender politics in the country's youth formations in general and within the ANCYL in particular. This dissertation considers the different phases the ANCYL went through in the different epochs of the country's history. These include a past where women played a minimal role in the public sphere, the political arena in particular and a present that considers their involvement, at a minimum through policy positions, as a priority aimed at ensuring that women find recognition in all areas in the public sphere

Secondly, at the time that this research began in 2012, the ANCYL was the strongest youth formation in the country that advocated for a strong nationalist developmental agenda alongside other smaller and less influential Pan Africanist and Leftist organisations. At its last

elective congress in 2011 the ANCYL made a clarion call to economic freedom in this lifetime (ANCYL Discussion document, A Clarion Call To Economic Freedom Fighters: Programme Of Action For Economic Freedom In Our Lifetime 2011). This call being one that challenged the policies of the mother body, thus making strong attempts to interrupt the status quo of the country's dominant neo-liberal economic policies, for the attainment of economic emancipation for all.

This call was not the first of its nature since segments of the left in the country have from the 1990s criticised the ruling party for its adoption of neo-liberal policies such as the Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP), and the Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy of the early nineties (COSATU 1997 and Dixon 1997). This accompanied an emergence of social movements from the grassroots as a response to the implementation of such policies by the ANC in government. Significant resistance was consolidated within the working class and seen in activism and resistance by the likes of Abahlali baseMjondolo, the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) (Nieftagodien 2014). The rebellion of the ANCYL from the ANC reflects a dis-unity within the ANC and its concomitant structures, thus raising the question of the ability of the ANC and its leagues to follow through with their policy positions amidst the internal differences.

Finally, in the foreword to Forde's biography of former ANCYL President Julius Malema titled, *An inconvenient youth: Julius Malema and the 'new' ANC* (2011) Achille Mbembe characterises the ANCYL as being marred by what he calls a lumpen radicalism, which refers to "...political unruliness - and at times resistance - in which fantasies of male power, control

and desire have always been entangled with ‘war envy’ and an almost insatiable appetite for luxuries and women.”(Mbembe in Forde 2011, VI). Mbembe’s characterisation of the ANCYL as such is more truthful than members of the organisation would want to admit. It is therefore the contradiction between the misogynistic character of the ANCYL and its stated commitment to gender equality and representation of women in structures that makes this an interesting study.

Relevance of Seshego

This research is located in a township called Seshego in Polokwane, the capital city of the Limpopo Province. Seshego is interesting for this research because although it may be modern in the sense that it has some developed infrastructure, relatively easy access to water, health care, education and some exposure to social media platforms by its residents, it remains grounded in Black tradition and culture, thus maintaining some conservative attitudes towards notions of what is generally considered to be the essence of being a ‘proper’ or ‘real’ woman and man.

Considering that the focus of this dissertation is on gender relations within youth political formations, an area like Seshego provides a fascinating perspective on young women as activists because it challenges the gender stereotypes of what it is women and men are supposed to be interested in. There are three main reasons why Seshego has been chosen as a key area of study for this research. The first of these is the historic existence of the Congress aligned movement in the northern region of South Africa. There is insufficient literature on the general history of the Limpopo province and the political activism that has characterised this region. Needless to say, this should not be seen as reflecting an absence of activism in the

area since the reality is contra to this notion (Heffernan 2014, p. 1-3). There are strong historic links between the northern region and Congress-aligned organisations, thus making the area worthwhile to look at in the context of ANCYL politics in contemporary South Africa.

Secondly, Seshego is interesting because as a township it is characterised by a combination of both rural and urban social attitudes. This is particularly of interest to this study as it is significant to the analysis of how normative perceptions of gender roles (what men and women should do) in rural communities differ from or inform urban understandings of gender relations and performance and vice versa. The characterising of Seshego as a peri-urban area challenges the widespread notion of a rural-urban binary. It is important to acknowledge the ambiguous positioning of the region and its social topography, as the geography and development of the area is interconnected. Iaquinta and Drescher (2000) assert that,

‘A key feature of periurban environments is their dynamic nature, wherein social forms and arrangements are created, modified and discarded. They are areas of *social compression* or *intensification* where the density of social forms, types and meanings increases, fomenting conflict and social evolution.’ (Iaquinta and Drescher 2000, p. 2).

This suggests that peri-urban areas outline for themselves what is perceived as acceptable and unacceptable ways of being in society. In relation to the gender focus of this work, this is of interest as it can be applied to the feminist theory argument that considers gender roles as socially constructed (Schuhmann 2011) and as such fluid, contextual and negotiated within contested social signification processes. An understanding of the nature of the area and the

influences of the rural and urban practices on members of the ANCYL is important in that it assists in analysing how gender relations are played out within the ANCYL.

Lastly, the reason to base this work in Seshego also lies in the reality that the stories of Black people in South Africa to great extents remain untold. This partly because; of the marginalisation of non-white areas in the apartheid period in South Africa, reflecting the second class citizen status of non-whites at the time. The story of Seshego is indeed a narrative that reflects Black people. Having said this, it is important to acknowledge the absence or systematic silence of the stories of Black people in the country. This absence or systematic silence is explained by Nieftagodien (2010, p. 41) as emanating from exclusive methods used for documenting history, which focused on the stories of white towns and their development as a result, abandoning the Black narrative treating it as one that is significantly peripheral. Moloi (2012, p. 8) in his work suggests that there is a valuable contribution made to academia through efforts of studying the experience of Black people and townships in South Africa. This as a process of giving a horse's mouth account of the history of Black people, thus also serving as impetus for this work.

In her work titled *A history of youth politics in Limpopo, 1967-2003*, Heffernan (2014a) provides a historical account of youth politics in the area, and argues that Limpopo has a rich political history which is unfortunately met by a dearth in available literature. Even as new work like Heffernan's begins to address some of these gaps, the stories of women's political involvement in the province remain untold even in the face of a rich political history; this dissertation thus seeks to make a contribution in this regard.

Arriving in Seshego

I first arrived in Seshego in July 2012 when I was about to begin the fieldwork for this dissertation. I had travelled by bus from Johannesburg and lived in a Bed and Breakfast in Polokwane's central business district, which is 15KM away from the Seshego township. The knowledge of the tensions within members of the ANCYL in Seshego became much clearer and even more real at my first encounter with the township. The journey to Seshego from Polokwane was in itself very interesting. I got onto a white mini bus taxi in Polokwane CBD to Seshego. As I got onto the taxi I told the driver I was going to the Police Station in zone one, I made him aware that I was not from this area and as such didn't know where it is. In response, the driver asked if my journey had anything to do with the ANCYL fights and if I was a journalist, my response to him was honest: 'I am a student at Wits University and am doing a research project on the ANCYL in Seshego'. In surprise he wished me well and encouraged me to be careful, especially because I am a woman, making me aware that ANCYL politics in Seshego had become violent with constant fights ensuing among comrades in the area. It is at this point that I realised that the journey ahead was one that would be interesting and deserving the kind of attention I would give it through this dissertation.

As soon as I got off the taxi around the corner from the Police Station I became nervous, walking towards the Police Station I started asking myself questions like; '*What are you doing here? Do you still have that granny's number that your mom gave you?*' And the ultimate '*you like things, who do you think you are (wanting to come to a distant place to do research⁵)?*' I finally got to the Police Station, which is located at the intersection of zones

⁵ Italics used here to represent my thoughts at the described point.

one, two and four of the township. According to my communication with Mandla*⁶ we were meant to meet at the Police Station and from there we would go to meet a few ANCYL comrades⁷.

While standing at the gate of the station trying to get hold of Mandla* to no avail, a certain man walked up to me, introduced himself and mentioned that he knew me from Facebook. It is from him that I learnt that **the** comrades had gathered to attend a court proceeding⁸ taking place within the vicinity of the Police Station. A group of ANCYL members and supporters of the former youth league leader Julius Malema were being tried for misconduct, vandalism and assault following a fight the day before between two prominent factions of the ANCYL⁹ in Seshego. He assured me that Mandla* was on his way and suggested that we go in to listen to the proceedings. Feeling as though I had no choice I walked with him into the Police Station to a courtroom that was filled with ANCYL activists, some of which I could recognise probably from Facebook **platforms** or the 2011 National Congress of the ANCYL where I was a delegate.

I chose to sit at the back on my own to protect myself from being associated with one or other person which could have a negative impact on my research fieldwork. Within the crowd I identified a female comrade from my region in Johannesburg, a woman with who I am very familiar from my own activism back home. She saw me, we waved at each other and I

⁶ Asterisk *, representing pseudonym for the person who introduced me to the activists in the ANCYL in Seshego. He was my main point of contact throughout this project. Asterisk * used throughout this dissertation to signify name change of participants for confidentiality purposes.

⁷ **The word ‘comrades’ is used throughout this dissertation to refer to members of the ANCYL with whom I interacted with throughout the research process.**

⁸ The courtroom is located inside the yard of the Police Station.

⁹ Article that refers to this episode accessible at <http://www.citypress.co.za/politics/seshego-by-election-clash-between-malema-rivals-averted-20120919/>

immediately became calm, feeling a sense of safety from seeing a familiar face. As soon as the court proceedings ended we walked out with all the comrades that were present in the hearing (approximately thirty in number), they were all male apart from the aforementioned woman.

Walking outside of the gates of the station we joined a group of comrades, in their midst were about six women and five men. This revealed the possible reality of there being different experiences for women and men within the ANCYL. It appeared as though female activists in the ANCYL in Seshego occupied a different sphere than their male counterparts. This scenario revealed the existing binary of the public and the private, and how these intersect with being male or female even within the context of the ANCYL. The courtroom symbolised a public platform of authority and thus fit for the male activists, while the waiting of the women outside the premises next to where food and beverages were sold symbolised a private space where the activity of waiting and caring took place, an activity that is designated for women.¹⁰

Seshego se botse bosigo¹¹ (Seshego that is beautiful at night)

Before tackling the complexity of gender politics within the ANCYL, I would like to continue with providing the reader with an impression of this township and in particular, how it is perceived by the ANCYL members that were the main participants of this research. Seshego is an old apartheid township and was the capital city of the former Bantustan of

¹⁰ Chapter 1 of this dissertation provides a deeper discussion on the binaries of public and private mentioned here.

¹¹ The language used here is SePedi (Northern Sotho/ Sesotho sa Lebowa), the most spoken language in Seshego.

Lebowa until the new capital of Lebowakgomo was built in 1974. The township consists of apartheid residential units, as well as newer houses including numerous RDP units constructed since the late 1990s. It is approximately 15KM from the city of Polokwane (previously known as Pietersburg). Seshego has a population of 86 863 people, with Black people making up 99.25% of the population, 0.28% falling under the category of other, 0,22% Coloured, 0,13% White and 0,12% Indian/Asian¹² as per the 2011 census.

The Seshego population growth has shown to be in decline, with an annual growth rate moving from 1% in 2006 to a steady decline from 2007 to 0,9%, this is attributed to outward migration, the death rate being higher than birth, as well as lower fertility within the population (Capricorn District Annual Municipality Report 2013). Located relatively close to rural areas such as Makgofe, Blood River and Perskebult, Seshego was historically known as the big township next to the city which had access to electricity and running water (Ngoatje 2008). Seshego was popularly known as '*Seshego se botse bosigo*' (Seshego that is beautiful at night), because of the lights and the night life that characterised it, representing a beacon of hope for development for its neighbouring villages (Lungile* 2013).

When compared to the surrounding rural villages, Seshego was more developed but when compared to the White town, or even the Coloured and Indian sections, it lagged behind in terms of basic infrastructural development. During the process of transition to democracy Transitional Local Councils (TLC) were established to address the concerns around the delivery of services in the broader Pietersburg area. Even in this period of transition, before a proper incorporation of the neighbouring areas such as Pietersburg, Nirvana and Westenberg

¹² Capitalised White, Black, Coloured alongside Indian/Asian in this context referring to racial groups found in the country.

as part of what is now called the Polokwane municipality, Seshego remained under the administration of the then Lebowa Homeland Government Department of Interior and Home Affairs, this serving as reason for persistent underdevelopment of infrastructure in the area. Considering the disparities between the Black and White¹³ administrations of the apartheid government, Seshego was even in the new democratic dispensation behind in many ways insofar as development and access to certain services was concerned (Ngoatje 2008, p. 43).

In the Capricorn district municipality 89% of the households have access to water, 51, 67% to sanitation, 90.25% access to electricity and 20, 2% of the roads tarred (Capricorn Municipality Annual Report 2013). Access to these services has not significantly increased within the Polokwane Municipality that caters for Seshego, with an increase averaging 2, 74% across services provided (Polokwane Draft Annual Report 2013). Among the reason for the slowness in the delivery of services at a broader scale is insufficient budget and corruption within the provincial government structures¹⁴.

As the capital of a Bantustan, Seshego was more privileged than other black rural areas forming part of the area. One could thus argue that this can explain a tendency that is complacent to issues of political significance. This is not to suggest however that the area was void of any form of political activism. As a Bantustan capital, political unrest was managed well in the area, because of the relationship that the apartheid government had with the leaders of Bantustans, where at the cost of certain benefits for the chiefs, repression of discontent was the order of the day (Mamdani 1996 and Van Kessel 2000). In the late 1980s

¹³ Capitalised 'White' in the context of this dissertation refers to those that were the primary beneficiaries of apartheid.

¹⁴ The Limpopo province was put under administration by Cabinet in 2011 for maladministration of funds. See <http://www.citypress.co.za/news/five-limpopo-departments-under-administration-20111205/>

however, Seshego emerged as a hub of political activism, shaped by both its internal politics and developments in surrounding rural areas.

The role of the United Democratic Front (UDF)¹⁵ in the urban areas of the Northern Transvaal in the eighties is an important one to consider in light of the developments of the then existing South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), a youth formation meant to organise young people who were too old for COSAS politics. SAYCO filled a vacuum that was left by the banning of political organisations from 1960-1990. SAYCO encouraged political activism and revolts against the regime by young people in the Seshego area, alongside activism in other areas in the country like Soweto, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town.

The UDF, having its base in the urban areas, made attempts at mobilising in the rural areas of the Northern Transvaal in the eighties with minimal success. The UDF however had much more impact in urban areas thus radicalising the politics of urban areas like Seshego, where the politics were not as rigorous considering the context. I argue that politics of the Northern Transvaal shifted in the eighties: from a critique of chieftaincy to the politics of access to better education and service delivery. This reflecting the changing political agendas, and a shift from rural to urban perspectives championed by young people in the Northern Transvaal at the time (Van Kessel 2000).

¹⁵ A non-racial coalition of students, churches civic organisations etc., that played a significant role in the struggle against apartheid. The UDF was founded in August 1983 as opposition to the introduction of the 'Tricameral Parliament'. The UDF played an important role during the period where political parties were banned in South Africa. See Seekings (2000), *The UDF: A history of the United Democratic Front in South Africa 1983-1991*, Chapter 1 'The UDF, Freedom and Democracy'.

Political activism in Seshego was in some respects contested by both the politics of the villages, as was the case with disputes with traditional authorities in Sekhukhuneland, as well as by township and student politics that came from the direction of Mankweng, a neighbouring township of Seshego and the University of Turfloop. Even though there was some political activity in the surrounding areas of Seshego prior to the eighties, the resurgence of political activism in Seshego is marked by a UDF rally that took place in August 1984, resulting in a formal structure of the UDF being established in this area (Van Kessel 2000, p. 89-92).

The politics of Mankweng were somewhat more visible and better documented than those of Seshego because of, the area's closeness to the Black University of Turfloop on the other side of the Pietersburg town amongst other possible reasons. The University was characterised by much political activity and according to Heffernan (2014b) has played a critical role in shaping both national and regional politics of Southern Africa, even though this is significantly under reported. Heffernan (2014b) argues that this is seen in the influence of activists from Turfloop like Onkgopotse Tiro who shaped the politics that lead to the Soweto uprising as well as the involvement of students in the seventies in Frelimo activities.

The first President of SAYCO and the re-launched ANCYL in the early nineties, Peter Mokaba, was a child of Mankweng. It is the politics of this generation that played and continue to play a significant role in the politics of the ANCYL in Seshego today. The impact of youth politics and politics broadly in the northern region is one that has been regarded as significant, and continues to serve as impetus for joining the ANCYL for some members of the branches looked at in Seshego.

It is in 1984 after the UDF rally and activities by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) that a youth congress is launched in Seshego, followed by the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) in 1990, this being an initiative of youth congress members who saw ‘...themselves as having been too old for the youth congress.’ (Van Kessel 2000, p. 98-99). It is therefore in the early nineties where the politics of Seshego heightened, this period was marred by a number of revolts in the northern region, where young people with occasional involvement by workers and other groups were involved in a series of revolts (Van Kessel 2000, p.98-104). In this period, the residents of the township began to occupy some of the vacant land belonging to the state that was surrounding zones one and two which are the biggest and oldest zones in the township. The civic organisation SANCO was central to this occupation of land in what has become zones five and eight (a ward which houses one of the branches looked at in this research), as Nkululeko* (2013) asserts:

‘when South Africa was being rendered ungovernable, they [Seshego residents] overtook land that was meant for subsidies and started building on it so generally, these are zones born out of a revolution...in Seshego, where people did not buy or were not put by the municipalities but they were put by SANCO [(South African National Civic Organisation)].’

(Nkululeko*, July 2013).

From this we see that the period of the early nineties not only marks a period of organisational growth and an increase in activism under the leadership of the UDF, SAYCO and SANCO, but it also marks an upspring of activism by the residents of the township and their willingness to express their dissatisfaction with the running of the township.

Seshego In the present day

With the intention to provide a context and a sense of Seshego and the challenges the township is currently facing, I asked the participants of this research to share with me how they view Seshego. Seshego is a township with eight zones, with the biggest and oldest zones being zone one and two and the newest being zone five. Many of the zones in Seshego are born from the first two zones which were the basic units developed under the apartheid regime. These zones are positioned in such a way that they can easily access health and education facilities available in the area, and are microcosms of the rest of the zones in Seshego.

This dissertation looks at branches located in zones four and one looking at wards twelve and thirteen respectively. Zone one is the oldest and most poverty stricken of the two, from it comes zone two which is somewhat better in so far as its socio-economic status is concerned. Zone one develops into zones five and eight which are lagging behind with development and service delivery (Capricorn District Municipality Report 2013). These zones are made up of adults who in the eighties sought independence from their parents' homes in zone one desiring to establish their own families.

This is the cohort that was involved in the occupation of state land under the leadership of SANCO in the eighties as earlier mentioned (Nkululeko*, July 2013). Zones three and four were developed mainly for the professionals in Seshego, teachers, nurses, police officers etc. In these zones, the socio-economic status of the families in the area is better, this is reflected in the way that these sections are kept, this section is known as the mortgage 'bond houses' section where the houses come at a price and have nicer modern architecture, are bigger, have

inside toilets with bath tubs or showers and yards that are somewhat bigger than those in the others zones.

In the whole of Seshego there are nineteen schools, two FET colleges, four clinics, a library, park, sports facility and a police station. Because of how the township is spread these are seen as inadequate to service all residents of the township in the different zones. Some of these frustrations were brought to my attention in the interviews by some of the participants. I will in the following section paint a picture of the area using the interviews conducted as the main guide to do this. Although the image depicted below is one of Seshego broadly, I do however focus on the wards that were important for this study, zones one and four.

When asked about Seshego, one of the participants first response was ‘its Marikana¹⁶...’ (Funeka*, August 2013), she further went on to say that Seshego had come to be referred to as ‘Marikana’ because of the challenges that are faced in the township. Inequality, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, poverty, substance abuse and crime were the main concerns coming from the interviews conducted with the participants. According to the participants, crime in the area has become idolised and seen as an alternative option to ensure survival for youths and their families in the Seshego area (Interviews, 2012).

Within the township however, there have been mechanisms put in place to deal with the realities of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy. There are community projects across the

¹⁶ A town in Rustenburg Municipality (North West Province, South Africa) which is home to a mine which saw a massacre by the South African Police Service during a mineworkers wage strike in 2012. It became an international epitome of state brutality.

township with the highest presence of these projects being in zone one. These community projects aim to support the elderly, those living with HIV/AIDS and TB. There is also a noteworthy presence of child drop-in centres in the township, where unwanted children are taken in and cared for by community members. The community has a few cooperatives and projects that are run mostly by women in the community doing beaded jewellery, traditional garments as well growing vegetable gardens.

According to the participants interviewed women in Seshego are more active than their male counterparts as seen in their activism in public spaces like the churches, community work as well as in the political space. The high levels of involvement in these spheres provide a contradiction to the under representation of women in mainstream politics like those of the ANCYL. This also reinforces the argument that women are equally capable of being active within the public sphere.

Although Seshego has a reasonable quality of service delivery, there are within the township areas that are lagging behind with some sections being worse than others, where access to water, libraries, sanitation, health care etc. is extremely limited (Capricorn District Municipality Report 2013). In certain parts like zone five, residents are still unable to access running water and electricity, relevant schooling facilities are far from this area, thus resulting in a lot of young people dropping out and resorting to drug and alcohol abuse as well as sexual activities at an early age leaving them vulnerable to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDS. Although Limpopo has fewer cases of HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy in comparison to other provinces, the socio-economic status of the province is leading to a significant increase to the phenomenon. In the year 2013, 50 000 people tested positive for

HIV/AIDS in the Limpopo province. Studies by the HEAIDS (2012), the HSRC (2012) and StatsSA (2012) show that this was most prevalent among young people with the most affected being between the ages of 15-30 years. HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy among youth in the Capricorn District¹⁷ is increasing with about 13 % of youth testing positive and 71% of the pregnancies being unwanted, resulting from either peer pressure, the need to prove love and sexual abuse (Limpopo Government Policy Research 2012).

Seshego however has a life to it that is flashier than its reality. As having earlier stated, on the other spectrum, Seshego is much known throughout the province for its night life. Seshego like other townships in South Africa has a culture of the showing off flashy cars and money at car washes, parties and the classic '*shisanyama*'¹⁸ which has come to represent South African township culture. I argue that these spaces are in themselves gendered, reflecting the masculinity that is heteronormative, strong and rich reflecting a sense of superiority to the men that are otherwise categorised and to all women as well. The car wash in particular has become a central embodiment of what South African township life in the new democracy means. As Moilola (2012) correctly asserts;

‘Carwashes with their big cars, and their paid labour cleaning, have become one of the more populous social spaces throughout the country for the performance of BEE identity and elite peer interaction.’ (Moilola 2012, p. 49)

The possession of a nice car and an ability to take it to the car wash also suggests that one has ‘arrived’ or made it. This therefore symbolises some kind of personal freedom and an ability to provide and ‘take care’ of the ladies, at clubs and parties, hence the re-assertion of one’s masculinity.

¹⁷ Municipal district responsible for the Seshego township.

¹⁸ A Zulu term referring to a buy and braai/barbecue area found in most South Africa townships

Methodology

The main interest of this work is the observation, the description and analysis, as well as the documentation of how members of the ANCYL experience and conceptualise or make sense of existing dominant gender relations. A particular focus lies in capturing the voices of ordinary women – therefore interviews form an essential part of this work. The research process was interesting for me, not only because of my familiarity with the ANCYL as both a member of an ANCYL branch at Wits University, Johannesburg, but more importantly, because of my role as an advocate for prioritising the consideration of women's inclusion and experiences in the ANCYL, as equal members of the organisation. There are various arguments to be made about the importance of bringing my position to the fore in this research, including an awareness of this dissertation as reflective of the process of knowledge generation and how different methods of research contribute to this process. Working within a framework of feminist theory¹⁹ allowed me to analyse the findings of this research not in spite of, but precisely because of my own positionality, as this approach recognises nuances in the research process that are informed by the subjectivity and situatedness of the researcher among other things.

Methodological approaches

It is important to distinguish between various types of methodology in order to choose the suited method(s) for a given research topic. The correct research method or methods support the validity of the research and allow for concepts derived from the research itself to be applied elsewhere. Qualitative and quantitative methods may be used in one research paper (Giddens 2006). Qualitative methods are distinct in their ability to capture the texture of

¹⁹ Feminist theory as a theoretical framework is expounded on in the theoretical framework section found chapter 1 of this dissertation.

individual experiences, as such not being confined to what is considered as factual yet void of the nuances present in individual differences. As such, this particular research generates exclusively qualitative data in order to best explore and analyse the socio-political complexities in the ANCYL branches in Seshego that I have studied in order to document the voices and perspectives that remain marginalised.

Alongside critical theory and textual analysis, this work also relies on a rich base of interviews conducted over a period of almost a year (between August 2012 and June 2013), and the theorisation of my observations during my time in the field. The interviews were designed as open-ended life history interviews in order to capture multiple aspects of the activist's perspectives and experiences in a holistic way, by doing so providing context for the research process in its entirety (Pierce 2008 and Buckingham 2004).

Open-ended interviews were chosen as a key component of this research because they provide ample room for discussing even those points that arise from the participants' responses as opposed to being reliant on the set questions. Using open-ended interviews was furthermore an appropriate method for this research as it firstly allowed me to focus on the stories as told by the women and their male counterparts and secondly, given the potentially controversial and sensitive nature of the subject matter at hand, provided the participants a more relaxed space within which sensitive issues can emerge more "naturally".

The open ended life history interviews provided room for an exploration of both the participant's personal history as well as their experiences in the ANCYL, as is expected of

the topic of this dissertation. Considering that this research focused on the experiences of women, this particular approach to the interviews was fascinating: it provided a platform to document the untold stories of women, in such a way that the interviews serve as ‘...an antidote to centuries of ignoring women’s ideas altogether or having men speak for women.’ (Reinharz 1992, p. 19).

Semi-structured interview schedules were useful for this research primarily because these provided an opportunity for me to probe certain points that I thought may be relevant to the study but had not been captured in the interview schedule. The life history approach of the interviews assisted the research process as it enhanced the understanding of the backgrounds and childhood experiences of the participants and therefore also provided a context for understanding participant’s personal narratives better. Furthermore, it gave a useful way of seeing what served as a motivation for joining the ANCYL.

Interestingly, the life history interview approach was seemingly much more appreciated by the women participants than it was by the men. Life history interviews underpinned by feminist theory are able to create a platform for women where they are able to easily articulate themselves in a way that is comfortable for them.²⁰ Oakley (1981) emphasises the value that such an approach provides to social research, arguing that this approach differs from the traditional ways of conducting interviews.

²⁰ See Maynard, M and Purvis, J (eds), *Researching Women’s Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, London: Taylor and Francis, 1994 and Wilkonson, S and Kitzinger, C (eds) *Representing the Other: A Feminism and Psychology Reader*, London: Sage, 1996

The traditional way of conducting interviews Oakley argues tends to be threatening for women, particularly when this is in a context where the male voice is seen as superior as is the case in the ANCYL. Each interview was structured in such a way that it sought to get a sense of who the participant was at a more personal level, this was useful and assisted in introducing the more difficult questions about their activism in the ANCYL. Without having used the life history approach, speaking about the more challenging issues confronting the ANCYL would have been a bit more difficult because of the hostility of traditional forms of interviewing.

The male participants were less interested in sharing their personal life stories with me. The life history approach seemed to be a nuisance to most of the males, they were not at all open to sharing their lives and some seemed bored by the questions. Some of the male participants interrupted the interview to ask whether the interview was about the ANCYL or themselves, while others didn't verbally express their discomfort with that part of the interview it was nevertheless obvious as the responses became shorter and less engaging. I recall an interview where I had to skip some sections and get into the questions on the ANCYL immediately because the participant seemed really annoyed. The irritation displayed by the male participants at times left me feeling a bit anxious and at times eager to get to part of the ANCYL so we could conclude the interview process.

For this dissertation, fieldwork included conducting forty-one interviews, each of these being approximately sixty minutes long. Most of the interviews were conducted in Sepedi, which I am fluent in, although it is not my home language. My fluency in the language was at times tested with some concepts which I understood in English but could not be well translated in

an African language. The questionnaire used was written in English, it was thus at the beginning a bit challenging to ask the questions in Sepedi. Over time the interviewing process became much easier as I was becoming more familiar with asking the questions and with the language that was accessible to both the participants and I.

When analysing the data I realised that some discussions were lost in translation, and that some of the answers given reflected a missed opportunity to probe and clarify some responses. Most of the interviews were conducted in Seshego, in the homes, public spaces or in Polokwane at the work places of the participants. I spent almost a year spread out between the year 2012 and 2013 in Seshego and Polokwane doing field work, with observation and analysing of my observations augmenting the interviews where necessary. Some time was spent with the activists in the branches in Seshego and this provided an in depth perspective on activism and gender relations as the main focus areas of this work.

Those that participated in the interviews were members of the ANCYL in the two branches located in zones one and four. Of all the people interviewed sixteen were women and twenty-four were men. The participants were between the ages of 18-35 years old, with most participants being in their late twenties. It is unfortunate that although the key focus of this research was women, less of them were available to participate in the interview process. Some of the women activists I interacted with were reluctant to have a formal interview with me mainly because they did not think they had anything valuable to say about the ANCYL or themselves as activists. This in itself should however be regarded as a contribution to the responses to the questions of the incorporation of women into political structures. This emphasises the point made by Carter (1991) that although the political space is one that

should be gender neutral, with both men and women seen as equals, it is however considered ‘...a male preserve.’ (Carter 1991, p. 29).

Participant observation was included as a research method throughout the research. This decision was informed by the acknowledgement that the interviews themselves, although informative, have certain limitations as knowledge production processes are reduced to speech and potentially internal, conscious or unconscious censorship (Pierce 2008). This twofold approach allowed me to compare what had been gathered in both the semi-structured interviews to what happens in practice. The data I generated as the researcher through the interviews is contextualised through secondary data such as articles and books that enhanced the conceptual and theoretical analysis of the research (Babbie 2001).

Having been an activist in the ANCYL I was fully aware of the ability of comrades to hold progressive views on gender relations and the equality of sexes in public settings, yet have contradictory views and practices in private spaces. There were certainly instances where the male participants had positive things to say about women in the movement during the interviews with me. Although this is so, these very activists expressed different views in a setting that was exclusively male, which I as the researcher was privy to. One of the male participants explained that women are and have been central to the struggle and are not given the recognition that they deserve because of the extent to which patriarchy has been entrenched in the community and in the organisation. From these sentiments I gathered that he held a progressive position of matters related to inclusion and recognition of women in the organisation. His views however changed in a context that did not embrace such opinions.

On one Saturday afternoon after a local soccer match some of the male participants of this research and other male comrades were refreshing over a few drinks where I was also invited.

The same participant was expressing his dissatisfaction with women, stating, that they don't know how to lead and are just useless in the movement. At some point he referred to women in the movement as '*di febe*'²¹ (meaning bitches), I found myself staring at him and upon remembering my presence as a researcher he went on to speak about my research and that it was important and directed a question to me. I merely shrugged and shifted the focus of the conversation to another topic. In retrospect I realise how this could have been an opportunity to hear the exchange of views of men who are ANCYL members in whose company I was in. How the male participants perceived and interacted with me changed from time to time, shifting from levels of distrust to a shared camaraderie.

In this case I was unlike other women in the branches, as there was a sense of freedom with regards to speaking about their female comrades, in a sense me being a researcher exempted me from being a female and an activist like other female activists in Seshego. To them I was not the average female activist: they showed me more respect because I am educated and can as such engage with them on a different level than they would allow their female counterparts. My status as a researcher afforded me a place in the male dominated conversations, where being a woman was temporarily ignored. At a different encounter where a few female activists were present, another senior male activist who was an ANCYL member but refused to be a participant told the women that were present to learn something

²¹ A Sepedi term used to refer to women perceived as bitches.

from me because I am also a comrade, I am their peer but '*ke rabotse*'²². This particular incident made me feel uncomfortable as I did not want the participants of my research to feel inadequate because they had been unfairly compared to me.

Managing contradictions emanating from my interactions with the participants and other activists was a bit simpler because of the good rapport I had established with the activists that I met. In an event where other activists were discouraging people's participation in this study there were more people that defended my research and cleared my name in face of a disregard of this work by others. These events were interesting and shaped this research in a way that it is informed not only by interviews but by how ANCYL activists live on a daily basis and whether or not they are aware of their positions as men and women outside the organisation. The complex relations in the field both with individuals and in a group setting, tended to be overwhelming and I was at times unable to respond to these the way I would have wanted to. The comments by the participant referred to above caught me off guard and changing the topic seemed the best decision to have made then, although in retrospect I realise how I could have used these occurrences to inform the detail of this work.

Reflections of the research process

The nature of this research and what unfolded during the fieldwork is interesting and I believe an important part of this particular dissertation is my positionality within the scope of this work. The use of feminist theory as a theoretical framework in this work allows me to make this reflection, as well as to incorporate my experiences into this research. This is

²² Meaning that I am a well read and seasoned comrade who understands the organisation.

important in that my being a young black privileged²³ woman has impacted the research process, and to a certain extent it has also enlightened me to some of the hardships women face in the process of knowledge production. I will thus briefly reflect on the general experiences in the field, and then will consider interviewing women and men respectively.

Finding my way around the city of Polokwane to Seshego commuting by public transport was not much of a problem for me seeing that I am familiar with the public transport system in South Africa, which is similar across provinces, and also because of my fluency in Sepedi²⁴. Polokwane not being my home city left me feeling like I stuck out like a sore thumb, constantly having to ask where a certain place was and how I could get my way around from one section in Seshego to another. At the end of the research process I knew my way quite well around the city and had made a few acquaintances, who although not fully understanding what my research was about and why it was important encouraged me and were encouraged by me.

Unfortunately the research process was not just a wonderful experience but also had some challenges. In the first two days of my being in Polokwane, I had met a few of the comrades who had suggested I go to the Peter Mokaba house which is the regional office of the ANC to introduce myself to comrades and also meet other people who would be able to assist me with my research. Upon my arrival I found about five middle-aged²⁵ (between the ages of 24-28 years old) ANCYL comrades having a discussion, I had met one of the comrades present the

²³ Privilege here refers to me being a University graduate and Masters candidate in the face of inaccessibility to higher education by many young people in South Africa. This is a privilege that comes at a financial and social price. It is important to mention that the privileged position I occupy is one that is contradictory in the sense that on the one hand I am privileged in the face of my community and those that have a shared racial and class identity with me, while also leaves me at a position of least privileged in the face of those that have an inherited both a racial and class privilege, i.e. white and middle class.

²⁴ SePedi is the most common language spoken in the Limpopo province.

²⁵ Middle aged in the context of the ANCYL which deems youth being between the ages of 14-35years.

previous day. One of the comrades asked me, who I was and what I was doing there, the comrade I had met the previous day quickly answered and said ‘She’s a comrade from Wits she’s doing research on the ANCYL in Seshego’. I was then asked if I was sure I was not a journalist who had come to spy on the factions in Seshego? They then asked me to prove to them that I was not a journalist. In my defense I told them that I am a member of the ANCYL in my region and asked if they knew leaders from Johannesburg and that if they were not certain they could call the secretary of the region I am from and ask him if he knew me. Mentioning the names of the leaders and showing them their contacts on my cell phone settled the comrades a bit. I thought to myself, ‘*Great at least that’s over*’²⁶, a few seconds later I realised I had spoken too soon.

The comrade asked me about my research topic, having told him his response was ‘...Oh when I was studying Political Science at Turf, you know Turf right?...we would never allow a woman like yourself who thinks they know everything to even speak...had you been in my Political Science lecture we would have silenced you long ago, in fact there was only one woman in our class, we just quickly put her in her place...’²⁷. Having heard this I showed him the information sheet I carried around and requested that I make a call to my supervisor who would speak with them and confirm that I was indeed a student on research and not a spy.

He then said I don’t need to, he told the other comrades to ‘just watch me’ and he stormed out followed by some of his other comrades. The comrade I had met the previous day remained behind and apologised on his behalf and said I shouldn’t take his words seriously and

²⁶ Italics reflective of personal thoughts.

²⁷ Not a verbatim account as I did not record this conversation. However as soon as I got an opportunity I jotted his words down on my phone. I have not been able to get over these words since that day; they have stuck with me throughout the research process and beyond.

encouraged me to continue because the country needed people like me. I have not, even after approximately two years been able to get over this episode and others similar to it. These have undoubtedly been a real source of intense affliction and insecurity. Without a doubt I believe that had I been a man or a much older woman, or of a different race I would not have had such an experience, and it certainly made me wonder about how much of this form of misogyny female activists in the ANCYL in Seshego had to endure regularly. My own experiences were also a reflection of patriarchal privilege rampant in the ANCYL, where women are in a constant state of anxiety about their own activism.

What I did expect however was romantic and sexual advances from the male comrades in general and not just the participants of this research. Having been an ANCYL activist myself, I had a full understanding of levels of the objectification of women by men in the ANCYL; I would have been surprised had this not happened. Among the few casual proposals two of the comrades who were participants were more persistent than the others. The comrades offered me lunch and dinner considering that I stayed at a bed and breakfast and only had breakfast from there. On my second visit to Polokwane the one comrade took it upon himself to come see me and bring me dinner almost every day, he said he just wanted to spend time with me. I found this situation very complicated, and left me concerned about the integrity of my work.

Considering some of my previous experiences I often felt disempowered and felt I had to agree and not be too defensive, or keep to myself too much lest this would affect access to interviews and my research as a result. I finally decided to lie about my whereabouts so the comrade would not have to bring me food, after a while he asked me if *'ke mo hladile'*²⁸. I explained to him that I appreciated his kind gestures however didn't want to implicate my

²⁸ This translated into English as divorce.

data in any way and my supervisor would have a problem with 'our relationship'. He was really upset but respected my decisions and took a step back, but would keep contact with me even after the research process to see how the research was going and suggest people that I could interview, and as a senior comrade he would speak in my defense with an authoritative voice. This incident was also revealing of the ways that women in the ANCYL have to navigate themselves around the desires and advances of their male comrades.

I had come to know that in comrade circles particularly among the men, there were conversations about this girl from Johannesburg who was doing research. This rumour was proven by a call I made to a certain comrade to request an interview who responded with a tone that said 'oh so you're the girl people are talking about'. To deal with the premeditated advances by the comrades I would interact with, I considered wearing a ring so as to suggest to the participants that I was romantically unavailable. After thinking about this I decided against it. I realised that being a woman, and in this case a researcher, gave me audience to men who would ordinarily not consider speaking with me about political matters, and that having a ring would disadvantage me, especially with those men who would want to start a conversation with me bearing intentions of some kind of romance.

Although I did not wear a ring, I told some of the participants who came on strongly that I was engaged and lobola (dowry) had been paid for me, and that I would be getting married after completing the research. As such I was not going to dishonour my fiancé by entertaining anything with them. Again had I been a male researcher, I doubt I would have been subjected to this uncomfortable experiences with the people that I encountered throughout the research process.

Interviewing men, as I have alluded to, was not always easy to do as the attitude that they displayed tended to be one that undermined me or the process of the research. Although most of the interviews went well, it was difficult to get the male participants to open up, and those that did seemed to struggle with remaining ‘politically correct’ insofar as the paradigms of this research **were** concerned as shall be revealed more in chapter four of this dissertation. The venues where the meetings were conducted were also telling of the indifference that these comrades showed. One of the interviews happened in a rented backroom where the participant stayed, when I arrived at his place he had just gotten out of the bath tub and he cynically asked if it was okay for us to just continue with the interview in his towel, he sat on his bed and the interview was conducted.

In hindsight I realise that this was compromising for me, although I was not subjected to any kind of violence. Had anything unfortunate happened I would have lost credibility with some of my participants and my research would have been compromised because in the discourse of gender based violence denialists I would have “asked for it”. This is one example among others that exposes the reality of a power dynamic at play during the process of doing research. Even though I was the researcher and supposedly having the upper hand, I was in some respects disempowered by myself and others on the basis that I am a Black young woman.

Interviewing women was more interesting than it was interviewing men, as a woman who has been active also in the ANCYL I was enabled to listen to other things that were said in the interviews although these not necessarily said verbally, expressions, sighs and pauses were important for me to understand what was being said and unsaid. Reinharz (1992) asserts that as a method of feminist research the shared identity of being women is helpful in that the

participant can become more open than they would have been when interviewed by a man. Indeed I experienced this in the research process that I undertook. As an insider I was cognisant of the disregard and misogyny experienced by women in the ANCYL and an acknowledgement of this was helpful as it positioned me to understand as a researcher to master the art of probing and getting as much information as necessary. The shared identification as women was also good in that there was a sense of ‘woman to woman talk’, this resulting in an ease of conversation.

My familiarity with the ANCYL was a bit problematic because it meant that the participants had to be hesitant in answering some of the questions because unlike with a person who did not know the ANCYL, I knew what some responses really alluded to and didn’t take them as a matter of what was being said. Where necessary I used the approach of self-disclosure in the research process, this meant that I opened up about shared experiences with the women participants to create a more comfortable environment for them to open up, especially where I realised that there was much that could be said but there was a hesitance on their part. For example in one of the conversations I had with a woman participant about her relationship with a senior comrade and what effect this had on her activism. To get her to respond to this I told her about my relationship with a senior comrade from my region and how the relationship affected my activism then and even after our relationship. Her knowing the person in question was helpful in that she asked how he was and this created an easy transition for her own reflections about her relationship.

Although this act of self-disclosure was good in this instance, it was also problematic for me in the long run as it opened me up to matters I had already laid to rest. It also concerned me because I had introduced to the conversation a person whose permission I had not requested

and at that stage I wondered about whether or not that was ethical. Moving forward I was even more careful in self-disclosure to protect the integrity of the research process, myself and other individuals likely to be implicated.

In thinking about the process of knowledge production undertaken by women, young people and to some extent by black men, it is of importance to be able to inscribe these realities into the discourse, as these experiences directly and indirectly shape the course of scholarship and without them the reproduction of certain types of knowledge are restricted. There's definitely value in identification as well as in familiarity as seen in my interactions with the women interviewed and the ability to navigate within frameworks and gatekeepers in organisations as seen in the case I have described.

Ethical Considerations

To stay in line with the procedure of consent for this research all participants were requested to sign a consent form. The consent form required them to consent to doing the interview and for me to record it as well. It was made clear that the participants were able to stop and skip questions whenever they felt uncomfortable. The consent form committed to keeping the interview material confidential and accessible to just my supervisors and I. It was also made clear that at any point they wished they had the opportunity to pull out of participating in the project even if it were to be months after I had left the area. As a researcher, I was cognisant of the controversy that could arise from this work, and as such deemed it necessary to protect the integrity of the participants.

Two interesting things happened which I think should be reflected on in this section. The first was with a participant whose interview was done in the presence of her grandmother who is

also an activist. Both my participant and her grandmother insisted on the presence of the grandmother during the interview. This participant requested **not to** record the interview, and a few days later requested that she be pulled out of the research, without much hesitance I acknowledged this and removed her interview from the data analysed. Secondly, one of the participants insisted that the interview should not be confidential. After the interview, she told her male comrades that she had told me all about the sexual harassment women activists were exposed to in the ANCYL and that as women they were sick and tired of the men's sexism. This case was tricky to deal with as I could not stop her from her reflections, yet at the same time I worried about my presence in the township for the remainder of the time. This interview was among the last I conducted and I left the area the next day, thus escaping whatever backlash would have come as a result of her actions.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on women's activism in South Africa, gender politics, youth, gender and sexuality as well as femininity and masculinity, reading these within the paradigms of activism within the ANCYL. The chapter also looks at the theoretical framework that underpins this work, in particular postmodernism, feminist theory and discourse analysis. This chapter makes reflections on the thinness in the literature on the topic of women as activists and argues that a richer development of research about women in South Africa is needed. Through the identification of gaps in the literature, this chapter proposes that this dissertation be seen as a contribution to thickening the stories of women which have been inadequately covered.

Chapter 3: History of the ANCYL

This chapter provides an overview of the history from its inception in 1944 to the early 1990's. The chapter discusses two periods in the ANCYL's history. First it looks at the period from its launch in the 1940's to its banning in the 1950's. Secondly the chapter looks at the exile years, a period which saw the predominance of the internal movement. This chapter makes the argument that the practices of the ANCYL are inadequately understood outside of the context of broader activism, and activism within the MDM in particular. Through a discussion of the different politics of the ANCYL as well as other organisations, I highlight that there is an underlying masculine narrative in activism that serves as a hindrance for the incorporation of women in political structures. This chapter in discussing how the organizational culture of the ANC is shaped argues that the African nationalist framework that underpins the ANCYL is in itself a hindrance to the inclusion of women into organisations like the ANC. This so because of the historical reliance on a framework that disregards women as a part of the political landscape.

Chapter 4: The ANCYL policy position on gender

This chapter provides an analysis of the ANCYL gender policy documents and what these say about gender representation and the inclusion of women in structures of the ANCYL. The key focus of this analysis will be the following documents; 'The ANCYL and its role in the struggle for gender equality' (2001), the 'ANCYL Constitution from its 24th National Congress' (2011) as well as the 24th National Congresses document titled 'The African National Congress Youth League Perspective on Gender Relations and Women's Emancipation' (2011). Through reflections of perceptions among participants, the chapter focuses on women's inclusion and representation, and the implementation of policy

resolutions as focus areas. This chapter argues that although the ANCYL has some progressive policy resolutions concerning women representation and issues affecting women this has not been well implemented in branches, thus questioning the progress that has really been made. This chapter draws from the fieldwork responses with the intention to transcend a theoretical analysis by taking into consideration people's actual voices.

Chapter 5: Women's activism in the ANCYL

The main aim of this chapter is to engage with the ANCYL and what being a woman in this organisation means. This chapter draws from the experiences of ANCYL activists, with the intention to narrate their stories, in a way that provides insight on gender politics in the ANC Youth League and how these play themselves out in the branches in Seshego looked at. The key themes that are looked at in this chapter are women's participation, solidarity between women and the possibilities for women organising separately from the men in the ANCYL. This chapter argues that the experiences of women and men in this organisation are different from those of women representing a position of disadvantage. To illustrate this, this chapter looks at concepts derived from the ANCYL like *panty-preneurship*, *Congress packages* and *motive forces for change*, contending that the existence of such ideas is in itself reflective of the inconsistency of policy and practice of the ANCYL insofar as their commitment to gender transformation is concerned.

Conclusion

This section of the dissertation provides a summation of the arguments made throughout the paper. In concluding this dissertation, this section responds to the questions of representation, incorporation and representation as engaged with throughout this dissertation. In reflecting on the arguments made of the organisational history of the ANCYL, the relationship between policy and practice in the ANCYL as well as women's activism, this section argues that there is little to commend the Youth League for insofar as addressing gender transformation. This

section acknowledges the contributions that this dissertation seeks to make in the topic of gender politics broadly, arguing that what has been revealed herein should serve as impetus for research on this topic even beyond the ANCYL and Seshego.

Chapter: 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This literature review begins by reflecting on women's activism during the anti-apartheid struggle, followed by a discussion on the politics of gender, especially how class, race, and culture intersect in the oppression of women. Considering that these are not only specific to the South African context the chapter looks at women's activism in the civil rights movement in the United States of America, emphasising the similarities between these women and female activists under apartheid. The literature review section of this chapter draws to an end by discussing the notions of youth, gender and sexuality, as well as masculinity and femininity. Following this, attention is drawn to the theoretical framework, which focuses on feminist theory as the underpinning framework for this research, with some attention given to the ideas of postmodernism and discourse analysis.

Literature Review

Women's Activism in South Africa

There is a body of literature that looks at how the struggles of the different groups of women in South Africa were contoured, as well as how women mobilised themselves around their political demands across differences as well as within similarities (Walker 1982, p. 173). This section reflects on the key issues that stem from scholarship on women's activism in South Africa, particularly during the apartheid period. Geisler (2004, p.68-74) discusses how in the history of women's activism women have been able to acknowledge their points of difference and still maintain a level of commitment to being in solidarity on issues affecting women.

The key point of contestation evident in women's struggles is the wedge between the 'motherist' approach that is rooted in ideas of a South African feminism which reinforces traditional gendered roles on the one hand, and those that provide a critique of this approach arguing that it is essentially conservative and disempowers women, confining them to the responsibilities of the family specifically (Gasa 2007, Hassim and Gouws 1988, Hassim 1991).

The available literature looks at the questions of representation, participation, the law and institutions and how although these have changed they still reinforce patriarchal values like the supremacy of men in the political environment and are as such unable to challenge these. This literature also highlights the necessity of women's involvement in the struggle, and perceives it as integral to the seriousness with which women in political spaces are taken (Albertyn et al. 2002). This by no means suggests that everything pertaining to women's activism is covered in this literature, but rather acknowledges the contributions made, and as per the objective of this dissertation, further develops the discussion of women's activism.

Women during apartheid were faced with numerous challenges and mobilised around a number of issues including working women's struggles, poor working conditions, the control of women's mobility and violence against women, among others. Like in other countries where similar struggles were waged, most of these issues were subsumed and homogenized within a nationalist narrative over and above the liberation of women (Hassim 2006, p. 9). On one hand this reality played an important role in linking race, gender and class oppression, and on the other hand it increased dependence by the women's movement on the national liberation struggle thus posing the question 'To what degree were the liberation of Blacks and

that of women congruent?’ Responding to this, one may argue that the congruence of these struggles was one which was to a great extent uncertain, and that it was instead the Communist Party at the time that mobilized working women in trade unions and developed their leadership more than the ANC did.

It must be noted that the doctrine of the Communist Party in South Africa, like that of the African nationalists did not prioritise women. Instead, the Communist Party schooled women in the understanding that their oppression was directly linked to capitalism, and that it was therefore important that the struggle be waged first against the capitalist system, as this would lead to the liberation of women (Hassim 2006). From this we realise that even where a platform was made available for women, it was seen as neither a matter of priority nor a means to introduce the secondary status of women as such.

Women were not fully acknowledged by the liberation movement, but this did not serve as a hindrance to their activism. Under apartheid, women continued to organise themselves even though this mostly took place outside of the formalised political structures like those of the ANC. Although also faced with contradicting views regarding its relationship to the liberation movement, the Federation of South African Women (FSAW) is an example of women’s ability to organise and rally behind women’s concerns outside of the involvement of the ANC and other liberation movements (Geisler 2004). It must be mentioned however, that the women’s struggle was one that was independent of the broader liberation politics of the time. Inasmuch as women wanted to see the end of apartheid, they also wanted to be recognised as equal to men, having equal rights and enjoying the same freedoms, to working, education etc. as well as having all their grievances accordingly attended to (Meintjes 1996).

At the point where women were allowed in the ANC, their role was restricted to auxiliary services to the men in the ANC; the provision of accommodation, food and entertainment during congresses being their priorities. Most of the women that became members of the ANC in its early years were wives of members of the Congress alliance, as well as distinguished African women like Charlotte Maxeke who was among the first Black women to obtain a degree (April 2012 and Hassim 2006). According to Ginwala in Hassim (2006, p. 22) “...men assumed, and women conceded, that defining and achieving the long term goals was men’s territory.” and neither the men nor the women in the ANC had a commitment to changing this phenomenon.

Although women led massive campaigns under the banner of the African National Congress Women’s League (ANCWL) and FSAW such as the anti-pass action of 1956, these women were only tangential to the leadership of the ANC. The African nationalist project saw the question of race as primary and assumed that once racial contradictions were dealt with, contradictions like gender and class inequality would subsequently be resolved (Geisler 2004, Hassim 2006). The process of dealing with racial discrimination as the primary struggle was thus led by the men. The ANC encouraged women to concentrate on more educational campaigns as opposed to confronting the authorities as this was perceived as the role of male leadership. This tendency was not one that was peculiar to activism in the ANC alone, but also existed within the liberation movement in general. The Natal Indian Congress (NIC) also did not recognise or grant representation to Indian women irrespective of their capacity to further the struggle or their commitment to broader social change (Hassim 2006, p. 24).

Acknowledging the long and interesting history of the women's movement in South Africa, dispels any version of history that presents the ANCWL as the taproot of the women's movement in South Africa, however still maintaining a cognisance of its notable contribution (Hassim 2014). This also recognises that before and alongside the involvement of women in the ANC, there existed a women's movement in South Africa that was unconvinced of the idea that freedom from racial oppression preceded women's freedom from male oppression. The women's movement of that time in fact regarded the women's struggle as equally important and as urgent as the struggle against racial oppression (Meintjes 1996). There are undoubtedly women who played a significant role in spreading the gospel of women's activism within the liberation movement in general. Within the ranks of the ANC women such as the late Charlotte Manye Maxeke challenged the perceptions of women by society, and in particular among the elite men who were at the centre of the ANC. The development of a consciousness of the struggles faced by women is one that was and still is of importance, yet remains significantly undermined.

Although seemingly disregarded by male leadership, the women's movement in South Africa was in many ways instrumental to the struggle against apartheid. The women's movement played a role in shaping national liberation discourse and committed itself to the strategies of the liberation movement, as is evidenced in their participation and contribution to the defiance campaign activities of the fifties. Even before being properly organised under the banner of the Federation of South African Women, women have always been involved in defining their positions and involvement in society.

In her book on the ANCWL titled *The ANC Women's League* Hassim (2014, p. 20-23) makes the point that women's organising is historically a conception of women themselves. Hassim argues that the discord in the women's movement of the bygone days was not out of the weakness of women, and looks to the emergence of a non-racial women's movement as evidence of this. A non-racial women's movement was necessary not only for the apartheid period, but also for shaping the participation and representation of women in South Africa's democracy. "Women were not bystanders, nor reluctant participants dragged along by the militancy of men, but were an integral part of the whole development of the campaigns" (Bernstein in Hassim 2006, p.27), as seen through the life of the FSAW. The Federation adopted a women's charter in 1954, which sought to advance the liberation of women and align it to the broader liberation struggle.

Encapsulated in the Women's Charter adopted in 1954 is the understanding of the role and needs of South African women in the context of apartheid. It demands that women's rights include equal citizenship status, work, maternity and property related privileges. It is cognisant of the different roles women play, as mothers, wives, working women and interracial women. It is on this basis that it envisages a society that is aware of these and does not shy away from the gendered expectations of women, but is able to address these effectively within a paradigm that also liberates women (Asmal et. al 2005).

Under apartheid the question of women's rights and representation was subsumed under the reality of segregation on the basis of race. The main source of oppression was race, and although this served the interests of white men in the first instance, white women were both beneficiaries as well as victims of the dominating values of patriarchy that disregard the

woman as an equal to the man. The ability of women to organise themselves across racial and class lines is the main victory of the women's movement that is expressed across the literature. Be that as it may, it is important to also recognise that this victory although significant fell short in explicitly materialising into working class women's interests. Although this may be so, the women's movement in the democratic dispensation claimed some victories where equality before the law and women's representation in leadership structures were concerned.

The influence of the women's movement is one that cannot be limited to the organising of women during the apartheid period. Going into the democratic dispensation, the Women's National Coalition (WNC) played an instrumental role in shaping the discourse of representation and participation by women in structures of leadership. The Women's Charter of 1954 had a particular focus on the deliverables for women, that is, access to resources, employment and decision making platforms among others (Hassim 2003).

In the early nineties, as negotiations about South Africa's democracy were at their peak, conversations about women were beginning to unfold even outside the Mass Democratic Movement. Although very progressive, I contend that the Women's Charter of 1954 was somewhat less assertive than the Women's Charter for Effective Equality adopted in 1994. The latter was premised on broader participation by women of South Africa. In its preamble, the Women's Charter for Effective Equality states that

‘At the heart of women's marginalisation is the patriarchal order that confines women to the domestic arena and reserves for men the arena where political power and authority reside. Conventionally, democracy and human rights have been defined and interpreted in terms of

men's experiences. Society has been organised and its institutions structured for the primary benefit of men. Women want to control their lives. We bear important responsibilities but lack the authority to make decisions in the home and in society. ' (Women's Charter for Effective Equality 1994)

Both the Women's Charter of 1954 and the Women's Charter for Effective Equality of 1994 are interesting in understanding the role of women in politics and challenging the notion that politics is not a place for women. These two documents reveal that activism amongst women in South Africa is not new a phenomenon, and that it is a necessity to acknowledge the challenges that have faced women activists in both the pre- and post-apartheid period. On the one hand, the charter of 1954 was met with much resistance by the men of the Congress alliance, while the Women's Charter for Effective Equality was much better received than its predecessor. The former postured itself as independent of male support and perhaps invulnerable to their criticism, while the latter was endorsed by the MDM under the leadership of the then President Nelson Mandela (Hassim 2006 and Ginwala & Meintjes 1994). Men were generally reluctant to acknowledge that women played a significant role in both the liberation and the women's movement. The charter of 1954 was not endorsed by the patriarchal liberation movements and feminists within the movements had to timeously defend this charter and argue for its importance. The radical tone projected in the 1954 charter unsettled the liberation movement particularly because it had the potential to divert political attention from the question of racial oppression, especially because the women's movement transcended racial and class binaries. The latter charter was not as contentious considering that its adoption was post-apartheid and although not fully liberated, oppression on the basis of racial differences had been eliminated. The endorsement of the charter of 1994 by the MDM on the one hand signified a fulfilment of the commitment to addressing gender inequality once racial oppression was done away with. On the other hand, this could also

symbolise an attempt to recognise feminist demands by legitimising the urgency of women's issues. The latter evidenced by the gains achieved through the involvement of the women's movement especially through the Women's National Coalition (Meintjes 2006).

After the adoption of the Women's Charter for Effective Equality in 1994, conversations about women, and women in politics in particular became popular not only in the Mass Democratic Movement but also outside of it. The Niisa Institute for Women's development facilitated an initiative in 1995 under the theme 'women and politics'. This event is telling of two things, firstly that that in pre-democratic South Africa the presence of women in politics was significant and secondly, that there was a need to further engage with the position of women in the political space considering that '... [w]omen, neglected in the political arena, [were] beginning to claim space in the existing systems and to exert their pressure and influence.' (Dinath & Dangor 1996)²⁹.

The conference moved from the premise of acknowledging that in the developmental trajectory of South African society during the transition to democracy, inequalities between women and men remained unattended to. As a result there was little recognition of the role that women play and minimal commitment to them being actively included in the future developmental goals as '...women have been effectively marginalised from decision-making; their work is unrewarded and devalued.' (Nisaa 1996, 75).

²⁹ Quoted from Niisa's foreword to proceedings from its 1995 conference.

In her presentation to the conference, former deputy minister of Welfare and Population Development Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi commended the South African government of the time for incorporating women into the national assembly, and the legislature. She expressed that the state indeed fell short insofar as the overall representation of women was concerned, but at the same time applauded the versatility of the women in parliament then, who were drawn from different strata of society. Recognizing this as a gain for women, she expressed the need for capacity building which would come about as a result of a progressive women's caucus in parliament (Nissa 1996).

Fraser-Moleketi also mentioned that women in parliament were faced with the dilemma of being Members of Parliament (MPs), as well as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters, this making it difficult for women to uphold their roles as MPs without compromising their personal relationships. The need to compromise is one that is felt by women involved in leadership positions in politics and elsewhere worldwide. The burden of leadership and activism is felt more by women than it is by men, and this is linked to how the nature of the political space which is orchestrated along heteronormative values of masculinity is perceived. Fraser-Moleketi at the conference advocated for a strong women's movement to deal with this dilemma and others like it. Arguing that, the strongest of female leaders are normally met with limitations which tend to be unbearable when not enjoying the support of other female activists (Nisaa 1996).

The question of distrust among female activists themselves came up as an obstacle leading to a lack of support of each other among women in general and Black women in particular. The situation in branches in Seshego that I will discuss in chapter four is reflective of this and

how the consequences of the distrust and conflict among female activists may hinder progress especially concerning the question of leadership and the emergence of women into positions of authority.

Reading the history of the women's abolitionist movement during the 19th century, the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, as well as that of the ANC in the South African context, it is made clear that women and their contributions to the struggle were largely undermined, irrespective of their capacity to lead (Higginbotham 1989, Walker 1989 and Hassim 2006). In some instances women themselves seemed to not have confidence in their own capacities, and this was reflected in the rhetoric of them not wanting to compromise the broader struggle against slavery or racism followed by the decision to suspend the fight against their oppression as women (Jeffrey 1998). The role of patriarchy in our society cannot be overemphasized in our pursuit of understanding the contestation of space by men and women over the decades. It is also noteworthy that the challenges faced by women in general and feminists in particular are international, thus revealing the extent to which patriarchy has been entrenched.

Maart (2014, p.112)³⁰ reinforces this argument by reflecting on the disregard of women by men, and the prevalence of this in South Africa during the eighties, when violence and intimidation tactics became prominent even though not always successful. Resilience and commitment to the liberation of women and Black people in general sustained the activism of women against the odds they faced. Although there was space for women to take up political responsibility notwithstanding the above mentioned limitations, the experiences of female

³⁰ Reference here is made to a published interview in Agenda (2014) by Zanele Hlophe (a gender activist from UKZN) with Professor Rozena Maart and I.

activists have historically been unfavourable, both within and outside of the Mass Democratic Movement. Contributing to this was a noteworthy disregard of feminism from within the structures in the liberation movement. Perceived as a ‘White women’s issue, not a cause that Black women felt strongly about,’ (Maart et. al 2014, p. 112), feminist ideology failed to entrench itself within the liberation movement in the past, and continues to fail in gaining momentum in mainstream political organisations like the ANCYL today (Hassim 2014). Of course this is not to suggest that there was no presence of feminists or feminist ideology within the national liberation movement. But rather to acknowledge that it was not very well received and as such directly and indirectly stifled the activism of some female activists, particularly those who had strong feminist convictions within the ANC (Hassim 2014).

The politics of gender

The ‘politics of gender’ are essentially about power relations between men and women and as such, the focus on ‘gender’ rather than women is one that is of utmost importance. Looking at gender as neither male nor female, calls for a shift from an exclusive emphasis on women’s disadvantage and difference, to the organisation of gender in all social structures and processes (Cock 1991). This therefore means that we ought to engage with both masculinity and femininity and how they are similarly constructed. An acknowledgement that both women and men are in one way or another oppressed serves as a point of departure for this approach (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005), without disregarding the subordinate position that women occupy.

Broadly reflecting on the gender question in South Africa in the apartheid period, Cock (1991) highlights the triple oppression experienced by Black working class women in South

Africa on the one hand, and the power and influence held by White middle class men on the other. In her reflections on gender politics in South Africa, Cock (1991, p. 29-30) not only highlights the dualities of women and men but transcends her analysis to one that integrates race, class and culture. This approach by Cock (1991, p. 29-32) is interesting because on the one hand it highlights how the gender hierarchy which is, the superior social position of men, takes precedence over race or culture, while on the other hand reflects the intersections of race and gender differently in specific contexts. This approach reveals how this hierarchy maintains the traditional dichotomy of the public versus the private, that which prioritises the idea of reserving space for women and men separately (Bock 1991).

There are multiple ways to see the performance of power by those higher up in the gender hierarchy, among these Cock (1991, p. 37-45) identifies violence, sexual harassment, the law and the household as key areas wherein this power relationship between the sexes is played out. The use of sexual harassment and violence as a way of exerting authority by men in South Africa over the years has increased to the extent that it has come to be treated as normal. Domestic violence is a historic problem that has proven to be difficult to tackle even though attempts have been made to ensure it is a matter considered as a national concern (Meintjes 2003 and Vetten 2014). Although not the central feature of this dissertation, the issue of violence is important for this research because the performance of power, from the perspective of the gender hierarchy, is central to politics of the ANCYL. The use of violence is a silently accepted way of engagement within the organisation's structures, as shall be seen in chapter four of this dissertation.

The family is also identified as a site of gender struggle; responsibilities of leadership and provision tend to be given to men, while those of caring, nurturing and general domestic work tend to be the responsibility of the women. This is so, irrespective of whether or not the women themselves are employed and as such also make financial contributions in the home (Cock 1991, p. 40-42). As the basic unit of human socialisation, the household in many ways encourages the unequal distribution of power between men and women by reinforcing the stereotypical roles of who does what in the household. These ways of socialisation also receive platform in institutions like the ANCYL and should be considered in line with the participation and inclusion of women into the politics of the organisation in making the kind of analysis that this dissertation attempts.

The role of the law in the subjugation of women to men is also historical and is closely linked to the racial and gendered inequalities that persist thus reinforcing them. A reading of the women's suffragist movement provides an understanding of how the law can be applied as a sphere that reveals the power relationship between the genders. The women's suffragist movement in South Africa like in other parts of the world was a quest for voting rights for White women, and particular minority middle class women who met certain requirements like being married. The suffragist movement in the thirties was not about the emancipation of women in general or challenging the existing power relations that favoured men more than it did women. It was particularly interested in the right to vote for White women, unlike the initiatives of the Federation of South African Women that had a much broader scope than the vote (Walker 1982).

Religion and culture have historically kept Afrikaner and British women in South Africa subordinate insofar as their roles both in the home and in the political or public space is concerned. Women in the Afrikaner community were expected to continue with their wifely duties as well as with farm work, the same being applicable to British women settlers who migrated to South Africa with the hope of being socially uplifted. The presence of Black people in this context was instrumental in elevating the position of the White woman, as she too became master and senior to both the Black man and woman. Evidently, the gender question is complex because women themselves are not a homogenised group and as such their experiences even in the political space are informed by their identity formulation along the lines of race, class and sexual orientation (Cock 1991, p. 29-33).

The lenses that Cock (1991) uses as a point of departure for analysing the performance of gender superiority are still relevant as they firstly provide perspective of the limitations of structure (the family, law and religion) and how women are intrinsically oppressed by them. Secondly and more importantly for this work, these lenses reveal the position of Black women in a bigger scope in respect to their White counterparts as well as to Black and White men. This reading of the power dynamic in the gender contest empowers the rationale of the subject focus of this research, the Black female activists in an ANCYL branches in Seshego. An important consideration to make here is that the women in branches in Seshego are typical of the women that Cock (1991, p. 33-40) suggests, are the most affected by the contest of power in the gender relationship.

This is based on the fact that they are Black, working class, and as such are the most vulnerable in society generally, as well as in the context of the ANCYL and its branches. This

dissertation engages with the discussion by Cock (1989) in a way that it extends the perspective of a triple oppression to that which recognises the intersections that come with women's identity as expounded upon by Crenshaw (1991). Which in the South African context; places particular emphasis on the complexities of the women's struggles, regarding them as not simply resolved by the end of apartheid in South Africa. This dissertation acknowledges that the law is now more accommodating of women, and mechanisms are in place to ensure that both the gender and racial inequalities are addressed, at least insofar as equality before the law is concerned. This being so however, it remains a reality that there is an inherited burden from all the years of persisting inequalities that structurally limit women's participation in social and political spaces, as shall be illustrated here.

A shared perspective

There are obvious similarities between Afro-American female civil rights activists in the USA and the Black women in the South African liberation movement such as race and their identification as women. There are definitely other organisational similarities that are not as obvious as these, but are also of high significance. For example, both women activists in the USA and in South Africa at the time when Black³¹ people were oppressed were subjected to expectations not just in their roles as activists but also as mothers, wives and daughters.

Throughout their activism they had to deal with being identified as women and the expectations that come with that such as child rearing, taking care of their homes as well as running the daily affairs of their respective organisations. Women in these movements were faced with the predicament of being incapable of challenging the sexist ideas and practices of

³¹ Black here refers to the people of colour subjected by racism both in the USA and in SA.

their male counterparts lest this compromised the broader struggles at hand (Hassim 2006 and Standley 1990).

In seeking to engage with the participation of women in political activism in contemporary South Africa, it is worthwhile to draw from the experiences of women's activism elsewhere. This shows how the challenges faced by women activists are similar, but also provides possibilities to highlight the nuances of the different contexts as well as an opportunity to explore possibilities for influencing change. This section looks at the political activism amongst African American women in the United States of America as well as that of their male counterparts during slavery and the 1960s Civil Rights movement.

‘...the story of black American women has been denied a “pulpit” for far too long.’ (Higginbotham 1989, p. 14) it is of critical importance to look at the story of these Black women when interested in looking at the role that women in the various struggles played and still play. This recognition is important because it gives credibility to the argument that politics is male dominated, and also hostile to women's involvement. Furthermore, it also serves as a way to highlight the challenges faced by women in the ANCYL as those that are experienced universally, therefore providing impetus for challenging male dominance in smaller contexts like those of the ANCYL branches.

In her discussion of the position of the African American woman in the history of the USA, Higginbotham (1989, p.16-17) begins by juxtaposing the struggle of African Americans against slavery and for citizen rights, to that of civil rights as fought for by White women. In doing this she not only highlights the view that these struggles share similarities, but also that

these struggles claim a cultural uniqueness as well as separate consciousness. White women like African American people sought to infiltrate the political, social and economic spaces. Yet they also had differences expressed as a 'cultural uniqueness'. This uniqueness set apart African Americans from their White counterparts on the premise of race, practices, beliefs, values etc., and in the case of the woman, her sex as well.

It is this uniqueness that questioned the Black man's masculinity in relation to not only his White male counterparts but also to White women and especially to the Black women who were perpetually expected to take the position of subservience to the men (Higginbotham 1989, 15). This revealed as per Higginbotham's assertion, the double jeopardy³² of race and sex which was far reaching in that ultimately the African American woman was unable to assume her position in the struggle alongside either the African American man, or the White woman. In the case of the latter different extents of oppression were experienced by the Black woman and her White female counterpart, who even though is subjected to male domination, is fortunate in that she is not just free from racial domination but also benefits from it in her position as master to the African American man.

The role of the women in the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties is one that is of interest to look at in the pursuit to understand the general perceptions of women in the struggle by themselves and also by their male counterparts. According to Standley (1990, p. 449), the role that women in the Civil Rights Movement played is one which was largely undermined by men and to some degree historically unrecognised. Women in the movement were formal members of the upper echelons of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the

³² Double jeopardy is a concept utilised by Higginbotham (1989) in discussing the position of black women in the USA in the 1960's.

Southern Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as well as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MDFP) and were informal, but dedicated participants and spontaneous leaders of the movement. Women played an integral role in the organising of protests, leading voter registration drives as well as teaching in freedom schools among other things.

Although their contribution was somewhat recognised, it is vital to acknowledge that their assumption of command was one that was restricted by the patriarchal and sexist views held by ministers and leaders of these organisations who regarded leadership as a domain for men. As a result of this, it has been difficult to measure women's contribution to the movement beyond what was acceptable to the ministers (Standley 1990). The women who were active in the Civil Rights Movement held different perceptions of what their participation in the movement ought to have been in relation to the broader struggle. Some women in the movement understood racism as politically motivated and thus saw the right to vote freely as the main obstacle to their freedom. These women lead various campaigns to remove impediments that African Americans faced in voting, in the hopes that this would bring about African American leadership which would deal with the atrocities they faced at the time.

Standley (1990, p. 454-455) brings to the fore the inability of African American women in the Civil Rights Movement to deal with the reality of the contradictory relationship that they had with their male counterparts, who were on the one hand their comrades in arms in the face of white supremacy, and on the other hand their oppressors when confronting the question of gender inequality. Both the women and the men did not question the secondary status that was given to women, but instead put on a pedestal the role that the men played in the movement. This irrespective of women having being at the centre of the day to day life of

the movement. In defence of the leaders of the movement and the movement itself, women down-played the significant roles they took up, minimised the extent to which their issues were important and viewed addressing their marginality as secondary to the agenda on course at the time (Standley 1990).

Even among the women who had lost confidence in the vote's capacity to free African American people from their oppression, the ability to locate and challenge their oppression in the movement itself was one which was for the most part non-existent. Women in the Civil Rights Movement were steadfast on the idea that the main antagonisms were racism and capitalism, and saw the end of racism through a separatist approach, and an end to capitalism as a beginning of their freedom from their oppression as women. The inability of the women in the movement to confront patriarchy and sexism existing within was informed by the fear that in challenging sexism, they would compromise the broader struggle of racism and the status of African Americans in general (Standley 1990).

There are evidently numerous shared experiences between the women in the Civil Rights movement in the United States and women in the South African liberation movement broadly and in the ANC in particular. Firstly among these is the downplaying of the involvement and contribution to the struggle by these women, secondly and in line with this, the propensity of these women to not question the secondary status that is attributed to them in these organisations. Indeed both women in the USA and South Africa struggled to make their issues a priority in the broader scheme of their respective movements. They consciously prioritised the struggle against racism and in a sense neglected to address the inequality and

disregard they were subjected to within these organisations, this however not to negate the attempts made.

Finally, the involvement of women in these organisations introduced them to activism in the feminist and labour movement, their perspective to activism was certainly broadened thus exposing them to much more than that what other women and their male counterparts would be exposed to. This in a sense reveals the oxymoronic nature of activism for women that this dissertation seeks to look into, where on the one hand one's political acumen is sharpened by being politically active, and on the other hand stifled by the reality of gender configurations within the political organisations themselves (Hassim 2006, Higginbotham 1989, Standley 1990).

In light of this historically rooted perspective of women's activism, this research adds to this body of literature a perspective of women activists in a context where a patriarchal discourse still dominates, but where the discourse of including women has a platform. This dissertation enriches this body of literature by bringing to the forefront the marginalised voices of women, making the argument that these too are important in writing history and also in developing a discourse that is not one sided and bias towards the already dominant male narrative.

Intersectionality

Recognising the shared perspective, this section looks at intersectionality, presenting it as a frame work that is useful to understanding both the South African and American contexts.

‘The concept of political intersectionality highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas. The need to split one’s political energies between two sometimes opposing groups is a dimension of intersectional disempowerment that men of color and white women seldom confront.’(Crenshaw 1991, p. 1251-1252)

The case of both the South African and American contexts is reflective of the inadequacy of both the race and gender arguments to accommodate and provide a framework within which black women’s challenges can be analysed through. The above realities depict a commitment to racial politics over one’s identity as woman. Women in both the anti-apartheid struggle and those in the anti-slavery movement recognised race as their primary source of oppression, this notwithstanding their activism in the broader gender struggle within and outside their respective organisations. Crenshaw (1991) argues that an inclusive way of looking at Black women’s oppression is important, and that an analysis of Black women’s struggles that is void of a recognition of the intersections of race, class, gender etc. merely reinforces the dominant discourse that neglects the black woman as a single body.

Within this framework, recognition is made of the subordinate position of Black women within the racial and gendered narratives of oppression. Crenshaw argues that the subordinate position of Black women is not always intentional. That is to say that neither Black men nor White women are intentional in their marginalising of Black women, but rather that it is the prevalent vulnerabilities amongst Black women that subjugate them to the vulnerable positions which disempower them. This is evident in the above mentioned cases where it is the women themselves within these movements who concede to the priority status of race over gender, and making minimal efforts to centralise women’s issues, thus opting for organising women outside of the nationalist struggle as specifically seen in the South African context.

The theory of intersectionality is therefore important in expounding on the findings from this research. Intersectionality provides a deconstruction of existing stereotypes of identity which cannot be understood in isolation from each other, it aids the analysis of the findings of this research from the perspective of both the dominant as well as that of the subordinate (Staunes and Sondergaard 2011, Crenshaw 1991).

Youth

The concept of youth is one that is interesting because it is contextual and as such seldom meant the same thing. Considering that this dissertation looks at young people, and youth in political parties in particular, it is important for one to establish an understanding of this concept and what it means in the context of this dissertation. According to Durham (2000, p. 117), youth is a historically constructed social category, a relational concept, and a sharp lens through which one can observe society. It is important to acknowledge the category of youth as heterogeneous varying from one society to another depending on political, cultural and social contexts among other things. Furthermore, the category of youth transcends this identity and intersects also with race, class, and gender; as such studies on youth should be well defined and cognisant of the various identifications.

In contemporary society the impact of globalization on young people to varying degrees informs what is characteristic of the youth as well as what is seen by young people as important and unimportant. Jeffrey (2010) moves from a premise that acknowledges that globalisation plays an integral part in changing the lives of youth and children. In South Africa, insufficient or decreasing welfare makes it even more difficult for youth to attain the "...social goods associated with 'adulthood', such as a stable job, valuable skills and secure

housing” (Aiken 2001a and Ruddick 2003 in Jeffrey 2010, p. 496). This is happening at a point where there is increased exposure to notions of independence, adulthood and success as per the international standards projected by the media. Like Durham (2000), Jeffrey (2010) acknowledges that young people are the ones who are a good lens to look through in trying to understand a range of issues like education, employment and identity among other things.

In theorising young people, Jeffrey (2010, p. 497) discusses how childhood and youth have been historically conceptualised. In the early nineteenth century, Jeffrey (2010) asserts that there had been a somewhat simpler, continuous progression from childhood to adulthood, where childhood was a ““highway of life”” (Kett 1971 in Jeffery 2010, p. 497). In the more romanticised period of liberalism childhood is conceptualised as a period of dependence, innocence, playfulness and less concern with sexuality. In contrast youth is seen as a period of emotional instability, semi-dependence, and maturity thus suggesting that there is a transition from being a child, innocent and dependent, to being a young person: exposed and independent.

This idea is problematized by Jeffrey (2010, p. 501-502) by suggesting that a youth that is characterised by less dependence cannot be perceived to be the norm, as in some countries, the transition is halted or perhaps made impossible by the country’s socio-economic conditions. Taking a look at the average ANCYL member in the branches studied in Seshego today provides a useful illustration of what Jeffery (2010) suggests here. The members of the ANCYL that participated in this study were on average 27 years old, were parents, unemployed, relatively educated (at least to the level of matric) and were dependent on their

parent's income. This fits the characteristic of being dependent like a child, but also a youth (or adult) because of their age and their responsibilities as parents.

This account of the youth as accounted for by Durham (2000) and Jeffrey (2010) although good falls short on accounting for other categories of intersection like race, class and gender that should be infused in the discussion of young people. Particularly because it is these categories of intersection that define the perspective of the different narratives of the youth, especially in diverse a society's like South Africa. The repression that is endured by young people is indeed underpinned by the apartheid history and the patriarchal values embedded in society broadly.

It is important to augment this perspective of the youth by reflecting on the identity of youth in the South African context, considering the peculiar history of the country. Although this doesn't completely deal with the concern raised, it provides a more specific perspective of youth in South Africa historically. Seekings (1993, p. xi) states that '[t]he category of youth in South Africa is political rather than a sociological or demographic construct.', as such the central feat of the youth of South Africa historically was their involvement in the political programmes of the time (Marks 2001). The category of youth in politics shifted from apocalyptic views that are hostile and regard the youth as delinquent, violent and destructive, to ones that are influenced by the noble values of freedom thus regarding them as selfless comrades aspiring for a democratic South Africa.

An important aspect of Black South African youth especially in the seventies is that they rejected all types of victimhood, and even in their positions of susceptibility to the apartheid regime, remained committed to protecting a type of cohesion within their communities (Mokwena 2005). Although this may have been the case, the backdrop that we ought to understand the Black youth of South Africa is one that has historically been marred by violence that stems from the instability of the families within the Black community as seen in their economic, social and education status among other things.

Amidst other political activity, the townships were ruined by gangs, which were inherently survivalist, violent and misogynistic this also seen in the way that the abuse of women in the townships was prevalent. Violence was an integral part of the township, and a by-product of this was the overt abuse of women. This violence of women was well accommodated in gangs that were prevalent in Soweto, but not limited to this township. Mokwena (1991) reflects on a practice familiarly known in the townships during the eighties as 'jackrolling'. This refers to the sexual harassment, abduction and in particular rape of women by those who are members of the gangs that held communities at ransom through their violent operations (1991). The rampage behaviour of the youths in these gangs Mokwena (1991) suggests is a distorted reassertion of power via masculine sexuality, a response to the emasculation of Black men by the apartheid regime.

The historical background of youth in South Africa is important, as it provides a type of basis for understanding the youth today. Be that as it may, literature on youth in the country suffers from a void insofar as the representation of women is generally concerned. This unfortunately provides an insufficient premise to begin a conversation on young people today since it is

indeed historical events that shape today's discourse. Undeniably the views, experiences and challenges faced by young women are largely unheard. This dissertation therefore seeks to make a contribution to this fleeting narrative of young women in South Africa, however cognisant that this too would be from a limited perspective.

Gender and Sexuality

In her introduction to *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir (1949, p. 12-13) looks at the idea of uncertainty that underpins women's identity. Her work seems to reject the nominalist approach to understanding women. She argues that this perspective shuns away from other intricate aspects of gender identity which are actually applicable to men in the same way that they are to women. This idea is embedded in the phallogocentric discourse that simply regards the superiority of the genders as informed by one having a penis. This sense of superiority is instilled in childhood by either family or society and in most cases continues to find expression in the lives of individuals in their adulthood. The dominant ways of socialising children perpetuate the idea that the female species is inadequate, and her value and existence should at all times be informed by her relation to her male counterpart.

These conceptions of a superior sex are normally kept in place by institutions in society like the family, church and political organisations which tend to embrace notions of male superiority. This reading is useful to this work because it provides perspective on how we understand the perceptions of being a woman in the ANCYL, and the extent to which this shapes the experiences of women activists in the organisation. In reflecting on the roles and activism of women, this analysis becomes useful as it helps problematize the difficulty on the

part of the ANCYL to properly break away from their conceptions of women's activism. In the subsequent chapters, this assertion by Simone de Beauvoir (1949) will be brought to life by the reflections from the activists themselves. In addition a dimension that recognises organisational culture as reinforcing values and practices of masculinity will be used to illuminate her argument in this context.

In addition to this, one ought to recognise the complexity of sex and gender, and to highlight what these two concepts mean and their applicability in the context of this dissertation. Schuhmann (2011) provides an interesting, useful and accessible understanding of these often complex concepts. According to her, 'Sex is commonly understood as the biological hardware, the body, with its signifying genitals, hormones, facial features, reproductive organs, bodily hair and so forth.' (Schuhmann 2011, p. 96), while gender has to do with '...how you sit, dress, walk, if you change nappies or repair cars...it is about how we perform what we understand within a given historical, local and cultural context as feminine or masculine.' (Schuhmann 2011, p. 96). This being so, it is important to be aware that there is no causal relationship between sex and gender, and that gender can be interpreted in multiple ways. This means that a female body may in some instances express masculine ways of being and the male body feminine, but is also an acknowledgement that a combination of both masculine and feminine ways of being may be exhibited in a body that is either female or male (Butler 1990 and Schuhmann 2011).

In problematizing this phenomenon, Butler (1990) questions the said construction of gender, and poses the questions, 'How is gender constructed?' 'Can we de-construct gender?' In asking these questions, she brings to the fore the possible controversy of gender being deterministic and not based on free will. These questions that Butler (1990) asks challenge

the idea that the body is a passive instrument, simply reflecting sex and therefore informing gender. She argues that the notion of sex being natural is itself a gendered construct and that, for that reason the construction of a gender-sex binary is itself a phenomenon that should be challenged.

Schuhmann's (2011) discussion of gender and nation building is helpful in engaging with the questions posed by Butler (1990). Firstly, Schuhmann problematizes the idea of a nation being symbolised as a woman as well as being imagined as one existing in a nuclear and heterosexual family. As such, a woman never stands for herself but symbolically for a collective hence the coining of expressions like a 'mother nation', '*mosadi a tshwarang thipa ka bohaleng*'³³ (a woman, she that holds a spear where its sharpest).

Secondly, by drawing attention to the case of South African athlete Caster Semenya (whose gender was questioned) she exposes the dishonesty in the discourse around accepting diversity in the process of nation building by suggesting that this diversity is in itself policed. She does this by drawing attention to how the notion of diversity is embraced as long as it does not challenge the heteronormative ideals that are cherished and protected by the nation state. Schuhmann's work is important in that it juxtaposes the narrative of the nation that is progressive with its reality. This outlook certainly aids my own reading of the ANCYL and its gender politics, as it gives confidence to the critical approach that this dissertation assumes, and sees this not as a phenomenon on its own, but as an outcome of a broader nationalist rhetoric.

³³ A SePedi phrase that describes the strength of a woman. This was used very much by participants throughout the interviews.

Masculinity and Femininity

The notions of masculinity and femininity are very problematic, in that they neither have a causal relationship with being male or female nor should they be understood in a simple and singular narrative (Connell 1995). The category of the feminine is one that is not very much contested in the discourse of gender that is heteronormative. The assumption is that the woman is feminine and also homogenous and her relationship to the masculine man is one that is direct and hierarchical with the man being at the top of this hierarchy. How we read the feminine in many ways emanates from our regard of the superiority of the masculine, this is grounded in the understanding of the expectations that we have of the sexes i.e. the biology of men and women (Munro 2010).

The norm is that the concept of masculinity is used in such a way that it refers to, the manly characteristics of an individual, these developed around the idea of what is traditionally seen to be male or female as discussed above. In his work on masculinities, Connell (1995) provides an in depth analysis of the different forms of masculinities broadly recognised. A central feature of these forms of masculinities is the idea that the male is naturally superior to the female, irrespective of the variation between the masculinities. Connell's main argument is founded on problematizing the notion of there being a single way that masculinities can be read thus bringing forth the view that there are various types of masculinities which must be read contextually as opposed to a reading from a singular lens (1995).

According to Connell (1995), the acknowledgement of different masculinities is a single but important step to dealing with the complexities of understanding this belief. He emphasizes

the need for a richer comprehension of the masculinities that are there, as well as a reading of how these different masculinities relate to each other. Below I will briefly outline some of the masculinities that are discussed by Connell (1995), this is necessary in that it will enrich the analysis of the different masculinities at play within the ANCYL in Seshego as shall be seen in subsequent chapters.

Connell (1995) identifies three types of masculinities, these being the hegemonic, subordinate and complicit types. Using Gramsci's analysis of hegemony, Connell (1995) speaks about a hegemonic masculinity which essentially represents and defends the privileges of a patriarchal order and maintains the status quo embodied by the classical stereotypes of men being macho, in control, authoritative and violent (Morrell et al. 2012).

Subordinate masculinity is one that is typically representative of male homosexuals. The relationship between the sub-ordinate type of masculinity and the hegemonic is one where the latter is dismissive of the former. The hegemonic type of masculinity perceives the gay man as not man enough, but rather as feminine and as such referred to as wimps, sissies etc. Complicit masculinity represents a masculinity that benefits from the dividends of patriarchy, that is to say that this masculinity '...realizes[s] the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy...' (Connell 1990, p. 79). The complicit masculine individual accepts heterosexual values and expectations (which are grounded in patriarchy), he doesn't really challenge patriarchal injustices nor perpetuate these through violence (like the hegemonic masculine individual would), but is safely in the middle as a provider, protector and defender of the nuclear family as we know it.

Theoretical Framework

This research rests predominantly in feminist theory as a theoretical framework, the

‘...fundamental goal of feminist theory is (and ought to be) to analyze gender relations: how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think or, equally important, do not think do not think about them.’ (Flax 1987, p.622).

As such it is important that we remain cognisant of the nuances of feminist theory, and how it has no fixed essence but rather relies on the variance within and over time. It is on this premise that we should also be sensitive to the theory of postmodernism (which will be expounded on later in this section) in relation to this theoretical framework. Feminist theory intends to bring awareness to the dominance of [HIS] tory (history) in the reading of human existence. Feminist theory although significantly varied, deems necessary a critique of the assumption that a reading of the present ought to be one that is oblivious to the differences between men and women (Flax 1987).

To dismantle the existing representations or misrepresentations of women and their ideas, it was necessary that attention be drawn to the patriarchal discourses that were mainly hostile in their representation of women, as well as those that had nothing to say about women. The goal of including women in these spheres that have been seen to not be accommodating of women and regard women as inferior to men is central to this. Seeing that there is no consensus on what gender is, and being cognisant of the inattentiveness seen in the ANCYL’s language on dealing with gender inequality and equality, this study on women is indeed in line with feminist theory. To do this one must bring to the fore those issues that were and still are seen as issues of and for women, such as sexuality, the private/domestic sphere and the

family, and in the context of this work locate these within the broader masculine narrative that is characteristic of the ANCYL (Flax 1987 and Grosz 1992).

Although not a metanarrative itself, feminist theory certainly draws from theories of oppression such as race and class. However, because of its nuances it theorises the oppression of women in a way that focuses much on the subject of oppression itself. Feminist theory advocates for a worldview that regards women as equal to men in both socio-economic and intellectual terms, its primary focus is of course women and their issues, and this is underpinned by the complete rejection of a patriarchal discourse (Grosz 1992).

As a result of this it identifies women as important points of focus for both empirical and theoretical work, especially considering their historical position of neglect. The challenge that arises from the process (or politics) of inclusion is that the spaces that women are meant to be included in already benefit men, therefore making the inclusion insufficient as it is inclusion only on the terms of the existing order. This results in a disregard of the 'womanliness' i.e. characteristics that may differentiate women from men like being feminine, of women therefore putting upon the woman the role of surrogate man (Grosz 1992).

The approach of treating women and men as the same in the pursuit of some kind of equality is problematic because of how in the theories and practices of research the point of departure has always been that of men. In response to this, feminist theory advocates for a transformation of the patriarchal order even within these paradigms. Although extremely difficult, even seemingly impossible, the pursuit of equality between men and women is one

that remains necessary it would allow for the emergence of women in social, economic as well as political spheres.

Grosz (1992) looks at the autonomy vs. the equality debate within the variants of feminist theory over the last decades. In the case of the former, reference is specifically made to ones' ability to define their own standards and norms in the pursuit of self-determination. This perspective thus argues that even though men and women could be perceived as biologically different, and because of this as having a gender that either adheres to or rejects the heteronormative expectations. In their autonomous selves they are able to carve their own narratives outside of the accepted gender framework.

The latter on the other hand speaks to an approach that moves from the acceptance of there being a standard of norms and practices which effort should be put in ensuring that these do not only represent the men over women, but are rather genial to both men and women. The controversy with regards to this narrative is that on the one hand it potentially does away with the hierarchy between men and women and allows a flexibility of these notions. This is also captured in the discourse of postmodern feminism as shall be later discussed. An acknowledgement of the complexity of these ideas is important, because it is here that equality can also be problematized, particularly its disregard of the historically unequal premise that underpins an acknowledgement of women and men as equals.

Feminists that focus on autonomy are cognisant of men, even though their discourse differs from that of equality feminists in that it seeks to produce an exclusive narrative that moves

from the position of women as both a subject and object. This means that women do not maintain the status quo of the dominant patriarchal discourse, but they rather have a perspective that acknowledges that in spite of shared humanity, being a woman is in itself an important point of differentiation.

The shift that is presented by feminist theory is one that is not limited to an agenda that is anti-sexist, but is also interested in ensuring that the patriarchal and phallogentric discourse that has enjoyed dominance is shaped in a way that it gives room to the feminine voice (in whichever form it takes). The anti-sexist project requires a thorough understanding of prevailing histories, ideologies and practices, so that it can respond adequately to these. Anti-sexist feminism is mainly reactive and negative with an intention to specifically challenge patriarchy as the dominating theoretical framework of gender. This is necessary to avoid irrelevance and idealization, although inadequate on its own.

While this may be necessary, it is important that anti-sexist feminist theory thinks beyond wanting to challenge the patriarchal notion that reduces women, their impact and the contributions they make. Without providing alternatives to the status quo, anti-sexist feminism reduces itself to being mere opponents of patriarchy and as such affirming patriarchal dominance. This work therefore goes beyond this understanding, and explores the topic in such a way that it brings forth a perspective that is rooted in the experience of the women from the view point of both the men and the women.

In using feminist theory as the underpinning framework for this work, it is important to look at postmodernism and how it is useful in doing feminist research. Among its interests is a shift from the metanarrative to a more context-based way of doing research. As such a postmodern position on feminism preoccupies itself with theorising women's experiences and their oppression, as a response to liberalism (a component of the enlightenment theory). It seeks to provide a criticism for the idea that the authority of men over women is scientific truth.

In moving from the premise that western philosophical reasoning is male, postmodern feminism seeks to not only distance itself from this view, but also engages with how men have become the custodians of knowledge and power while exploring ways that this narrative may be dismantled. Postmodern feminism also engages with the idea of universalizing theories, it perceives a shift from the grand narratives; enlightenment, liberalism, Marxism etc. as necessary such that consideration of context is at the centre. Weedon (2000) drawing from other literature makes the point that these discourses are predominantly androcentric and Eurocentric thus not necessarily applicable to other contexts. The work of Chandra Mohanty (1988) is useful as it not only problematizes the singular account of doing feminist work, but encourages an acknowledgement of the nuances that exist in the category of women as a whole.

Postmodern feminism moves from the premise of the subject as understood by western philosophical thought as rational, able, unique etc. and sees this as a problematic conceptualisation of the individual subject, therefore arguing for a deconstruction of such hegemonic assumptions of identity. According to postmodern feminism, sex and gender are

socially and culturally constructed and can in no certain terms be reduced to biological explanations. The postmodern approach to feminism is one that is anti-essentialist and perceives the categorization of male and female as a mere disciplinary tool for the human race (Barker 2000). Postmodern feminism like the social constructionist theory seems to argue that cognisance of social factors such as culture is crucial to the development of gender and how it is significant in making an analysis of how our understanding of ourselves is predisposed or not by our gender (Barker 2000).

Because of its anti-essentialist character, postmodern feminism does not subscribe to 'biological reductionism' (Barker 2000) which refers to reducing the analysis of gender and the behaviour of males and females to genetic characteristics of the individual. Alcoff as discussed by Barker (2000), adds to the discussion of 'biological reductionism' by arguing that emphasis on women as a special species in relation to men is incorrect in that it merely serves to 'solidify' the oppression of women in society thus hindering the women from their agency.

An example of this from my research can be seen in the way that women at times are said to be incapable of dealing with certain matters because they are said to be emotionally unstable. This suggests that because of this, their decision making can be influenced by their emotions and is therefore unreliable, deeming women as unable of holding certain leadership positions such as being a chairperson in the context of an ANCYL branch. The postmodern feminist position dismisses this notion and sees gender and sex as social constructs which are constantly moulded by the varying specifics of both culture and history, this suggesting

therefore that neither sex nor gender are concepts that are natural or unchangeable (Barker 2000).

Feminist Theory Discourse Analysis

As having earlier outlined, feminist theory is in multiple ways a useful tool for this study. Firstly because the subjects of this study are affected by the rigidity of what sex and gender is as expressed within a context of patriarchy. Secondly this research will show that the ANCYL's view on gender is essentialist, patriarchal and blind to sexism. The approach to dealing with issues pertaining to women that seeks to protect and rescue women will be shown, thus revealing the inability of the ANCYL to also criticise men and how their race, class and sexual orientation is disadvantaged by patriarchy and also perpetuates the oppression experienced by women.

In challenging the idea that women are a homogenous group, Butler (1990) asserts that the perceptions of women as stable and uniform in character is problematic. She argues that even within feminist discourse the identity of woman remains one that requires close attention which should emanate from the understanding that the **identities of women are** heterogeneous. The terminology of women has, in itself become a troublesome term, representing a site of contestation and reason for anxiety (Butler 1990).

To un-trouble the woman, it is necessary that cognisance of the other factors that shape the identity of the women be made, these being race, class, ethnicity etc. since gender is not in and of itself an identity but only an aspect of it. In challenging classical feminism's position on the singularity of the woman, Butler (1990) argues that in the same way that the universal

claim of a ‘universal’ has been challenged, so should it be with the woman inscribed in the feminist discourse as well.

Also important to this work is the use of Foucault’s critical discourse analysis since a part of the research is embedded in the analysis of textual documents of the ANCYL. The aim of discourse analysis among others is

“...to identify through analysis the particular linguistic, semiotic and ‘interdiscursive’...features of ‘texts’ ...which are a part of processes of social change, but in ways which facilitate the productive integration of textual analysis into multi-disciplinary research on change.” (Fairclough 2012, p. 453)

Discourse analysis refers to the abstract semiotic (ways of communication, language, visuals body language...) elements of social life (aka semiosis). It also refers to ‘...particular ways of representing particular aspects in social life’ (Fairclough 2012, p.453), i.e. the relation between genres and styles, where the former refers to the ways that interaction is seen in interviews, institutions, organization and the various ways that meetings are carried out in organizations. Semiosis is three-dimensional in social practices in that it focuses on the interaction or actions, representation (how organizations are represented), as well as identity formulation.

The approach to discourse analysis that this dissertation takes is one that is not limited to the reading of written documents, but also explores the interviews, meeting and observations carried out throughout the research process. There is a dialectical relationship between these elements because they are separate and are not reducible by each other, this is underscored by my use of trans-discipline methods.

Fairclough (2012) makes the point that there are different aspects of how meaning is made between relationships, some of these being hegemonic, subversive, or oppositional. This work is premised on the understanding that the ANCYL holds hegemonic ideas that embrace values of patriarchy. As such in the analysing of texts and individuals narratives, these ideas and practices are to be identified and analysed in a way that provides a criticism to the discourse that is prevalent within the ANCYL.

Deveaux (1994) looks at the feminist readings of Foucault problematizing the different ways that feminism from the first wave to the present at times inadequately uses the Foucauldian paradigms of power. Deveaux (1994) describes the body as a political field wherein different power relations are observed, these being seen in the notion of a docile and policed body as well as a normalised gaze. Interesting here is the concept of Panopticonism which refers to the perpetual exposure of viewership resulting in the policing of one's body, which in the context of this work can be applied to the female activists as shall be discussed in later chapters. The use of Panopticonism in this context however will take heed of the caveat raised by Deveaux (1994) about the use of the theory as it is without modifying it in such a way that it takes into consideration feminist objectives. Particularly what it is that women concede to within the power relationship and the ways in which they resist and assert this as their identity.

This dissertation will also use the Second Wave feminism's approach in order to understand notions of power better, also inspired by Foucault who argues that where power resides, there too is found resistance. Power in this context is not looked at in a dualistic, hierarchical way, but rather as multiple relations which view the position of the woman in patriarchal society as

one that can be empowered through resistance. Although useful, Deveaux (1994) points out the limitations in Foucault's conception of power: that Foucault does not take into cognisance that the freedoms that women have or should have are not restricted to material freedoms, but are also inclusive of internal freedoms, in other words, the extent to which a woman may be or feel empowered and confident about that position:

‘Addressing women’s freedom requires that we reflect upon internal impediments to exercising choice as well as the tangible obstacles to its realization- and this means considering practices and conventions that may have disempowering effects not easily discernible to theorists who focus exclusively on political power.’ (Deveaux 1994, p. 235).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the relevant literature that will serve as a backdrop for the issues that are looked at more in depth throughout this dissertation. The chapter presents an assessment of work that has is available on the topic of gender politics and activism. It begins the discussion with reflections of women’s activism in South Africa followed by juxtaposing this to women’s activism in the USA, and examining the shared experiences and cultural uniqueness of these two contexts. A discussion of gender and sexuality, femininity and masculinity and intersectionality also unfolds in this chapter, in order to contextualise the arguments of what these mean in the ANCYL as shall be seen in subsequent chapters. The literature review section of the chapter closes with a discussion of youth, since this dissertation focuses within a framework of a youth political organisation it is necessary that the category of youth is looked at and its heterogeneity expressed in shaping the understanding of the young people who are the subjects of this research. The second part

of this chapter looks at the theoretical framework that underpins this dissertation. This chapter commits to Feminist Theory as the key underpinning framework alongside discourse analysis and intersectionality as supporting paradigms.

Chapter 3: The making of the character of the ANCYL: Trajectories of youth politics in South Africa

Introduction

A reading of existing literature on youth politics in South Africa before the democratic dispensation suggests that there were very few women involved in the youth movement and in political organisations more generally. There is great difficulty in locating women in African nationalist struggle. The dominating narrative of political activism is that which characterises activism as simply a male space, where women play insignificant roles. The two chapters before this have argued that the under recognition of women and their issues in the struggle in South Africa is largely due to the prioritizing of racial oppression over and above any other struggle; therefore leaving women's issues and their activism as a bit on the side or of very little significance to the struggle. The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the history of the ANCYL from its inception in 1944 to 1990 when it was re-launched inside the country. This chapter seeks to highlight the limitations inherent in African nationalism, in particular its inability to recognize how intersections like ones' sex complicate how we understand mainstream politics. As such the question of whether women were integrated into the youth movement and the roles they played is one that must be answered. In an attempt to do this, this chapter looks at the broader youth movement through a gendered lens, analysing the then existing organisations with the intention to understand how they conceptualised gender and women's activism in particular. In pursuit of this objective, the chapter will discuss two periods in the ANCYL's history: firstly, the period from 1944 to 1960 when it

operated legally and, second, the exile years, from 1960 to 1990. Of particular interest in this study is how the organizational cultures of the ANCYL has been shaped over the years, and in particular how women have been included and represented within this culture. In order to shed further light on these issues, the chapter will pay attention to the underground and above ground practices of the organization, later making reference to the branches in Seshego in assessing whether these have changed or not over the years. This chapter seeks to illustrate how practices of the youth movement have not changed to accommodate women therefore systematically restricting women's activism within the organization.

A Congress perspective of African nationalism in South Africa³⁴

To understand the rationale behind the formation of the ANCYL as well as the development of women's activism, it is necessary that we begin by briefly reflecting on the emergence of a congress aligned African nationalism in South Africa in general. Heidi Holland in her book titled *100 Years of Struggle: Mandela's ANC* (2012) discusses how African nationalism as considered in the context of this dissertation can be traced to a meeting of African leaders in Bloemfontein (now Mangaung) in the year 1912. It is at this meeting where a congress known as the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was formed with the objective to '...agitate for the removal of racial discrimination in parliament ...' (Holland 2012, p. 29) by means of peaceful propaganda desiring an inclusion to the existing union. The Land Act of 1913 which entrenched the dispossession of Black people in South Africa deepened the desire for self-determination amongst Black people and inspired an interest in

³⁴ Having said this, it is important to mention that the African nationalist ideology in South cannot be limited to the account give here. There is available a larger body of literature on this ideology within the South African context.

the ideology of African nationalism even further. In the 1920's we see the emergence of the All African Convention (AAC) called under the leadership of Pixley Ka Isaka Seme (Who was later to be President of the ANC), where a commitment to unite black opposition against white legislation finds resonance (Holland 2012).

It is important to acknowledge that throughout its trajectory, African nationalism in South Africa was characterised by multiple variations. On the one hand, it was used as a means of advancing the social aspirations of the elite, and on the other hand, seen to be much broader in its approach and seeking to advance the interests of even those in less privileged social positions (Holland 2012). The increased commitment to African nationalist self-determination was accentuated in the ANC by the ANCYL. Although this is not to suggest that the ANCYL did not challenge the version of African nationalism that was advanced by the ANC. As such, debates ensued from within the African nationalist movement on the envisaged South African society, that is whether or not the imagined South Africa included whites and the extent to which an influence from the communists (whose leadership was predominantly white) would be accepted in the pursuit of the liberation of Africans (Walshe 1970). As having earlier argued, African nationalism in this context (and in general) paid minimum attention to the inclusion of women's struggles and women's involvement broadly, therefore even as it manifested itself within the South African context, it was void of recognising gender and the nuances that intersections within the movement itself would bring. This being important to understanding gender configurations within the youth movement at large.

A look at the ANCYL

This section looks at the emergence of the ANCYL, with the intention to highlight the extent to which gender was not considered in the formation of this organisation, thus providing a premise for arguing that the conceptualisation of gender in the ANCYL today is an outcome of historically established gender configurations. The youth wing of the ANC was founded in 1944 under the headship of young, effervescent individuals passionate about the future of Africa, and in particular Black South Africans. The ANCYL primarily African nationalist in its ideological convictions, somewhat elite considering the levels of education and the economic standing of the people who were key players at the time of its formation (Glaser 2012, p. 11), was in multiple ways reflective of a men's political organisation even though there were women involved at its inception.

The story of the ANCYL begins at a time where in depth engagements which sought to define the progression of self-determination for Blacks in South Africa ensued. Growing dissatisfaction with the ANC leadership provided the institutional context within which its youth league was formed. The draft manifesto of the ANCYL opens with the following statement:

““We attribute the inability of Congress in the last twenty years to advance the national cause in a manner commensurate with the demands of the time, to weakness in the organisation and constitution; to its erratic policy of yielding to oppression, regarding itself as a body of gentlemen with clean hands and failing to see problems of the African through the proper perspective.”” (Draft manifesto in Glaser 2012, 29).

The above quotation reflects the anxiety and impatience among the younger men in the ANC who felt stifled by the tone and gentlemen like position of the ANC on the condition of

Africans in South Africa generally. The significance of the formation of the ANCYL lay in its desire to radicalise the ANC in relation to its approach to African people's oppression. In the formation of the ANCYL there is no acknowledgement or effort made to include African women or even a conceptualisation of their status as a much more oppressed group in a white supremacist and patriarchal context³⁵. The main preoccupation for the ANCYL was the neglect of the assertion of African nationalism by the ANC, this void of the ways in which this nationalism in itself neglected the assertion of women's rights thus reaffirming the argument that nationalism ignores the **woman** and her position as one that comes second to racial issues.

In the midst of these developments the founding fathers of the ANCYL, who were also members of the ANC began their engagements with the ANC leadership regarding the launch of the youth league. These young men in the ANC were lobbying and seeking support for the establishment of a youth organisation of the ANC. An organisation that would influence the ANC towards less conservative resolutions, and infuse a radicalism and energy into the significantly reserved ANC which appealed only to male and middle class Black South Africans (ANCYL Manifesto 1944).

The main aim of the ANCYL then was to challenge the ANC's conservatism mainly on questions pertaining to race, with no recognition of the gendered aspect of the struggle. The ANCYL envisioned an ANC that was able to fundamentally change the conditions of Black people in South Africa, and not simply seeking reformative means to the then oppressive system. The younger people in the ANC had become frustrated by the ANC's tone of

³⁵ The patriarchal context referred to being that within and outside of the ANC itself.

pleading, requesting and praying the government for change. Their commitment to the agenda of African nationalism was founded upon their view of the ANC as ‘the symbol and embodiment of the African’s will to present a united national front against all forms of oppression...’ (ANCYL Manifesto 1944). In affirming its position in commitment to the ANC, the youth league acknowledged that

‘...in the process of our [the African people’s] political development, our leadership made certain blunders. It was inevitable that this should have been the case, encompassed as the African people were and still are with forces inimical to their progress. But it does no good to stop at being noisy in condemning African leaders who went before us.’(ANCYL Manifesto 1944).

This in some respects responding to criticisms launched toward the congress. The strategy of these young activists was to ensure that there was a leadership of the ANC that was sympathetic to its programme, and to do this they saw it necessary to infiltrate the leadership positions in the ANC and influence resolutions and programs from within (Glaser 2012, p. 39-40 and SAHO 2013).

In the context of this dissertation, it is important to mention here that the radicalism advanced by the ANCYL at those stages was such that it was not sensitive to the position of women in general and within the movement in particular. The ANCYL sought to galvanise young people to confront their reality and take a step against segregation in the country, considering that South Africa was undergoing major political and economic developments, seeing that industrialisation and urbanisation were at their peak. The consequences of the reality of the issues at the time were an inability of municipalities to provide services, thus creating chaos and discomfort particularly in the African urban townships (Walshe 1970). The period between the 1940’s and 1980’s was marred with chaos and unrest with high levels of

unemployment and crime being characteristics of the African township during this period (Glaser 2012, p. 46-51 and Nieftagodien 2014, p. 12-13).

The launch of the ANCYL

Following successful deliberations and engagements from within the young radicals and the ANC parent body, the ANCYL was launched in March 1944 at the Bantu Social Centre in Johannesburg under the theme 'Africa's cause must triumph'. Central to the programme of the ANCYL was the struggle for African development, progress and national liberation in its truest form. The ANCYL sought to create a disciplined, united and consolidated youth from which African leaders of the future would come from. The programme of the youth league, as per its manifesto included much more radical types of activism as seen through the defiance campaign of the 1950's which sought to make the country under the leadership of the National Party unmanageable (SAHO 2013 and Hirson 1988).

The African National Congress Youth League, was officially founded on the 2nd April 1944, under the leadership of Anton Lembede, Ashby Mda, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela to name a few. Like the membership of the ANC, the youth league was led by a cohort of young and educated males from the elite ranks of the ANC. In its inception it was made up of mostly men, and even where women were present they were seldom recognised as key players in this organisation. According to Glaser (2012, p. 47-8), the ANCYL of the 1940's focused on challenging the ANC and galvanising young people toward the confrontation of their material reality, as such, the ANCYL saw recruitment as a necessary means to the development of a mass organisation that would numerically and ideologically challenge the conservative ANC.

The limitation here however was the inability of the then elite youth league membership to engage with and consequently mobilise the uneducated working class and peasantry. This therefore resulted in recruitment to the ANCYL being mainly from within their spaces of familiarity such as high schools, colleges and professional associations (Glaser 2012, p. 48). This limitation on the part of the ANCYL also systematically excluded women from being recruited into the ANCYL, as most women were not considered as a part of the elite, therefore restricting membership to the ANCYL to a predominantly male base.

Although the ANCYL agreed with the ANC on African nationalism as an ideological framework, it did at times take a significantly different political stance on the issue of the actual programmes to be implemented from that of the ANC. This seen through, the hesitance by the ANC to accepting the calls for the defiance campaign in the 1950's. The so called sweetheart politics of the ANC at the time, lead to the ANCYL shaping its own political framework which had a much more radical posture. Insofar as its aims and objectives were concerned, it was clear that the ANCYL would be significantly different to what the ANC then perceived activism to be. It is important to acknowledge that the ANCYL has under no circumstances sought to act as an opposition to the ANC, such that even when it was seen to be differing with the ANC it continued to reiterate its position as the youth wing of the ANC (Glaser 2012). Having said this, the radicalism that underpinned the formation of the ANCYL was in itself limited. It was a radicalism that simply located the struggle as one that was about race and the self-determination of Africans in particular. The ANCYL at that conjuncture failed to engage with women as an oppressed group and as activists. The ANCYL's historic preoccupation is one that cherishes African nationalist ideals and therefore failed to consider the intersections evident in oppressive systems like apartheid. Although positing itself as a

radical youth movement, the ANCYL even at its inception perceives radicalism only within the ambits of African nationalism without transcending the limitations of this framework.

Youth politics above ground

It is important to understand youth formations that existed in the period of the banning of the ANC and the PAC, and in particular how the gender question was dealt with within these structures. This will provide insight into political activism in general as well as help us think about the extent to which gender relations in the ANCYL today are reflective of the relations between men and women in the above ground movement in South Africa. The subsequent discussion looks at the above ground organisations between the 1960s and the early 1990s and how these organisations perceived women's activism and their marginality in mainstream politics. This section highlights how the politics of the ANCYL even today are not immune to the influences of the youth movement during apartheid. Recognising that the South African youth movement has had some changes over time, it is still crucial to consider how it has impacted what the ANCYL has become today even insofar as gender politics are concerned.

In his book on the Soweto uprising, Nieftagodien (2014, p. 26) provides an account of the above ground movements and their subterranean activities that were crucial to building the resistance movement in townships in the period from the late sixties. Nieftagodien's intervention is important in that it thinks about youth politics from a point of view that transcends what is already known or has platform in the discourse of youth and student politics under apartheid.

Among the first movements to emerge during this period is the South African Students Movement (SASM), founded arguably between 1968 and 1970 by Kehla Mthembu, and other youths, mostly high school pupils in townships in Soweto and surrounding areas (Nieftagodien 2014 and SAHO 2013). Alongside the emergence of SASM was that of the National Youth Organisation (NAYO) and the South African Students Organisation (SASO), which served as the cornerstone of the 1976 Soweto uprising, which sought to challenge apartheid's Bantu Education system. On the surface SASM's interests were narrow with a weak organizational structure; however this organization remained critical to the resistance movement. In remembering SASM, Obed Bapela reflects on how this organization ran secret political classes that doubled up as study sessions, and how these were crucial for the political struggles in 1976 (Nieftagodien 2014, p. 44-5). Due to the organisational weakness of SASM, this organization did not have a framework within which it understood young women's role within student politics of the time.

Another pertinent organization to look at is the South African Students Organisation (SASO) and its successor the South African National Students Congress (SANSCO) which later becomes the South African Students Congress (SASCO) in the post-apartheid period. Not much attention has been given to the student movement in general and particularly in the apartheid period. Badat (1999) however gives an informative account of student politics in the period 1968-1990 in his book titled, *Black Student Politics, Higher Education and apartheid: From SASO-SANSCO 1968-1990*. This book adds a rich history to the politics of the student movement in South Africa, and this is important for this work as it gives perspective of youth student politics and helps one to draw similarities and differences from the different organisations. The politics of SASO fundamentally sought to change the discourse of higher education in the institutions of higher learning designated for Black

students, initially underpinned by the Black Consciousness ideology. 'In analysing South African society, as SASO viewed "race" as the primary cleavage. Class divisions were not seen as important and there was little recognition of gender issues.' (Badat 1999, p. 87).

SASO's slogan was in many ways telling of the masculine, sexist and male dominated nature of the student movement. Across black campuses participation by women in SASO was very minimal, with only three women present at the launch of SASO in 1969 and nine attending the General Students Council of 1972 which had a total delegation of 68 members. 'The priority of BC was national liberation and "women were thus involved in the movement because they were black. Gender as a political issue was not raised at all...' (Ramphela in Badat 1999, p.112). Within the organisation, domestic responsibility automatically fell on the women present, and this seldom challenged by either the women themselves or their male counterparts. There were women who were able to break through the barriers they faced as activists because of their sex. Ramphela asserts that for those women who were able to do this they were given the status of 'honorary men' considering that they entered into what was perceived as a domain primarily for men which had no conceptualisation of women as activists and didn't recognise them.

The contribution of SASO in the period of the 1970's is impressive and unquestionable notwithstanding the sexism that marred the organisation, as gender remained a non-issue for a long time. SASO '...ensured that black students committed to social change and political liberation would no longer be mere spectators, but would have the opportunity "to do things by themselves and all by themselves"' (Badat 199, p. 115), it is definitely this involvement that one can argue contributed to the igniting of a desire to change from within Black

students, particularly since SASO activists saw themselves as members of the community before being students and as such having a responsibility to conscientising the communities that they came from.

Although Black Consciousness (BC) is central to the emergence of the student movement, African nationalism also played a central role in shaping the development of the student movement. The emergence of the youth congresses contributed to the shift in the student movement from Black Consciousness towards a more nationalist school of thought. Even with this shift, the student movement still showed no commitment to the organising of women or to developing women within the new South African National Students Congress (SANSCO). This having implications on the internal politics of the student movement and also on how women's involvement was perceived. In fulfilling its commitment to the development of African communities, SANSCO was limited to race-based interventions and mobilised and conscientised communities only within the framework of race not transcending race and also engaging gendered politics. Of course this not surprising, considering that the discourse of nationalism is in itself masculine as discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis. The shift towards a more African nationalist discourse swayed the ideas within the movement insofar as race and class were concerned but definitely not in relation to the gender question as such gender did not become an important point of intersection. The SASO Policy manifesto and SANSCO Constitution are both silent on gender, and perhaps the nonchalant attitude of SANSCO to gender issues in the organisations was a reflection of the naïveté of the student movement which was unable to deal with the internal differences and contradictions amongst all the non-white Africans in the movement (Badat 1999).

The Congress of South African Students (COSAS) formed in 1979 also plays a significant role in the student and youth politics of the country. As an organisation existing during this period and focusing on young people, it is necessary that we look at its position on the gender question historically. COSAS comes after the SASM as well as the BCM and the student movement in institutions of higher learning, as a reaction to the 1976 uprising and a political vacuum left by the exodus of young people going into exile as well as the challenges faced by the Black Consciousness Movement then. Considering that the student movement stemmed from an ideology of Black Consciousness, one cannot as such neglect its influence on the members of COSAS, even though COSAS was committed to the politics of the congress movement (SAHO 2013).

The main project of COSAS was the attainment of an equal, non-racial and democratic education system, one that rejected the then existing Bantu Education that disadvantaged Black pupils over their white counterparts. Although a youth organisation by virtue of its membership which was predominantly high school students, COSAS had a commitment to broader issues and as such had alliances with black workers, trade unions and the UDF. The ability of COSAS to be aware of broader societal issues other than its own student issues is important and commendable for a student movement, considering the inability of student movements to do this previously. The ability of COSAS to transcend students as their main constituency presented an opportunity for a gendered analysis and intervention to be incorporated in resistance politics of the time. Although this may have been so, COSAS did miss an opportunity to expand its politics to that effect. This student organisation ultimately took on a gender neutral position and as such showed a disregard of women's issues even within the student body itself, thus mirroring the broader nationalist discourse prevalent in the congress movement.

The South African Youth Congress (SAYCO), which is also looked at later in this chapter was formed in the 1980's through initiatives by both COSAS and the UDF in attempts to deal with the political vacuum emanating from the absence of a youth political organisation at the time (SAHO 2013). Although not having a gender quota insofar as the representation of women within its structures, SAYCO was cognisant that there were issues that affected women, although this focus being on women in general and not female activists of SAYCO particularly. Evidence of the recognition of women by SAYCO can be seen in a statement by SAYCO to the UDF criticising the operations of UDF. In its recommendations to the UDF SAYCO specifically suggests that in its restructuring the UDF should have a particular focus on youth, students, workers, women and civics, insinuating that there may have been a neglect of these groups in the past (SAYCO Discussion Paper n.d).

A discussion of women's involvement and activism in SAYCO is important for this dissertation because it provides us with an idea of how SAYCO, which served as the central youth organisation during the period where political organisations were banned, perceived the gender question. SAYCO politics were founded upon the nationalist discourse that was espoused by the MDM. Considering the neutral stance of African nationalism elaborated upon in chapter two of this dissertation makes evident the framework within which gender and in particular women's activism was understood. SAYCO's constitution stipulated that it sought to unite and politicise all sectors across race, sex and class, however this within a loosely defined strategy. This strategy was seen in the establishment of a specific portfolio/department for women led by a women's organiser, who also had an assistant. The duties of the organiser included convening meetings with sub-committee members of the department but more importantly developing programmes in conjunction with other portfolios where the key focus was to organise, mobilise and develop women (SAYCO

Constitution n.d). Unlike the organisations that preceded it, SAYCO acknowledged that an approach to activism that didn't include recognition of women and their domestic and labour issues was inadequate. Although limited in its overall approach, this is an unprecedented recognition of women within the youth movement and provides room for an engagement of women's involvement in mainstream politics.

The trajectory of the ANCYL

In the 1960's the apartheid government banned the ANC as well as other existing liberation movements present in the country. In the absence of the ANCYL, the Congress of South African Students played a significant role in organising young Black people. A student organisation in its inception, the Congress of South African Students to some extent went beyond its framework and continued to politicise and be a political home for young people including those who had completed high school. COSAS was a political home, a space where young people could continue to sharpen their understanding of the society they lived in as well as continue their activism post their schooling. As such, it is important for this paper to consider what the implications of this are insofar as the shaping of gender attitudes amongst ANCYL members is concerned. It is important to note that this point is given a bit more attention in later chapters of this dissertation, enabling a deeper understanding of existing influences amongst women activists in the ANCYL today.

Also important is an acknowledgement of how the revival of the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) was to a great extent an outcome of COSAS' involvement. In the early eighties realising that it was becoming vulnerable and was likely to lose its core focus as a student organisation because of its role in shaping broader societal issues as it was beginning

to do. COSAS effected the establishment of a youth congress, which would focus on broader societal issues, and thus allowing it room to continue on its programme of advancing the concerns of school going students (Glaser 2012).

The youth congresses that came as an initiative of COSAS amid other influences were also largely African nationalist in their ideological perspective. These congresses served as a political home for young people in South Africa at a time where both their political identities and their lives as Black youth in a racially oppressive country, were marred by political unrest and uncertainty. The Cape Town Youth Congress (CAYCO), Soweto Youth Congress (SOYCO) as well as the Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO), were amongst the first of these congresses followed by many others throughout the country. In their pursuit to address social issues particularly those affecting young people, the youth congresses definitely evoked the spirit of radicalism similar to that which inspired the establishment of the ANCYL in the 1940s. By the mid 1980's there was in South African politics an emerging political black youth sub-culture stemming from within these youth congresses which had now been well spread around the country (Glaser 2012, Marks 2001 and SAHO 2012). Not only was this organising a hope for the youth alone, but also for the older community members who saw the comrades as defenders of the communities from the 'Jack rollers' who traumatised the community through numerous acts of violence; 'The comrades have saved us from a terrible thing [The Jack rollers], that has been worrying the community.' (Participant in Marks 2010, p. 67). It is indeed at this conjuncture that the identity of 'comrades' in its different forms found expression and located itself in black communities including the Seshego township as well.

Even at this point the existence of SAYCO was embedded in gender normative values and traditions. The young men of the ANCYL sought to amongst their broader political objectives protect their communities and their female counterparts. Although one could argue that this was a response to the pressures of the time. It would suffice to say that the culture of protecting women reinforced the gendered roles and stereotypes of what it is to be a man and woman.

The Youth Congresses like COSAS were closely affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF) which led to a successful launch of the South African Youth Congresses (SAYCO) in 1987, under the leadership of Peter Mokaba who became the founding President of the SAYCO. It is important to mention that SAYCO has always identified itself with the ANC and the ANCYL which the majority of its members didn't know, but had grown to love and have a sense of identification with even during the period that it was banned as an organisation (Glaser 2012 and Marks 2001). Activism in the Youth Congress provided room for activists to be part of the radicalism that was characteristic of the ANCYL before its banning. As expressed by a former SAYCO activist

““In our understanding even before the ANC Youth League was unbanned, we knew deep in our heart[s] that we [were] the Youth League but we [could not] be the Youth League because of apartheid...”(Glaser 2012, p. 97)

The ANC realising the responsibility that lay ahead saw a need for a youth structure of the ANC, that would bring together the existing youth formations that operated during the apartheid period in the absence of the ANC. The existing formations to be considered were the South African National Students Congress, which later became the South African Students Congress (SASCO), the ANC Youth Section (ANCYSS), SAYCO as well as

COSAS. In the process of negotiations, the ANCYSS and SAYCO merged into the formation of the ANCYL as we have come to know it today. While SASCO and COSAS remained within the broader Mass Democratic Movement as lead by the ANC, in pursuit of the NDR whilst maintaining their independence as student organisations (Glaser 2012, p. 98-108, SASCO Strategic Perspective on Transformation Document 2004, p.4).

The outlook that the ANCYL has since its re-launch **has** been shaped by influences from both the ANCYSS, which was a section of South African exiled students as well as other anti-apartheid activists in exile, and the South African Youth Congress. Considering the differences in outlook of the ANCYSS, which was more conservative and elite in approach *vis-à-vis* SAYCO whose attitude was more radical and militant, it goes without saying that, in its re-establishment the youth league was characterised by some contestation. In the final analysis however, it is evident that the militancy and radicalism emanating from SAYCO became the point at which the African National Congress Youth League shaped its politics. After the official re-launch of the ANCYL in December 1991, this organisation sought to primarily achieve what it had come to define as its ‘twin tasks’, the first being mobilising the youth behind the banner of the ANC, alongside generally championing the interests of all young South Africans (Glaser 2012, p. 101).

With these two key objectives the ANC of the early nineties created a mass organisation out of the efforts of ANCYL, considering its earlier challenges of accessibility to the working class and uneducated. It is certainly at this point where the ANCYL took a significant turn, not only in its make up, but also ideologically. Notwithstanding the significant influence of SAYCO which claimed to be Marxist-Leninist, the re-launched ANCYL recommitted itself

to an Africanist perspective, interested particularly in the triumph of the African, as per the theme of its founding conference in 1944 (Glaser 2012).

It is only after its re-launch in the early nineties that the ANCYL seemed to take a slightly different attitude towards the role of women in the organisation. In this period we do not only see the emergence of women into the upper echelons of the ANCYL, but also a much more decisive position on the gender question and recognition of women's activism as reflected in the policy resolutions of the ANCYL. It is in the period of the nineties where for the first time since its inception the ANCYL elected a woman from within its ranks Febe Potgieter (now Potgieter-Gqubule) as the Secretary General³⁶ of the organisation in the year 1994. From this development, the ANCYL at least at its national level has consciously made attempts to create a gender balance in the top five, which normally translated into two out of the five officials being female, and a fifty-fifty representation being seen throughout the structure. The second female Secretary Vuyiswa Tulelo occupied a leadership position as the deputy Secretary General and Secretary General in 2005 and 2008 respectively, and Kenetswe Mosenogi deputising her in 2011. The extent to which there has been a shift from leadership being male dominated, as was the case in the past, is an important point of consideration for this thesis. The entrance into positions of leadership will be a measure of progress within the ANCYL throughout this dissertation. This is so because this provides a concrete measure of the supposed shift of power along gender lines and whether or not this has shown to be effective, particularly in branches which are the focus of this work.³⁷

³⁶ The position of the Secretary General is the second most important position in the ANCYL national structure after the President.

³⁷ Chapter three of this dissertation provides a critical analysis of the quota system as adopted and used in the ANCYL.

According to Dlamini-Zuma (2010, p. 65), 'From its inception, the ANC's character has remained more or less the same, though the terrain and means of struggle have changed...' (Dlamini-Zuma 2010, 65), thus suggesting that the approach to dealing with issues in the ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement in general have remained the same. The political framework of the ANC and its alliance partners has as such, at least in speech been committed to Marxist paradigms which have mostly intertwined the issue of national oppression, racism and gender together with class thus leaving no room for discussions on gender and in particular the position of women in the movement (Turok 2010). As it stands, the question of diversity and representation of the different classes, races and genders in the organisation is somewhat commendable (Ndebele and Jordan 2010), because the MDM lead by the ANC acknowledges the need to undo the injustices informed by race, class and gender. Understanding this sharpens our analytical tools of gender in the ANCYL in the post-apartheid dispensation.

Bonner (2012) argues that the mistakes of the ANC, like its inability to deal with the gender question among other things stems from a commitment to keeping the narrative of the ANC well glued together. What has kept the ANC together is its commitment to the grand narrative of the struggle that is at all times seen as heroic and correct. A limitation of this however is that the ANC and its concomitant structures turn a blind eye to issues of importance because these are likely to dent the image of the people's movement. The key focus of this thesis is in retrospect to the reality of the grand narrative as suggested by Bonner (2012), is concerned with those issues that are silenced like that of women's activism in the organisation. Following in the sentiments shared by Bonner (2012), this thesis argues that an integration of the stories of women among other marginalised groups within the ANC must be told because indeed '...the mass of African women remains anonymous and hidden. Yet...in the histories

of the localities, the fragments, women clearly emerge as the driving forces of radical community politics...’ (Bonner 2012, p.7).

The importance of this integration lies in the possibilities of a new story that can stem from this focus. This new story however is neither glorious nor does it take away the glory of the ANC, but it rather provides an honest and more coherent reflection of politics within the movement itself.

The organizational culture of the ANCYL

Before we actually delve into understanding organizational culture and what the organizational culture of the ANCYL is, it is necessary to define what it is we mean by this concept. In the context of this dissertation organizational culture refers to the shared feelings, values, meanings and practices within an organisation. Drawing from a definition by Alvesson (2013), the basic reference of organizational culture is to be underpinned by the following understanding of the concept;

‘ The concept of culture seems to lend itself to very different uses as collectively shared forms of, for example, ideas and cognition, as symbols and meanings, as values and ideologies, as rules and norms, as emotions and expressiveness, as the collective unconscious, as behaviour patterns, structures and practices, etc...’(Alvesson 2013, p. 3)

This section seeks to bring an understanding of the values, feelings, sentiments, practices, meanings, beliefs etc. and particularly how these have been historically shaped for the context of the ANCYL. The character of the ANCYL is one that is buttressed in politics that

are seen to be radical in so far as their pushing of boundaries within the MDM is concerned. This is at times justified in the ANCYL's youthfulness that is perceived as lacking in caution, experimental, free and as such permitted to make mistakes, speak out of turn and even make insults to its leadership, as seen from some of the former presidents of the league from the times of Nelson Mandela to Julius Malema (Interviews 2013). The ANCYL is seen as a safe enough space to allow mistakes for the purpose of rectifying them, it is embedded in the understanding that the league is a preparatory school of the ANC, this in line with the founding principles of the ANC Youth League in 1944, which saw the organisation as a space to groom future leaders of the ANC.

Characterising the ANCYL as a preparatory school of the ANC and a space to make mistakes and learn is historic. Radicalism and in some instances impudence have always been seen as stumbling blocks which ultimately contribute to the building of the type of leader the ANC needs from its youth league, radical yet also cautious and disciplined. Such characteristics however have developed from varying influences in the Mass Democratic Movement and in the passing down of organisational practices, and have become entrenched in the existing political structures. Looking at the organisational culture through a gender lens is important because from a gendered reading of this, one can analyse the extent to which women are accommodated by the organisational culture and are as such empowered in their activism. Highly masculinised organisational cultures and practices reinforce the challenges that women have insofar as inclusion is concerned. While practices that are conscious of gender differences and consider women's historical position are more likely to encourage the participation and representation of women in political activities. It is therefore on this premise that tracing the attitude and behaviour that has become tradition in the ANCYL today is important.

A background of activism in the Mass Democratic Movement

The ANCYL has historically been embedded in a mass based type of political activism seen in campaigns like stay aways, boycotts and other protests that have characterised the political activity of the country in the 1950's. A provoking type of activism has always been the cornerstone of campaigns in the ANC Youth League, such that the ANCYL today draws significantly from the activism of the youth league of the past and the political culture that has been shaped by SAYCO and other youth organisations existing prior to the re-launch of the league. As such, the culture that stems from the days of SAYCO and before still finds space within the ANCYL of today. This implying that the paucity in dealing with issues pertaining to gender in the past are also likely to find platform in the present day ANCYL seeing that not much has changed (Glaser 2012, p. 108).

In understanding what has become the organisational culture of the ANCYL today, it is of utmost importance to begin to think about how activism in the ANC was broadly understood, and the extent to which the ANC in exile influenced the culture of the ANCYL following its re-launch. During its exile years the ANC did not maintain the youth league, however youths that remained active in exile were mainly channelled towards the uMkhonto Wesizwe (MK), which was the underground military wing of the ANC. The reality of the situation in the 1970's is that there were a number of young people, some holding staunch Africanist perspectives, and others sharing the ideological perspective of the ANC that went into exile. Upon going to exile, this youth joined the underground structures of both the PAC and the ANC (Glaser 2012), with some in the post-apartheid period finding a home in the re-launched ANCYL and other MDM structures.

It is on this premise that it is not absurd to suggest that the MK and the type of culture and perceptions of female activists in particular that were perpetuated underground played a significant role in shaping the organisational culture of the youth league today. As such it is important to briefly look at the realities of the underground wing of the ANC. Suttner (2008) provides us with an interesting view on underground relations, which is especially useful for this research as he also taps into the individual and provides a specific focus on gender which equips us to think about the practices of the ANC underground, and the extent to which these can be seen in the ANCYL today. To unravel the gender dynamics at play in the underground movement, it is necessary that one also looks at work by Trewhela (2009) and Lissoni and Suriano (2014). The realities of the underground movement are manifold and this section of this thesis does not intend to exhaust these, however it seeks to highlight the formation of organisational culture and perceptions of women activists in the underground movement and how these are reflected in the present day ANCYL.

Suttner (2008) notes that there is an insufficient treatment of the relationships that men and women have in the organisation as gendered subjects, where dynamics of power are evident in the relationship. The focus on women and their experiences specifically as different to those of men is an issue that is perceived as not important, as everyone is perceived as just an activist like any other. It is this approach that Suttner (2008) differs with and problematizes in his engagement with the context of the ANC underground. It is also this perspective that serves as a basis for the framework of this research.

African nationalism tends to assert African manhood and perpetuates the idea of women as mothers and therefore nurturers and not so much as activists (Gasa 2007). Upon the entrance

of women in the political environment, the expectations upon women do not necessarily change. As earlier discussed, the general phenomenon particularly in national liberation movements is that, women who enter into these politics do not advance women's issues, but tend to prioritise the broader struggle of Black people in context. This being so, one can argue that the outlook also becomes one that is masculine and inclined towards patriarchal values, making little or no provisions for female activists. A look at the work of Suttner (2008) is thus helpful in assessing the extent to which the underground movement was a gendered struggle and what the challenges of this were as largely expounded on by authors such as Jeffrey (1998), Ginwala (1990) and Hassim (1987).

In looking at gendered relations in the ANC underground, Suttner (2008) makes the submission that there is amongst men in the movement a need for an assertion of their manhood, this in a sense being a response to the childlike status attributed to African men by the apartheid regime. This desire for manliness as presented in the context of colonialism and apartheid is inclusive of other forms of restrictions like social and economic exclusion which tend to deepen the desire for black men to perform their masculine authority, mostly at the detriment of the women's position.

This enactment of masculinity certainly linked to the ways that nationalism was underpinned in South Africa historically where even the pursuit of liberation was in itself gendered; heightening the emasculation of black men alongside a repute for white women (Erlank 2003). This was not only the case then, but is also prevalent in contemporary society whereby economic and social exclusion reinforces the divide or differences between men and women. Underlying these are general stereotypes that are the foundations of our societies, as well as

how individuals understand themselves as gendered bodies in their private spaces, as this has a ripple effect on what happens even in political organisations like the ANCYL (Steffen et al. 1984).

Joining the ANC or the MK was in some instances seen as a rite of passage to manhood for many. This suggests that the ANC underground was to great extents perceived as a platform where one could in one way or the other assert or perhaps re-assert their manhood. Evidence of this can be drawn from Suttner's (2008) analysis of the MK underground as a kind of initiation school that groomed boys into being young men, particularly in the context of South Africa at the time where instability was prevalent. Suttner (2008) brings to our attention how the MK in particular recruited young boys and trained them in the activities of becoming men, and thus being able to protect and care not just for their families, but their chiefdoms as well. Integral to the initiation practices was the teaching of war songs and the practices of war in general (Suttner 2008), these clearly being indicative of the performance of manhood or more frankly a re-assertion of their masculinity in a society where Black men were constantly emasculated by the apartheid system.

Although the notion of heroic masculinity is quite central, it is however important to acknowledge that it is not homogenous and is performed differently by both men and women who were active in the MK, which was dominated by men. It is not true that the ANC underground was entirely militaristic in its imagery or its activities, however it is important to consider that 'Many people no doubt conformed to macho militaristic images- military activities [which] encourage traditional notions of manhood...' (Suttner 2008, p. 121). That being so however, '...there were individuals, some of them famous revolutionary figures,

who did not conform to these conventional notions, men like Chris Hani and Vuyisile Mini.’ (Suttner 2008, p. 121). The latter having become an important role model for both male and female activists in the ANCYL today.

Trehwela (2009) however provides a contrary account of the activities of the ANC in exile. Unlike Suttner (2008), he argues that the ANC in exile was extremely militaristic and violent and infringed upon the human rights of its soldiers, and further silencing their expressions of discontent regarding this. The work of Trehwela (2009) is important in understanding the organisational culture and practices of the ANC in exile in light of the ANCYL today. In emphasising the issue of violence, an impression is given that the relations were solely on misogynistic terms of reference, thus disregarding the importance and recognition of women in exile.

The account given by Trehwela (2009) is interesting because it challenges what is known and exposes the controversies of the underground. It does however come short insofar as reflecting on the presence of women in ANC camps in exile. Be that as it may, he provides an account of two women exiles from Namibia’s SWAPO, which are important to look at in thinking about the case of women in ANC camps in exile. The story of the twin sisters exiled in Cuba tells of the atrocities women were faced with in exile. The SWAPO account as per Trehwela (2009) makes mention of a period where women were generally regarded as spies and sell outs of the revolution and as such subjected to high levels of torture and violence, ‘...the main accusation against female comrades was that they were supposed to be carrying poisoned blades in their private parts’ (Pandileni Kali in Trehwela 2009, p. 148). Therefore

degrading the contribution of women and vilifying it to one of traitor and untrustworthy comrade.

This account provided by Trehwela (2009) is relevant in that it draws also from the experiences of SWAPO activists in Exile and seems to make the argument that the reality of the violence, victimisation and infringement of human rights on SWAPO activists was equally a reality for ANC exiles. Looking at *Prodigal daughters: Stories of South African women in exile*, a compilation of women's stories in Exile by Lauretta Ngcobo (2012) it is evident how the reflections of women in exile resonate with both Suttner (2008) and Trehwela's (2009) account of women in exile. These stories reject any representation of women's experiences as homogenous or at most simply rejecting or accepting their involvement without the necessary analysis.

Women in most cases entered the liberation movement as mothers and as such, the roles they played were often different to those played by the men. Women as such took care of the roles that were perceived as less demanding like media and child nurturing in some instances, while the men were seen to be making the ultimate sacrifices by having to laying down their own lives for the struggle (Ginwala 1990 and Gasa 2007, Mbete 2012). Correct in his assertions, Suttner (2008) continues to provide a critique of this by bringing forth the view that our understanding of combat and things that are most important in combat are the carrying of the gun and not the feeding of the soldiers, which he suggests is equally, if not of most importance (Suttner 2008). Although the training offered for both male and female soldiers was the same, the majority of the time women in the MK were often deployed in the least dangerous tasks and mostly dealt with medi-corps and communication. Even though the

MK was in many ways patriarchal, there were some amongst the leadership who would always fight for equal treatment between the male and female soldiers. This certainly served as encouragement for female activists to take the centre stage (Mbeti 2012 and Suttner 2008).

Another disheartening practice was the assumption from within the MK that female comrades underground were there because they were following their partners, and thus leaving female comrades constantly vulnerable to male comrades, both those in senior leadership and their peers. Practice in exile was that on arrival women would be met with relationship proposals, although some of these were genuine, they left the women feeling compelled to start relationships with the men for security reasons while familiarising themselves with the underground (Suttner 2008). This ambushing of female comrades by the males is not a phenomenon that only existed and was practiced in the underground movement, but is a practice that is still prevalent even in the ANCYL today. Although not always expressed as a discontent, a number of females activists in the branches looked at alluded to this and how it affects their activism, this is very important an issue to consider in the pursuit of having a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the male and female interactions within the organisation.

Lissoni and Suriano (2014), provide an interesting and overlooked narrative of relationships and marriages between men and women in the underground movement. The ANC underground as a voice of authority to the exiles also facilitated marriages between the MK soldiers, as well as between MK soldiers and residents of the countries where MK bases were located. The idea of the possibilities of marriages within the context of the underground movement is interesting, because it introduces a language to the underground movement that

is emotive and challenges the macho discourse of the revolution. Most importantly however, the reality of marriages in the underground suggests that there may have been definitive roles of husbands and wives in exile where a distinction between the private and public was unclear thus these ways of relating having had a ripple effect on gender relations in the exile camps and also in the ANCYL today.

Sexual interactions between comrades underground were expected. This being so, it is important to acknowledge (although difficult to do so) that; in addition to consensual sex, sexual harassment was also experienced in the underground movement generally, as well as in the Umkhonto weSizwe bases. Of course this is an unheard of practice, as it could have questioned the credibility of the organisation and would be seen as betrayal, both within and outside of the organisation and the liberation movement as a whole. Having said this, the extent to which sexual engagements and harassment in particular exists in the ANCYL in the branches in Seshego remains undetermined at this point, although expressed as reality for some comrades' active there. The political environment is certainly not one that can be divorced from sexual and romantic interaction, it is however the extent to which these relations reinforce a power dynamic within the organisation which in effect silences female voices within the organisation. It is the intention of this thesis to unravel this aspect of activism and use it as a point of analyses of women's activism in the ANCYL branches looked at.

The Congress of South African Students has historically played a critical role in shaping the organisational culture of the ANCYL then and now, as seen in the case of the studied ANCYL branches in Seshego. Considering that COSAS played a central role in the

establishment of the youth congresses across the country, it is safe to say that to some extent the practices and organisational culture of COSAS have also found expression in the development of the organisational culture of the ANCYL. In its outlook, the Congress of South African Students was characterised by boycotts and at times radical forms of activism which have also become central feats of the ANCYL today, and have now been termed militancy, radicalism and fearlessness amongst other things (Glaser 2012). The influence and presence of COSAS in the establishment of SAYCO and the ANCYL was equally felt in branches in Seshego. Throughout the research process, one of the most significant things about ANCYL members in the branches looked at is that the majority of the current members were introduced to the ANCYL which they have come to know as a political home through COSAS.

At the current conjuncture, the ANCYL's National Executive Committee (NEC) as well as ninety percent of its Provincial Executive Committees (PEC's) is disbanded, following the failure to find a middle ground between radicalism, learning and autonomy. The ANCYL and the ANC have from 2011 reached a point where a complete overhaul of the leadership of the Youth League occurred. Although this is may not be a particular point of interest for this thesis, it is important to reflect on what this means for this research. The beginning of this research coincides with the beginning of the noxious rifts between the ANCYL and its parent body post a National Congress gathering of the ANCYL that sowed sharp divisions within the organization, this however done in a way that unity and a decisive way forward are seen while effectively covering dissent and the isolation of many other activists of the ANCYL. The findings herein revealed deep seated contradictions, which in themselves shifted the focus from issues such as gender to party politics of power that merely resemble masculine contest.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to historicize the ANCYL with a specific focus on two incidents of interruption that have shaped the way in which politics within the league are practised. Acknowledging African nationalism as the underpinning ideological perspective of the ANCYL, the chapter briefly discussed the roles of women in youth politics, since the establishment of the ANCYL to the present in hindsight of the perceptions of gender politics by this ideology. As a result, this chapter has highlighted the absence of women not only in the ANCYL, but also in organisations that existed in South Africa during the banning of the liberation movement. Although SASM as well as the BCM were also looked at, this chapter focused on COSAS and SAYCO as the organisations that played a key role in sustaining African nationalist ideology within youth politics in South Africa at the time, and even more importantly that lay the foundation for the establishment of the re-launched ANCYL in the 1990's. This chapter thus sought to bring forth that the ANCYL has for a long time been characterised by masculine practices and values and that this has been a standard characterisation of youth politics in South Africa even outside of the existence of the ANCYL. The role of the underground movement was also looked at in this chapter particularly for the purpose of drawing attention to how the organisational character of the ANCYL has come about, this has thus lead to attention being drawn to the nuances that exist between the ANCYL and not only the underground movement but also the internal youth movement.

In essence this chapter proposes that in wanting to undo the gendered ways of activism prevalent in the ANCYL, one ought to look closely at the practices and culture of the youth

movement. The ANCYL as seen in branches today did not organically become what it is. Central to the making of the ANCYL today was an appropriation of political culture and emulation of historic practices regarded as heroic in the democratic period. This cultural appropriation and re-enactment of the past is in itself void of gendered analysis and as a result reinvents the patriarchal culture of youth politics, but this happening in the shadow of progressive policies thus stifling any attempts deconstructing or reconstructing political activism in the ANCYL such that it addresses the position and participation of women.

Chapter 4: The ANCYL policy position on gender

Introduction

Non-sexism and non-racism have not always been characteristic of the ANC or its respective leagues. It has been a result of efforts from the multiracial congress alliance as well as the strong women's movement. The highlighting of the limitations of a simply Black discourse within the context of apartheid and in particular the post-apartheid period was inadequate in dealing with the strategies of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa. The posturing of the ANC as non-racial and non-sexist was not in itself an easy victory. This required deliberations and advocacy especially in the case of non-sexism and the inclusion of women. Although the involvement and representation of race and gender were in principle addressed, by the stance taken on non-racialism and non-sexism by the ANC. Although this is the case and the party was informed by the need to resolve gender inequality through affirmative action there have been inconsistencies regarding how gender in particular has been engaged with within the organisation. Evidence of this is seen in the sporadic attention given to the gender question by the ANCYL since the early 2000's as shall be further discussed below.

This chapter looks at gender representation and the inclusion of women in structures of the ANCYL through an analysis of ANCYL gender policy documents. It is important to mention that the ANCYL since its unbanning has only had two discussion documents that address gender in general and women in particular. In the other conferences and policy documents gender has been subsumed under broader issues such as organisational renewal or social development. This in itself is reflective of the inconsistency within which the gender question has been dealt with in the ANCYL. As a result, the key focus of this analysis will be the following documents; 'The ANCYL and its role in the struggle for gender equality' (2001),

the 'ANCYL Constitution from its 24th National Congress'(2011) as well as the 24th National Congresses document titled 'The African National Congress Youth League Perspective on Gender Relations and Women's Emancipation' (2011). The discussion of the ANCYL constitution is the first of the documents to be discussed, followed by the documents adopted in 2001 and 2011 respectively.³⁸

This chapter argues that although there's evidence of an intention to increase women's representation in the ANCYL, and that the challenge in the implementation of this lies in the gender neutral position that is the premise from which transformation in this organisation emanates. Regarding the politics of representation, the point of interest is particularly how gender inequality is expressed within the texts, what the obvious intentions of the texts are and what implicit assumptions about gender relations can be found in the policy.

Herein lies an analysis of the discursive formations related to gender and sexuality as found in these official documents. This chapter focuses not only on the context but also on the language, within which the ANCYL analysis and intentions are presented. The work of Smith (2013) on the ANCYL's gender controversies between its formal policy positions and the attitudes that it seems to exert concerning how women are generally perceived by ANCYL activists is important, and will be considered within the context of this dissertation.

As a starting point, this chapter will give a brief reflection of women in the ANC and their inclusion into the mainstream politics of this organisation. This will be followed by a

³⁸ The clause dealing with the quota in the ANCYL constitution has not changed between 2001 and 2011. Reference is made to the 2011 document here for ease of tracing references for the reader.

discussion of women's representation in the ANCYL documents, highlighting the limitations that underlie the process of including women in political organisations.

Background

The myth that women are not able to contribute to political organisations has long been proven false, and there is certainly a deliberate move towards involving women in spheres they have historically been excluded from. Although this may be so, it must be noted that the effects on women's activism that emanate from the historical exclusion still linger on. In locating the position of women and their emancipation, the ANCYL draws from the discourse and gendered practices within the national liberation movement in general. In the year 1918 black women who identified with the ANC organized themselves under the banner of the Bantu Women's League (BWL), later known as the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL), which was the women's branch of the ANC. The ANCWL,

‘...regarded itself, indeed, as *the* women's movement in South Africa, frequently asserting that it is the vanguard organization and the only legitimate voice of the women of South Africa.’ (Hassim 2014, p. 9).

Perhaps if this were true the reality of gender representation and inclusion, particularly in decision making processes seen in the ANC and the ANCYL today, would be a bit more reflective of equality between the sexes. Though the Bantu Women's League was a branch of the ANC, its members were initially not allowed to be members of the mother body. When this changed in the year 1943 the role that they played was that of “mother” and “nurturer”, and there was as such little room for genuine women rights issues such as those associated with reproduction, access to employment, and their role in the liberation movement to be raised (ANCYL 2011 and Hassim 2014).

The interest in looking at issues pertaining to women specifically, was to some extent perceived by both male and female activists as a result of influences by western feminism and, as such had very little space in the national liberation movement whose focus was race and class. The discussion document on gender adopted at the 24th National Congress of the ANCYL submits that this is no longer the case, and thus regards the focus on women as an integral part of the struggle for democracy (ANCYL 2011).

South Africa has for many years been characterised by a patriarchal discourse that relegated women to the status of being second class citizens, and in the case of the black woman even a third class citizenry. Like African-American women in the United States, the case of the Black women in South Africa is one that has their oppression premised on the basis that they are African-American (Black), working class and woman, this essentially meaning that they stand as the oppressed when juxtaposed to White and Black men irrespective of their class positioning, as well as to White women (Higginbotham 1989, Cock 1991 and Walker 1990).

The inclusion of women in governance structures in democratic South Africa symbolises recognition of the conscious, and perhaps in some instances an unconscious exclusion of women in the political discourse, and although lacking in evidence, a commitment to addressing this. As such this country has, and to a great extent still is well in the lead when coming to the representation of women in structures of leadership not only in government, but in the corporate sector as well. Thus it is acknowledged by the World Economic Forum as part of the top ten gender equal countries in Africa (Bekhouche 2013). Be that as it may, it is of utmost importance that one not only acknowledges and appreciates this, but that this is problematized as well.

Goetz (2003, p. 29-30) problematizes the extent to which the representation of women is useful in furthering the gender sensitive issues in the structures where women and their demands are meant to be represented. She identifies three types of engagement involved in the process of ensuring gender equity, these being; consultation, dialogue, representation and accountability. Aware that the electoral system in South Africa is accommodative in so far as the representation of legislative structures is concerned, Goetz (2003, p. 35) questions the ability for the elected and the structures themselves to prioritise those issues that are seen as 'women's issues'. According to Goetz (2003, p. 38-47) the nature of the decision making process and the implementation of policy resolutions, which may at times reflect positively on the part of the women, is inadequate in that it operates from at best a position of gender neutrality and at worst a bias towards the norm which remains one that advances for a discourse marred by patriarchal values.

Moving from the premise that the 'women's voice' is important in the discussions of gender equity, an acknowledgement of the lack of this is important. Goetz (2003, p. 36) identifies a number of constraints to the 'women's voice', among these being the gender based divisions of labour that limit civil engagement on the part of the women because of her commitment (which is not always chosen) to her domestic duties as a mother, wife, daughter . Other constraints identified are the heterogeneity of women as a group and the subordination or control of women's sexuality by men. In the case of the former, attention is brought to limitations that disregard the different identities that women have, and see them being women as the only aspect **worth considering**. Whereas in the latter case, the lack of control women have over their sexuality is important to look at because this removes the women's agency over her body and sexuality, and does this in such a way that the sexuality and body of the

women becomes a point of public discussion to either be criticised or affirmed by the man (Goetz 2003, Schuhmann 2010 and Erlank 2003).

In post-authoritarian and largely patriarchal contexts like South Africa, the inclusion of women requires that there are mechanisms in place that make sure that there is female representation in structures notwithstanding the existing constraints. Women are indeed the most disadvantaged insofar as political involvement is concerned. As a result of the domestic responsibility that women have, they are unable to be involved in political activism in the same ways that their male counterparts are privileged to. Practically women's domestic responsibilities hinder their full participation in political activities, because meetings are in the evening when women and girls are expected to cook and care for their families. And as having earlier alluded to in the previous chapter, the culture of activism in itself is constructed in such ways that it considers activism as an activity for men.³⁹ The use of enforcing gender quotas on the representation of women is a response to this. Quotas have been very valuable in ensuring that there is indeed a presence of women in all structures of leadership. The quota in some ways serves as a coercive means of ensuring women's representation where they would historically be side-lined because of their unavailability or inability to be active in politics within a patriarchal framework like that of the ANCYL. The debate among scholars of women's representation in decision making structures is currently around the extent to which the quota is effective in dealing with matters affecting women and establishing the difference between, the inclusion of women as merely adhering to requirements and a reflection of legitimate intentions to include women (Goetz and Hassim 2003). It is thus from this framework that a discussion of the ANCYL and its gender policy

³⁹ This point is addressed extensively in the previous chapter, and is used as a point of reference within which this work is underpinned.

position particularly, and more generally its implementation will unfold in the subsequent discussion.

The ANCYL Constitution from its 24th National Congress

The ANCYL constitution that was adopted by the 24th National Congress in 2011 serves as the foundation where regulations and rules of the organisation are instituted. From this, one sees that the constitution is an instrument that is necessary for the function of the ANCYL. It is as such an important document to look at first, as it structurally represents the cornerstone of ANCYL policy positions. It must also be acknowledged that because of this, the constitution serves to guide organisational policy positions, programmes and practices.

In keeping with its value of non-sexism as well as non-racism, the ANCYL membership is open to ‘...all South African youth between the ages of 14 and 35 who accept its policy guidelines, aims and objectives...’ (ANCYL 2011, p. 6). Although this may be seen as common in democratic South Africa, it is important to acknowledge that this has not always been the case⁴⁰, and as such one should understand that this reality also contributes to the minimal participation (in the ANCYL) that is seen among the women and people of other races represented in the country’s demographics.

With regard to the rights and obligations of members of the ANCYL as per Article H of its constitution, the ANCYL makes it clear that all its members have the right to being protected

⁴⁰ This based on apartheid laws that sought to keep White and Black people separate.

‘... against any harassment, victimization and/or discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex or creed;...’ (ANCYL 2011, p.8). They also have the obligation to ‘Combat all forms of tribalism, regionalism...and other forms of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sex or creed...’ (ANCYL 2011, p. 8). The code of conduct of the ANCYL as outlined in the constitution classifies ‘grievous bodily harm including rape or attempting to rape...’ (ANCYL 2011, p. 29), as well as, ‘Sexual assault, sexual harassment whether verbal or physical or the physical abuse of women or children or in any other way seriously offending the dignity of all members...’ as grave offences resulting in punitive measures from a reprimand to an expulsion.

In dealing with the conduct of ANCYL members the constitution takes seriously sexual harassment and any form of violence directed towards women, even more seriously than it considers sowing regionalism, sexism, racism and tribalism within the organisation; with this offence being regarded as a serious offence. Although the constitution seems to place much emphasis on any form of violence on women it is limited firstly, in how it purposes to deal with disciplining perpetrators, as well as in recognising that men too can be victims of violence. The position of the ANCYL on the question of violence is one that is gender insensitive and has a bias that feminises the idea of victimhood. It therefore suggests that the ANCYL is representative of a single type of masculinity which is hegemonic and exempt from being victimised, which is simply not the case (Connell 1995). This is important because it reveals the perception of the notions of gender that underscore ANCYL politics, these being the regarding of women as victim and man as perpetrator with there being no consideration of what lies outside of the heteronormative conceptions of gender.

The ANCYL and its role in the struggle for gender equality (2001)

In the year 2001, the ANCYL at its 21st National Congress through its document titled ‘The ANCYL and its role in the struggle for gender equality’ made some reflections on how the position of women had over time, improved in South Africa in the period of the late nineties and early 2000’s. The document first makes references to the work that has been done in attempting to deal with gender inequality in South Africa by the ANC-led government. Amongst these achievements the ANCYL mentions the ‘providing for freedom from unfair discrimination on the basis of sex...’ (ANCYL 2001, p. 1), and the adoption of laws that protect the women from domestic violence and rape, the office of the status of women and the National Gender Commission (ANCYL 2001, p. 1).

Meintjes (2003, p. 140-143) reflects on the processes leading up to the gains reflected in the discussion document of the ANCYL on gender. Among the key ideas coming out of her work is a recognition that is overlooked by the ANCYL of the need for other stakeholders like civil society, the women’s movements, the women’s parliamentary caucus and the Women’s National Coalition (WNC) to ensure that the necessary amends are made in dealing with women’s interests in the post-apartheid South Africa. This contribution by Meintjes (2003) on how to hasten the women’s agenda is important in that it makes a consideration of how dealing with the contradictions of violence, leadership and other matters requires a concerted effort and commitment by different stakeholders.

Practical programmes that address gender equality

The 2001 gender policy document of the ANCYL makes significant reference to the work that is done by the ANC-led government in addressing gender inequality. Mentioned in this document is government ensuring that there is access to clean water, an increase of the availability of child support grants to South Africans, free health care for pregnant mothers and children below six years. In addition to this, the document takes a decisive position regarding dealing with sexual offences for women and giving them the confidence in the judicial system etc. Although these are gender issues that the ANCYL should be interested in, I contend that this discussion is amiss for two reasons.

The first being that the document speaks about the programmes of the ANC-led government as opposed to youth or organisational issues affecting women who are the constituency of the ANCYL. Secondly because it only addresses the realities of women on a much broader scale without much attention given to what the challenges are for those women who are activists in the ANCYL. This therefore reflects a denialist outlook to the challenges that women within the organisation face as female activists, and also implies that women in the ANCYL are representatives of a homogenous body of women, thus ignoring the intersecting identities women have. This being the case however, it is important to acknowledge that this document brings to the fore the reality of the vulnerability of women in South Africa as well as the expected roles they should occupy. The document raises issues like racism and the persisting unfortunate reality of Black, working class women, this not divorced from the historical identity of being triply oppressed⁴¹ under the apartheid regime. Although it is not only Black women who suffer the wrath of male dominance, it is the Black woman who represents the

⁴¹ Triple oppression referring to the oppression of black, working-class women on the basis of their race, class and sex.

women who are poor, abused, unemployed, uneducated and to some extent not fully protected by the law (even though, Acts and mechanisms are meant to be in place to change this reality).

In addition to this, the document highlights the resolutions from the 20th National Congress from the gender commission, these resolutions including; mobilizing women in the Youth League and involving them in issues of the ANCWL, the women's coalition, and the broader women's movement etc. The ANCYL admits that it has been unable to implement its own policy resolutions on the gender question. This suggesting that, there is within the organisation a recurring oversight insofar as attending to the different challenges women face as activists is concerned.

The recommendation that this document gives, makes mention of the need for political and administrative development among women in the ANCYL through programmes aimed at the development of women (ANCYL 2001, p. 3-4). Although somewhat problematic, this recommendation is evidence of an imbalance in the ANCYL regarding the ability of leadership to take a central role in ensuring that the organisation shifts towards the envisaged gender equal society. This meaning that, the way of understanding and consequently resolving the inconsistencies seen in policy resolutions and the implementation process is inadequate. These recommendations by focusing only on the development of the female activist reinforce the perception that women are not equal to men and as such require more intervention, and men requiring less to none. This approach is problematic in that it excludes the men from acknowledging that they too contribute to the inequality and resistance to

changing women's experiences within the organisation. This reinforces the erroneous idea that undoing wrongs embedded in a patriarchal history is the business of women alone.

The next gender discussion document to come from the ANCYL is the document from the 24th National congress. Considering its limitations, the document serves as evidence that there has been a shift regarding how gender has been perceived from within the ANCYL, this is evidence that gender inequality remains important in dealing with transformation in South Africa, thus necessitating much attention to the subject.

The ANCYL Perspective on Gender relations and Women's Emancipation (2011)

Drawing from the discussions of the 21st National Congress, the ANCYL acknowledges the inadequacy that has been seen in its approach to addressing gender inequality and related issues in South Africa, considering the history of the country that is embedded in conceptions of the male as superior. The ANCYL in the introduction of this gender document makes a commitment to leading the struggle of emancipating women in the youth league and beyond. To do this, the ANCYL commits to aligning itself with 'radical gender reforms' (ANCYL: 2011; 1) to ensure that its members are capacitated to deal with matters affecting women like gender based violence.

The first shift that can be seen in this document is the differentiation of women's emancipation and broader gender relations. Unlike its predecessor, this document recognises that merely saying gender relations or gender equality is inadequate, and as such a more defined representation of the points of contest is necessary. In a subtle way, the ANCYL here

appears to also recognise that gender relations are not merely about the freedom of women from patriarchal bonds, but that there may be within the discourse of gender relations other relations of power that are not just between men and women. Having said this, the ANCYL does not define what could be understood as gender relations, which is in itself problematic in that the likelihood of meanings being misinterpreted remains. The use of the idea of a gender struggle is also interesting here, in that unlike in the document of 2001, the notion of gender is not simply equated to women, but is deconstructed such that it considers other forms of sexual orientation even though this is not explicit. It is important however to recognise the shift herein.

The gender neutral position that is seemingly encouraged by the ANCYL through the language of the 'gender struggle' is problematic in that it doesn't take into consideration the reality of the complexity that exists between men as both superior and inferior bodies. This language as a result disregards the existing differences among men and their reality within the ANCYL. Having earlier in chapter two looked at the dominant culture of the ANCYL, it almost goes without saying that a certain type of identity, in this case a dominant masculinity most often than not is prioritised over not only women, but also over the more sub-ordinate type of **masculinity mostly represented by gay men**. The intersections of social class, age, sexual orientation and race play a critical role in positioning males in the ANCYL, this therefore further challenging the implausibility of the idea of taking a position of neutrality when coming to addressing gender (male and female) inequality in the ANCYL.

In this document the ANCYL understands and makes a good criticism of the constant subsuming of women's domination under broad discussions such as the more general social

and economic transformation matters, thus treating women's oppression as 'a bit on the side' or even 'an optional extra' (Bea et al. in ANCYL 2011, p. 1). An acknowledgement is made that members of the ANCYL by virtue of their existence in a patriarchal society are both victims and beneficiaries of patriarchy. This being so it is their responsibility to actively participate in dealing with the inequality of gender and women's emancipation more holistically. The ANCYL in taking up this responsibility proposes that it leads several campaigns aimed at mobilizing young women around their practical gender needs as well as ensuring that they challenge patriarchy by making radical gender reforms that affect both men and women and finally making the necessary demands on the state in this regard (ANCYL 2011, p. 1 and Molyneux 1994).

Contextualising the ANCYL documents

Having provided specific yet limited a discussion of the 'gender question', the ANCYL document makes a contribution to what it sees as 'contemporary issues relating to women's oppression under patriarchy' (ANCYL 2011, p. 5). This section of the discussion document raises the incorporation of women in social, economic and political terrains as a key issue. Reflections are made on the presence of women, this done in such a way that looks at their subordination economically and socially, in particular the disregard that they are treated with in society broadly. This narrative extends to the context of the ANCYL itself, focusing on the prevailing gender discourses and practices of inclusion. Although the ANCYL is committed to the inclusion of women in the different spheres, the views held by members of branches were not in consensus on the matter. Among the responses to the question of women's inclusion was that

‘...through the NYDA [National Youth Development Agency] interaction, young women can have their own companies...and structures in government...it’s not enough, we still have women who can’t interpret the constitution of the organisation, we still need more capacity building.’

(Jabu*, July 2013).

The ANCYL draws from how the question of women’s representation in the economic and social context under patriarchy from the point of view of the ANC, and how this has been dealt with by the mother body. For example, the document mentions that the representation of women in decision making structures has improved, as seen through the representation of women in parliamentary and other legislative structures (ANCYL 2011, p. 5 and Goetz 2003). Although this is the case, members of the ANCYL have expressed some dissatisfaction with the ways that women are included within the organisation, and in responding to this some participants said;

‘There has been no progress that has been brought about by the youth league... Because there have been no changes.... it makes me sad...I am not as motivated as I was when I joined, my spirit is down and I am discouraged.’

(Noluthando*, June 2013).

While others, in contrast with the position of the ANCYL believe that

‘...the role of the youth league is not to improve the role of the women, [but] is to improve the role of the ANC, so I cannot say that the youth league has failed to do that because it’s not the responsibility of the youth league to do that.’

(Senzo*, July 2013).

It is thus important to acknowledge the contested views within the ANCYL in so far as the approach of dealing with women's day to day issues is concerned. One realises that although progressive, this stance is seen through expressed commitment to inclusion and equal representation of men and women in the different spheres. This being said however, the document acknowledges that society is entrenched in patriarchal values thus making the implementation difficult. This entrenchment of patriarchy is experienced by men and women differently, informed by the historical impact that a patriarchal system has had on men and women of all races, classes and sexual orientations. In locating this contemporary reality, the ANCYL looks to the impact that the neoliberal developmental trajectory that South Africa has. In particular how this has disproportionately affected the poor, as seen in the increase of atypical work, privatising, restructuring and downsizing of the public sector, which affects Black working women (ANCYL 2011, p. 6). Smith (2013, 20) reflects on this by arguing that poverty and vulnerability are feminised and therefore force an acceptance of a reality whose burden predominantly lies with the women and their relationships.

In the case of the latter, where focus is put on the key issues raised related to the discourse and practices within the ANCYL itself. The document depicts a heavy reliance on the quota system to ensure representation of both sexes in structures of the organization, this in addition to the more practical strategies, some which have been mentioned above. Although the quota has to a large degree increased women's participation which was historically stifled by male dominance in the organization, it was and to some degree continues to be met with much opposition (ANCYL 2011, p. 11-13).

Those that are against this view of the quota in the organization argue that the quota shuns away from looking for capacity in leadership and rather uses women as 'charity cases'

(Nkululeko*, July 2013) who should be put into positions because of their sex. This view is in itself problematic in that it assumes that women do not have capacity and that all men are inherently capacitated to lead which is not the case (Goetz 2003, p. 52-53). The argument of the ANCYL is that indeed quotas are a progressive tool for increasing women's participation, although this may be so, the ANCYL also acknowledges that this is insufficient a tool in that it does not eradicate the discrimination that women are subjected to (ANCYL 2011, p. 12). This recognising the existence of the organization in a society that does not really take women seriously and discriminates against them based on their sex and as such buttressing the limitations that exist when addressing the question of the representation and inclusion of women (ANCYL 2011).

Though progressive, the quota system is to some degree problematic in that it '...cannot remove the obstacles of combining job, family and political activity; a significant issue for women and a bigger problem for women than for men' (Dahlerup in ANCYL 2011; 13). Since the introduction of the quota system in 2004 it has indeed played a critical role in the development of young women by the organization. The reality however is that the quota system has not itself been naturalized and when pertaining to electoral processes the top positions tend to be preserved for men and the rest of the unofficial positions allocated to women, this suggesting that women leadership remains an afterthought in the organization even with mechanisms to deal with this in place (ANCYL 2011, p. 13).

In addition to this, women are subject to harsh scrutiny by males which leaves them in a position where they are expected to have twice the capacity as men in order for them to lead. This expectation is one that is prevalent not only among the men but also among the women,

thus exposing the animosity that is experienced by female activists in the ANCYL. The way that women choose to lead their lives, how they dress and how they use their sexuality is also put under much scrutiny when considering women for leadership positions in the organisation (ANCYL 2011, p. 13). This criterion is one that is not applicable to men, especially those who represent a hegemonic masculinity, this attributed to the misogynistic nature of these discussions themselves. The document argues that the commitment to gender equality and the emancipation of women by the ANCYL is one that should not be doubted. There are certain limitations, but the fact that the ANCYL continues to lead gender campaigns such as the call for free sanitary towels, and those against sexual harassment in the work place is reflective of this. Indeed this commitment is well captured in the documents the main issue however is whether or not these congress resolutions and strategies are implemented in the branches, regions and provinces of the ANCYL; this in essence being the main interest of this dissertation.

For one to be able to make a critical assessment of the resolutions vis-à-vis the implementation, the ANCYL suggests that to look at how the practices and culture of the organization have changed to accommodate the limitations faced by female activists is important. Do the meeting times and responsibilities of women in the ANCYL sharpen the contradiction of maternal responsibility and activism, or are these able to comfortably co-exist? (ANCYL 2011, p.15). In creating a home for female activists in the ANCYL, the organisation should create a space for young women to be able to challenge the patriarchal order of society, thus ensuring that women and men do not benefit or are disadvantaged merely because of their sex. The ANCYL looks to organizations such as those found in the Nordic countries in addressing this. The Young Left of Sweden being a case in point, where self-defence classes take place and women are encouraged to confront male domination not

just mentally but physically as well. It is also of importance to the ANCYL that women continue to organize themselves in platforms such as the Young Women's Assembly (YWA), where women can engage on the challenges faced in the organization, but also to equip young women with particular qualities such as assertiveness, confidence, public speaking, and advocating for the issues like gender based violence, and others that face them directly among others.

The scope of the gender document of the ANCYL resolved upon and adopted in its 24th national congress is not limited to the above mentioned issues only, it provides a relatively in depth discussion of issues such as the Child Support Grant, HIV/AIDS, access to water and resources and how these affect women in society broadly. The scope of this dissertation is however one that is much aligned to the issues discussed above thus justifying the selectivity in looking at the issues raised in this chapter. In the section below, I will draw from the interviews done and illustrate the relationship existing between the stipulations from the documents and the reality in the branches. The focus will be on how the branch members understand the position of the ANCYL on transforming the gender problem, understanding the documents and how these have shaped the development of women, and finally the Young Women's Assembly (YWA).

A Branch Perspective

Having looked at what the documents of the ANCYL say about addressing the challenges around the gender question, in particular women's emancipation from within the ANCYL itself, this section will seek to look at the responses from the participants of this research to what it is they understand to be the position of the ANCYL on gender transformation.

Drawing from the interviews conducted with the participants, I will in this section attempt to juxtapose the official policy position of the ANCYL on gender as well as how if at all, current members of the ANCYL have seen or see the development of women from within the structure itself. With the intention to provide a background for subsequent discussions in this dissertation, I will present here the views of the women collectively, and will do the same for the men. The rationale behind this is to highlight the prevailing perceptions on the 'gender question' and the challenges that have been seen to be prevalent throughout the research process.

Documents and implementation

Having established how, when and why people joined the ANCYL, I attempted to interpret how they understand the gender policy of the ANCYL and what it means for their activism. The majority of the participants, as shall be seen in the subsequent chapter, were people who had been in the ANCYL for a while and were to a certain extent familiar with the practices and culture and had significant understanding of the ideological framework of the ANCYL. Having said this however, as a researcher as well as an activist of the ANCYL, I did not assume that the gender policy of the organisation was well understood or even known at all by the participants of my research. I had to consider that I had an obligation to research this topic and because of this had already familiarised myself with its contents and as such took this for granted. Also, as an activist of the ANCYL I already understood from experience and observations made that the gender policy is often taken for granted and not considered as an important policy and is as such given little attention in comparison to other documents. The gender question in the ANCYL remains one that is considered as second to issues pertaining to economic and racial inequalities, it was therefore, necessary for me to first establish what was known about the policy position of the ANCYL on gender.

The ANCYL position on gender

Females

In responding to this question, only two of the sixteen women interviewed were able to say confidently that the ANCYL prioritises equal representation of men and women in all of its structures. Three additional views came from responses to this by the female activists which will be used as bases for the argument to be made in this chapter. The three responses that came up were, 'we don't know', 'we think its fine because it takes women forward' and 'there's a progressive policy in place but it doesn't really work as it should'. Although there was a slight difficulty in articulating the actual policy position of the ANCYL on gender, what this policy meant for female activists however was better understood. The stance of the ANCYL to ensure that there is in all of its structures an equal representation of men and women, which is biased towards women where necessary was appreciated by most of the female activists spoken to. For most women it meant that a commitment to the attainment of gender equality was regarded as a priority and '...means that women must at least be taken more seriously.' (Deliwe*, June 2013).

On the one hand the need for women to begin to take responsibility and lead by example implies that the channels for them to have expressed their ability and desire to lead outside of the resolve of the quota system in ensuring representation were minimal. It may on the other hand mean that, there may have been a lack of seriousness from female activists especially concerning them being represented in structures and mainstreaming women issues. To support this, Lungile asserted '...as women to be honest, we do not take our transformation serious, until lately...' (Lungile*, June 2013), implying that the implementation of the gender policy of the ANCYL was not pursued by the female activists in the branches themselves, to

the extent that the policy could be used to further female activists interests within the movement.

Males

The male response to what the position of the ANCYL on gender transformation was came from an understanding of the position of the ANC which has a representation of both sexes in all structures of the organisation. What came out of the interviews with some of the male participants was that it was important for the ANCYL to aspire to see women, who are capable⁴² leading the ANCYL and thus taking it forward. There was some kind of general agreement on what the ANCYL's position on transformation is. There were however differing views on the plausibility of this. On the one hand the inclusion of women was applauded, while on the other hand it was opposed because women in the ANCYL were seen to not take themselves seriously. Women were said to be incapable of exposing their leadership abilities and making these available to the organisation, but rather relied on the men to lobby for them to occupy leadership positions.

In the words of one of the participants, '....women are more of followers and [are] not in the forefront enough' (Duma*, June 2013). This made it difficult for the men to trust them with leadership positions in the ANCYL. One of the ways that this was understood by some of the male participants was that although the official stance of the ANCYL was progressive because it considered the deliberate inclusion of women into structures as important. The reality was that the organisation had a different narrative of politics of inclusion and gender equality outside of policy resolutions, which is hostile to the official resolutions.

⁴² Much emphasis was made on the capability of women by the men, this seen as a prerequisite which was not necessarily the case for the men, since men are already familiar with what is expected of them in the ANCYL.

One of the participants spoke about how sometimes what a woman looks like and how she relates to her male comrades (those of which are seen to have some kind of authority in the branches), in some instances determined the inclusion of that woman in leadership structures or other functions of the organisation. In a sense the participant expressed that women are assessed for leadership and other opportunities sometimes on the basis of how they appease the interests of their male comrades. This was articulated by Bongane* in the following way;

‘I wish I could influence every member to see what I am seeing because this issue of gender transformation...women are not taken serious, people look at how women look, there are many intelligent women who are not being considered [for leadership and employment opportunities] because of how they look. If you are unattractive you won’t get assistance... I have seen many comrades with business plans get no assistance and you see empty people getting assistance because their beautiful.’ (Bongane*, August 2013).

It is indeed herein where the contradiction between policy resolution and day to day experiences of activists within the organisation lies. While the policy positions are applauded and are used to reflect an organisation that is moving towards equality between the genders, the available evidence on the implementation of these positions fails to reaffirm policy.

The resolution of the quota was as acceptable and had some gains however it was seen by most of the participants as giving advantage to women who were seemingly not interested and were constantly depending on being forwarded by men without claiming the space themselves. There are two interesting perspectives that came from this part of the conversation with the participants, what made these even more interesting is that they came

from what is commonly known as ‘seasoned comrades’⁴³. The first of these was that the imposition of the gender quota in the ANCYL was rushed and as such was problematic in that women who have no leadership capacity had an opportunity to emerge into leadership positions. This participant further said that it would have been better if the quota sought to achieve a thirty percent representation of women and a seventy percent for men in all structures, to be increased once women were ready.

The second perspective was that the quota was unnecessary since women were not willing or interested in leading and as such this compromised the broader function of the ANCYL. This so because structures were made up of women who were not interested or capable, but were there for the mere purposes of fulfilling the gender representation requirements of the ANCYL. Both these perspectives are amiss because they are in the first instance blind to the reality that the ANCYL and politics broadly has a history that has prioritised masculine values and ways of being, as such is unaccommodating of women. They do not recognise that measures like the quota ought to be put in place to ensure women’s inclusion in political structures is fast-tracked, such that the perception of politics being an area for men may be undone.

From these reflections one already sees the disjuncture between the resolutions of the ANCYL, and what these mean for branches. There is evident consensus that women must be better represented, and mechanisms put in place to ensure this. However, the women aware of their own limitations maintain confidence in the policies of the organisation, while the men

⁴³ Seasoned comrades are those who are held in high regard in the organisation because of their history in the ANCYL and leadership, as well as a good command of organisational theory.

adhere to this only because it's a requirement and not because they have confidence in both the women and the policy resolves.

Understanding of Documents

Political astuteness together with the ability to articulate views on a political matter go a long way in political organisations such as the ANCYL insofar as making a determination of the extent to which an issue or an individual may be perceived as important. Having said this, it was important for this research to assess how many participants had knowledge of the documents of the ANCYL that address the gender question; these being the documents discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Females

Among all the women interviewed, only two had read the gender policy document adopted at the last national congress of the ANCYL which was in 2011, although they did not read the whole document, these two participants saw the documents as being fair, but also mentioned failure in the implementation of these resolutions in branches. Among the group of women who had not read the documents, reasons for this interchanged between, 'I didn't know about it...because we were not told about it' and 'it's too long and I don't have time to read it'. This reality thus in a sense arguably giving credibility to the view that women do not take the struggle and their emancipation seriously. Although there may be other ways to read this unfortunate truth, it does however reinforce the general gender stereotypes, as well as those that are to some extent prevalent in the ANCYL itself.

Males

Only one of the male participants from both branches interviewed said that they had read the ANCYL policy document on gender and in his assessment saw the document as being good and the challenge lying in the implementation of the proposals of this document. The rest of the male participants mentioned the following as reasons for not having read the document; the document was presented under the leadership of Julius Malema who they did not like as a leader, they didn't get the document, and some of these activists mentioned that gender is not taken that seriously and as such its highly unlikely that gender documents would be entertained much in the ANCYL, unless by women themselves.

One of the participants said that he 'never read it, I didn't get it. And generally as men we are ignorant when it comes to gender issues.' (Fana*, July 2013). The extent to which this ignorance was prevalent was well expressed by Hambo* when he said:

'I don't have a problem with gender...I can easily influence someone to treat a woman right, the only thing that I read are the economic documents, it's just simple basic knowledge you're a person you just have boobs...I don't see a problem so I don't read them.'

(Hambo*, July 2013).

From this one can clearly see that the source of dealing with the gender question in the ANCYL at the branches looked at is not informed by the resolutions of the organisation and as such, it is indeed tempting to say that the inability of the ANCYL at least in these branches looked at to address the challenges stems from this reality. What is even more interesting is that even among the women themselves there seems to be little commitment to sharpening themselves theoretically on issues that are affecting them directly. In some ways this reality reinforces the narrative expounded by Hassim et.al (1987) and other scholars that the

question of gender is in most cases treated as a thing on the side, never a priority issue but continuously subsumed under other issues that are considered more important.

This phenomenon is largely associated with national liberation movements as having earlier discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. It is however interesting that even in contemporary society where there is less pressure to commit to the broader struggles of economic development, as is the case in the ANCYL currently, issues affecting women remain an afterthought, even to those they should be of most benefit.

The development of women in the ANCYL

The development of women within the ANCYL is one of the overarching themes found in the organisations gender policy documents. This section of this dissertation is dedicated to making an assessment of the extent to which the proposed resolutions of the ANCYL with regards to the gender policy are implemented in branches. I asked a question of whether in the past five years (for those that have been members for that long) there was evidence of development or empowerment of female activists. Below lies an analysis of the responses from the participants on this.

Females

The overarching response to this question was; yes women have developed, however not at the desired pace. This was seen through the ways that women have been included in the processes of the ANCYL, even leadership positions. According to one of the participants, the extent to which the ANCYL is successful in its commitment to developing women was seen in the inclusion of women to occupying key positions in political structures, government, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and business amongst other sectors. One of

the participants expressed how in the past women were excluded from processes (especially leadership related processes) thus isolating them as activists. The reality that now there were mechanisms in place to ensure their inclusion was seen as very important and showed that there was some commitment to gender equality by the ANCYL. Although the dominant voice was one that recognised that there was indeed some kind of women's development in the organisation, it was also expressed in the interviews that this was not adequate.

From this one can deduce that the inclusion of women had to transcend the politics of occupying space, and had to translate into a much more substantive kind of development, as expressed by one of the participants who said: '...we are still backward in terms of developing some women...in political education...' (Funeka*, June 2013). Although there was a sense of consensus among some of the women regarding this, it also came to the fore that the development of female activists in the ANCYL was not done in a way that all female activists benefitted from it. There were some female activists who were not so close to 'leadership' (here referring to male leaders), and as such did not have the same opportunity at development as those women who were much closer and had a better rapport with the male leaders did.

A counter opinion on the development of women in the ANCYL was also provided, where another group of activists said that according to them there was very little done by the ANCYL to develop young women activists within the branches. The political and leadership development of female comrades was said to be 'very slow', and although there was an inclusion of women in leadership structures, the positions that they held were still the less

influential positions. As a result the gains of this development or more specifically inclusion are minimal.

The ANCYL was said to not prioritise the growth of women. Among the reasons for this was that the majority of men in the ANCYL branches considered for this research had a tendency to undermine women and showed attitudes that disregarded women and their contribution, until such time that women would be necessary for whatever goals the male comrades would have. In expressing this opinion Kwando* (2013) said; ‘the problem is that men undermine us...especially in our ward...they do not take us seriously, and when they want things they use us women in this very ward...’ (Kwando*, July 2013).

Among those that believed there were no efforts to develop women into strong activists in ANCYL branches, sentiments of discouragement and uselessness were felt by the female activists who said, as opposed to feeling empowered they felt disempowered and not motivated to participate actively in programmes of the organisation. It is interesting that from the discussion had on the topic of women’s development, a direct link was made by participants to the idea of development in the sense of leadership training and in providing political education. Participants valued this more than they did a more personal approach to development that is the building of women’s confidence and them being equipped for political leadership as is advocated for in the 2012 discussion document. Although not necessarily incorrect, such an understanding of development shows a slight disconnect between the understandings of development as advocated for through the gender policy documents of the ANCYL.

Males

With regards to the development of women in the ANCYL, the males in the branches looked at said that there was some kind of development, although not to a satisfactory level. One of the participants said that ‘I think necessary conditions have been created for their development.’(Nkululeko*, June 2013), but it was suggested that the reason that women are seemingly not developing at a faster pace was because they were too lazy to think and depend too much on the men in the organisation to do things for them.

One of the male participants in expounding on the laziness of women in the ANCYL said that ‘...they would rather sit and do facials instead of political work, and then want to claim the victory afterwards’ (Goba*, July 2013). The slowness in the development of women in these branches was also attributed to the reliance on men by women to push them into positions, as well as the lack of seriousness on the part of the women activists. In emphasising the former, one of the participants said that ‘...women just emerge [into leadership positions] because of gender sensitivity...they need to emerge because of capacity.’ (Andile*, July 2013). In saying this he was making the point that the development of women in the ANCYL is not consistent and is to some extent a mere activity of window dressing on the part of the ANCYL with minimum commitment to the actual development of the female activists.

One of the views that also seemed to find much resonance from among most of the male participants was that women activists were prone to use sex as a tool to ensure their emergence into leadership positions. Women who are romantically or sexually involved with men who were respected and held ANCYL leadership positions were seen to benefit more than those women who had less of a rapport with the male leaders. In a sense the emergence

into leadership positions by women in the ANCYL was not always about inclusion for the purpose of development, and even where it was the case, this inclusion was done in a way that favoured some women over others.

Women who were seen to be in a closer proximity to power, either because of their political maturity, or relationship to those who were at the centre of the lobbying and deployment process, were always first to benefit over the ordinary female activist who didn't have this. It was interesting however that one of the male participants understood this differently from the rest of his male comrades who saw this as women merely throwing themselves at men in exchange for power. Acknowledging that there has been development on the part of women in the ANCYL, he said the use of sexual relationships was prevalent, and what this actually meant for him was that it ought to be looked at as sexual harassment, which is a grave offence as per the ANCYL constitution earlier discussed in this chapter; Bongane* (2013) said that:

‘Sexual harassment is a problem within the organisation, you’ll find comrades not joining the organisation but joining comrades, this means it can hamper the ANCYL from growing and achieving whatever it wants to in society. You find most of the people, especially women they feel that if you join the ANCYL you will be used like those ones that are being used. So there is no progress...’

(*Bongane, August 2012).

This reveals the continuing power relations between men and women activists that undermine the position of women on the basis of their sex. Although not in an obvious way, this reality as seen in the ANCYL branches in Seshego is reflective of the trends and characteristics of

the MDM even in exile as we have learnt from work by Suttner, Gasa and other scholars of the ANC in exile discussed in the previous chapter.

Among those that thought that there was development for women in the ANCYL, the name of Vuyiswa Tulelo, former Secretary General of the ANCYL under the leadership of Julius Malema elected at the 23rd National Conference was one frequently mentioned as evidence (or arguably a token). Although good that a woman was consistently mentioned as having lead in the higher echelons of the ANCYL, it is however slightly concerning that it is the same name that comes up, and is as such treated as a pinnacle for women development in the organisation. What this reality exposes about the ANCYL is the extent to which its commitment to actually developing young women within the league is limited to there being one or two women in positions of authority. What Tulelo presents is, at best the ability of the ANCYL to give women the necessary platform to lead and grow their leadership capacity. At worst however she having become the only reference point on this question represents the slow pace regarding the transformation of young women within the ANCYL, this being a question that should be dealt with in platforms such as the Young Women's Assembly (YWA) as per ANCYL resolutions.

The Young Women's Assembly (YWA)

In the conversation of development discussed above, the question of the Young Women's Assembly was mentioned. The YWA is an informal structure of the ANCYL established in 2010. It was created as a platform where females in the organisation would reflect on their experiences as female activists, and also to prepare young women for their political journey in a context that was hostile. This initiative was regarded as a programme of the National

Executive Committee (NEC) that ought to have been introduced also to all other structures of the ANCYL from provincial structure to branches.

The essence of the YWA was the organising of young women in the ANCYL without their male counterparts, a creation of an environment that is not made up of harsh criticism, but ways of helping females grow as political activists as well as sharing their challenges. In the interviews carried out, I asked all the participants what they thought about the YWA and it was shocking that in these branches most of the people did not know about this forum. What this revealed is the slowness in the implementation of developmental programmes for young women which are already recommendations from ANCYL policies as having earlier argued.

One of the two participants who knew about the YWA said that from his understanding he saw this platform as very good for the development of young women and believed that there was indeed a need for it to be implemented even at the branch level. The chapter subsequent to this one draws much on the responses by the participants of this research, among other issues that will be looked at closely is the organising of female activists separately from their male counterparts which in a sense speaks to the intentions of the ANCYL through the YWA as expressed through its documents.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the ANCYL gender policy documents from a point of view that sought to problematize the documents and how they deal with the gender question, in particular the inclusion and representation of women in the ANCYL. The chapter challenges

how the concept of gender is understood within the framework of the ANCYL. This analysis has revealed the gender neutral position that is taken by the ANCYL on matters affecting women. Particularly important for this work is the emphasis of an absence of an engagement that challenges the gender configurations within the ANCYL. The chapter depicts a shift from a regard of gender as referring to women that was found to be prevalent in the ANCYL. The acknowledgement that gender is not merely about women, but includes men in its discourse of transformation was also recognised. An acknowledgement is made of how from the last ANCYL document addressing gender, the specific reference to the emancipation of women as distinct from gender relations is important and signifies a difference in how gender is configured. Having also looked at the participants perspectives on how they understand what the policies say on gender, this chapter exposes that the disjuncture is also informed by insufficient commitment to dealing with the inauspicious position of female activists within the ANCYL, and the inability of the organisation to treat this as a matter of priority.

It is important that the notion of gender be reconfigured in the ANCYL in such a way that women and men are perceived as equal, however cognisant of the advantages and disadvantages that come with being either male or female. Contributing to doing away with the inequalities between male and female activists should be considered as much an issue of importance for women than it is for men, especially because a true transformation of such inequality is made possible only through a commitment by both men and women.

Chapter 5: Women's activism in the ANCYL

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the experiences of women within the ANCYL, and how these differ with those of their male counterparts. Having earlier argued that the ANCYL is as an organisation that struggles with the inclusion of women within its structures, it is important that one looks at the general perceptions about women's activism and their experiences. Considering that the ANCYL is underpinned by heteronormatively masculine values and practices, one can argue that women activists' involvement within the organisation is different to that of their male counterparts. Although this chapter focuses on the experiences of women's activism, it draws from interviews conducted with both male and female activists of the ANCYL. The intention is to essentially provide insight on the configuration of gender politics in the ANC youth league and how these play themselves out in ANCYL branches. To get a deeper understanding of this, interviews were carried out with some members of the ANCYL. The interview process was informal and an open-ended interview schedule was used. This was important to give room for the participants own interpretation of the questions asked. As such, the responses are characterised by some nuances, reflecting the dynamic membership of the ANCYL as well as a broad and fresh perspective to the untold parts related to the theme of gender politics in the ANCYL more generally.

Moving from a premise that acknowledges the development of organisational culture within organisations, as having established in chapter three, it was important that the experiences of the individual participants be captured outside of how one understands the organisational culture and practice of the youth league. The presentation of the findings is largely reliant on the shared and unshared experiences of the people in the branches, this meaning that in

engaging with the findings the analysis is at times presented in such a way that the men and women or the branches as a whole are juxtaposed to each other. This chapter then looks at how gender is understood in the ANCYL from the point of view of its members' experiences, relations between male and female activists, and finally females' activism, focusing on women's participation, the prospects for women organising themselves separately and the levels of solidarity among the female activists in these branches.

Firstly I will briefly reflect on the two branches in Seshego, Branch A and Branch B, with the intention to give an idea of how these branches are like, secondly I will look at how the participants got involved in youth politics in their areas.

Branch A

Branch A is a branch that is older than branch B and it is located in one of the first sections built in Seshego. This ward is of low socio-economic status than branch B. The majority of people in this branch joined politics of the ANCYL out of the desire to change their communities with significant influence stemming from political activism in high school. The membership of this branch is on average slightly older than branch B, and the ward is faced with the challenge of extremely high levels of unemployment. Gathering from the interviews, because of the socio-economic status of people in this area, access to opportunities like education and entrepreneurship is limited because of costs related to the accessing of information considering low infrastructural development in this area. For example, when asked why accessing information was difficult, participants mentioned not having money to make calls or go to the internet cafés as this was expensive to do, especially since most internet cafés are located in the central base district, which is not within reasonable walking distance.

Branch B

Branch B is an area that has a mixed socio-economic group of people. This is a ward that includes old and new residential sections in Seshego. The one section of this ward is made up of a middle class⁴⁴ group in Seshego, composed of teachers, nurses, police officers etc. It is an area for the emerging black middle class that came from the era that saw the nearing of the apartheid regimes demise and ushering in of the new democracy in South Africa in the late eighties and early nineties. This section includes an RDP section that is composed of low to no-income families living in housing provided for free by the government of the day. With this marriage between the emerging middle class and lower class population, this branch is indeed slightly more diverse and as such has a wider representation of opinions on ANCYL activism. The members of this branch are younger, most of them were not members of the high school COSAS organisation unlike most members from branch A. Activism in this branch is inspired by personal career aspirations in addition to the development of the community and the desire to change the status quo.

The next section looks at how participants of this research found out about the ANCYL, and how they got involved.

An introduction to the ANCYL

Branch A: Females

In branch A which is a branch covering zones 1 and 2, strong links were found between activism in the ANCYL and COSAS. The majority of the women that were now involved in the ANCYL in leadership of the branch were members of the student movement before they became members of the ANCYL. It is safe to suggest that to varying extents it is COSAS that

⁴⁴ The emerging middle class and middle class as used here refers mainly to people employed by the state who have permanent employment and salaries. It is not reference to the upper middle class i.e. the rich/elite.

shaped the activism of women in the ANCYL and in some cases their involvement in COSAS automatically served as an introduction to involvement in the ANCYL. Although different, these two organisations resemble each other, in that membership of these organisations is an affiliation to the ANC. COSAS was (and still is) seen as preparation for activism in the ANCYL which is where members of COSAS ‘graduate’ to post-schooling. This of course as suggested in chapter two is not a new phenomenon in the ANCYL as COSAS has historically played a central role particularly in the re-establishment of what could be referred to as the ANCYL’s shadow organisation, SAYCO.

Although most of the female members in branch A who were interviewed were themselves members of COSAS, participation in the ANCYL after their COSAS days did not necessarily come as easy as it did for their male counterparts. This is so because upon leaving high school the female participants were met with other responsibilities and deemed politics as a thing of the past. Most of these women had more domestic responsibilities post-school some of them got married, had children, started working or pursued higher education qualifications. Recruitment by friends and comrades who had been in COSAS was common among the female members of the ANCYL. This is to say for some women, activism was encouraged by their friends or family members and had ceased to become a priority because of other demanding responsibilities that come with adulthood and being a woman. One of the participants shared with me that in the early days of her activism in the ANCYL, one of her male comrades would always fetch her at her home so they could attend the ANCYL meetings together. For her participating in the ANCYL is not something that she did naturally or with ease, but is something she was encouraged to do by her male friends. Be that as it may, the fact that recruitment is seemingly an important motivating factor for some women is not to suggest that they themselves did not have a genuine interest in the politics of the

ANCYL. It instead reveals the differences in experiencing activism for women and for men where the latter by virtue of their gender is exempt from certain responsibilities the former is subjected to.

Among the many reasons why the women in these branches saw the need to participate in the politics of the ANCYL was their concern about youth, the community and women development in the area. They saw the ANCYL as a vehicle to champion the interests of their community. In reflection on her interest in participating, Jabu* said that,

‘My father told me about the ANCYL, told me about the ANC, Soweto uprising and the challenges, about people losing their lives fighting for this democracy we enjoy today. I wanted to take the baton and continue...generations after us will continue after us...’ (Jabu*, August 2013)

Some of the participants were inspired to be politically active by observing other activists in the neighbourhood. The commitment to dealing with the concerns of the community and an apparent sense of purpose seen in other activists was in itself a great source of inspiration for some. One of the female participants told me about how her interest in the ANCYL was captured by the behaviour of one of the men who she used to play *ma-dice*⁴⁵ with, who irrespective of whether he was winning or not would leave the game to rush for an ANCYL meeting. One of the participants said that she joined the ANCYL because she was intrigued by the fights that were sparked by the developments towards 24th National Conference in 2011, since leadership contestation was high at the time. The ANCYL was the talk of the township especially with its President Julius Malema having been a child of Seshego and as such captured the interest of youth in the township that would ordinarily not have been

⁴⁵ Ma-dice is a SePedi term that refers to a poker like gambling game popular among black youths in South Africa townships.

members or interested in politics. The ANCYL in this branch was seen as interesting for many different reasons, people joined because they wanted to know more about this organisation and perhaps locate themselves as activists of this movement following inspiration from the inroads made by someone from their own community, whom they had grown up and went to school with.

Only one amongst the six women interviewed from this branch has been a member of the ANCYL from the year 1996. The rest of these activists had joined this organisation in the early to mid-2000 with the exception of one having joined only in 2011. Although these women have been active in the ANCYL for what would seem as a shorter period than their male counterparts, they have all been active in the ANCYL in different ways over the years. All of them see themselves as active members of the league and their activism being informed by their holding of leadership positions in the branch, sub-regional and national levels in some cases. Although at times met with some resistance from some members of the community and their own male comrades, activism to these women is of utmost importance, to some because it represents a bright future, while to others it is a way in which their worth and contribution to their community can be measured. 'The people in my community appreciate what we do as comrades for the betterment of the whole community and this makes me feel very proud.' (Sihle*, August 2013).

Branch A: Males

The emergence of Peter Mokaba into the leadership of the ANCYL in the early nineties as well as his fearless character seemed to have played a significant role in developing interest among the young men in this branch. All but two of the participants interviewed from this

branch said they were inspired by the former President of the ANCYL, suggesting that the men in the ANCYL were seemingly attracted to the macho imagery of Mokaba that did not at least at face value, appease the women. Although most of the participants interviewed were not within the required age to officially join the ANCYL during Mokaba's term as President, there was a growing anticipation to join this organisation until such time that they had reached the accepted age for membership. Political activism in COSAS also played a role in giving these participants perspectives on what politics in the ANCYL were about. For those that were active in COSAS, the ANCYL was seen as a platform for young Black people to think through as well as act towards the attainment of freedom for Blacks in South Africa.

It is important to mention that for the male participants in Branch A officially joining the ANCYL was strongly linked to the desire to contribute to the development of their communities. This is indeed a sentiment that also came out in the conversations with the female activists however it must be mentioned that this didn't come out as strongly as it did from among the male participants. The majority of the male participants from this branch joined the ANCYL in the early to mid-nineties after its re-launch with an exception of one participant who joined in 2005. Being a member of the ANCYL means a lot to these participants, and has in some instances opened doors for furthering their education as well as getting employment. The ANCYL is not seen as instrumental only for this, but has also played a critical role in moulding these young men into who they have become today. The ANCYL embodies hope for a brighter tomorrow and as was the case with the females in this branch, being active in the ANCYL has exposed these activists to other parts of South Africa, which would have been difficult or impossible outside the ANCYL. Similarly with motivation for some female activists, the element of delinquency also contributed to one of the participants joining and being active in the ANCYL, as Andile* (2013) when responding

to why he joined the ANCYL said, ‘We liked are *botsotsi* (delinquency)...going around burning schools and being rebellious.’ (Andile*, July 2013).

Branch B: Females

Activism among females in branch B was mainly inspired by their desire to help better their community more than it was about furthering an activism that had begun in high school through COSAS or SRC involvement, since most of the female participants in this branch were not politically involved prior to their activism in the ANCYL. Branch B is inclusive of zones four, five and eight; this is a branch that in some ways encompasses the lower and somewhat more middle class sections of the township. Zone four is the oldest of the sections and more diverse in so far as its class representation, unlike zones five and eight which are mainly lower class sections that sprung up in the early nineties. The women in this branch were recruited to join the as ANCYL as volunteers, and it is as such the spirit of volunteerism and the desire to change their community for the better that has motivated their membership in the ANCYL. This notwithstanding the levels of apathy that characterises this section of the Seshego township.

The women interviewed for this dissertation in this branch became members of the ANCYL between the years 2005 to 2011. Irrespective of the time that they joined, these women consider themselves as very active members of the ANCYL particularly because of their commitment to attending programmes of the organisation as well as being involved in other community programmes, and making sure that the ANCYL has a presence and position in their community as a voice for young people. When asked what the ANCYL meant to them, women in branch B responded by linking the importance of their activism to the ability of the

organisation to make a difference in their communities. These participants saw their activism as an exercise of one's democratic right and a vehicle to fight crime and other ills in the community.

Branch B: Males

Unlike in branch A, the influence of the former ANCYL President Peter Mokaba amongst the males in this branch was not very prevalent. The majority of the participants heard about the ANCYL through parents, or at school and not all of them were inspired by the then President, Peter Mokaba, who came from a neighbouring township called Mankweng. Most of the participants interviewed from this branch joined the ANCYL between the years 2007 and 2009, although there were some participants interviewed who had been members of the organisation from the early nineties. Even though most of the participants have not been active members of the organisation for very long, they all have a deep love and commitment to the ANCYL. Among the sentiments shared in expressing this love the participants mentioned that they were addicted to the ANCYL and politics in general and didn't see themselves outside of the movement. The ANCYL was also seen to be a place where one could be rehabilitated and a space wherein sobriety in action, thought and behaviour was encouraged, this alongside a loyalty and commitment to the development of one's community as significantly important. The participants expressed that their activism in the ANCYL gives them a sense of worth and importance and that they too feel that they can be revolutionary heroes, and they can be known and can be put in a position to stand up for their community. Ntando* (2013) asserts that;

‘...being a member of the ANCYL to me it means being someone who is safeguarding the interests of young people [of] the community that he or she has joined, always being the first line of defence of the ANC...’ (Ntando*, July 2013).

From engaging with the participants of my research it is safe to say that the ANCYL in one way or another, still resembles hope and confidence in the future in more or less the same way that it represented a desire for progress and change for Black people at its establishment in the early 1940’s. An important observation made here is that joining the ANCYL mainly comes from the desire to see a difference being made in the community, this being evident among both the men and women interviewed.

This is important for this work because it reveals a shared drive and passion for bettering the community by both men and women. This goes against the stereotypical notions that perceive an interest in the public as one that is the sole characteristic and responsibility of men, and the private being the domain in which women are seen through the use of the gender dichotomies discussed in chapter two of this dissertation. Secondly, one also gathers from these responses an interesting binary where the males in branch A are significantly inspired by the masculine qualities portrayed by former President of the ANCYL Peter Mokaba. This reinforces the established notions of activism in the ANCYL being underpinned by values that represent masculine traits that stem from the historicity of the organisational culture of the ANCYL as well as members who have been schooled and inducted into these masculine and at times incorrectly termed radical politics.

On the other spectrum, the silence on the character of Mokaba and Malema among the men in branch B and women from both branches signifies a shift in what has been regarded as

important for activism by generations before the current, which are also represented in the older branch of the ANCYL looked at for this study, i.e. branch A. It is interesting that the responses also reveal how the women who are members of the ANCYL were recruited by either their male friends or were encouraged to participate by their parents and family members. The inability of women in this branch to initiate membership in the ANCYL is expressed as a hostility that is still felt by women in the ANCYL even though the political space has been opened and women's participation encouraged. This is an important observation to make particularly because it allows one to reflect on the nature of gender perceptions and relations in the ANCYL. The inability for women to easily join the organisation without being encouraged to do so by their male friends or family members suggests, that the outlook of the ANCYL remains one that appears as hostile and unwelcoming of women's participation which contradicts what the ANCYL seeks to do. This as well serves as evidence that it is inadequate to have policy resolutions without ensuring that these materialise (Goetz 2003, Meintjes 2003 and Hassim 2003). This also cognisant of the unaccommodating nature of activism critiqued in the previous chapter.

Gender and the ANCYL in Seshego

This section of this chapter will focus on the themes that resonated strongly from the interviews conducted. In line with the interest on gender politics, considering the earlier discussed organisational culture of the ANCYL herein lay a discussion of the experiences of both male and female activists in these branches in Seshego. This was done with the intention to establish if there was a difference in the way that activism is experienced by men and women and what this means for female activism. Moreover, a reflection on relations between men and women in the ANCYL is provided, with some emphasis being put on how romantic and sexual relationships affect women in the organisation.

Finally, this section discusses the participation of women in the activities of the ANCYL, women's solidarity and perceptions of women's separate organising within the organisation. This discussion in general seeks to argue that activism cannot be looked at in a narrow way, and considerations of what is perceived as normal activity like romantic relationships and participation in political activity must be factored in. An assessment of the gains of women's inclusion in political activity ought to recognise the distinctions between women and men's organising, and how these are factored in ensuring that women's inclusion reaches optimum levels not only in the sense of quota representations, but broader involvement as well.

Activists Experiences

The culture of political activity is such that there is an experience that can only be understood within a political activist framework. Having earlier discussed that organisations tend to have certain cultures that their members find themselves being exposed and accustomed to, it is of importance for this dissertation to understand how, if at all the experiences of male and female activists differed in the branches of the ANCYL looked at. Below is an account of the experiences of female and male experiences within the ANCYL in both branches in Seshego. The focus here is on assessing whether or not there are differences or similarities in the way that women and men perceive their activism, and what this tells us about the extent to which the ANCYL embodies a non-sexist posture on a day to day basis.

Branch A and B: Females

The women in branch A particularly felt that their experiences as ANCYL activists were different from the experiences of the men because participation between the men and women was different, and the men were seen to be more active than women. Some women said that

they felt they knew very little about politics, but even with this being so, they felt that they have been groomed by the ANCYL and as such suggesting that there has been progress from their first encounter with the organisation. Although political involvement is seemingly easier for men, it is also beneficial and also important for women as well. One of the participants asserts the following about her activism in the ANCYL:

‘It [activism] taught and showed me places I have never been to. For example, I now know other places like Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban... I know these places because of the youth league...for me to be here and be a strong woman is because of the ANCYL.’

(Noluthando*, July 2013).

The case in branch B was similar, where the ANCYL has been said to be significant in grooming young women who have come to see themselves as strong leaders. Although this may be the case, the more senior activists in this branch described their activism in the ANCYL as one that was difficult. Strong women in the ANCYL are, according to most of the women in this branch, seen as threats to the men and are as such constantly silenced and are vulnerable to being ‘destroyed’ by their male comrades. In expressing this Gugu* (2013) said;

‘...let’s say you are a tough woman, they will always feel that there is a point where they can be able to make you to agree to their views. They will always find ways to have a point where you agree with them politically or silence you even if you don’t want to.’ (Gugu*, July 2013).

What also arose from the interviews was that there was much resistance towards women in the ANCYL that were courageous enough to step into their position as activists, and particularly activists focusing on issues affecting women like women's representation in leadership structures. This stepping out and being confident requires from female activists a boldness and an ability to stand one's ground not fearing intimidation by male comrades. The effects of the intimidation or ability to 'destroy' on the part of the male comrades also meant that female activists who were not well established and confident enough to stand their ground would have their views silenced. It is important to mention that this silencing was more tactical more than it was coercive. It is a type of silencing that is disempowering and also restricts a true expression of activism on the part of women activists in the ANCYL.

Some of the women in this branch expressed that they were not given a chance in the organisation to take up leadership roles or even just provide direction to the branch. The standing position of a fifty-fifty gender quota representation in all structures of the youth league was noted as good but also as not effective as it should be because the key positions remain occupied by the men in the branch leaving women feeling that they are not influential in decision making processes. Although women and men contribute the same, 'women are treated as perpetual minors in the ANCYL.' (Cebisa*, August 2012), and as a result recognition is made to the efforts made by men only and although identified as a problem, women in the league have accepted this and any kind of leadership from the men because that is the status quo.

Branch A and B: Males

Talking about experiences in the ANCYL with the male participants, in particular how these may be different to those of female activists was slightly difficult than it was with the female activists. The male participants said that they did not believe that their experiences were different from those of their female counterparts. It was also mentioned that the levels of confidence and participation varied between men and women, and that the women had a tendency to sit back and allow the men in the organisation to take the lead. The involvement of the male activists was largely informed by the existence of factions within the ANCYL. These factions required of the male activists to always be at the top of their game, while women seen to benefit from the quotas without having to display any ideological sharpness or leadership capability. Betrayal, jealousy and various levels of bullying also shaped the experiences of the male activists, particularly those from branch B who were younger and had little experience in the ANCYL as opposed to those in branch A. One of the participants expressed themselves by saying that the nature of ANCYL politics required that one accept that there are no permanent friends or enemies, and that because of the increase in factional types of politics in the ANCYL, activists and in particular male activists are compelled to be on watch of which faction they support at a given time.

Throughout the conversations that I had with the male participants on the experiences of women (in this case informed by observation) they argued that activism for women was easy, and that not much was required from them because they would be given leadership positions by virtue of them being women. Political acumen was not seen as a basis on which women activists were assessed, what was more important instead was the extent to which they were accessible to male comrades.

In a conversation with one of the male participants I was introduced to the term '*Panty-preneurs*', which I later heard on numerous occasions from my interactions with the male participants from both branches. What this term refers to is 'women who are not members but come [to the organisation] to benefit,' (Bongani*, June 2013). From the conversations I had with the male participants I did indeed get the sense that some women activists are vulnerable to being labelled such terms and as such even when sincere, their activism was normally highly questionable in the eyes of their male counterparts.

In understanding this term, one realises that the accessibility of male activists to female activists sexually becomes an integral part of the experiences of the female activist, such that it also contributes to the positions of leadership they may occupy in structures of the ANCYL. This then means that for most women, relevance and ability to occupy space in the leadership structures of the ANCYL requires of one to be available to fulfil the sexual desires of their male comrades. The silence of female comrades in general and in relation to this issue in particular, apparently leads to the disrespect and the consistent objectification of women by men in the organisation. This is because on the one hand, women are seen as willing to use sex as a ladder to echelons of leadership in the ANCYL, and on the other hand gives an impression that women are weak and not able to speak out against whatever atrocities they encounter within the ANCYL thus making them incapable leaders.

From the above reflections it is important to firstly mention that women's experiences are shaped by what is purported in the policy documents and what actually happens in the branches of the ANCYL. One realises that the policy position, particularly when coming to the incorporation of women in the politics of the ANCYL is not in line with the reality in

branches. While overall reflection is one that sees women as side lined and victimised by their male counterparts for wanting to assert themselves more within the ANCYL, the perceptions that resonates more with the men is that which sees women as having it easy and not putting in the necessary effort yet getting what they want while the men must work much harder. On the one hand this reveals the disregard and lack of confidence in the policy resolutions and expectations. And on the other hand exposes the incapacity of ANCYL branches to deal with changing the status quo of gender relations that disadvantages women, and consequently the experiences of female activists within the ANCYL.

The disregard and lack of confidence is shown by the males' attitude that sees women as being disinterested and accepting of less influential and demanding positions and also with the women feeling that by them being assertive they disqualify themselves by not agreeing with the male power brokers of the ANCYL. These women that put themselves in positions of vulnerability to being silenced or ostracised within the movement and as such not being fully protected by the recommendations of the ANCYL on the matter. From this single reality, the disjuncture of the policy position and reality within the branches of the ANCYL is made clear. This disjuncture is prevailing because of the tradition that in the first instance excluded women's involvement, and in the second instance a continuous re-appropriation of this culture that leads to women not being included in the practices and discourse of the ANCYL even when this is an organisational mandate.

Relationships in the ANCYL

How people relate to each other in a given context is important in that it can determine the extent of the participation of individuals within an organisation. As such, it is inevitable that

different types of relationships will emerge within organisations. In the context of a political organisation such as the ANCYL, the relationships that develop within can serve as gateways to positions of influence and other benefits as a result of associations with an influential figure in the organisation. It is likely that because of the shared vision and time spent doing organisational work individuals may genuinely develop romantic feelings within the ANCYL circles. This can be both beneficial and detrimental for the parties involved. As a member of the ANCYL, I have seen how romantic relationships affect the activism of the individuals involved and in most cases, it is women's activism that is most affected considering that men by virtue of their sex enjoy a much closer proximity to power than women do.

Although their focus is on marriages in exile, Lissoni and Suriano's (2014) article reveals dynamics seen in romantic relationships. The article shows how intimate relations as seen with those of exiled men and women tend to result in the women's activism being compromised, especially in cases where there may be a break down in the relationship. The sense of entitlement that male activists have over their female counterparts is also problematic, as it bestows upon the woman an identity that is linked to her partner, neglecting her own individual identity (Lissoni and Suriano 2014 and Suttner 2008). This being the case, it was important for this research to ask a question about relationships in the organisation with the intention of establishing if those relationships were in any way seen to affect the activism of individuals from the branches that this work focuses on. This section looks at the responses that were given by the participants when asked what they thought about how men and women in ANCYL branches relate to each other.

Branch A: Females

The female participants in branch A said that they saw an improvement in the way that men and women in the ANCYL in their branch related to each other. Men were seen to be giving women in the organisation more space to participate and lead programmes than before, and were also seen to be taking women more seriously than in the past, where their role as activists was constantly undermined.

This however does not mean that the relations are satisfactory. The interviews highlighted that female activists were to some extent treated like ‘flowers’ and expected to sit and look beautiful and making no contributions much to discussions that unfold in the organisation. This reasoning was inundated by a sentiment that saw women in the ANCYL as still being relegated to lower positions and how this makes them feel as though they are still oppressed. It is important to note the role that young women themselves play in shaping these relations. According to Jabu* (August 2013), the reason why women remain in a position where they are oppressed is because they allow themselves to be used by men. This is mostly reflected in the way that women in the ANCYL have a tendency to concede to being *congress packages*. The concept of a *congress package* is one that I am particularly familiar with as a person who has been an ANCYL activist. This notion essentially refers to those women who attend conferences and are used for the mere sexual pleasures of their male comrades. Those seen to be congress packages are normally members of the ANCYL who are present in organisational gatherings but are not very vocal and as such are perceived as not having an understanding of political activism. Those female activists are derogatorily referred to as *members of members*, suggesting that their allegiance is to those that recruited them to the organisation, therefore stripping away their independence. Some are also girlfriends of the male comrades and have been recruited into the movement by their partners. To be a congress

package, in most cases, one must be a delegate to a conference or have access to the conference venue at the call of the person to whom one belongs for the congress season. Speaking about the congress package, this is what Gugu* (August 2013) said,

‘...you’ll find that a sweet young girl, quiet as she is, from here [Seshego] to Joburg [where the conference may be happening], the only time she opens her mouth is when a man says to her I am sleeping with you tonight and she’ll say yes...’ (Gugu*, August 2013)

Jabu* (who is a senior female leader in the ANCYL) said that ‘...young women have a problem of wanting to sleep with leadership or other comrades...for money or being appointed into positions or employment...’ (Jabu*, August 2013), and are therefore satisfied with being treated as congress packages. Such an understanding is useful in providing insight on why relations between men and women in the ANCYL remain unequal. There seems to be a power dynamic that is at play in these relationships. To some extent, the power dynamic pushes one to think about authority and how that authority can be read in both political and social contexts.

Although there may be an element of truth in the coercive nature of the congress package situation, it is also important to acknowledge that throughout this narrative there is disregard of whether or not there is a consensus between the women and the men on the part of the women in accepting the role of being a congress package. The phenomenon of the congress package is also useful in understanding the challenges of taking matters and issues affecting women forward. For example, if a conference is mainly inclusive of women who fall under the *congress package* category and *member of a member category*, the influence that women may have on policy issues affecting them directly is compromised, especially in the context of the ANCYL where disagreements are resolved through a voting process. Therefore, to

assume that the congress package phenomenon thrives simply to serve the sexual urges of men is naïve. Concealed in this reality is also a tactic to dilute the women's voice within the organisation.

Branch B: Females

Although there was a recognition of an improvement in how men and women relate to each other in branch B, the overwhelming views expressed were that women are undermined by men and as such are not and will never be taken seriously by their male comrades in the ANCYL. Men in this ANCYL branch (and in general) were seen to regard women only as important for simply fulfilling and adhering to the stipulations of the ANCYL constitution on the fifty-fifty representation gender quota.

Women in politics are normally labelled the '*motive forces for change*'; meaning that they are seen as means to win over the existing cabals within the ANCYL, particularly in conference contexts. It is argued that sexual and romantic relations can be used to silence women and their support for certain factions. Women are used as these 'motive forces for change' to weaken opposing factions through encouraging romantic and sexual involvement with men who may be in a different faction; who are tasked to ultimately win these women over to the contesting faction. The reason underpinning this is the modesty and sense of shame that is associated with sexual activity for women. Considering that women are taught to be shy and at times ashamed of their sexual needs, sex is used as a tool to silence and control them within the ANCYL. Men tend to have an undermining attitude towards women and objectify their fellow female activists to the extent that they refer to them as 'motive forces for change', thus suggesting that he that has sex with female activists also has power to silence or

persuade them towards a certain perspective. The idea of motive forces for change was explained by Gugu* (July 2013) in the following words;

‘Motive forces is something that they, a term that they developed from the NDR project that it must have the motive forces. Something that will motivate that project to make it easier, they [men] call women the motive forces for change because they think when you sleep with her you can be able to change her mind or you can just change her position [point of view] on one thing and then the following day when she sees you she will view you as acting for something where everything that you raise she must agree with...’ (Gugu*, July 2013).

Although the analysis of the idea of motive forces for change is important in highlighting how sexual relations among ANCYL activists control women’s voices, it is also important to consider that although these relations may be consented to, and reflect women’s individual agency, they happen within a paradigm that is male dominated and hostile to women’s dissent.

A concept known as deployment was also brought up in some of the interviews. The term ‘deployment’ in this context refers to a situation where an individual (male or female) from a certain core/faction is sent/deployed to another individual in a different faction with the intention to either win the individual over or get information about the faction they have been deployed to. What normally happens in this process of deployment is that male comrades particularly send (deploy) other men to female comrades so they can change their minds on a particular issue. This kind of deployment normally comes in the form of a relationship between the deployed and the one deployed to. The idea is that if a woman sleeps with a man, the likelihood and expectation is that the woman’s political decisions will be informed by the

sexual or romantic relationship she has with the man, herein lying the application of the notion of ‘motive forces for change’.

The response given to whether or not this strategy of deployment was useful was that it is one of the reasons why activism among women in the ANCYL is to some degree inconsistent. The relationships between men and women in the ANCYL normally result in the women involved distancing themselves from political activism. Women who would have been involved with men, who are deployed to them, would at the end of the relationship cease to be active members of the ANCYL, if they remain members at all. This would be a result of the shame that they experience and the resistance from the cliques that they had been part of. Reflecting on this phenomenon, Hlengiwe* (August 2012) said that, ‘...they [women] no longer attend meetings when you ask why, they say no she slept with so and so and these guys are comrades. And these men will come into the meeting, but the girls won’t come...’ (Hlengiwe*, August 2012).

The reality that is depicted by such a statement is a disregard for women as well as a disregard for relations between women and men by these male comrades. With regard to the subject, one of the participants made the following assertion, ‘Men in the Youth League [ANCYL] don’t treat women well...you see they ask women out and tell them they love them...after they sleep with them, they don’t want them...he then goes to find another one’ (Kwando*, August 2012).

One of the senior comrades explained that the dilemma is also in that the men date a lot of the young women who are convinced that the men are being genuine only to be rejected by them once the men are 'done with them'. Having been played by their male comrades, the women end up being identified as girlfriends of comrades and congress packages. It is because of this derogatory identity, among other reasons, that the credibility of female activists in the ANCYL is questioned.

Relationships are clearly prevalent in the organisation. However, not all relationships are based on the desires of men to use women for their personal and political interests. There are genuine relationships in the ANCYL which develop among comrades. These relationships, although genuine, are also problematic in that they have an impact on the activism of one person in the relationship, in most cases being the woman. One of the participants expressed that it is difficult for most women to stand up in a meeting in front of a man the woman is having a sexual relationship with. This disempowers the woman and her participation is decreased (sometimes to a point of no participation at all) because of her relationship, and also the public knowledge of her relationship. In wanting to get a clearer understanding of the effects of the relationship on participation by women, I asked one of the participants if it was easy for those women in relationships to differ in opinion with their partners in public and her response to this was;

'...let me talk about myself, I am dating a comrade right, it's that, obviously if he's contesting sometimes I might not agree but because he's my boyfriend I must just agree, I don't have a choice you know...even if he's being out of order for contesting that position, but because he's my boyfriend I must support him... If I was the one contesting and he disagreed, he would sit me down and explain to me why I shouldn't contest, give me clarity and understanding, and I would concede.' (Athandwa* July 2012)

There is a power dynamic that is clearly at play here, even in a space that one assumes embodies an equality of the sexes, there is still a silent regard of the opinion of men as truth. What is also revealed here is the narrative of sex as a tool to disempower and silence the women, while on the converse it empowers the men. As highlighted above, a sexual relationship between a man and a woman has more of a negative impact on the woman than on the man. This has been noted as one of the factors that contribute to the inconsistency of female activists' participation. Although natural and at times inevitable, the relations and relationships between men and women are often seen by the women as detrimental to their activism. Of course there are some women who have been in relationships with their comrades but have not had their activism affected, however these women are a definite minority.

Branch A: Males

In engaging with the men from branch A about the relationships, the general view among men in this ANCYL branch was that there was indeed positive progress on how men and women in the ANCYL related to each other. Although this is so, most of the men in the branch felt that the women activists were not doing enough to develop themselves, even though their presence was definitely noted. In echoing this view, one of the participants said that the only problem that he had identified was that

‘...young women in the YL at the moment, the majority of them are actually not actually trying to equip themselves in understanding the politics of the ANCYL, they are just there maybe for entertainment I think. I wish there would be a point where they are trying so we can say no that one is a comrade and actually referring to a woman.’ (Dube*, August 2012).

Although most of the men did not see anything problematic about how men and women related to each other in the ANCYL, some of the male participants in the branch did say that, women in the organisation were undermined by the males and that they were also seen as sex objects. They also stated that women were generally disregarded especially during the period of conferences, where ‘all line ups [were] not inclusive of women in the discussions, they just impose women who they have benefitted from before, sometimes sexually, women are easily influenced because of money.’ (Fana*, September 2012).

Branch B: Males

From this branch, the idea of women being undermined by men through how they relate to each other was relatively insignificant. The males in this branch said they saw women as their equals and didn’t see any sexuality in them, especially if they were females who were as active and sharp as their male counterparts. The men in the branch said that they had confidence in the women, and have seen how they have grown and developed in the ANCYL. This was particularly seen through the women’s willingness to occupy positions of leadership, with the same enthusiasm as their male counterparts, thus dismissing the idea that women are not interested in leadership positions.

That being the case however, one participant spoke about how women will always be undermined despite the leadership positions they occupy. This is also seen in how women do not get strategic positions. To underline this point, Gcina* (2013) emphasised that it is the women who actually sabotage themselves by always supporting men and never supporting each other. He stated that some women in the ANCYL have a tendency to subject themselves

to being congress packages and are content with being delegates to conferences merely for sexually pleasuring men.

It is interesting how for men the relations between men and women activists are not perceived as problematic as they are for women. This reality has been identified and discussed in gender documents of the ANCYL, closely looked at in chapter four of this dissertation. The ANCYL emphasises a shift from focusing on women in dealing with the transformation of gender perceptions. One could argue that the inability of men to identify their behaviour as problematic stems from a limited focus on engaging with how gender stereotypes and oppressive practices used by men are reinforced within the organisation. From this, it is evident that relations between men and women in the ANCYL are not neutral but exist within a framework that fails to problematize the historical superiority of men over women.

Female activism: Participation, Solidarity and Exclusive women's organising

Moving from the understanding of relationships between men and women in the ANCYL, and having established that these are problematic in that they are patronising and oppressive, it is the intention of this section to look at how women themselves in the ANCYL in these branches relate to each other. To do this, this section will focus on the participation and solidarity among women as well as whether a forum that is separate from that of men is seen as necessary by activists in these branches. The ANCYL document on gender, as seen in the previous chapter, encourages the existence of a platform where women can discuss among themselves issues that affect them. However, this in many ways relies on the extent to which women participate in the ANCYL, and their ability to convene themselves without the

interference of men. Below are responses from the participants on their perceptions of women's participation, solidarity and a separate organising by women in the organisation.

Branch A and B: Females

Participation

According to the women in branch A, general availability among women in this branch was seen as fair as the majority of women were seen to be attending to their organisational commitments. This however does not necessarily suggest that they participate in the same way as their male counterparts or have the same impact as their male counterparts, especially where contribution through discussions is concerned. In fact, it was acknowledged that in the branch discussions, women played a significantly marginal role. Women are not seen as active participants in discussions related to the history and the direction that the organisation should take, but are encouraged to take part actively in those discussions that relate to issues affecting the community. In explaining why this is so, the women in this branch revealed that women tend to be shy and afraid to voice out their views because they are concerned about what other people would say about them. In addition, they are careful not to put themselves in a position where they could be victimised by other activists in the branch for challenging their views, or in a position where they could be mocked if incorrect or out of line. It was also mentioned that men were seen to dominate the discussion platform and as such deprived women of the opportunity to also bring forward their opinions, dismissing them as not very important and as such treating their issues as what Hassim et. al. (1989) have referred to as 'a bit on the side' (1989).

Echoing the views of women in branch A women in branch B said that participation by women in their branch was low mainly because of the tendency of men to undermine women and not give them freedom of expression. Another reason for the poor participation is that women themselves lack confidence and see themselves as incapable when compared to the male activists. Female participants in this branch also highlighted that the lack of participation among women in the branch was informed by other reasons other than the ones mentioned above. One of the reasons mentioned was that many female members in the ANCYL are recruited for the wrong reasons and as a result, at times do not understand what their role in the ANCYL *as activists* is or should be. One of the participants shared with me the tactics used by some of the men in recruitment, and central to this was the recruitment of women with the intention of using them as congress packages, a phenomenon earlier explained. Gugu* (2013) emphasised how this was becoming problematic in her branch because it gives the newly recruited female activists the impression that they should merely act or be treated as sexual properties by their male counterparts in the organisation. When under this impression, female activists do not want to contribute to anything in the organisation, but prefer to rather wait for directives from those male comrades who recruited them into the organisation. On the other side of the coin is the opinion that activism among female activists is also limited by the women who are '*sexually bitter*'. Being sexually bitter means that a woman is inclined to disagree with everything that her former sexual partner advocates for even if it is right. This is normally born out of disgruntlement felt by the female activist who has suffered shame as a result of her sexual encounters with certain male comrades. When asked whether men can also be sexually bitter, Gugu* (2013) said that

‘Some they do, some somewhat they don’t care, isn’t it normally men, their formation is not how women were formed. They don’t develop soft spots very easily, but women naturally they are soft my dear and I am telling you if you want to go wrong with a woman, just hurt

that woman...hurt her related to issues that are related to relationships and everything and you will see that they can really rebel they can be brutal on you.’ (Gugu*, July 2013).

Another factor that stifles participation among female activists is that at times women do not have support from their families or their communities to continue with their activism. This is because activism is seen as dangerous and not meant for women. Some of the participants said that their families questioned their activism and argued that ‘...there’s nothing that comrades would ever do for us...’ (Kwando*, July 2013) and that they were seen as ‘...being forward and we liking things, wanting to be seen’ (Ntombi*, August 2013). Like some of the male activists, the community and families stifle women’s involvement by accusing them of wanting to be active simply because of relationships. Buhle* (July 2013) said ,

‘Most of them [community] say we are their girlfriends, we are engaging in sexual activities with comrades, we are just there for money, nothing else, they don’t believe that we can understand politics...’ (Buhle* July 2013).

Some of the women who participate in the ANCYL are mothers and wives and as such have other responsibilities other than being activists. This causes a strain on their activism to a point where they have at times found themselves having to choose between their families and the ANCYL, resulting in them choosing their families. The reality that the ANCYL is at times marred with much conflict, betrayal and many fights also pushes some women away from participating. Expressing her opinions and feelings about the conflicts that occur in the ANCYL, Khwezi* (2013), a senior activist, who is a business woman, wife and a mother to four children said,

‘...you end up feeling that it’s not worth it, why should I do it? If they don’t want us let them keep their ANC we can keep our families. As a born again Christian and a mother and wife

sometimes I just feel that it's not worth it and that I would rather focus on my family, sometimes it gets too much and you get tired of sacrificing.' (Khwezi*, August 2013).

Solidarity

When asked about the relationships between female comrades in branch A, the overarching sentiment shared was that indeed women in this branch were on good terms. Although there were elements of jealousy among the women, these were not always visible but rather well concealed. When asked about whether there was harmony among the female activists in branch B, a negative response was given by the women activists interviewed. The biggest hindrance to a harmonious relationship is jealousy among the female activists themselves. This jealousy is a result of the way male activists treat some female activists. Those female activists that are treated better become victims of jealousy. One of the female activists who claim to be a victim of jealousy said: 'Just because I am being recognised by the leadership because I speak and participate then they [other women] don't like me and they feel threatened.' (Athandwa*, July 2012).

Aware of this, the women who tend to have good rapport with male leadership in the branch and upper structures of the organisation have also admitted to deliberately rubbing it in the other women's faces that they are in a better position than them. Such behaviour exacerbates hostility and leads to gossip, women being judgemental and not taking each other seriously, this therefore closing off possibilities of women organising themselves separately from the men.

The conflict is also encouraged by the desire to hold leadership positions among the women themselves. One of the participants articulated this by saying, 'In politics you must never think you have a sister, but rather think you have a competitor as women don't empower each other.' (Gugu*, July 2013). One of the senior female members in the ANCYL pointed out that women in the organisation tend to deliberately hurt each other. Individuals' sex lives are usually made public issues, and at times the knowledge is used for political blackmail. This disunity among women is problematic particularly because it only benefits men and there are no benefits for women since women become victims of factionalism, which in most cases results in the 'pull her down' syndrome and smear campaigns about who is dating who.

Women's Exclusive Organising

In both branches, women saw value in women organising separately among themselves within the ANCYL. The idea of women in the ANCYL organising themselves separately was well received and seen as necessary in the branches by those women who have been in the ANCYL for a period under five years. In speaking of this type of organising, one of the participants stressed that it should be something that is implemented at the branch level first for it to be effective. In expressing the need for such organising, Buhle* (July 2013) said;

'...if we caucus something as women and then present it to men, it's better than I just come with my own explanation, it might be wrong or maybe misleading, so it's better for us to correct anything in our own women's caucus before we present that...' (Buhle*, July 2013).

Some of the participants in branch B felt that there was no need for women to organise separately from men because women already lack political maturity and don't inspire confidence for that type of engagement. It was also mentioned that the women in the branch

would refuse to honour such an engagement on the basis that a certain female comrade whom they did not like was the one suggesting it.

Branch A and B: Males

Participation

The male participants in branch A echoed the views of the women, saying that the women in the branch were less involved in discussions during branch meetings. One of the participants said that he believed women to be significantly ideologically sharper than men. This is because women have more time to read the organisational documents and are not constantly found in the egotistical rampages that are seen among men. Male participants in the branch declared their commitment to encouraging female comrades to familiarise themselves with the documents of the organisation and also making reference to those documents in branch meetings. This was seen as a problem by some of the male participants interviewed because it portrayed a sexist ANC which restricted engagement by women which, is anti-ANC. In trying to understand this better, I asked one of the senior members of the branch why it seemed as though the development of women in the branch was not consistent. His response was that women seldom remained in youth politics long enough because of commitments like marriage and having children which forced them to leave the organisation. In addition, women are seen to be more interested in parties and access to VIP areas than their own political development and contribution to the ANCYL. Moreover, the issue of confidence was raised, according to Andile* (2013) ‘...women don’t contribute as much, they don’t have confidence...they doubt themselves. They don’t read about politics...’ (Andile*, July 2013).

With regards to women's participation in the ANCYL, the general consensus among the male participants in branch B was that women in the branch do not take politics as seriously as men and as a result their contribution is minimal even though the expectation is that it should be equal to that of men. Furthermore, conversations with male participants revealed that women in the ANCYL are not being confident although capable. One of the male participants said, '...women undermine themselves, but have capacity to raise important issues...they just keep quiet and after the discussion they start raising issues with you on the side.' (Bongani*, August 2012). Women are still mainly seen as incapable of doing the activist work that requires excellent political acumen, yet good enough for recruitment because they have the heart for it. Although women have good leadership qualities, they have been criticised by male activists who argue that they lack consistency in their activism unlike men who remain politically active for much longer.

Solidarity

In response to whether there was an observed solidarity among women in the branch, the male participants were all in agreement that women in the branch were not united. The feedback from the men was that jealousy and the tendency of women to bickering and being unfriendly to each other was the main cause for the lack of solidarity among women. Romantic relationships between men and women in the ANCYL were also identified as a contributing factor to the hostility that was found among women in the branch. One participant revealed a case about two women who had been friends from primary school but saw their friendship suffer because they were dating male leaders in the ANCYL who were from different factions. The other contributing factor to the unfavourable relationships among women in the branch was that those women who are in romantic relationships with the leadership receive better treatment from male activists. Those women are taken a bit more

seriously because of their close associations with male leaders. There is also competition among the females in the branch which has been stated to be the main reason for the hostility among female ANCYL activists. Some of the men in the branch said that they had been trying to get women to unite but have been unsuccessful and that squabbles between women are discouraged.

The majority of the participants in branch B said that there is no unity among the female activists; they are mostly divided, with the question of jealousy, and undermining each other coming up again as the main causes for the division. There was a dominant view among the participants that women are generally, and somewhat naturally always going to have problems with each other, and because of the cliques that develop among women in the ANCYL, it is very easy to divide them and have them at opposite sides. As a result, the prospect of them getting together and discussing issues affecting them in the ANCYL and preparing to combat those same issues is nullified. One of the contributing factors to this reality is the inability of female activists to distinguish between political and personal (in particular sexual) issues; women are more concerned about who is dating who in the organisation than in the 'revolution' itself.

Women's Exclusive Organising

On organising, the majority of the men in this branch saw this as necessary and indicated that it must be encouraged. The men highlighted that women were organising around issues that are said to be affecting them specifically like domestic violence and rape, but not necessarily around the challenges that they face in the organisation itself. One of the participants did

however say that he doesn't encourage women organising separately from the men within the ANCYL because,

‘...we will have a problem in the youth league where people are saying as women in the youth league we have agreed on this issue so we are standing by that position, that will divide the ANCYL, they must join the ANCWL and debate issues of women as women.’ (Dube*, August 2012).

On the question of women organising themselves separately from men in the ANCYL, a few of the male participants interviewed in branch B provided a similar response to those in branch A by not being in much agreement. With the exclusive organising of women, most men saw the need for a separate organising by women among themselves, as necessary and potentially useful in the sense that it would equip the women with the ability to correctly identify and deal with the issues affecting women in the ANCYL and in society in general. In this conversation references were made to the historic Anti-Pass Laws women's march in South Africa in 1956, to highlight the strength that lies in women; leading struggles, their own and those of others. In the same breath, this platform was seen as useful also because it would provide space for issues such as teenage pregnancy, substance abuse among women, as well as HIV/AIDS to be addressed well, since these are issues that even in society lie on the shoulders of women. Although this rationale is very much in line with what is proposed in the gender documents of the ANCYL (ANCYL:2011) it does, as having earlier mentioned, in some way relegate women to those issues and in a sense removes them from the other mainstream issues that the ANCYL deals with as a political organisation.

On the other hand the separate organising of women was shunned upon by some of the male participants interviewed. One of the participants referred to this as ‘ganging up on the men’, and thus foreign to the organisation. The participant mentioned how the ANCYL has always been and will always be a safe space for expression and as such this would be going against the principle of openness in the organisation, and would in fact ‘...be to their [women’s] political detriment.’ (Nkululeko*, July 2013). When asked about the Young Women’s Assembly, Nkululeko* (2013) said that there was according to him no need for this and that women should rather focus their energies in the ANCWL, because ‘...political issues are not gendered.’

Having taken into consideration the different factors that shape political activism generally and women’s activism in particular, these findings reinforce the arguments made in previous chapters of this dissertation. Firstly how entry in politics happens has been found to be different for both women and men, where the former has been seen to require more encouragement than the latter. This I argue lies in the historic binaries of the public and the private that are discussed in chapter two of this work. As such women tend to have to renegotiate themselves into these spaces that they may have historically been barred from while facing resistance from their male counterparts, this already shaping the differences in experiences of men and women.

Secondly, these findings also reveal the differences in experiences by women and men in the ANCYL. What these findings expose is the difficulty that lies in reconciling patriarchal privilege embodied in ANCYL culture as discussed in chapter three, as well as women’s exclusion informed by the historic positions they occupied in the ANC. In line with this, the

findings reveal how solidarity amongst women in the ANCYL is low and not considered much of a priority. This also evidenced in the responses to the idea of women organising themselves separately from men in the ANCYL. I argue that the former is also a response to patriarchy as a phenomenon that tends to put women up against each other for male approval, therefore reducing possibilities of a unity among women that can challenge patriarchal hegemony and privilege. Thirdly, in the case of women organising themselves, it is clear that women are willing to organise themselves within the ambits of the YWA. This being so however, the resistance harboured by the men and the differences among women are among the factors that hinder the possibility of this even when this is a standing resolution of the ANCYL.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in depth analysis of women's activism in the ANCYL. In bringing out the voices of women in the ANCYL this chapter began with a contextualising of the branches looked at, highlighting their differences and similarities, with the intention of providing context for the discussions that follow. Having done this, a discussion of how participants got involved ensues, focusing on the different motivations for activism between men and women activists. In discussing the how activists experiences are gendered, this chapter looks at the challenges that women face in this organisation and how these are different from men. This chapter highlights how women's experiences are disadvantaged in the ANCYL, concepts such as *panty-preneurs*, *Congress packages* and *motive forces for change* are discussed to illuminate the experiences of women and how these are curtailed by a discourse that is invented by males and serves patriarchal interests. This chapter argues that the experiences of women in the ANCYL are not on par with the recommendations set out in the organisations policies focusing on gender. In making this argument, emphasis is put on

how the inability to encourage high levels of participation, solidarity and prospects for women separately organising themselves reveals how inadequately representation, development and incorporating of women in the ANCYL has been addressed, this in contradiction to what is proposed in the policy positions of this organisation.

Conclusion

This dissertation sought to look at gender politics in the ANCYL focusing on two branches in Seshego. Moving from a premise that recognises that policy positions and resolutions are not always reflective of reality, this dissertation sought to look deeper into the day to day experiences of ANCYL activists to analyse the ways in which gender politics are configured within this organisation. Noting the ANCYL's expressed commitment to gender transformation, this dissertation sought to make an assessment of the extent to which the ANCYL was able to uphold its stance on gender and the implementation of necessary programmes in ensuring that women are included in the politics of this organisation. The main focus of this dissertation was as such to look at the day to day experiences of women in the ANCYL and how their activism was shaped in this organisation. As well as what this meant for the broader questions regarding transformation and the inclusion of women in mainstream politics like those embodied by the ANCYL.

This dissertation thus begins by providing the context and the required ambience for the reading of this work. It is in the introductory chapter where context to women's political activism is understood in South African politics broadly and in the ANCYL in particular. This chapter outlines the key questions addressed in this dissertation, gives context of the chosen area of study, as well as outlines the methodology that is used in the undertaking of this work. The beauty of this chapter is in how it locates the positionality of the researcher within the contexts of youth politics and women's activism in particular. As it draws to an end, this chapter reflects on the intersections characteristic of the researcher and emphasises that it is these that bring the nuances found in this research, and puts forward to the reader the importance of this recognition in the context of the theoretical framework herein used.

Chapter two of this dissertation begins by providing a review of available literature on women's activism in South Africa and gender politics broadly. It is in this chapter where African nationalism is argued to be an ideology that disregards women while prioritising the pursuit of African self-determination. In juxtaposing the reality of politics in South Africa under apartheid to those of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, this dissertation reinforces the argument that women in African nationalist organisations have been seen to occupy an unimportant **role** that challenges the fundamental victories sought in struggle for national liberation.

This dissertation draws from concepts such as gender and sexuality, masculinity and femininity to begin to contextualise the realities of activism within the ANCYL, in relation to the politics of the ANCYL later argued to be safeguarding the practices and values that represent a heteronormative politics that undermines difference. It is these ideas that serve as an underpinning framework within which a discussion of gender relations in the ANCYL transpires in later chapters.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, the discussion looks at the history of the ANCYL and broader youth politics through a gendered lens. By means of analyzing documents of the ANCYL and other youth movements existing in the apartheid period, this chapter argues that youth politics have historically been seen to embody the interests of men more than they did **those of** women. This chapter looks at the student movements COSAS, SASO and SANSCO among others, as well as the youth congress (SAYCO) with the intention to reveal how gender politics were configured in the youth movement. The key argument that is made in this chapter is that youth politics particularly in the pre-democratic dispensation had no

conceptual understanding of women as activists and even where this was evident, it was not significant.

Having established this, chapter three begins to trace the organizational culture of the ANCYL, beginning this with the culture and attitudes that underpin the broader congress alliance. Looking at the history of political activism through the lens of youth politics broadly and the ANCYL in particular, this dissertation reveals how women were expected to reject their 'womanliness', conforming to masculine attributes that had characterised politics at the time. The experience of exile is used in this dissertation to highlight the extent to which women were subjected to different forms of harassment and disregard by their comrades on the basis of their sex and gender. Drawing from this, another argument made in this dissertation chapter is that, the macho and misogynistic cultures prevalent in the underground experience have trickled down to the ANCYL. This premised on the politics behind the reemergence of the ANCYL, and the role that the different organisations played in the processes leading to the re-launch of this organisation. This chapter is considered an important cornerstone for the arguments that transpire in chapters four and five. A perspective of how historically youth politics have been unable to incorporate women as activists themselves and the failure to engage with women's intersecting identities is herein emphasised as an important point of consideration in dealing with this topic.

The fourth chapter of this dissertation moves from a premise that recognises that in democratic South Africa, the ANC and its concomitant structures aspire for a National Democratic Society, which is a society that has resolved all gender, racial and class contradictions. With this being said this chapter draws from the gender policy documents of

the ANCYL to provide an analysis of how these perceive the inclusion, representation and development of women activists within the ANCYL. This chapter therefore analyses the policy position of the ANCYL on gender and how it seeks to address the marginality of women. This chapter looks closely at the gender quota, and the Young Women's Assembly as mediums that are intended for the facilitation of women's development and inclusion in ANCYL structures and juxtaposes these positions to the knowledge, understanding and application of these policy documents of the ANCYL by its members in the branches looked at. Moving from a premise that challenges the framework within which gender is understood on the basis that this framework reflects a gender neutral position, and fails to adequately address the issues affecting women in the organisation. This chapter argues that the policy positions on gender have not been implemented in the Seshego branches looked at for this study, this therefore meaning that there has been no significant change insofar as dealing with gender transformation; particularly the inclusion, representation and development of women.

In this respect, this chapter argues that although on paper there is a commitment to dealing with the marginalised position of women, in practice this has shown to be marred by some challenges. In providing a criticism of the quota, responses from participants are incorporated, with these ranging from an acceptance of the quota as presented by the ANCYL and a partial rejection of it. This dissertation [chapter](#) further argues that neither the quota nor the Young Women's Assembly have produced significant gains for women in the ANCYL in the branches in Seshego. Instead these have been used as ways to overlook real challenges like women's victimization and the lack of possibilities for growth and development for women in these ANCYL in branches.

The last chapter of this dissertation responds directly to the questions of representation, inclusion and women's development as engaged with throughout this dissertation. In reflecting on the arguments made about the organisational history of the ANCYL, the relationship between policy and practice insofar as women's activism is concerned, this section argues that the ANCYL *struggles with implementing* these resolutions as expected and prescribed by its policies.

This chapter provides an analysis of women's activism in the ANCYL, by bringing out women's voices and how men perceive the inclusion of women within the ANCYL and how this materialises in the branches looked at. This chapter argues that activism is gendered and as such the disadvantages of women in the organisation are not void of the marginalised position held by women in the ANCYL, and that these are reflective of the disregard of women in the ANCYL. In highlighting this, concepts such as *panty-preneurs*, *Congress packages* and *motive forces for change* are discussed to illuminate the experiences of women and how these are curtailed by a discourse that is invented by male power brokers dominant in ANCYL politics. This chapter argues that the experiences of women in the ANCYL are not on par with the recommendations set out in the organisations policies focusing on gender. In making this argument, emphasis is put on how the inability to encourage and maintain high levels of women's participation, the absence of female solidarity and low prospects for women separately organising themselves reveal how insufficiently representation, development and incorporating of women in the ANCYL has been addressed, this contradicting what is posited in the policy positions of this organisation.

Chapter five of this dissertation draws extensively from the interviews conducted with the forty one participants who were engaged with regarding this work. The findings are herein discussed thematically beginning with women's participation, their solidarity ending with the question of women organising themselves separately from men. The findings discussed here are representative of the views of both female and male opinions an attempt is made to highlight the similarities and differences across sexes and branches too.

In essence this dissertation argues that there is a disjuncture between the official position of the ANCYL and its practices as seen throughout the different chapters. Through rigorous research, this dissertation has shown that although commendable, good policy positions in themselves will not deconstruct how women's activism has been understood and is experienced by ANCYL members. Recognising the multiple challenges that face a youth organisation of a liberation movement like the ANC, this paper critiques the ways in which the status quo has gone unchallenged. This dissertation seeks to introduce a conversation about the need for recognition of women's activism and the challenges that underlie it. This probing an introspection of not the ANCYL alone, but that of other mainstream political organisations struggling with incorporating women into their politics as well as developing them for party leadership. In addition to this, this dissertation seeks to make a contribution to literature on young people in contemporary South Africa, in particular young women in political parties. Over and above this, this dissertation seeks to argue that the lives of ordinary young women in South Africa matter and as such joins the conversation of documenting the truths about activism, and women in general.

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