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Research Report

Johannesburg, South Africa

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Title: The rise and role of feminists and queer-identifying individuals in democratising political and policy environments

ABSTRACT

This study examines the rise and the role of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in democratising the political and policymaking environments in South Africa. The research investigates the lived experiences of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the political and policymaking environments, looking at the exclusions, challenges, and opportunities of these marginalised groups. The study examines the impact of inclusive and representative policy developments on the creation of safer spaces for marginalised groups. Intersectionality, Social Ecology, and Queer theory have been used as theoretical frameworks to provide critiques on the effect of complexities in intersectional identities and how often the exclusions exist because of policies that undermine these theories. It also provides a critique of the limited representation of queer persons and women in countries such as South Africa, with a legal and progressive stance on the rights of queer-identifying individuals and women.

The study conducted interviews with activists, politicians, feminists, and policymakers within various political parties to better understand the lived experiences of these marginalised communities. The study shows the barriers to political participation of queer-identifying individuals and women, such as the structural, institutional barriers and homophobia as they undermine an inclusive and representative policymaking environment.

The findings suggest that progress has been made to address the gender and race politics around including women, but little has been done to highlight the exclusion of the "other" when it relates to sexuality. The study expresses the need for comprehensive policy reform to ensure political participation and representation of queer people and women to reflect the diverse and equal society that is expressed in the South African constitution. The study aims to contribute to the understanding of strengthening democracy through the representation and participation of marginalised groups to create a more inclusive political and policymaking environment in South Africa.

KEYWORDS: Queer, political, policymaking, social ecology, intersectionality, queer theory, constitution, political participation, representation, inclusion.

DECLARATION

I, Atlehang Molefe (Student number 1606597), declare that this research report is my work, and it has not been submitted anywhere else except for the Research Report (PADM7213A) course at the Wits School of Governance.

Signature: A. Molefe Date: December 2024

DEDICATION

To my late mother, Puleng Mirriam Molefe & Grandmother, Keneoue Florence Molefe. You will always remain indelible in my mind and heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Rekgotsofetse Chikane. You have made an invaluable contribution to my postgraduate studies, especially my Masters. Thank you for always believing in me and making this process slightly bearable. Your patience, guidance, insights, and words of affirmation have consistently kept me going. The unwavering support you have shown, was the source of strength and encouragement even when it was unimaginable to keep pushing. You constantly motivated me and believed in me. Thank you for giving me space and time to learn, improve, and achieve my goals.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to my partner, Thembakazi Matroshe, who has seen me from the beginning until the end of this project. Thank you for holding so much space for me and for supporting me throughout the process. You helped me find inspiration to continue throughout the journey. Thank you for caring.

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To my family - Thank you to my dad, Blessing Mbiza, for your unwavering love and support. My aunts, Tholwana Molefe & Victoria Molefe-Tolo, you two amazing women have always made it possible for me to dream. Thank you so much.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to the Members of Parliament in the National Assembly of South Africa and the Western Cape provincial government and all the other participants for making time to do interviews that were significant for my study – Busisiwe Bess Nxumalo, thank you so much for making this possible.

ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS:

ACERWC: African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

ANC: African National Congress

ANCYL: African National Congress Youth League

ANCWL: African National Congress Women's League

AU: African Union

CGE: Commission for Gender Equality

DA: Democratic Alliances

EFF: Economic Freedom Fighters

EHRC: Equality and Human Rights Commission

GEO: Government equality office

LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex & Asexual

MKP: Umkhonto Wesizwe party

MP: Member of Parliament

NCOP: National Council of Provinces

OPM: Office for Public Management

UNHR: United Nations Human Rights

USA: United States of America

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This study examines the lived experiences of feminists and queer-identifying individuals within politics and policy environments in South Africa. The need for investigation, advocacy, and policy reform is significant in understanding how the denial of queer people's rights has a significant impact on their lives and harms their ability to exercise and enjoy the advancement of more traditionally recognised women's rights (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The study aims to critically illustrate the nature and levels of involvement of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in politics and policy-making environments. This includes the extent, nature, and experiences of the involvement towards the participation and the effects of their visibility within the political and policy environments. As of 2021, South Africa does not have a political party that exclusively focuses on the needs of the LGBTQIA+ community (Smout, 2021). It is important to note that not all queer people have the same needs or concerns. Existing parties have the potential rewards when they appeal to queer voters by explicitly addressing their rights in their manifestos and action.

South African queer-identifying persons are highly politically active and always willing to vote for a political party that prioritises their well-being and wants more representation from the political parties they support (Heerden, 2021). Queer-identifying individuals find it difficult to trust politicians and members of the parties to provide a better quality of life for them. There are very few openly queer politicians in South Africa, and it is the responsibility of those in positions of influence to use the opportunity to make their respective parties accessible to the queer community (Heerden,2021).

The Constitution of South Africa was enacted in 1996 and was the first in the world to express the need to protect the rights of gays and lesbians and to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation (Croucher, 2002). South Africa's democratic transition provided a political opportunity structure that was responsive to gay mobilisation and the creation of the gay liberalisation movement that contributed to the deepening democratisation and strengthening of the country's civil society (Croucher, 2002). All the fundamental victories for the South African queer community were achieved under the constitution's equality provision (Devji, 2016). Despite the progressive policies and interpretations of the South African constitution, many of the citizens condemned the queer community (Devji, 2016).

The rise in queer visibility and shift in ideology manifest itself in being a pushback against the intense policies of the apartheid government that used to have control over people's sexualities. There is no government in South Africa that could claim to represent the will of the people if it failed to address the central issues around the emancipation of the marginalized community, such as women and queer-identifying individuals in all aspects, including the government structures (Shvedova, 2005).

Women are still not afforded a place of prominence in politics and governance, particularly in Africa, and this is a brief reflection on women's political representation, even at the regional level within the

African Union (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019). For example, the Pan-African Parliament women's representation was formerly at 20% and is currently at 30% even though the protocol treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to the Pan-African Parliament article four notes that each member state should be represented by five members and at least one should be a woman and that contradicts the Maputo Protocol that states that women should be represented equally at all levels with men in all the processes (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019).

The recent decades have shown noteworthy progress in establishing normative frameworks on human rights, especially the rights of women. The representation of women in the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the child (ACERWC) is at 56% (Makgale & Chibwa, 2019). The African Union has remarkably improved in the representation of women within the various structures and the leadership of its constituent states still lacks female state leaders (Makgale & Chibwa, 2019). Reflecting on the African Union and South Africa, the implementation of women's rights is important to examine whether there have been tangible and sustainable gains in their representation during the 2019 national and provincial elections (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019).

There has been a significant amount of time debating the definition and ways to measure democratisation, and South Africa is well on its way from all indications. This means that not only is South Africa meeting the minimalist qualifications of rule-oriented democracy, but it is also holding up to some more emancipatory definitions that include the progressive inclusion of different people in political life as a central aspect of democratisation in the country (Croucher, 2002).

In South Africa, the Electoral Act 73 mandates political parties to ensure that female candidates can speak freely with party candidates and participate equally and fairly with their male counterparts (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019). According to Coetzee & Gouws (2019), the failures of women's movements, activism, contributions, and achievements have been documented in manuscripts specifically focused on Africa from the position of the Global South. The progress that the country has made in terms of women's representation in politics and governance is significant to examine (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019). The electoral act encourages political parties to ensure that there is access for women to all public meetings, marches, demonstrations, rallies, and other significant public events and take all steps to ensure that women are free to engage in political activities (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019).

The ANC Women's League (ANCWL) attempted to expand the developmental agendas to include political concerns that are aimed at finding solutions for developmental problems (Coetzee & Gouws, 2019). Engaging the State has its drawbacks for women's movements, though the relationship between them and the state is important. It is invaluable for state feminism (feminists working in the state) to be successful because the women's movements or organizations are significant in setting up the political agenda and putting pressure on governments to act in the interests of women (Coetzee & Gouws, 2019). The removal of the distinction between the State and feminists or women's movements makes it difficult

for the feminists in the state to resist co-optation in male-dominated environments or face isolation and marginalization (Coetzee & Gouws, 2019).

There are specific types of violence that target queer women in different spaces, and it is, therefore, important to highlight these issues and create environments that allow for the progression of policy centred exclusively around queer-identifying individuals (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The research report is structured into six chapters. The first chapter focuses on the introduction of the research, providing the background information and summary of the focus of the research. It looks at the research problem, research questions, and objectives. The second chapter focuses on the literature review, themes around identity, homophobia, inclusion, representation, participation, and the decision-making process. The second part of chapter two focuses on the theoretical framework of the research, looking at intersectionality, social ecology, and queer theory. Chapter three focuses on methodology, looking at the research approach, the information collected from interviews, sampling, positionality,axial coding, thematic analysis, the ethical consideration and validity of the research. Chapter four of the research explains the findings of the research and the discussion of the themes found in the research study and interviews. Lastly, chapter five will be the conclusion.

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem that the research aims to examine is the exclusion of queer-identifying individuals within politics and the policy-making process in South Africa. According to Smout (2021), All South Africans are given the right to participate politically and run for office. The representation of LGBTQIA+ individuals in government remains limited even 30 years into democracy. The Constitution was one of the first documents to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (Smout, 2021). There has been no real effort to improve and increase the representation of queer-identifying individuals in government. The same problems can be seen in other countries in the world, where queer-identifying individuals are tremendously underrepresented in many political parties and among elected officials (USAID, 2023). The recognition that the anti-queer stigma, discrimination, and exclusion permeates all aspects of political and civil life is a call for concern, and it specifically highlights the significance of this research study.

The report on *ENDING VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBTI+* by the United Nations (2015) shows the importance of ensuring that queer-identifying people are consulted and allowed to participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring of laws, policies, and programmes that affect them, and this includes the development and humanitarian initiatives. The involvement of the key actors in a policy review shows this initiative and guides the national legislature to discuss the possible questions around gender diversity with queer-identifying individuals who form part of politics and policy making (International Labour Organization, 2022).

The exclusion of queer-identifying people from the implementation, design, and monitoring of laws and policies that affect them perpetuates their economic and social marginalisation (United Nations, 2015). When the issues faced by the queer community are not considered independently of the issues of other minority groups, such as women, gaps can develop (Thorpes, 2018). This means that all policies should consider their impact on LGBTQI+ individuals and promote queer-identifying leaders to give credibility to their respective parties when addressing these issues. Daly (2022) argued that there are major gaps in the baseline data that suggest that there is a scope for research to inform policymakers about the significance of queer participation in policymaking. Queer people are systematically excluded from the development policy and practice, and these exclusions are intersectional (Daly, 2022). "All measures adopted by the state must recognize the intersectional nature of discrimination and exclusion, address their root causes, and ensure meaningful participation of different people in decision-making processes" (UNHR, 2019).

The diversity of sexual orientation has been highlighted as a critical component of manifest inclusion. The mainstreaming of sexual orientation in academia and public policy research around the role of a gay politician has given rise to a better understanding of the mechanisms and strategies that facilitate the creation of inclusive legislature (Reynolds, 2013). The presence of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in politics and policy-making challenges traditional power structures, promotes equity and provides representation for marginalized groups such as queer-identifying people and women. The phenomenon highlights the significance of incorporating diverse perspectives within decision-making to create more equitable policies and systems to shift towards a more inclusive and diverse governance.

1.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE STATEMENT

The research study aims to examine the increasing presence and impact of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the politics and policy-making environments and discuss their contributions, challenges, and the changing outlook of inclusivity within these spaces. International and national political discourse and policymaking show the general progression in which queer rights are gaining attention (Wilk, 2022). The rising visibility of queer-identifying people within activists' movements, politics, policymaking, and community inclusion in mainstream media has contributed to the growing attention. According to Hames (2007), "Given South Africa's apartheid legacy, the policy-making and legal reconstruction by the post-apartheid state has been preoccupied with the eradication of race and gender discrimination in all spheres". The post-apartheid South Africa had an overwhelming and unprecedented flood of legislative and policy measures to ensure that all discriminatory practices relating to gender were properly addressed in both work and civil society spaces (Hames, 2007).

The purpose of this research is to show that the political representation of queer-identifying people in parliaments and their participation is important in building stronger democracies and in improving human rights (Rodriguez, 2023). Queer members in positions of governance can encourage policies that

guarantee the right to vote for trans and non-binary persons without discrimination, as promoted in other countries, such as Brazil, Bangladesh, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, India, and Peru (Rodriguez, 2023). Further reforms are needed to guarantee equality in the exercise of political rights and participation of queer-identifying individuals. Political representation of LGBTI+ persons is limited and small. Official and reliable data is difficult to find, but according to a comprehensive survey conducted in 2013, there were 107 openly LGBTI+ members of parliament holding office at the national level in 24 countries (Rodriguez, 2023). According to Matthews (2023), "queer activists and organizations have made a significant contribution to garnering the queer political representation that can further equality at all levels of government".

The rise of queer-identifying individuals in the political environment can positively impact the adoption of legislation and policies, recognising the rights of the population and the role of supportive allyship as a key factor to success. In the policy-making environment, various regions from diverse ideological backgrounds have supported the participation of queer-identifying leaders in decision-making and the elective offices in foundational documents and policies, adopting quotas, and nominating LGBTI+ party members to provide training for their respective political parties.

Queer people in all levels of government are reflective of the way queer culture has been normalised, accepted, and celebrated in media, corporates, music, and pride campaigns (Matthews, 2023). The continued allyship and advocacy for queer politicians and the upliftment of their respective organizations is necessary for the creation of an equitable and representative government.

1.3 Research Questions

a. Do parties' policies adequately address queer-identifying individuals, women/feminists issues, and the necessary policy amendments?
b. How can parties' policies provide a safe and inclusive society for queer people and women/feminists?
c. Why should political parties care about women/feminists and queer inclusion, representation, and participation in their manifestos and execution?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to first understand representation. The Representation of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in politics and policy-making environments. Looking at the impact of representation by examining the influence of queer-identifying individuals and feminists on the outcomes of policies and the decision-making process.

The second objective is to discuss policy prioritisation by providing an analysis of the advocacy efforts of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in various political contexts.
The third objective is to identify the barriers and challenges faced by queer-identifying individuals and feminists in entering politics and influencing the decision-making processes in policy.
The last objective is to examine the intersectional identities of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the political and policy environment, such as gender and race.

1.5 Conclusion

In summary, chapter one provides an introduction of the study as an investigation for the rise and the role of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in democratising the political and policymaking environments. The need for reform and advocacy of policies affecting the marginalised groups, It also provides the problem statement as means to examine the exclusion of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the policymaking process in South Africa which ultimately affects the representation of the marginalised communities, and with underrepresentation comes anti-queer policies and disciminations. Representation of the queer community and feminists allows for a more collaborative and inclusive policymaking process in South Africa. Chapter one provided the purpose statement for the research study, the increasing presence and impact of the queer-community and feminists by discussing the challenges and ways to ensure inclusivity within the political and policymaking environments. It includes research questions on how to provide a safe and inclusive society, whether parties address queer-related issues and women's issues and the question around inclusion, representation and participation in the party manifestos. It includes the research objectives as representation, policy prioritisation, barriers and challenges and the last one being intersectional identities.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.

2. Introduction

Chapter two of this paper is a literature review on the themes of identity, the distinction between gender and sexuality, homophobia, representation or inclusivity and participation, and social justice in the policy-making and decision-making process on queer-related and women's issues. The first theme discussed is identity and how it is socially constructed through interactions and relationships. Scholars such as Fraser (2016) and Gergen (1999) agree that social construction and identity politics are intricately linked, with marginalised groups forming a self-designated identity that is represented by individual identities. This allows these groups to claim certain inalienable rights, such as equal treatment and participation in democratic governance. Self-identity is informed by one's relationship with the world and the community they belong to. The distinction between gender and sexuality is also discussed, with the former referring to behavioural aspects of sex and sexuality that are first understood in a biological context, while the latter is more ambiguous and is often used in different ways by different people (Fraser, 2016).

The process of creating theory borders between the ideas has been a subject of debate between feminism and queer theory (Fraser, 2016). The fundamental theme around the argument about self-identity discussed in the literature review is to show how an individual's identity can be political to the extent that it is debatable whether they should have access to political institutions. The theme of homophobia is centered around the argument that institutions of power are homophobic, and as a result, the policy-making process can rarely provide space and protection for queer-identifying individuals (Reddy, 2001). The framing of the theme around inclusion, representation, and participation shows the importance of the triangle projects in politicising the erasure of queer-identifying individuals within political parties and the significance of having them within as part of the policy-making process (Thorpes, 2018).

The last theme on social justice within the policy-making and decision-making process is to provide the significance of strategies and recommendations on creating an inclusive society for queer-identifying individuals, creating an inclusive space for them within political parties and the policy-making process. The themes discussed in the literature review show the importance of the research study.

2.1 IDENTITY AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

2.1.1 Identity Politics & Power

According to Fraser (2016), an individual's identity is socially constructed, forming from early childhood in their interactions and relationships with others. The concept of identity allows one to understand their connection to the world and how that relationship is constructed across time and

environment. Understanding oneself is described as the combination of self-awareness and interference with our society. The sense of self, as argued by Fraser (2016), is not entirely what we decide upon; rather, it is informed by our communities. In contrast to the idea provided by Fraser (2016), Norton (2000) argued that "Our global understanding of ourselves, or our self-identity, comes as a result of a reasonably enduring combination of self-assessments about what we consider most important about ourselves". What Fraser (2016) aims to show is the relationship between power and identity.

The term power refers to the social construction among individuals, communities, and institutions (Norton, 2000). The heterogeneity of society must be understood in an inequitably structured world in which gender, race, class, and ethnicity may serve to marginalise people. Other scholars, such as Gergen (1999), agree that social construction and identity politics form a pair and some form of relationship that they define as relational politics.

Identity politics is a mode of political activism, typically not exclusively conceptualised by groups excluded from traditional mainstream politics. Marginalised groups generate a self-designated identity (group consciousness) represented by the individual identities of their constituents. Identity politics is a political orientation built around the pre-existing social identity (Ford, 2005). Identity does not come before politics but is a by-product of politics. Identifying as queer turns out to be political within the institutions of government because identities shape and inform the relations with different people within the same environment. Gender and sexuality are politically and theoretically problematic.

The argument that Smits (2004) provides about class and gender is how they fundamentally construct individual identity because the analysis of society in terms of its constituent groups and the power relations between them requires that there is representation by groups of their own identities. According to Foucault (1982), power is the relationship between partners, collective or individuals, not simply the exercise of power; it is through the modification of certain actions where power exists when it is put into action and is not a function of consent.

An analysis of Foucault's conception of power argued that the exercises of power include meaningful agency (Haugaard, 2022). Foucault argued that power is everywhere, and it can be found in relationships and institutions and lastly that it shapes the behaviour and social norms. This means that the social structures are not simply constraints but also interactive creations. Power being described as an interactive creation by Foucault means that it does not oppress but enables and produces knowledge, identities and the societal roles (Faucault,1982). The idea that the body and sexuality are cultural constructs rather than natural phenomena has made an important contribution to the feminist critique (Armstrong, 2024).

The feminist political perspective aims to promote women's autonomy and the tendency of Foucault's power to reduce social agents to submissive bodies seems to be problematic (Armstrong, 2024).

Foucault's questioning of the categories of subject and agency on the grounds undermines the emancipatory aims of feminism. The definition of feminism is the advocacy of women's rights based on the theory of the equality of genders (Easton, 2012). Similar to the definition provided by Brunell & Burkett (2024) that feminism is the belief in political, social, and economic equality of the sexes.

Women were confined to the domestic sphere throughout most of history. They were denied the right to participate in public life, and even as late as the 20th century, women could not hold elective office or even vote (Brunell & Burkett, 2024). At its core, feminism is the belief in the full economic, social, and political equality for women and the term feminist refers to the individual who subscribes to the principles of feminism. The term arose in response to the traditions that restricted women's rights. The collectivisation of feminists resulted in the global manifestation of the emancipation of women (Easton, 2012).

2.1.2 Different Waves of Feminism

The first wave of feminism emerged as a response to the battle for women's suffrage, which is the right to vote in political elections, and was achieved by the nineteenth amendment in 1920 (Easton,2012). First-wave feminism aimed to make society recognise that women are humans, not property. The focus on this was on white women's rights, and this exclusion haunted feminism for years (Human Rights, 2024).

The second wave of feminism advocated for greater equality in the workplace, access to education, and in their respective households. It emerged in the 1960s and 70s (Easton, 2012). It built on the first wave as it challenged the role of women in society. The activists focused on the institutions that held women back and it was inspired by the civil rights movement. This included taking a step closer to understanding the oppression of women as the traditional gender and family roles were interrogated (Human Rights, 2024).

The third wave of feminism focused more on identity politics to rectify the perceptions of lack of attention to class, race, religion, and the other makers of differences between women (Easton, 2012). The institutional successes of second-wave feminism allowed women to enjoy more rights and power going into the 1990s (Human Rights, 2024). Women were able to think about other aspects of their identity, allowing them to express their individuality, and this was an era of reclaiming. Women expressed their sexuality in how they expressed themselves and dressed. This wave of feminism allowed women to be more conscious of race politics even though the first and second waves neglected racial disparities within gender, the third wave paid closer attention (Human Rights, 2024).

As feminism developed, it paid closer attention to the intersectional identities of women, such as race and sexuality. Women became more expressive about their sexual identity and that allowed for them to even express themselves as queer. The term queer-identifying or queer can be used interchangeably

with the abbreviation of lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender (LGBT+) in queer theory as it has a particular connotation and alignment with ideas about sexual orientation (Harris, 2005). Queer, as a political concept defined by Kornak (2015), had commonly been used as a derogatory term to address gay men until the recent two decades, the word has achieved popularity across different languages and specifically in academia. The term queer has been used to develop a specific set of complex debates that created a new politics of sexuality (Kornak, 2015). It is important to understand what the term politics mean in relation to the politics of sexuality.

The term politics or political does not have one legally accepted definition because it is a loaded term. Politics can be defined as the exercise of power, the exercise of authority, the making of collective decisions, the allocation of scarce resources, and the practice of deception and manipulation (Modebadze, 2010). For this study, politics is understood as the study of power. The definition refers to any social relationship that involves power differentials, whether in institutions, political parties, law enforcement agencies, or different departments of government (Modebadze, 2010). Politics about power is the ability to achieve a desired outcome through any means, which can be threats, sanctions, or manipulation. Modebadze (2010) argued that politics exists at every level of human societies as it is the defining feature of all humans and that politics does not only take place in institutions of the state but within the private domains of life, which shows that all people are somehow involved in politics.

Policy environments refer to arenas in which issues are recognized as important and placed on the agenda, where public policy goals are debated for a desirable outcome (Harries, 2012). The programmes of action are initiated or sanctioned, and innovative and creative thinking about effective courses of action is shaped and debated. The research report examines the significance of the inclusion of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in politics and policy environments, which will allow queer people and women to take part in the policy-making decisions that benefit or affect them.

According to Gouws (2011), quota systems have been implemented globally to get more women into government, and it begs the question of whether this line of inclusivity in government contributes to policy influence that will benefit all women eventually or not. There is a fundamental need to change the level of thinking to an understanding that women within political parties or institutions of government have a significant role in democratisation. The argument by Smits (2004) supports what Gergen (1999) said about identity politics and that it is not the same for every social movement; it can be women-entered or gay-centred, and that can be politically marked as individuals. An Asian-American, lesbian, or a member of the lower class, by nature or through conditions that they are members of the said groups, lays claim to certain inalienable rights such as equal opportunities, equal treatment, freedom to practice, and participation in democratic governance. Gergen (1999) and Smits (2004) agree that representation by groups of their own identities and interest groups lays the liberal foundations for modern identity politics.

The relational politics between identity politics and social constructionism is the generalised shift towards the powerful justificatory basis for political and moral activism (Gergen, 1999). The discussion around the materialisation of the historical debates when it comes to sexual identity issues allows for the concept of social constructionism, which was frequently ignored in much research around sexuality as an identity (Kitzinger, 1995). This shows how Fraser (2016), Gergen (1995), and Kitzinger (1995) hold the same sentiments even regarding sexual orientation as a concept that helps to establish the theory of social construction because it is seen as impossible. However, its implications are significant to the debates around gay and lesbian politics. Self-identity comes from self-assessment, which is self-awareness of physical attributes and knowledge of one's abilities in the world.

In summary, the theme of identity as a social construction is significant and adds value to this research study because it shows the various ideas on the conception of one's identity and the relationship, they have with the communities that they form a part of. It explained the relationship between identity politics and power as certain identities such as queer or feminist, may be excluded within the institutions of power. Queer-identifying people and women can express their identities concerning their personhood. However, their presence in politics and policy environments informs their treatment and position in those respective spaces. The discussion around queerness cannot happen in isolation from the conception of society because the identity is socially constructed and informed by our respective surroundings.

2.2. The distinction between gender and sexuality.

Carver (2003) argued that the concept of gender was highly politicised, signalling a rearrangement of the scope and the political theory of the term itself. The gender theorists saw it as an opportunity to add the concept to their political theory as a further engagement of feminism with "malestream" thoughts defined as the theorisation of politics written by men and reflecting their assumptions and interests. "Sexuality and gender are assumed to be related concepts, but they are separate and distinct" (Vinney, 2024). Both gender and sexuality are an important part of an individual's sense of self; the lack of understanding of each one may create incorrect assumptions. For example, some people may assume that a transgender person is gay but the transgender individual's gender identity and sexual orientation are not connected. Richardson (2007) argued that the link between gender and sexuality is both politically and theoretically problematic. Part of questioning their relationship represents an ongoing debate between feminists and queer theorists about the discipline of the study of gender and sexuality and the process of creating theory borders. One of the difficulties in theorising the connection between gender and sexuality is that the terms are ambiguous and often used by different people in different ways. The primary argument here is to understand the naturalist approaches from the mid-19th century to the second half of the century, the dominant western understanding of the relationship between gender and sexuality was as an expression of an underlying natural universal or natural order that relies

on the notion of sexual and gender dualism which is male or female, heterosexual or homosexual, masculine or feminine (Richardson, 2007).

The shift from a naturalising to a social constructionist perspective of sexuality and gender opened an analysis of the relationship between the two terms (Richardson, 2007). This happened through contesting and pluralising the meanings associated with the terms, suggesting that they are social rather than pre-given natural categories. The understanding of the relationship between gender and sexuality shows that gender has always been prioritised over sexuality, which highlights the significance of the research study to examine how best sexuality could be prioritised in the study of gender that is not in line with heteronormativity. According to Little (2016) gender is often regarded as the central organising principle in the process of constructing people's sexualities, which proves the argument of the research around the exclusion of queer-identifying people within the political and policy environments based on their identity as queer beyond that of being of a particular gender such as either man or woman. The experience of transgender people demonstrates that a person's sex as determined by their biology, does not always correspond with their gender (Little, 2016).

According to Deborah (1995), the social constructionist approach has posed a significant challenge to the ahistorical, essentialist account of sexual orientation and provided an extension to our understanding of the impact of culture on human sexuality. In contrast to the predominant attention on homosexuality, the notion that only "deviant" sexuality, such as homosexuality in this case, is socially constructed as opposed to the more radical idea that all sexual orientations are constructed (Deborah, 1995). The system of democracy in South Africa has not done enough to alleviate the obstacles of patriarchy that women and queer people are faced with, and as a result, their needs and policymaking have not materialised to the point where the democratic system represents all members of society (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The objectives are to examine the exclusion of intersectional women in the feminist spaces within the political parties (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The documentation and the issues raised within the movements highlight race and gender politics and do not address the sexualities of other women within the spaces. This highlights the knowledge gaps in academia because the writing around systematic issues women face in institutions of power rarely discusses intersectional identities.

McDermott & Hatemi (2011) argued for the significance of adequately distinguishing between the concepts of sex, gender, and sexual orientation. McDermott & Hatemi (2011) reviewed literature across disciplines to suggest numerous ways political scientists might benefit by considering the significance of biological distinctions in addition to the cultural factors regarding sex, gender, and sexuality in their research. The distinction between these concepts is part of continued efforts to help reduce discrimination and defuse misconceptions, stereotypes, and imposed social roles. It is important for the discipline to better communicate the distinction between gender and sexuality to the politics and policy environments with the hopes that the wider public opinions and elite discourse will shift in a more

tolerant and positive direction. Adding onto the discussion around better communication of the distinction between gender and sexuality to prevent the confusion that often led to the exclusion of queer-identifying individuals, other scholars provided the term social process as a way of "authenticating another person's gender" (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). Individuals are expected to provide information about their genders; others interpret it to place them in gender categories and determine their gender. The process of gender determination does not always rely on visual and behavioural cues. Many people also use genitalia (biological criteria) to determine another person's gender in heterosexual terms.

The contrast that has been drawn by Martin (1994) is the performative theory of gender as the most well-known example of the use of queer theory to challenge feminist's investment in gender binaries. The emphasis on gender has allowed for the tendency among some lesbian, bisexual, and gay theorists and activists to construct queerness as a vanguard position for the newness and advance against a superseded and now anachronistic feminism. The gender divisions within political parties in South Africa were established to ensure there are internal strategies for advancing gender equality and measures to ensure women's full participation in party structures (Women in Political Parties in South Africa, 2013).

In summary, the concepts of gender and sexuality are important to discuss in this research to show how the construction of these concepts has informed the need to shift the focus to intersections. The politics and policy environment places value on the concept of gender more than they do on sexuality, which resulted in the exclusion of queer-identifying individuals. Intersectionality and ensuring that the distinction between gender and sexuality are addressed ensures that the representation is not limited to having a black woman, for example, but to that of black queer women as well. How gender and sexuality are theorised will inform the cultural turn in the politics and policy environment because the concepts provide a contested understanding of the meaning of these categories and their relationship. The cultural turn and the rise of queer people have led to a reappraisal of gender and sexuality categories.

2.3 The exclusion of queer-identifying individuals (Homophobia).

The argument against the creation of an inclusive society, free of hate speech and discrimination against people who identify as homosexual, within institutions of power, in this case, political organisations and society, is the notion that "homosexuality is "UnAfrican" (Reddy, 2001). The advocacy and protection of sexual minorities is significant and must be understood and critically engaged with the social and political context of laws criminalising or discriminating against queer-identifying individuals (Segunro, 2022). The engagement requires an awareness of the dominant power dynamics and relations underlying the enforcement and evolution of the criminalizing laws in Nigeria, for example, with the knowledge that these power dynamics are a significant part of the wider social control that is aimed at perpetuating the hegemonic power for the benefit of a political elite.

Homophobia can be described as "UnAfrican" as it undermines the rights of sexual citizens in a way more reminiscent of colonial repression than post-independent freedom (Reddy, 2001). Homophobic identification of homosexuality by African leaders as "un-African" removes the moral and sex panic that is externalized as an acute psychiatric and security emergency. The framing of the argument here is that queer-identifying individuals are often ostracised within the political spaces, and there is no incentive created for them to exist in those spaces due to homophobia that affects their everyday lives and the reality that there are significant data gaps about queer people throughout most of the world (Daly, 2022). Homophobia can be described as an individual or personal prejudice; however, Meredith & Michael (2013) explore homophobia as a transnational political phenomenon. Homophobia has a distinct configuration of repressive state-sponsored policies and practices and affects how sexualities are understood and experienced.

The hate speech by political leaders increased in 17 countries, such as Spain, Portugal, and even in the country known as LGBT-friendly, Finland. Homophobic violence has also risen across the European region (Homophobic populism, 2020). The Nationalist ruling party railed against the LGBT ideology in its election campaign, and the parliament speaker from Hungary equated gay adoption with paedophilia. The Spanish and Finnish politicians criticized the pride marches (Homophobic populism, 2020). This shows that homophobia is rife within the political spaces, which then makes the politics and policy environment regressive and not inclusive of queer-identifying individuals. This hurts the creation of progressive policies for queer-identifying individuals, which then does not create an inclusive society. It also shows that even the countries perceived to be progressive in the European region can be homophobic.

It can also be seen in African countries that political leaders have pursued legislation to expand the criminal penalties for same sex (Tara & Angotti, 2016). As further expressed by Tara & Angotti (2016) "much of the research on efforts to expand criminalization of same-sex sexualities in Africa has focused on individual country cases, neglecting the role of national and transnational sociopolitical context and economic flows". From 2000 to 2014, news media data in three African countries, Malawi, Nigeria, and Uganda, reflect larger conflicts over political power, social change, and global status hierarchies (Tara & Angotti,2016). The understanding of the use of homophobic rhetoric, policies, and practices as strategic and purposeful is a new phenomenon, and much of the academic research on the topic has been rooted in psychology and individual pathology. The key critiques of this individual-level approach argued that the concept of homophobia is narrow in the characterization of oppression because it ignores the manifestations of the structural influences when the focus is simply on fear or anger (Tara & Angotti,2016).

Political homophobia is considered purposeful, especially when practised by state actors, such as politicians and policymakers, in this research. It is part of the scapegoating of 'othering" that drives the

processes of state-building and retrenchment as the product of the transnational influence into the questions of collective identity and the complicated legacies of colonialism. The intolerance towards queer people in Europe, as argued in the report around the *Pride vs indignity: political manipulation of homophobia and transphobia in Europe* by the Commissioner for human rights (2021), is because of more politicians and public officials targeting queer people for political gains. Public officials at the highest level are failing in their duty to promote equal dignity and human rights for all.

The United Nations Office for the high commissioner on Human Rights identified that the barriers to entry and data collection on queer people are created by stigmatization and criminalization (Daly, 2022). The barriers hinder the collection of accurate estimates regarding the world population affected by discrimination and violence against queer people. Same-sex desire can be threatening to the institutions of power, such as the state and society, as actors that assume that heterosexuality is natural as opposed to a cultural phenomenon. In addition to this argument, Pharr (1993) adds that homophobia is effective as a tool for sexism because it is joined with heterosexism. The assumption that the world should be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm results in homophobia as a weapon for heterosexism.

According to the Commissioner for Human Rights (2021), it was concluded that various parliamentary bills discriminating against queer-identifying individuals were designed to stoke anti-queer sentiments as part of the rivalry between opposing political parties. The systemic display of heterosexism in the institution of society is homophobia because there is a full force of societal pressure to conform to heterosexuality and prepare for marriage (Pharr, 1993). The indoctrination starts in the early stages of development until the language is normalised during puberty (Pharr, 1993). During these early stages of development, the best tactic is to ostracize the person when they need to gain acceptance from society (Pharr,1993). The high-ranking officials and politicians affiliated with the ruling coalition used the stigmatization of queer people as a campaign tool during the 2019 parliamentary elections in Poland (Commissioner for human rights, 2021). “During the 2020 election re-running in Poland, the president promised to prohibit the propagation of LGBT ideology in public institutions”.

Homophobic violence may always have an element of an attempt by society to create corrective measures for those who identify as openly homosexual. Reddy (2001) explained the nature of homophobia as a tool to control, police, and harass. Homophobic discourse constructs the homosexual as an outcast. Reddy (2001) further argued that homophobia is a form of gender violence and gender oppression. Gender violence is an interpersonal, organisational, or politically oriented violation perpetuated against people based on their gender identity, sexual orientation, and the hierarchy of a male-dominated social system.

According to the *Political use of homophobia report* by Schafer & Range (2014), homophobia is a political problem, and is the responsibility of the government to stop the hatred that often gives rise to

violence against the queer community in African countries. Government has a moral obligation to abolish anti-homosexual legislation and deprive homophobia of its legal basis. Schafer & Range (2014) further expressed that the violation of human rights of queer-identifying individuals is often used as a tool of incitement by politicians in media outlets close to the regime to attack homosexual people.

According to the *Global assault on LGBTQ rights undermines democracy report* (Shaw, 2023), there is limited information about the extent to which sexual and gender minorities are excluded from aspects of political life. This barrier means that there is a lack of data available as most governments fail to collect systematic data that is inclusive of the queer community. Shaw (2023) further expressed the need for policymakers to commit to protecting the rights of sexual and gender minorities because inclusive countries are more economically prosperous, as there is a great deal of effort to ensure that everyone's potential is maximized. This is in line with the argument made by Daly (2022), that the other reason that queer people are not being included in the policymaking process is because of homophobia. Policymakers make decisions in the dark with personal prejudices, preconceptions, and ignorance without seeking appropriate evidence from civil society.

It is significant to understand the relationship or connection between democracy and sexuality in the process of democratising the politics and policy environments that between civil liberties and the protection of nonconforming sexualities have been instrumentalized to entrenching dictatorship and weakening democracy (Tamale, 2013). Heterosexuality is idealised by the acute historicization of African politics by the Western media and civil society, and homophobia has become a political tool that conservative politicians use to promote self-serving agendas. The independent expert's consultation on the report identified many different accounts of data being utilized for harassment, surveillance, arrests, and persecution by government officials (Daly, 2022). The elimination of homophobia requires that individuals who identify as homosexual be perceived as normal, legitimate, and equal to heterosexual individuals.

According to Pharr (1993), the elimination of homophobia does not require tolerance but equality so that their sexual identities will not be perceived as good or bad but simply as what it is. It is significant to recognize that there is insufficient data with which to analyse government inclusion of queer people. This proves one of the arguments in the research around the exclusion of queer-identifying people within the policymaking process. As a result, people who are not part of the queer community are allowed to create policies that do not even affect their livelihood, which means that there is no inherent benefit in them trying to create effective & efficient public policies if the issues around queerness are not going to affect them.

In summary, this part of the literature review on homophobia in the political and policy environments is significant in highlighting that the lack of inclusivity creates a space that does not allow for prioritising queer-centered policies. It also responds to the research questions around the lack of

inclusivity in the politics and policy environments which hurts the data collection on the representation of queer people in the most important spaces and positions of policymaking. It also highlights the fact that not only is homophobia a political problem for African countries, but it is a problem in the European region as well.

2.4 Representation, inclusion, and participation.

The Triangle Project and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) Victory Institute started a research report into the political participation of queer persons in South Africa (Thorpes, 2018). The recent evidence reviews on sexuality and inequalities that were commissioned by the Equality and human rights commission (EHRC) have shown that there is insufficient research into participation and representation among queer people in politics (Ryrie, McDonnelle & Allman, 2010). Thorpes (2018) further expressed that the Government Equalities Office (GEO) commissioned the Office for Public Management (OPM) to undertake research into the experiences of and the barriers to political participation of queer-identifying individuals as part of the commitment to improving equality of representation and involvement in the political life.

The purpose of the study was to increase the participation of the queer community in democratic processes in South Africa and to achieve equality and advocacy for queer people. The objectives of the projects were to identify best practices to encourage political participation and to identify opportunities to increase the number of queer people who are part of political parties' structures (Thorpes, 2018). The ANC has made considerable progress on its 25-year plan to increase women's occupation of seniority and leadership positions; there was at least 40% women's representation among the ANC candidates in all provinces (Makgale & Chibwe, 2019).

According to Smith & Haider-Markel (2002), a groundbreaking volume surveying the contributions that queer Americans have made to the democratic process. Queer people first participated in the political process in 1969 as they faced a myriad of imposing issues, from personal rejection and violence to the anti-sodomy laws, exclusion from the armed forces, and legal discrimination. The queer community has transformed themselves into a respected political force in the process of drastically changing laws and attitudes across the nation. Representation of queer-identifying individuals in parliament is important to improving human rights and building stronger democracies (Rodriguez, 2023). The inclusion of queer people throughout the electoral and political processes is significant because it highlights the need to embrace sexual and gender diversity to build stronger and more inclusive democracies.

Parliamentarians can promote legislation supporting equality and non-discrimination based on gender and sexuality. According to ACE projects (2024) on the parliaments and LGBTI political inclusion and participation, a higher representation of queer-identifying individuals in national parliament can have a

significant impact on lawmaking, and it often leads to the passing of equality laws that are focused on sexuality. A contextual example of this was the establishment of the ANC Women's League as an effective way to ensure women's participation in the party decision-making process within local and national government (Women in Political Parties, 2013). It is important to investigate whether this gender division within the party allows for women's political mobilisation, specifically queer-identifying women, or if they are used as tokens.

It is significant to promote party accessibility and support for queer-identifying individuals and ensure that it does not end with women only, but the inclusion of queer women is equally as significant. It includes the introduction of deliberate policies to encourage queer people's participation or interests throughout the existing policy to promote having queer people in leadership positions. Countries with higher representation of openly queer MPs in parliament have the most progressive queer-related policies (ACE projects, 2024). The establishment of institutions and informal focus groups to discuss queer-related issues, such as the LGBTI caucuses, can be positive for the work of parliamentarians defending this cause. Creating such a platform is a way of providing a political message in favor of social inclusion, political inclusion, equality, and human rights.

It is fundamental to incorporate respect for the human rights of queer individuals in party manifestos and constitutions (Thorpes, 2018). The manifestos should explicitly mention queer persons as an interest group and constituency and do sensitivity training with the organizations to ensure that the perspectives are incorporated. It is important to note that most people and organizations mention gender within political party structures that are related to cisgender women, and that undermines the experiences of queer-identifying women. There are more openly queer politicians entering politics despite the risk of discrimination. According to (McNamara, 2023), the 118th Congress in the US has recorded several openly lesbian, bisexual, and gay members. There are 11 House members and two Senate members, which means that the number is almost double that of just 10 years ago. Queer representation in government is expanding as more elected officials are coming out as queer, even though more needs to be done to create an environment that is safe for queer politicians.

Marginalisation prevents political spaces from being inclusive and does not ensure that the target of representation is considered. According to Thorpes (2018), it is significant for queer individuals to be in political organisations and engage them on the issues that they face. The political spaces may be controlled by political priorities that are exclusive to queer issues, which makes it significant that representatives of the queer community position themselves as individuals that deserve a seat at the table. Queer-identifying individuals are disproportionally affected in their attempt to gain access to elected office, difficulties in candidate nomination lists for parliament, discriminatory practices with their political parties, and the lack of campaign funding (Antara, 2017). The first openly gay legislator in Nepal, active participation of the queer people in political life, and strategic alliances with political

parties, members of parliament, and civil society was in a better position to promote queer-friendly legal and policy reforms. In addition to this, candidates and mainstream parties tend to believe that they place themselves at risk of losing votes when they address queer-related issues in their campaigns.

It is significant to see representation of queer people across the board and even included in politics because there are about 0,2% of elected officials in America who identify as LGBTQ+ Out for America, and that means 1000 queer elected officials in government from the local and federal levels (Seemaan, 2022). The report released by the Victory Institute in 2021 highlights that over 28000 LGBTQ+ elected officials would need to be elected to reach true representation (Queering Congress 2022, 2021). More queer people are running for US Congress in 2022 than in any other election cycle in the history of the USA.

LGBTQ+ candidates face personal attacks when running for a political office (Branigin, 2021). The barriers that hinder heterosexual women from running have a tremendous impact on queer women who run for office. Branigin (2021) further expressed that sexual identity and race are used against them in their political campaigns to the extent that even their loved ones are discriminated against. Contrary to the above, the number of queer representatives and state legislators increased from 161 in 2020 to 175 and this shows that queer people of colour have made significant gains in recent years (Florens, Gossett, Magni & Reynolds, 2020). A precedent was set when an LGBTQ person of colour, Kimberley Jackson in Atlanta made history as the first Black lesbian elected to Georgia's state senate (Bauer, 2020). This was a significant moment for representation because several legislatures will see their first queer members of colour.

Brechenmancher & Hubbard (2020) argued that the existence of organized and broad-based women's movements was key for pushing political parties to make gender equality commitments. In South Africa for example, women's broad-based mobilization coordinated action allowed them to exert pressure on the male party leaders to ensure that there is representation within the electoral and party rules to improve their capacity and influence. Coalition-building between women in civil society and women in politics was particularly impactful in the process of empowering women in the political spaces. The inclusion of women with strong links to feminist groups and organizations within the transitional and constitutional negotiations assisted in ensuring that gender equality commitments and parity measures were central to the political agendas and were anchored by the constitution (Brenchemancher & Hubbard, 2020).

The Commission for Gender Equality sought to achieve and strengthen awareness among political party leaders who identify as both men and women to overcome the challenges around women's political participation (Women in Political Parties in South Africa, 2013). The analysis provided proves another research argument around the significant attention placed towards gender and not much on sexuality because the ANC 2019 election manifesto asserts that the party has improved the representation and

empowerment of women in the private and public sphere through their constitutional commitment to non-sexism and gender equality & at no point of the manifesto are they exclusive about how to do the same for queer-identifying individuals (Mokgale & Chibwe,2019).

In summary, the significance of representation, inclusion, and participation of queer-identifying individuals and feminists is significant in furthering the advocacy of the said minority groups and ensuring that they have a seat at the table in discussions around their issues and express their lived experiences. To be part of the policy-making process and ensure that there is sufficient prioritization of queer and women-centred issues. In the South African context, democracy is a widely interpreted concept dependent on universal participation and the ability of all persons to be represented in the democratic processes.

2.5 The decision-making process in policies and political parties

The discussion around the decision-making process in policies and political spaces seeks to introduce an important conversation around the inclusion of queer individuals in positions of power where decisions are made, and policies are implemented. There is great significance in women's representation; however, not much is done to create space and representation for queer-identifying individuals. *The review of developments in women's representation in politics and government between the 2014 and 2019 election report on balancing the scale* by the Commission for gender equality (2019) shows that the bicameral system of parliament that constitutes the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) as the highest law-making body of the country allocates seats for political parties' representatives based on the proportion determined by their electoral strength and votes. Friedman (2004) argued that representative democracy is the only true legitimate means of representing the interests of the marginalized. While the agreement could be that democratic mechanisms need to promote opportunities for the marginalized, Friedman (2004) argued that the only mechanism that can do that is a representative democracy because it can only establish how all citizens feel about particular ideas and interests.

South Africa is a constitutional democracy with three different systems of government and an independent judiciary (South African government, 2024). The national, provincial, and local levels of government include legislative and executive authority at their level, which are defined in the constitution as interrelated, interdependent, and distinctive. The government is committed to building of non-sexist, united, non-racial, and free South Africa. According to Thorpes (2018), there is a perception that at some levels of government, it is acceptable to be homophobic. It is important to address this perception by holding party leaders accountable. Policy and laws have not been sufficient in creating an equal society as they require constant reinforcement of constitutional values by political parties and government (Thorpes, 2018).

According to the *Review of developments in women's representation in politics and government between the 2014 and 2019 election report* by the Commission of gender equality (2019), the inter-parliamentary union argued that the participation of women in democratic parliamentary processes tends to have a valuable impact. When a significant number of women is represented in parliament, the quality and nature of social policy processes trends to reflect this, and the processes of policy-making that focus on advancing women's rights and those of minorities increase. The report by the Commission of Gender Equality (2019) further suggests that countries around the world make gradual progress in improving women's representation and participation in politics, policy, and decision-making processes. The same trajectory is possible for queer-identifying individuals when significant pressure is placed on state institutions.

The Constitutional Change and Participation of LGBTI Groups: A Case Study of South Africa by Bilchitz (2015) highlighted that working mostly with leaders of advocacy campaigns themselves has developed detailed accounts of struggles for constitutional equality for sexual orientation has shown that over recent decades, the inclusion of rights for queer individuals' groups in the national constitution has increasingly seen an indicator of the strength and consolidation of democracy. Advocates of queer rights do not have sufficient access to resources that guide how to engage with the constitution-building processes or frame demands for equality of rights and recognition in politics and policy environments. According to Buccus & Hicks (2018), participation and deliberation can overcome the failures or shortcomings of a purely representative democracy by connecting the voice of the citizens with the decision-making of the state.

Transformation of broader social power relations and enabling responsive policymaking can be achieved through collaboration and the creation of inclusive environments. The need to open the executive policy-making processes to the engagements of the affected communities, which in this research is the queer communities and women in politics and policy environments, the legislative provisions for participation, existing mechanisms and practice that highlight the experiences of the civil society's experiences of these processes.

Gaveta (2004) and Luckman et al. (2000) expressed the notion of democracy deficit, which is the failure of established liberal notions of representative or participatory democracy to link citizens with the institutions and processes of the state, which then affects the quality of democracy and results in reduced accountability. The significance of making this argument is to understand that the party transformation ought to happen to enable the policy-making process to include queer-identifying individuals, like how the feminists in the space have transformed the institutions to prioritize women's representation. In the recent South African elections, the former President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, was held accountable for the anti-democratic same-sex laws (Macupe, 2024). It has been reported that during the rally of 3000 supporters of one of the parties that made it to parliament, the Umkhonto Wesizwe Party (MKP),

expressed its solidarity with the tribal leaders' alleged concern about same-sex marriages. He also implied that ‘’legislation supporting same-sex marriage lacks support from the majority of South Africa’’ (Achmat, 2024).

These comments echo the 2006 sentiments that same-sex marriage is a disgrace to the nation of God. The homophobic sentiments expressed by these members of parliament mean that there is a lack of buy-in when queer-related policies are to pass in parliament, which then shows the significance of this research study to examine the importance of the party’s representation to be inclusive of queer-identifying individuals (Achmat, 2024).

The ANC manifesto is frail in its recognition of addressing the systemic and structural discrimination of women, sexism, patriarchy, queer issues, and male dominance within the party (Women & democracy initiative, 2019). The terms “women,” patriarchy, and gender equality come up at different points in their manifesto or policy formation; however, the terms are simply used as part of listing groups and without specific strategies to create a more inclusive and equal society (Women & democracy initiative, 2019). Whilst the policies on the manifestos highlight the significance of creating an inclusive society for women, they do not highlight the policies and strategies around queer women within the party and even in the country at large (Women & democracy initiative, 2019). In recent years, legislative developments, case law, and policy initiatives have significantly improved many people’s lives and assisted in building a more equal and inclusive society for the queer community, as in 2015 when the first policy framework specifically combating discrimination against LGBTI people was presented by the commission (Progress report on the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality strategy 2020-2025, 2023). This further shows the significance of creating an inclusive decision-making process where queer rights and policies are prioritised.

The gains of the LGBTQ+ community are severely underrepresented in elected office, and in some state legislators, there have been proposals brought forward to rethink or limit the rights of the queer community (Smith, 2023). The increased representation in public office has been seen as a firewall against a wave of homophobia, and the queer community has placed all efforts toward supporting future queer candidates. The further suggestions placed forward expressed that equitable representation in state legislature seems to be more within reach and in other sectors as well (Smith, 2023). According to Smith (2023), the first transgender lawmaker in her state’s history has become a national spokesperson encouraging more queer people to run for office.

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) is successful in addressing social justice issues but less in executing a fair analysis from a gendered perspective, and this highlights their lack of gender parity beyond limited specific targets in the financial sector and quota system across the board (Women & democracy initiative, 2019). The official opposition’s Democratic Alliances (DA) set out a constitution that advocates for freedom, fairness, opportunity, and diversity (Gallagher, 2019). Party members are

held to strict standards of conduct and can be found guilty of misconduct when they discriminate against a queer-identifying individual within their party or society at large (Gallagher, 2019). In 2014 the DA elected an openly gay Black member of parliament. A substantial number of members of parliament within the DA are openly part of the queer community (Gallagher, 2019). This shows the significance of having queer-identifying individuals' representation within political parties when it comes to the policy-making process.

The New Women's Movements, such as the ANC Women's League, which can be defined as the feminist or women's movements that emerged within political parties, were formed with an agenda to empower women in the political party and to promote women's leadership (Coetzee & Gouws, 2019). The formulation of these women's organizations was to focus on engaging institutional politics through campaigns for greater women's representation in government and an example of this can be through quota systems, women's involvement in policymaking, and the improvement of women's leadership skills (Coetzee & Gouws, 2019).

In recent years more openly queer individuals have entered parliaments (Tremblay, 2019). The visibility raised the question of how they imagine that their sexuality interferes with their mandate of political representation. Openly queer individuals within politics and policy-making environments empower their role of representation and have become an asset for legislators. The representation of queer people remains limited, and the triangle projects political learning is aimed at attempting to change that (Smout, 2021). Queer people face both legislative and societal barriers when running for office.

In contrast to the idea of queer representation in the decision-making process, the clauses for anti-discrimination in the constitution are not assigning queer individuals some sort of privilege simply because of their sexual identity. The fact that there is a perceived inequality that exists does not automatically mean that an injustice has occurred. There is a common belief that everyone should stand on merit, personal skills, talents, and abilities, and that is based on meritocracy. A perceived injustice should not be used to validate privileges as it effectively undermines the country's efforts to bring about meritocracy. Smout (2021) further expressed that the Constitution prohibits discrimination and gives every citizen the right to run for political office and to participate in elections.

The transformation within the South African government has seen an increasing representation of women in government and ethnic minorities to enhance democratic goals (Thorpe, 2018). The assumption has always been that increasing the representation of women and ethnic minorities will accelerate the extent to which issues that affect their lives will be considered within the government spaces, to ensure that the issues are always kept on the agenda and to give government responses to women's concerns legitimacy. Recently, there is minimal attention that has been paid to increasing the representation of sexual and gender minorities. The report by Thorpes (2018) further suggests that diversity is important in the South African government and should be encouraged in both national and

regional agreements. “Triangle Project 2018 research surveyed 876 people, it showed that for most LGBTQI+ persons surveyed, voting is the main form of political participation, with education, basic services, and political leadership among the top issues considered by LGBTQI+ voters when selecting a party” (Thorpes, 2018).

Countless parties have made efforts to enhance the representation of women as a form of gender equality, supporting the idea that representation brings an additional focus to the issues of marginalized groups. These efforts have not been successful in ensuring equal representation of women and men and have not been effective in increasing the representation of LGBTQI+ government (Smout, 2021). The inclusion of queer people in politics allows for the recognition of the marginalized group as equal members of society, it ensures that their voices are heard, the issues are understood, their contributions are valued, and so are their needs being addressed.

In summary, the decision-making process in politics and policymaking in South Africa is important for the research study in examining the impact of queer representation and women in legislative structures. The inclusion of both minority groups accelerates the prioritization of queer or women’s issues on the inclusion of both minority groups accelerates the prioritization of queer or women’s issues. The decision-making process cannot be exclusive to the marginalized group because the issues or policies do not affect them to the marginalized group. The issues or policies do not affect them.

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter two of the research study discussed various themes, such as identity, the distinction between gender and sexuality, homophobia, representation or inclusivity and participation and social justice in the policymaking environments on queer-related policies and feminists. The first theme on identity as a social construction, had a sub-theme on identity politics and power and the discussion was on the construction of identity and how each identity informs the power or lack of in the political and policymaking environments. The argument was on the idea that the exercise of power includes meaningful agency and that power can be found everywhere, including relationships and institutions and that it shapes the social norms and behaviours. The sub-theme on different waves of feminisms argued that each wave of feminism had a specific goal and that the first wave was mostly on fighting for the rights of women to vote and the second wave advocated for greater equality in access to education for women, equality in the workplace and in their respective households and the third wave was significant as it focused more on identity politics and how the intersiction between race, gender and sexuality affects the various ways in which women navigate their daily lives. The identity as a social construction themes was significant as it adds value to the study by showing different ideas and conceptions of one’s identity and the relationship that they have with their communities and institutions of power.

The second theme on the distinction between gender and sexuality discussed the constructions of both concepts and how they have each informed the need to shift the focus to being that of intersectionality, as the political and policymaking environments place value on the concept of gender but rarely do the same for sexuality and how that then creates an exclusionary policymaking process in South Africa. Representation is not only limited to having a black women but extending it to having a black queer women as well. The third theme on exclusion (Homophobia) was important for highlighting how the lack of inclusivity creates environments that do not prioritise queer-related policies and provided a response to the research question around the lack of inclusivity which harms representation. Homophobia is a political problem in both African and European countries. The fourth theme on representation, inclusion and participation, was significant to add on the literature review as it advances the advocacy of both feminists and queer-identifying individuals by ensuring that they are included in the political and policymaking environments.The fifth and last theme on the decision-making process in policies and political parties, discussed the significance of examining the impact of queer representation and women in the legislative structures.

2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.7.1 Introduction

The second part of chapter two looks at the theoretical frameworks. There are three different theories that the study seeks to examine. The first one is intersectionality and it is used as a theory to examine public policies and to show the link between the different identities that individuals have and how those complex and multi-dimensional identities affect the ways in which policies address the inequlalities. The theory recognises that represesentaion in the political and policymaking environments and advocates for prioritisation of policies. There is prioritisation on the basis of gender and race but the policies rarely address the issue of sexuality. There is a general underrepresentation of queer people and it is important to consider that specific identity. The second theory is social ecology, it adds value to the research as it explains the complex interactions between queer-identifying individuals, feminists and the heterosexual people in the policymaking environments. It is significant to examine the theory as it provides the perspective on access to the political and policymaking environments for queer-identifying individuals and feminists to feel included. The third and last theory is queer theory, the framework explains the normative structures and power dynamics. With the construction of identities, it is important to show the difference between gender and sexuality to deconstruct the normative assumptions.

2.7.2 Intersectionality

The theoretical framework of intersectionality in the research project examines the public policy promises and the challenges of intersectionality. The goal of intersectionality policy analysis is to identify and address the way specific acts and policies address the inequalities experienced by different social groups, in this case, feminists and individuals who identify as queer (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). The link between the theoretical framework and the research study is that part of the intersectionality approach is recognising people's lives as multi-dimensional and complex and that they have multiple stories. The research study recognizes that representing a black woman based on race and gender is not sufficient if it does not advocate for their sexuality. This framework of analysis is widely applicable to various relations of marginality and privilege (Dhamoon, 2011). Considering the identities such as race, class, gender, ability, and age interact to form complex experiences and unique meanings between queer people and feminists in society. The political environment of the study is significant in looking at how they are further affected by multiple systems of power and oppression that can be referred to as a matrix of domination.

Verloo (2013) adds that some crucial social theory predicts that policies and movements that work against inequalities can be set up to achieve equality for certain marginalized and disadvantaged groups. The social movements and policymakers will find it hard to escape the dominant discourses that created the inequalities. The literature aligns with the research question around the incentive for political parties to show care in the creation of inclusive environments where black, queer & woman participate. It aligns with the part of the literature review on the decision-making process and how that needs to reflect and represent queer-identifying individuals. A sort of discourse that does not account for the intersectionality of individuals that exists in the space is more inclined to exclude them from the policy environments. Progress in women's representation in parliament should also be followed by a gradual inclusion of queer-identifying individuals. The complex identity dynamics are important because the framework allows for a nuanced understanding of how queer-identifying individuals and feminists navigate the political and policy-making environments, considering how various aspects of their identities intersect and influence their political engagements and policy priorities (Mccall, 2005).

The oppression changes over time and place in different institutional domains and it is therefore significant to focus on several complex realities that intersectionality allows us to uncover the exclusions and vulnerabilities that can be considered (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011). This research was guided by the three frameworks. Intersectionality looks at how Black women and queer-identifying individuals' oppression is multidimensional. It can be based on race, gender, and sexuality. The Social ecology framework looks at how homophobia affects queer-identifying women within feminist spaces and how ecological problems can be resolved by dealing with the problems of society. Lastly, the Queer

theory gives the theorization of gender and sexual practices that exist outside of heterosexuality and challenges the notion that heterosexuality is "normal."

According to Weldon (2008), the framework analysis of intersectionality is an important contribution to feminist theory and the endeavour of understanding society and politics. Weldon (2008) further describes the concept as valuable for scholars and critical theorists who aim to critically evaluate social relations and expose relations of domination that relate to speaking about or against power. The concept originated among Black feminists in the United States to theorize experiences and social positions. Kimberle Crenshaw first coined it. The analysis provided by Crenshaw (2010) shows that intersectionality is used to denote the different ways race and gender interact to inform the multi-dimensions of Black women's experiences. The term expresses the representation within the discourse of either feminism or anti-racism because Black women have intersectional identities as both being a woman and the politics around their Blackness. Intersectional feminism ensures that there is inclusivity in terms of who is given space to speak (unwomen, 2020).

The inclusion of voices of those experiencing overlapping, concurrent forms of oppression to understand the extent of inequalities and the relationships between them in any given space is significant in ensuring their needs are considered, and their policies are prioritized. Society tends to speak about race inequality as separate from inequality based on gender, class, and sexuality, and this highlights how far we are from achieving equality if the communities around the globe, international protests, racism, and discrimination based on gender are exclusive of sexuality. The theory is significant in the research in allowing the interrogation of how the acceptance of Black women within political parties does not account for their sexual identities and the fact that they have intersectional identities. Progress made to create inclusive spaces for women should account for their holistic personhood, where their different identities are considered.

It is important to highlight marginalized voices as they are conventionally perceived to lack traditional forms of power such as public influence (Alm & Guttormsen, 2021). According to Nash (2008), the most significant theoretical contribution of intersectionality to women's studies has become a multi-disciplinary approach for analysing experiences of both identity and oppression. The theory rejects the "single axis" framework that is often embraced by both feminist and anti-racist scholars, it instead provides an analysis of the different ways in which race, and gender interact to shape the various dimensions of Black women's experiences.

Nash (2008) further analyses how intersectionality serves a theoretical and political purpose for both feminist and anti-racist scholarship because it subverts the binaries of race or gender in the service of theorizing identity in a more complex way. The destabilization of race or gender binaries is significant for enabling a robust analysis of cultural sites that implicate both race and gender. In line with the research question or the holistic research, it is important to note that women in political spaces have

these intersecting identities, such as being black, queer, and women, and as such the politics are not always on their side. They face a myriad of issues and oppression based on their intersecting identities.

The framework is significant for the research study because it speaks about informing policy development (Mule, 2018). Policies that do not take intersectionality into account may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities. Intersectional analysis in policymaking ensures that policies are more inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of society, leading to more equitable outcomes. An example of this case is when gender-neutral policies might fail to address the distinct needs of queer individuals of colour. Intersectionality, being attuned within subjects' overlapping margins of race and gender discourse, is a tool that is particularly necessary for capturing and theorizing the intersecting identities of race and gender as a social process.

Intersectionality aspires to provide a vocabulary to respond to the critiques around identity politics (Nash, 2008). While the liberal critiques of identity politics criticize its failures to transcend differences, the argument provided by Crenshaw (2010) about intersectionality is that the real problem of identity politics is that it neglects intra-group differences within the broad categories of being a black woman and that it merely serves as a force for mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics (Nash, 2008).

In the research project, intersectionality seeks to demonstrate the racial variations within gender and the gendered variations within race through its attention to subjects whose identities contest race or gender categories. Intersectionality as a theoretical framework for this specific research enables an understanding of the legacy of exclusions of multiple marginalized subjects from feminist and anti-racist work and the impact of those absences on theory and practice. In addition, the framework is important for the research study as it addresses systemic inequalities (Laub, 2018). intersectional projects centred on subjects' experiences whose voices have been ignored or silenced.

The understanding of sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination intersect, policymakers can develop policies and effective strategies to address these systemic issues and promote equity and justice within the political institutions. An understanding of those who have experienced discrimination speak with a special voice to which there is an expectation to listen. The complexity of intersectionality started since the first criticism that feminism claimed to speak universally for all women, feminist researchers have been closely aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category (McCall, 2005). This is to say that feminists are most probably alone in the study of intersectionality to the extent that they have embraced it as the relationship among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations as a central category of analysis. According to McCall (2005), intersectionality is the most significant theoretical contribution to women’s studies in conjunction with the related fields it has created.

There has been minimal discussion on how to study intersectionality in its methodology and this would not be the case if intersectionality had a wide range of studies (McCall, 2005). The methodological problem of intersectionality is that it has limited the wide range of methodological approaches used to study it. The complexity arises when the subject of analysis expands to include the different dimensions of social life and categories of analysis. The research practice mirrors the complexity of social life and calls for a specific methodological demand that is challenging, which then restricts the scope of knowledge that can be produced on intersectionality.

In summary, intersectionality as a theoretical framework for the research study provides a critical lens for examining the multi-dimensional experiences of feminists and queer-identifying individuals in politics and policymaking environments. It ensures that their contributions are understood in the spaces of power dynamics and social structures, leading to more inclusive and effective political processes and policies. It empowers diverse leadership to allow for unique perspectives and experiences in the political arena. Feminists and queer-identifying individuals who understand intersectionality are better equipped to advocate for policies that benefit a wider range of individuals. The framework for this research is important as it highlights the importance of strengthening social movements for stronger and more cohesive advocacy efforts.

2.7.3 Social Ecology

Social ecology is important for the research study because it explains the importance of understanding the complex interactions between queer-identifying individuals, feminists, and heterosexual people in politics and policymaking environments. Argyros (2012) adds that a holistic perspective is important in emphasizing the interconnections between different social systems and environmental factors. The framework allows the researchers to understand how the different political and social factors influence the participation and impact of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in politics and policymaking. The link between the theoretical framework and the research study is that it examines the relationship that queer-identifying individuals and feminists have with political and policymaking space from the perspective of observing how accessible the environments are for them to participate and feel included. What defines the concept of social ecology as “social” is its recognition of the fact that all our present ecological problems arise from social problems (Bookchin, 2009).

The present ecological problems cannot be understood or resolved without dealing with the problems of society. Economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflict are central to the most significant ecological dislocations that we see in society. Homophobia is a feminist issue because queer-identifying women are rarely a significant part of the national debates about women’s rights and there is a deep undercurrent of heterosexist and socio-religious attitudes that have also resulted in the erasure of queer-identifying women within the feminist movements (human rights watch, 2023).

The theoretical framework of social ecology in the research examines ecological feminism as an attempt to unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to bring about a worldview that is not based on socioeconomic and conceptual structures of domination (Warren & Cheney, 1991). Many feminists claimed that social ecology was needed to establish an adequate understanding of the nature of the connections between the twin dominations of women and what nature requires as a theory and practice informed by an ecological perspective (Warren & Cheney, 1991). The ethics of feminists are grounded in the philosophy that the denominations of women are morally unjustified and ought to be eliminated. The critique of sexism and other social 'isms' of domination include unjustified domination. The link between the framework and the research study is in the understanding of power dynamics that exist where queer-identifying individuals and feminists constantly must fight for their voices to be heard.

The theory helps in analysing power dynamics within political and policymaking environments. It shows the various social structures and institutions, such as government, how they perpetuate power imbalances, and how these can be challenged and changed to create more inclusive political and policymaking environments (Bradshaw & Boonstra, 2008). Ethics guide the action on issues in the pre-feminist and patriarchal present, and this is aimed at guiding women and queer people in resisting the existing sexism and interconnected racism, classism, heterosexist practices and in imagining and creating a morally desirable society (Warren & Cheney, 1991). The link between the theory and the research study is that it provides a contextual analysis that considers a broader context in which political and policy activities take place (Bednar, Hagan-Green, Bain & Eglin, 2004). It examines how the global, national, regional, and local contexts shape the challenges faced by queer-identifying individuals and feminists, and the opportunities given to them.

The framework helps identify how specific environments support or hinder their political engagement and policy influence. This is in line with the literature review section on homophobia and how it affects queer-identifying individuals from engaging in politics and policymaking environments on issues that specifically affect their livelihood. There has been a recent development of what is known to be queer ecology which can be defined as the bringing together of queer individuals, ecological theorists, and political people to respond to the questions around the contributions of the creation of a society where all humans, including queer-identifying individuals, are connected to and live in harmony with nature (Herkert, 2012). The contrast of the term queer ecology is queer "environmentalism" which can be defined as the habit or thought to express the various ways of rejecting heteronormativity. The link between the theory and the research study is that it provides insights into how queer-identifying individuals and feminists mobilize and gain support and achieve policy changes. It highlights the significance of community and social networks, advocacy groups, and building community organizations (Salone, 2019).

It rejects the notion created by the binaries that men and women should be perceived as bodies that should only procreate and carry the seed of the future, but rather rejects the reproductive heteronormativity as insufficient because it does not do justice to the biodiversity of pleasures and is problematic as it places value on individuals insofar as they can produce the next generation (Herkert, 2012). The theory is in line with the argument provided by the research because the various issues that queer-identifying people face are linked with the fact that they have nothing to offer in the world due to the lack of capacity to reproduce the next generation. Social ecology theory is significant in providing the space for the emergence of queer ecology or queer "environmentalism" to discuss the various contributions that queer-identifying individuals make in the world, the significance of creating a society where they are protected, and how their relationship to the ecology should not be tied to reproduction heteronormativity. The theory is concerned with sustainability and social justice, emphasising the need for an equitable environment and aligning with advocacy work to transform the politics and policymaking environments (Clayton, Kals & Feygina, 2016).

In summary, social ecology examines the influence of the environment on social behaviours and political activities and how they impact visibility and organization, and the link with the research study is based on the influence of feminists and queer-identifying individuals and their positions in politics and policymaking environments. It provides a valuable framework for examining the rise and the role of feminists and queer-identifying individuals in politics and policymaking environments by providing a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach. It assists in showing the complex interactions between the various actors and their existence in the politics and policymaking environments. The challenges faced by queer people and feminists in politics and policymaking environments and the opportunities that are given to them in trying to create inclusive policies. By understanding the interplay between different social and environmental factors, the theory informs more effective policymaking designed with the social-ecological perspective that addresses the root causes of the inequalities in both environments and creates conditions that support the empowerment and participation of queer-identifying individuals and feminists.

2.7.4 Queer Theory

Queer theory is important for the research study because it provides a framework for understanding and examining power dynamics and normative structures. Queer theory, as defined by McCormick (2013), is a conceptual field that finds its driving force in post-structuralist reservations about the notion of what is called an essential identity. The queer counter-discourse was made possible by the post-modern reconfigurations of subjectivity as being more flexible and contradictory rather than a fixed and important concept. In the research study, queer theory examines the deconstruction of normativity as the key area of the research.

The construction of identity and the distinction between gender and sexuality are linked to this part of the literature review. The deconstruction of normative assumptions about gender, sexuality, and identity is important for the understanding of how feminists and queer-identifying individuals challenge and navigate heteronormative and cisnormativity political and policy environments (LeMaster, 2017). By questioning what is normal, queer theory allows for diverse identities and experiences to be validated and recognized in the political and policymaking environments.

The particular interest around the discourse of the theory is the conception that it is transgressive, while the feminist theory is placed as being angry and old-fashioned (Schott, 2003). As argued by Carroll (2012), queer theory often intersects with other critical theories, such as feminist theory in the intersectional analysis. This provides a comprehensive understanding of how different forms of privilege and oppression intersect. The analysis of the experiences of feminists and queer-identifying individuals is significant for understanding the intersectional approach and the overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalization in politics and policymaking environments. The discourse explains how queer theory needs feminist theory because any queer theory that posits feminism as the enemy is unlikely to form an inclusive society. The theory interrogates the pervasiveness of heteronormativity to attempt to argue the unsettled powerful norms supporting the privilege of heterosexual people.

According to Schott (2003), Queer theory should learn the significance of analysing queer practices concerning the complex factors of social identity. The theory includes the project of normalization that has made heterosexuality hegemonic. The queer theory originated in the United States in the early 1990s and its influence has spread throughout the world. As noted in the definition of queer that it is not simply restricted to gay and lesbian people, but it includes any person who identifies outside the common norms of society. In support of the inclusive nature of accommodating queer-identifying individuals, the theory argues that activism is required for political salience by insisting that anyone can engage in anti-homophobic activism, regardless of sexual orientation (McCormick, 2013).

Queer theory provides tools for critiquing the existing power structures and exclusionary political institutions that may reinforce systemic inequalities (McCready, 2004). In the research study, the theory is used to challenge and highlight the marginalization of queer and feminist voices in politics and policy-making environments. The theory is significant in understanding the critique of coming out. The reality is that queers are expected to come out and disclose their sexuality, even in spaces that are not accommodating or harmful to them to do so, which includes the political spaces that they exist in. Disclosing their sexual identity upon entering the political spaces means having to submit to a distinctive set of dangers rather than being an act of liberation because homophobic people can express themselves and queer-identifying individuals are marked and evaluated because of openly admitting their sexual identity (McCormick, 2013).

The theory emphasizes the significance of amplifying and centering the voices and experiences of feminists and queer people who are often silenced and marginalized in the political or policymaking environments. Pearson & Dancey (2011) argued that the focus on marginalized voices ensures that the perspectives of feminists and queer individuals are included in the political discourse and policy development. Queer theory advocates for a more representative and inclusive political and policymaking environments. Queer theorists argued that the coming out narrative is counterproductive as it forces an individual into an already established identity category. The argument speaks on the identity category of being homosexual and is supported by a set of narratives that makes sense only by being what the binary of homosexual is supported by a set of perspectives of coming out as the narrative of living up to the identity categories that can be limited by the problems of viewing gender and sexuality as fixed categories.

The promotion of coming out as significant to combat homophobia and the denial of true homosexual identity, as was the academic trend, was concentrated on theorising "closeted" as a space that protects more than it reveals. This leads to the biggest controversy within political spaces as to whether being in the closet means that people treat you as heterosexual because you have succeeded in hiding your sexual identity or because they know you are homosexual (McCormick, 2013).

In summary, queer theory is important for the research study because it provides critical insights into the deconstruction of normative structures, critique of power, and intersectional analysis and provides an environment that promotes the inclusion of marginalized voices and fosters a deeper understanding of the complexities and dynamics that exists to contribute to more equitable and transformative political and policy environments. The theoretical framework has a transformative potential by promoting radical thinking, political practices, and social norms. Queer theory encourages the implementation of inclusive policies and political strategies and challenges the current context to promote social justice for marginalized groups. The theory highlights the significance of empowerment and agency of individuals in resisting oppressive structures and reshaping the institutions of power. The queer theory emphasizes the way that queer-identifying individuals and feminists can actively participate in political and policymaking environments and influence the processes and not be passive subjects of discrimination.

2.7.5 Conclusion

The second section on theoretical frameworks has shown the significance of each theory to the research study. The first theory being intersectionality, has provided a critical lens on the multi-dimensional identities that individuals have. It has discussed the significance of ensuring that the political and policymaking environments address all the issues that individuals have and not to only focus on race or gender but to also understand the importance of sexuality as an identity that is often neglected which then affects the ability of institutions of power to promote inclusive public policies. The second theory

being social ecology has discussed the influence of the environment on social behaviours and how the political activities impact the visibility of the organisations to be inclusive. It examined The influence of feminists and queer-identifying individuals and their positions within the political and policymaking environments by providing a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach, by showing the complex interactions between the different stakeholders. The third and final theoretical framework was queer theory, it provided a critical analysis into the deconstruction of normative structures to provide a transformative potential to the implementation of inclusive policies and the political strategies to challenge the current context of exclusionary policies.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

Methodology refers to the systematic and theoretical analysis of the methods that must be applied to the field of study (Igwenagu, 2016). It guides the research and how it ought to be conducted. It describes and provides analysis of the methods, limitations, resources, reliability, validity, and dependability. The methodology offers the positionality and ethics of the research. It includes the theoretical analysis of the principles of the methods and the principles associated with the branch of knowledge. It entails the paradigms, theoretical models, and phases of qualitative or quantitative research techniques. The section does not set out to provide solutions but instead offers the theoretical underpinnings for understanding the methods of best practices that can be applied to achieve the best possible results.

3.1.1 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD.

This research used a more qualitative research approach. The method collects non-numerical data such as words (Mcleod, 2023). The research focused on exploring the subjective experiences, opinions, and attitudes of feminists and queer-identifying individuals in policy and political environments. The qualitative research approach is significant for the study of feminists and queer-identifying individuals in politics and policymaking environments. The method assisted in understanding nature, interactions of variables, and strength (Black,1994). The qualitative approach is important for this research study because it takes a holistic perspective that preserves the complexities of human behaviour. A quantitative approach would not have worked for this research study because it provides a simplified and reductionist view of the subject. It answers the “what” question and not the “how often” one. The research provides a detailed description of the phenomenon under study and uncovers new insights and meanings of the relationship between queer-identifying individuals and their lived experiences in politics and within policymaking environments. The purpose of the chosen method of research is that it enables the process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting non-numerical data to allow for the subjective understanding of queer-identifying individuals, and it has provided meaning to their social reality.

It is significant to note the unique experiences that feminist and queer-identifying individuals within the political and policy environments have. Feminists and queer-identifying individuals within the ANC have unique experiences from feminists and queer-identifying individuals within the DA or the EFF or any other political party. Quantitative research methods would not work with this research project because quantitative research methods aim to produce objective and empirical data that can be measured and expressed in numerical terms, which does not account for the different experiences of queer-identifying individuals in various political parties who are under study and experience the world in different ways based on many different factors, such as their positions within the party, background and

lived experiences. The benefits of the qualitative approach are greater because the subjects of the study, feminists and queer-identifying individuals, cannot be controlled, and they can reveal what is going on in their respective parties.

3.1.2 CONSTRUCTIVISM PARADIGM.

Constructivism as the paradigm of qualitative research methods was used in this study. It is the philosophical paradigm that ontologically emphasizes how an individual actively constructs their ideas of reality through their cognition (Shannon-Baker, 2023). The constructivist philosophical paradigm was important for this research because the participants were allowed to construct their unique understanding and knowledge of the world through their different lived experiences (Honebein, 1996). Participants were allowed to reflect on their different experiences because individuals construct much of what they learn through experiences. The paradigm applied to the research allowed participants to construct, describe, and provide narrations of their lived experiences, as well as the belief that knowledge is co-constructed between the researcher and participants. Reality is socially constructed, and the constructivist approach allowed for the interpretive understanding of the lived experiences of feminists and queer-identifying individuals from different political parties (Mertens, 2010). The concept of constructing from the perspective of constructivists is learning that nullifies the uniform and traditional concepts of the world and the assumption that all queer-identifying individuals and feminists have the same experiences in the political and policymaking environments.

The knowledge was socially constructed by feminists and queer-identifying individuals who were active in the research process, and the research attempted to understand their complex world of lived experiences from their respective points of view. The constructivist paradigm emphasizes that research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them (Mertens, 2010). This assumption relates to the research topic under study because it provided space for a broader understanding and interpretations of the unique experiences of queer-identifying individuals and feminists who exist in the same space and even in different political parties who may have the same or different experiences. The constructivist paradigm allowed for an understanding that is not uniform but rather one that allows for the groups under study to co-construct their lived experiences. The understanding of the lived experiences of queer people and feminists cannot only be learned and studied from the literature, but the interviews conducted also showed that learning does not only happen from traditional methods and that it happens even when the researcher discovers knowledge through interacting with the feminists and queer-identifying individuals who form part of politics and policy-making environments. The paradigm was significant for the interviews as new knowledge was learned from their experiences (Adom & Attah Kusi Ankrah, 2016).

3.1.3 RESEARCH TOOLS AND THEIR APPLICATIONS.

3.1.3.1 INTERVIEWS

The research used semi-structured interviews as the main tool to collect information. The application of the tool allowed for the planning, monitoring, and evaluation of the information collected (Simister, 2017). The semi-structured interviews were conducted as a natural conversation with written questionnaires to which the participants responded. There were open-ended questions to discuss the research topic in more detail and to empower the interviewer to collect related information from the interviewees. The interviews considered personal feelings, emotions, and ideas with less censorship of the participants. The qualitative research required planning as the semi-structured interviews were pre-planned and well-prepared (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022). Frequent questions related to the research were asked to briefly touch upon the research topic to prepare the interviewee for the more challenging questions. Additionally, the interviewer developed follow-up questions based on the answers provided by the interviewee (Elhami & Khoshnevisan, 2022).

The semi-structured interviews were quite flexible, and most of the questions were crafted during the interview. The research was conducted with one person at a time (individual interviews). The interviews were administered formally and conducted face-to-face via Teams, Skype, and Zoom. The research interviews were conducted with queer-identifying and feminist individuals who form part of the ANC, EFF & DA. Participants were made up of queer-identifying members of parliament and feminists who were previously members of parliament, councillors, organizations, and various individuals who formed part of their respective parties. The set questions for the interviews are in the appendices. Interviews were an important data-gathering technique involving verbal communication between the researcher and the subject (Mathers, Fox & Hunn, 2000). It was significant to use interviews because it allowed participants to speak freely, and the responses were not always limited to answering direct questions.

3.1.4 SAMPLING: PURPOSEFUL (CRITERION)

The research report was conducted using purposeful sampling as it is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information related to the study of interest (Palinkas et al, 2013). There are different purposeful sampling strategies. Criterion sampling is used the most in the implementation research. The research used the criterion of purposeful sampling to aid in identifying and selecting queer-identifying and feminist individuals who are especially knowledgeable about or have experienced homophobia and understand queer-related issues. The importance, availability, and willingness of the participants and their ability to communicate their experiences and opinions in an articulate, reflective, and expressive manner were considered during the research study (Palinkas et al, 2013). This research study aimed to discover and interpret opinions and revise accepted theories or laws considering the new opinions or facts about queer-identifying individuals within the policy and political

spaces. It closely looked at political party members who identify as queer and feminists to ensure that there was a generalization of the findings from the research sample to that of the entire population (Mujere, 2016). The study data was collected from interviews with queer people who form part of the political parties and those within the policy-making spaces.

The process of selecting suitable groups ensured that there was a maximization of the best possible number of responses so that a large enough sample was achieved to allow for data analysis (Mujere, 2016). The study determined that the parameters and characteristics of the entire population were achieved. The set criteria of questions were created to better understand the lived experiences of queer people and feminists in the entire population, and the sample that best fit into this criterion were old and young queer-identifying individuals and feminists within political parties. It enabled a better understanding and responses to the research questions. It determined the objectives of the party manifestos and how the leaders can ensure that there is access to political participation of queer people within their political space. It interrogated the existence of feminist movement members that emerged within the party to evaluate their contributions to the implementation of queer policies and their representation within their respective political parties. In the interviews, queer individuals and feminists participated as it was a one-on-one basis, and therefore the achieved sample were the representatives of the population. The specific eligibility criteria for the participants were as follows:

1. Aged 18 and above.
2. Willingness and consent to participate in the study.
3. Self-identifies as part of the queer community and/or feminist.
4. Part of the three dominant political parties in South Africa and or within the policy-making environment – ANC, DA & EFF.

A total number of (15) participants were interviewed for this research. Some names used in the paper have been anonymized and do not reflect the real identities of some participants.

The study aimed to gain deep insights and understanding of queer people and feminists within politics and policymaking environments. The sample size of 15 participants was to ensure a detailed collection of data. The research questions, methodology, and the need for insight guided the decision to have 15 participants for the study. The breadth and depth project and method allowed the researcher to manage and analyse the data and retain the distinctive order of knowledge (Edwards, Davidson, Jamieson & Weller, 2021). The smaller sample allowed the researcher to spend more time with each participant, conducting in-depth interviews and analysing the data in detail.

3.2 PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS.

The process of data analysis in qualitative research refers to the mass of words generated through interviews or observational data that needs to be described and summarized (Lacey & Luff, 2007). The research question required that the researcher find the relationships between different themes that have been identified, or related behaviour and ideas to biographical characteristics of the participants such as age, gender and affiliated political party. The common main themes identified in this research were homophobia, representation and intersectionality. According to Lacey & Luff (2007), the implications for policy or practice can be derived from the data or interpretation sought of the findings from previous studies and the ultimate theory can be developed and evaluated using advanced analytical techniques.

The analysis of qualitative data went through the following stages: familiarization with the data through review, reading, and listening, transcription of tape-recorded material, organization, and indexing of data for easy retrieval and identification and lastly the anonymizing of sensitive information (Lacey & Luff, 2007).

3.2.1 NARRATIVE DATA ANALYSIS.

The narrative data analysis was used for the research study to focus on interpreting the core narratives of the participants (Kaluza, 2023). The processes taken included, defining the research questions and objectives as the focus of the research was on the personal experiences, identity construction, and the narratives of queer-identifying individuals and feminists. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the narrative data. This means that it used the first-person narrative and was then organised to allow for the understanding of how queer-identifying individuals experience homophobia within political parties (Kaluza, 2023). The researcher encouraged storytelling by asking open-ended questions to prompt participants to share detailed accounts of their experiences. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The focus was not only on the actual words used during the interviews, but the narrative analysis also allowed for a compilation of the set data on how queer people and feminists expressed themselves, the language they used when expressing their thoughts, feelings, and their experiences within the political parties and in the interviews (Kaluza, 2023).

The researcher read and re-read the data to familiarise themselves with the content and highlight the key ideas. Notes were taken on the initial themes that emerged. The narrative analysis of the study did consider how the research participants constructed their narratives. The narratives were separated into meaningful stories to maintain the overall flow. From the interviews to coding, the entire individual narratives were kept together so that the information shared during the interview remained intact. The initial themes emerging from the data such as the actions, relationships, and feelings were observed to see if there were any patterns within the stories. The individual data that tells the story of their experiences was captured using structured interviews, to allow the researcher to identify the structure

of the narrative. The researcher applied the narrative elements such as chronology which is the order of events and the themes to see what the main themes were from the interviews. It was significant for the researcher to interpret the data, and this was done through the process of analysing within and across the narratives. The information provided by queer-identifying individuals and feminist participants within the political and policymaking environments across different political parties in South Africa was compared (Kaluza, 2023).

The researcher contextualized the narratives to relate the participants' narratives to the broader social and political contexts, focus was placed on identity and meaning. Closer attention to how the participants constructed their identities and realities through their stories. The process that followed was for the researcher or interviewer to reconstruct the narratives. The participants' stories were pieced together in a way that reflects the underlying meanings and experiences to show the shared patterns across the participants and to highlight the differences between queer-identifying individuals and feminists. The process that followed then was the analysis write-up. The researcher presented the individual stories and discussed how the narratives address the research questions and reflected on how the theoretical frameworks of intersectionality, social ecology, and queer theory influenced the analysis (Kaluza, 2023).

The researcher considered multiple interpretations of the data by being transparent in how the conclusion was derived. Lastly, the main findings were summarized in the findings and discussions section of the paper.

3.2.2 AXIAL CODING

Axial coding was used to read over the codes and their underlying data, to find how they can be grouped and abstracted into categories. The method was used to make sense of the data through a transparent and organised process. The researcher identified larger themes that were relevant to the research questions (Sybing, 2024). The researcher analysed the interview data about perspectives regarding the rise and the role of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in democratising the political and policymaking environments. The codes such as “the rise of feminism in the party”, “expression of queer identity” and “exclusive women and queer desks within the parties” might posit a connection among the first three codes and were organised under the same category of representation. This axial code represents a potentially key theme that was significant for the data analysis. The coding helped the researcher to identify relationships to elevate the initial codes from the separate and unrelated ones to have more cohesive units for comprehensive understanding of the data (Sybing, 2024).

The grouping of codes together into categories allowed the researcher to do a comparison to incorporate new data into the study to enable the researcher to re-read the existing data to check if it affirms or challenges the identified categories. An example of this was when the researcher examined whether the

category of “homophobia” apply to new data as the participants were saying that there is a “disregard for queer issues” or “lack of prioritisation of queer and women policies” or that they need to revisit which codes it belongs to. Even when the axial coding had its own challenges of being subjective, the researcher ensured that their iterative process for coding is clear to the research audience (Sybing, 2024).

3.2.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

The researcher used thematic analysis to systematically organise and analyse the complex data set. It involved searching for themes that can capture the narratives that were available in the account of data set (Dawadi, 2020). It involved the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the transcribed data to produce insightful and reliable findings. The thematic analysis used the deductive (top-down) approach and the inductive (bottom-up) approach. The deductive approach allowed the researcher to analyse the data in relation to their theoretical interest in the issues being investigated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The top-down approach allowed the researcher to begin by analysing the themes that are identified through the literature review. In the inductive approach, the data was coded without trying to fit the themes into the pre-existing coding frame or the preconceptions of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Both inductive and deductive approaches were used to maximise the overall depths of the analysis. A deductive approach was used as a starting point, which allowed for the analyses of the data in relation to the themes that have emerged through the literature review, such as representation, homophobia and intersectionality as a theoretical framework that was done for the study of the research questions that were designed for the research study. The interesting and relevant themes emerged through the interview and was considered to maximise the overall analysis of the research. The unexpected themes were considered as sub-themes for a better understanding of the lived experiences of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the political and policy environments. Many inductive codes emerged when analysing the data.

STEPS TAKEN FOR THE THEMATIC ANALYSIS:

1. **Familiarisation with the data**

The first phase begins with the researcher in familiarising themselves with the data to help them figure out the type and number of themes that might emerge through the data (Braune & Clarke, 2006). All the oral interviews were transcribed in full to have a sense of how the participants responded to the questions asked during the interviews about the study. All the transcription are attached on the appendices of the paper and the recordings are stored safely to protect the identities of the interviewees;

This step was significant in guiding the researcher on the further steps of the research that may have to be carried out to appropriately analyse the data (Braune & Clarke, 2006).

2. Generating initial codes

The first step of the data analysis (familiarisation with the data) allowed the richness of the initial findings to emerge. The researcher re-read the transcripts before the creating the codes that were considered. The transcripts were carefully read, and all the data was coded. All the transcripts were coded after reading the transcripts several times (Braune & Clarke, 2006).

3. Searching for themes

This step started with a long list of the codes that were identified across the data set. The main objective of this step was to find out the patterns and relationships between and across the entire data set (Chamberlain, 2015). The researcher had analysed the codes considering how different codes could be combined to form an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The major focus in this step was on the analysis at the broader level of themes rather than codes as the themes capture something significant about the data in relation to the research questions and presents a patterned response or meaning within the data set. It was significant for the researcher to conceptualise those codes as the building blocks and combine similar or multiple codes to generate potential themes that are also in line with the literature review, theoretical framework and the research questions.

A list of codes was prepared on a separate paper and then they were organised into themes and sub-themes to reflect the relationship between the codes and themes because of the explorative nature of the study. It was significant for the researcher to return to the transcripts and re-read before placing theme in their respective groups to create different codes to combine them into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). When the researcher was developing the themes, the concepts and issues that were previously identified in the literature review, were found to be meaningful and some codes could be subsumed under them.

4. Reviewing themes

All the themes (main themes and sub-themes) were intentionally brought together as the process was aimed at the refinement of those initially grouped themes to be presented in a systematic way. The themes were checked for consistency and coherence for internal homogeneity and the distinctions between themes for heterogeneity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step considered all the coded extracts relevant to each initial theme. The researcher reread the collated extracts for each theme and clustered all the themes and sub-themes to check whether they could form a coherent pattern. All the codes and themes along with the collated extracts were considered to examine whether they could form a coherent pattern.

The validity of individual themes in relation to the data set was set. It was significant to reread the transcripts to ensure that themes work in relation to the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Some new codes emerged but did not add anything substantial and that is why the researcher decided to stop recording the data. All the themes were put back together and were refined which could reflect on the type of themes developed for the study being representation, homophobia and intersectionality. The themes fit together and tell the overall story about the data.

5. Defining and naming themes

This step started with an aim to further refine and define the themes, that is identifying the essence of what each theme is about and examining what aspect of the data each theme captured (Braun, Clarke, 2006). The themes cannot be too diverse and complex; therefore, the researcher went back to collated data extracts for each theme and organised all the themes into a coherent and consistent account (Braun, Clarke, 2006). Final name along with the definition was assigned to each theme to tell a story about the data. Careful attention was paid to identifying the story that each theme told and how it fitted into the broader overall story that the researcher wanted to talk about on the data in relation to the literature review, theoretical framework and research questions to ensure that there were not too many overlaps between the themes.

6. Writing report

The final stage of the analysis was to write down the report of the findings. A great effort was made to provide a coherent, concise and logical account of the story that the data represented within and across themes by providing sufficient evidence and particular examples and extracts which could capture the essence of the point that the researcher was demonstrating. The examples and extracts were embedded within the analytic narrative in such a way that they could make an argument in respect of the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.3 LIMITATIONS, FEASIBILITY, AND POSITIONALITY.

3.3.1 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study arise when there are inconsistencies in the way that queerness is defined, thus making it difficult to compare the findings across studies (Institute of Medicine, 1999). Research on queer-identifying women presents various challenges because sexuality represents a subgroup of women for which the standard definition of the population is lacking in terms of identity. The challenges arise from many queer women's distrusts of researchers and there was little funding support for researching queer-identifying women (Institute of Medicine,1999). The use of small, non-probability samples limited the generalizability of findings (Institute of Medicine,1999). Many studies have used

queer bars, and organizations as their samples. Part of the limitations of the research study is ambiguities which are inherent in the human language and can be noted in the analysis (Atieno, 2009).

The categorization of queer-identifying individuals is different across the spectrum, people can form part of one community as queers but still have other different identities. The other disadvantage of the study was that the analysis in their findings cannot be extended to a wider population with the same degree and this was because the findings of the research were not evaluated to discover whether they were statistically significant or due to chance (Atieno, 2009). The research was only exclusive to queer-identifying and feminist individuals within the three dominant political parties in South Africa and not entirely open to all queer-identifying individuals in society which can mean that not all experiences of queer people are under study. The other limitation was the unwillingness of most queer-identifying people within political parties and policy-making processes to avail themselves to be part of the study or to even speak about the various issues they face within their spaces.

3.3.2 FEASIBILITY

The researcher ensured that the study was feasible and acceptable to use the experience sampling method amongst queer-identifying people and feminists and acknowledged the barriers and harms that may form part of the research or hinder the ability of the research to be conducted effectively. Feasibility aimed to refine the understanding of how the intervention works and the facilitation of the ongoing adaptation of the research and the evaluation design in the preparation for the study (O'Cathain et al, 2015). The qualitative data was of value at this stage because the feasibility stage was unique in that it involved the ongoing adaptation of plans for conducting the research and of the intervention in preparation for the full report (O'Cathain et al, 2015).

It was significant to determine what needed to be done, how long it took to complete the study and how best it was done, and the resources needed to complete the research (O'Cathain et al, 2015). In this instance the research was feasible through organizing interviews months in advance to give the participants time to schedule and be present for the in-person interviews or virtual ones. The research collection of data required little to no tangible resources. The researcher travelled to designated public places to have the interviews with the participants or on various social platforms such as zoom, teams and skype for the virtual ones.

3.3.3 POSITIONALITY

Positionality describes a person's worldview and the position that they adopt about a research study and its social and political context (Holmes, 2020). Where the researcher comes from and the participant's worldview concerns ontological assumptions, which refer to their beliefs about the nature of social reality and what is knowable about the world (Holmes, 2020). In terms of positionality, it was significant to ensure that the researcher does not have any influence on the participants of the research, simply on

the basis that they have a higher position than those the study is based upon (Institute of Medicine, 1999). The researcher needed to maintain their role and not provide any advice based on their experiences.

At no point did the researcher exercise power and it is imperative in the collection of data to make the participants feel comfortable and not forced to disclose confidential information about themselves. The relevance of positionality was critical in the research because it determined the outcomes and the results when the researcher did not directly influence how the study was conducted. Holmes (2020) claims that an individual's values and beliefs are shaped by their political allegiance, faith, religion, gender, sexuality, race, social class, and status. It was significant for the researcher to not assume to understand the lived experiences of the participants and to always remember that the individuals have unique experiences that are informed by the party that they belong to. The researcher remained impartial during the interview process and did not view the participants' experiences through their lens (Berkovic, Ayton, Briggs & Ackermans, 2020).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical consideration is a significant part of qualitative research. The main objective is to ensure that members of the research can identify and apply the criteria in place for the evaluation of different areas of the research (Institute of Medicine,1999). Ethical means and ends are both important to the study when it entails the protection of human subjects. The researcher needed to respect and adhere to ethics when conducting the research (Institute of Medicine, 1999). The direct interaction and involvement with queer people and feminists required that they acknowledge the subjective nature of the researcher as part of the tools within the research process. During the process of research, it was significant to protect the participants from harm during the conduction of information and not to merely treat them to an end. A practical example of an ethical issue that may happen is harassment or discrimination when dealing with people from minority groups (Institute of Medicine, 1999). Ethics revolve around the responsibilities of the researcher towards the participants, academic community, and society at large. The Researcher referred to the ethical guidelines to ensure that they have followed the principles of good research practices (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023).

The ethical considerations that were adhered to for the collection and analysis of the data included ethics of respect and conflict of interest, relationship with the participants, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity unless permission was granted to disclose the information of the participant. Reporting back to the participants, issues of translation when needed, and trustworthiness of the research. Individuals were treated fairly, sensitively, and with dignity and freedom from prejudice in recognition of both their rights and any of their differences (Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza, 2023). Recognition of their age, sexuality, gender, race, class, nationality, disability, or political belief were considered.

3.5 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND DEPENDABILITY

3.5.1 VALIDITY

The validity of the research was established using the employing moderator method, to overcome personal bias through the process of analysing the data collected (Chetty & Thakur, 2020). There was a consensus among the participants and the school on how to establish the accuracy and correctness of the research (Chetty & Thakur, 2020). The research included a series of interview questions to assess the knowledge of queer-identifying individuals and feminists who form part of the policy and political environments in South Africa. The sample was divided into two groups. Namely, one in the policy space and the other in the political space to reduce biases. The sample included queer-identifying individuals and feminists, who have been mostly raised in an urban environment, along with the middle-aged and elderly population. According to Chetty & Thakur (2020), the inclusion of greater diversity allowed for the research to reduce the biases towards only a specific type of outcome to create a base for valid results.

The internal validity is defined as the extent to which the observed results represent the truth in the population that is under study and are not due to methodological errors (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The internal validity of the research was increased when the researcher ensured careful study planning and sufficient quality control and implementation strategies. It included data collection, data analysis, and the same size. The external validity was maximized, by using broad inclusion criteria that resulted in a study population that was more closely similar by choosing interventions that were feasible to apply (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). The research provided sufficient evidence for the study to be valid. The data was collected from queer-identifying individuals and feminists from more than one political party by using the same interview questions and analysis to represent the truth in the population. The subjective responses provided by the respective participants in the study had common themes to represent the internal validity of the study. Queer-identifying individuals and feminists within political parties represent the interests of the general population as people who exist in their respective communities with similar struggles and issues as the many other queer-identifying individuals in society. The components and materials used in the study were similar across all different participants to ensure the validity of the study.

3.5.2 RELIABILITY

The researcher conducted two processes to establish the reliability of the research. The first part included recording the data in a paper as the participants were sharing their experiences. The participants were asked for consent to have the recording on whilst the research was conducted, and the researcher was typing the responses verbatim. Reliability in the research included the researcher's role in notetaking of all the activities that took place during the study and the decision around the various

aspects of the study and the relevant people to interview for the research (Clowney, 2009). The recordings of the interviews allowed the researcher to listen to them to ensure that the credibility of the research was maintained by capturing the correct information on the research. In the research around queer-identifying individuals and feminists, reliability was achieved through the evaluation of interviews and was measured accurately by engaging the people who had sufficient information and lived experiences for the study.

The data is reliable and accurate as the results were consistent across the participants. The use of recordings in the interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to interpret the results as per the recording of every queer-identifying individual and feminist participant to assess the progress of the research. The writing and recording of the interviews as they happen, helped in the concise construction of the conclusion of the research parameters (Chetty & Thakur,2020).

3.5.3 DEPENDABILITY

The dependability aspect of the research refers to the stability of the data over time and in the study (Clowney, 2009). The dependability of the research was ensured by using the same techniques to collect data from different participants. The research indicates that the work was repeated in the same context, with the same methods and participants who exist under the same political and policy environment in South Africa, related results were obtained regarding their common experiences within their respective political parties. In addressing the dependability issue of the research, the processes within the study were reported in detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the same work, if not necessarily to obtain the same results, and to allow others to understand the environments in which the research was conducted to contribute to the dependability of the study (Shenton, 2004). Dependability includes the aspect of consistency, the researcher checked whether the analysis process was in line with the accepted standards for the design to ensure that it was the same for all participants under study (Korstjens & Moser, 2017).

The researcher thoroughly documented each step of the research process to ensure transparency for when others want to replicate the study or assess the dependability of the findings, by following the same steps and procedures (Ahmed, 2024). The research design and implementation were explained in detail, and the process of gathering data was explained in detail for the in-depth methodological description to allow for the study to be repeated. The reflective appraisal of the study was maintained through the process of evaluating the effectiveness of the process of the inquiry that was taken (Shenton, 2004). The researcher maintained a reflective journal to document their own biases and thoughts to assist in recognizing and accounting for potential biases that could affect the research.

3.5.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the research approach as a qualitative method. It has collected non-numerical data such as words to explore the subjective opinions, experiences and attitudes of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the political and policymaking environments. A constructivist paradigm was used as a method of data collection to show how individuals actively construct their ideas of reality through their expressions on their lived experiences, using interviews as the tool of application. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect information and the application of the tool allowed for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the collected information. A purposeful criterion was used to carefully identify and select queer-identifying individuals and feminists who are specifically the right individuals to contribute to the study.This process was done to select the suitable groups to ensure the maximazation of the best possible number of responses. The narrative data analysis was used to interprete the core narratives of the participants.The chapter discussed the limitations of the study as there are inconsistencies in the way that queerness is defined and that makes it difficult to compare the findings across the studies. Feasibility of the study was ensured through organising interviews months in advance to give participants sufficient time to be present for the interviews. Positionality was discussed as a parameter to ensure that the researcher did not influence the responses of the interviewees and an ethical consideration ensured that the researcher adhered to the ethics of respect, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. The validity of the research was established using the employing moderator method to overcome personal biases through the process of analysising the data collected. Two processes were conducted to ensure that the data collected is reliable through the recording of the data in a paper and having the recording on with the permission of the participants. The dependability of the study was ensured through documenting every step of the research process to ensure transparency.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings of the study. It discusses the axial coding as a method used to understand the data collected from the interviews as explained in chapter 3 (3.6). The researcher analysed the data collected from interviews to create codes that were grouped together to create themes. It includes a list of participants and the political parties that they form part of. A thematic analysis was used to show the step by step process of how codes were devided into themes as explained in chapter 3 (3.7).

Table 1: List of participants and their affiliated parties.

Participants	Affiliated party
Participant 1	EFF
Participant 2	EFF
Participant 3	ANC
Participant 4	DA
Participant 5	ANC
Participant 6	EFF
Participant 7	ANC
Participant 8	DA
Participant 9	ANC
Participant 10	DA
Participant 11	DA
Participant 12	DA
Participant 13	ANC
Participant 14	EFF
Participant 15	ANC

Total number of participants in each party: ANC (6), DA (5) & EFF (4).

Table 2: Familiarisation of the data: Points of interest linked to research questions

Research questions	Codes
Do parties' policies adequately address queer-identifying individuals and women's issues and the necessary policy amendments?	Advocacy for different policies. The rise of feminism in the party. Policy formation. A sense of belonging. Women-centred policies. Queer-centred policies. Sexism. Tokenisation
How can party's policies provide a safe and inclusive society for queer people and women?	Inclusion of queer individuals and women. Safety. Prioritisation of lesbians/ queer or women's issues. Inclusive decision-making process. Opening spaces for discussions Cisgendered policymakers. Power given to men. Liberal party. Safe spaces. Plight of queer issues.
Why should political parties care about women and queer inclusion, representation and participation in their manifestos and execution?	Representation. Pride events. Inclusion. Voices of queer individuals being heard in the party. Participation. Manifesto. Constitution. Access to spaces for queer people. Patriarchy. Exclusive LGBTQIA+ desk. No Platform. Progressive party. Disregard. Adapting to the male paradigm for survival.

Table 3: Searching for themes

Themes	Sub themes	Codes	Description
Representation	Inclusion of queer people and women.	Expression of queer identity. Inclusivity in decision-making process. Exclusive queer and women desks in the parties.	Representation refers to the portrayal and inclusion of queer/LGBTQIA+ persons and feminists/women. Participants frequently mentioned inclusion, representation, gender equality.
	Diversity.	LGBTQIA+ structures in the party.	This theme highlights how queer individuals and women navigate their identity in environments that can be both liberating and threatening.
	Gender equality.	Platforms given to queer people.	LGBTQI+desk created for exclusive queer-related issues.
	Visibility.	Progressive.	It suggests visibility and personal comfort.
	Equitable society.	White gay cis male.	
		Equality and diversity.	This theme means queer people elected to represent their parties in government. The social acceptance of queer people in different positions of government and in society.
		Opportunity to serve in government.	
		Promotion of LGBTQIA+ person's rights.	This theme highlights the celebration of pride and the legal and social rights of queer persons.
		Privilege to represent the party.	This theme represent challenging the stereotypes and influencing the systemic changes within the party. Avoiding tokenism and creating spaces and dialogues to foster solidarity through the use of inclusive languages.
		Access.	
		Liberal feminist.	

		Inclusive language.	
Homophobia	Power-dynamics, men.	Lack of prioritisation.	Homophobia is defined as prejudice, dislike and irrational fear against people who are homosexual or perceived to be part of the queer community. Participants frequently mentioned lack of prioritisation on the basis of their sexual identity.
	Social and institutional exclusion.	Cisgender and straight males. Rejection of exclusive desks for minority members.	This theme highlights the alienation and marginalisation from the political and policy environments.
	Disregard for queer issues.	African political issue.	Participants shared accounts of exclusion and heteronormative assumptions.
	Prejudice against people of the LGBTQIA+ community.	Lack of Creation of safe spaces for women and queer individuals. Pushbacks.	This theme highlights overt and subtle manifestations of homophobia. The discrimination and prejusice based on their sexual orientation and how these experiences shaped their sense of self and interactions with others.
	Discrimination.	Tokenisation.	This theme highlights erasure and invalidation as it emphasizes the emotional labour that queer individuals undertake to navigate such environments.
	Violence directed towards individuals based on sexual orientation.	Disregard for queer related individuals.	Familial rejection and the denial of gender-affirming care.
			This theme highlights the lack of belonging and unequal access to opportunities. Racial segregation in policies. This theme highlights women and queer individuals being excluded from the male-dominated professional spaces.
	Stigmatisation.	Bigotry. Patriarchy.	

	Negative attitudes towards queer people.	Misogyny. Oppression based on sexuality.	This theme highlights some of the traditional and religious doctrines.
Intersectionality	Race, gender and sexuality.	Black woman.	Intersectionality is a framework for understanding how different aspects of an individual's social and political identities such as race, gender and sexuality intersect to create unique modes of discrimination. Participants frequently mentioned that the parties represents them on the basis of being black and not necessarily on their sexual identity (gender vs sexuality).
		Black & queer.	Black participants often expressed facing compounded discrimination. For example, a black lesbian participant shared that they sometimes feel invisible and that they have to prove their queerness while navigating racism too.
		Non-binary black individual. Privilege.	
		Social justice strategies.	This theme shows the significance of recognizing diversity and highlights the singular narratives of queerness and how it excluded marginalized voices and perpetuates inequalities in spaces that are supposedly inclusive.

4.2 Conclusion

The chapter has shown how themes were created from codes that were generated from the data collected. The researcher grouped the participants together into categories to create themes, sub-themes, codes and descriptors to explain how the themes were created from codes. An explanation on how the axial coding was utilised to read over the codes and their underlying data. The chapter explained how the researcher did a comparison to incorporate new data into the study. A list of participant and the party that they belong to was shown on table 1 and the familiarisation of the data was shown on table 2 and the table on searching for themes was shown on table 3. A thematic analysis of the step by step process on how the codes were grouped into themes was explained in the chapter. The steps being familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and lastly writing the report were explained.

5. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

Three key themes were examined in the research study and interviews. The themes are as follows, Representation, homophobia and intersectionality. These themes are found in the literature review and even in the interviews conducted in the research study with the participants. The research had three main questions to examine the rise and the role of queer-identifying individuals in the political and policymaking environments. The first one is whether parties' policies adequately address the issues faced by queer-identifying individuals and women, and if necessary, policy amendments have been made. What political parties and policymaking environments can do to make provisions for a safe and inclusive society for queer people and women, and lastly, the question around the need for political parties to care about women and queer inclusivity, representation, and participation.

The engagements with existing literature influenced the choice of themes to discuss in the findings and the discussions of the research report. The researcher noticed a gap in previous studies and that led to further exploration of the themes mentioned for the research study. The data analysis was organised around key themes and grouped under the headings of representation, homophobia and intersectionality. The research study had a total of fifteen participants who form part of three political parties in South Africa, namely, ANC, DA & EFF.

5.1 THEMES: REPRESENTATION, HOMOPHOBIA & INTERSECTIONALITY

5.1.1 REPRESENTATION

On the theme around representation, participants expressed that they feel included and prioritized in the issues around queer people and feminists. Some participants expressed that they feel excluded from the decision-making process of their respective parties. According to Itai (2024), although South Africa is the only African country that constitutionally recognizes the rights of the queer community, some of the political parties that managed to secure seats in parliament had signed that they would reserve these gains. None of the eighteen political parties that managed to win at least one seat in parliament entirely represented the queer community (Itai, 2024).

The political party respondents expressed support for human rights for the LGBTQIA+ community and women during the interviews conducted; however, few parties had developed explicit policies or dedicated structures to address the issues of the queer community (Thorpe, 2018. This stretches the representation pool of the queer community in political spaces and particularly in the executive political office that she occupies as a deputy minister in the presidency for women, youth, and persons with disabilities (Mafu, 2024). Some respondents on the theme around representation mentioned that they do feel represented, but more work could be done.

Respondent 3 (ANC) mentioned that:

> *"The ANC is a representation of society, the patriarchy and homophobia that is displayed in society can be seen in the party too".*

This further adds to the argument on how parties differed in their assessment of whether increasing the number of LGBTQIA+ representatives within their parties would increase or decrease their voter support (Thorpes, 2018). The respondent suggested that this decrease could be attributed to societal conservatism rather than the lack of party support for the human rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. South Africa has an open multi-party democracy but the equal representation of the queer community and other marginalised groups such as women remains a work in progress (Hitchen, 2023). Although all major political parties openly support the rights of LGBTQIA+ people, they continue to face prominent levels of violence in society and are marginalised, and political representation remains incredibly low.

They further added that:

> *"We have created an LGBTQI+ DESK within the party. Ideally, when this was pitched in the ANC it was rejected and it was then taken upon in the women's league as a substructure and that is why it was named the ANC women's league LGTBQI+ desk. There was a lot of pushbacks about why it was part of the women's league. There have been very progressive moves that have been made in the same LGBTQI+ DESK."*

Respondent 9 added that:

> *"Existing in the LGBTQIA+ in KZN means that we are dependent on the ANC women's league and now that we don't have leadership in the KZN women's league as it was launched nationally, the KZN conference didn't sit which meant that it delayed us as the LGBTQIA+ desk. So, we depend on the ANC women's league and now we are unable to perform the duties of the LGBTQIA+ desk." The launching of the structures of the ANC women's league will enable the ANC LGBTQIA+ desk to be able to perform their duties."*

The establishment of the ANC LGBTQIA+ desk shows that increased participation, as discussed in the literature review, has led to greater inclusivity but is still insufficient even with the policy changes that have been made. Both responses given by Respondent 3 and Respondent 9 speak to the argument provided in the research that parties rarely speak on the intersectional identities of women that exist in their spaces. The problem of how queer people consistently rely on feminists or women's movements that exist in their parties for some form of existence is unacceptable. The ANC Women's League has created a new structure to champion the needs and rights of the LGBTQIA+ community and the desk

serves as a space for members of the LGBTQIA+ community to freely express themselves and influence the movement in its articulation of the conference resolution and policies (Igual, 2020).

The desk is a subcommittee of the ANCWL and will be run in line with the constitution. It is problematic for the ANC LGBTQIA+ desk to be under the ANC women's league because that means there are still limitations that the queer community faces on issues that are not entirely the same as those of women. The fact that the resolution was passed in recognition of the intersections between gender and sex in a heterosexual and patriarchal society and the oppressions faced by all those who identified as women, shows the policy gaps that have not been sufficiently addressed as discussed on the theme of intersectionality in the framework. The progress made within the desk is on the inclusiveness of transgender women and the fact that at first the members were only limited to women but have now progressed to being open to gay men (Igual, 2020).

The representation from a feminist/woman, Respondent 5 (EFF) said:

> *"I feel included in the party," in the position I sit in the committee, I must inform the party about the discussions that take place in parliament." "Everything is primarily informed by the constitution of the party and the manifesto."*

This shows that the South African constitution is consulted in drafting the party's constitutions. Members of the Queer community are protected by the inclusion of sexual orientation as one of the listed grounds on which unfair discrimination may not take place (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 2017).

Representation matters because it can affirm queer identities and other feminists in the political and policymaking environments. Representation reduces feelings of isolation and provides a sense of belonging and community. Representation is significant for educating the broader public about the issues faced by queer people and women in the political and policymaking environments and society. These findings are important for political and policy reform, parties should prioritize inclusive policymaking as a representation of marginalized communities such as women and queer-identifying individuals. Lack of representation is a problem, and it also means that the policy development does not substantively include the voices of queer-identifying individuals and their lived experiences (Hitchen, 2023). This is in line with the argument provided in the literature review that South Africa is a case of a state that has legalized homosexuality, and the development of equality legislation does not lead to social acceptance (The Political Use of Homophobia, 2014). Homophobia is a political problem in Africa, and it is the responsibility of the government to put an end to the hatred that often gives rise to violence against the LGBTQIA+ community.

Respondent 6 (ANC) said:

> *"In our contributions to the formation of the constitution, we formed organizations and asked what rights the gays and lesbians would like to see enshrined in the constitution. "We were active in the ANC branches, and we would go to meetings and raise gays and lesbians' issues." When the constitution formation started, we managed to start the conversation in the setup of committees that looked at different issues."*

South African post-apartheid constitution was the first in the world to include an explicit prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation. The broad legislative and judicial protection for LGBTQIA+ rights was enshrined in the constitution from the decriminalization of sexual behaviour and this timeline shows the significant moment in the struggle for freedom from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (We the People South Africa, 2017).

Respondent 4 (DA) expressed that:

> *"Over the years the party policies of the DA are formulated in line with the South Africa constitution and their voice has never been sidelined during the address of queer-related issues even as an openly queer individual."*

This response was significant in affirming that the South African constitution explicitly recognizes and provides for the rights of LGBTQIA+ persons and women, making it an important outlier on the continent and further adding to the discussion on the research conducted in 2017 by the Triangle project (Thorpe, 2018), that suggests that while trust in political parties remains low, about 58% of the LGBTQI+ respondents felt that more representation of queer and women politicians in parties would better address their issues and needs.

Respondent 7 said:

> *"I want to mention the process around the task team because we needed all departments to understand the plight of the queer issues." I was employed to set up the provincial task team." "I was frustrated in the process because the government officials that were supposed to participate were not interested." They would always say that they do not understand and when we form a sensitization workshop to educate them, they would not come." "It looked like they were just ticking the box but not necessarily being active."*

This speaks to the lack of care and prioritization of queer-related issues by government officials. Representation of queer people in leadership positions on both the LGBTQIA+ issues and all other social issues affecting the country is important (World Economic Forum, 2018). Queer education and awareness of government officials are important, and the officials also have the responsibility to be actively engaged in the process and show up for meetings and actively collaborate with the queer people in the space to transform the political and policymaking environments. The lack of queer political

representation echoes the similar sentiments around progressive approaches to inclusion to say that queer representation in political and policymaking environments can actively reform the policies and ensure that there is the prioritization of queer-related issues, as highlighted in the decision-making process of the literature review.

5.1.2 HOMOPHOBIA

The responses received add to the arguments presented in the literature review that individuals whose genders and sexualities run counter to normative ideals have become important in the discourse around state building (Van der Wal, 2021). The complexity arises from the tensions between belonging and disidentifying and that the idea of sexual and gendered citizenship is negotiated by queer people who exist in the political environments. Chapter two discussed the barriers to political participation. The idea is that sexism and homophobia negatively affect feminists and queer-identifying individuals from accessing political power. This means that the development of structures to encourage queer participation in politics needs to be created to ensure more meaningful participation that is inclusive and representative.

Respondent 1(EFF) expressed that:

> *"There is lack of prioritization of queer-related issues, queer people are somewhat given the space to have input when it comes to policies around queer persons, but I can still say that the space is still very much cisgender, and straight males are in control of the same policies".*

Social exclusion involves being "shut out" fully or partially from any of the political, economic, social, and cultural systems, which determine an individual's social integration in a society (Sogunro,2022). It is considered an important and multi-dimensional process, including the exclusion from the decision-making and the political process. Social exclusion in the study highlights how vulnerable sexual and gender minorities are excluded from political participation, even on issues that specifically affect them. Political homophobia can even be seen in the enactment of laws targeting sexual and gender minorities as a means of social control and the enforcement of laws sustains the power that cisgender people have in the policymaking environments.

Respondent 2 (EFF) expressed that:

> *"I am part of the leadership structure of the party however it is difficult to be one voice in a party that you did not start", in terms of the LGBTQIA+ community and women, I do not think it is solely an EFF problem but the African continent problem".*

Political exclusion of queer people in the political spaces on the African continent is utilised as a tool for constructing or reinforcing authoritative notions of national collective identity (Sogunro, 2022). This

is promoted to prevent alternative identities that may oppose the national collective identity. Political homophobia has become a strategy to encourage the thinking in society that sexual and gender minorities constitute a threat to social values and interests. Homosexuality has been referred to as a Western concept that attempts to erode African values (Sogunro, 2022). Media propaganda, policies, religions, and public debates have been used as platforms to promote anti-homosexuality rhetoric across African Countries. The political use of laws to repress sexual and gender minorities is used to serve the interests of hegemonic power in countries such as Nigeria (Gogunro,2022). The examination of the legislation is a significant aspect of engaging political homophobia. Legislation denotes both the will of the legislator and demonstrates the perpetuation of political homophobia in the law (Sogunro,2022).

5.1.3 INTERSECTIONALITY.

Respondent 5 expressed that:

> *"The structural issues that affect women's main fight is capitalism that gives rise to patriarchy, racism, and all the other superstructures."*

According to Armstrong (2020), Marxism has analysed unpaid, which is also referred to as reproductive "women's work" as an important part of capitalism. Marxism feminism provided an analysis of reproduction as production to aid with the understanding of the exploitation and oppression women face under capitalism. This speaks to the socialist feminist idea in the research of how women are often not given the same opportunities or remuneration for their labour compared to men. Marxism feminism has been significant in theorizing imperialism and theft of land and resources. In line with the research, it also speaks to the idea that women face a myriad of issues based on their intersectional identities and the systemic dimensions of racism, sexism, and class exploitation.

Respondent 6 (ANC) said:

> *"I do not think the issues around feminists and lesbians were prioritized". There is still a lack of understanding." "It can also be tied to racism as white lesbians and gay people can hide themselves. The middle-class nature does insulate people from such discriminations." "I have always been in a privileged position as an out lesbian who is white, and I have not suffered similar experiences like other lesbians who are from the townships or even masculine presenting lesbians." "This is because I am white, and I do not particularly look queer, but I have always identified as a lesbian."*

This speaks to the argument provided in the research around intersectionality, black queer women are bound to face discrimination and ostracization, and the white lesbians do not face similar struggles and are often insulated from the violence based on their race. Queer-identifying people with an emphasis

on Black people are disproportionately the target of violent crimes and open discrimination (SAIIA, 2021). Intersectionality recognises that individuals are shaped by their identities, social factors, and relationships. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on the context of the individual and the existing power structures, such as patriarchy, homophobia, and racism. Intersectionality matters as a framework because it promotes substantive equality that leaves no one behind. It promotes inclusivity and responsive policymaking. It identifies hidden structural barriers and supports understanding how people's experiences differ within the already marginalised or underrepresented communities or groups.

5.2 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

As analysed through the interviews, the policy implications of not including queer-identifying individuals and women are that there is no space for progressive stances on the sociocultural dimensions and more favourable positions on state expansions. Regardless of crucial factors such as party affiliation. Candidates who identify as queer do take on significantly less traditional positions compared to the position of their party. Increasing descriptive representation of queer-identifying individuals in parliament leads to a strengthening of more progressive voices in parliament and a bigger representation of queer interests. The small representation of queer-identifying individuals in parliament has shown the" enhanced queer rights (Debus,2024).

The data collected from interviews does not suggest new insights into how queer-identifying individuals and women navigate the political and policy environments. Queer people within political parties have been reduced to a sexuality to some extent and queer policies are often recognized as unique from other policy areas. This is often due to those who occupy positions of power. Queer policies shape public opinions and contribute to the understanding of queer politics and this in turn shapes political institutions and democratic responsiveness to queer issues (Poggione,2019).

5.3 LIMITATIONS

The data was primarily from interviews and this qualitative data may not necessarily represent all perspectives but that of the fifteen participants who took part in the study. The data simply provides deep insight into the lived experiences of some queer-identifying individuals and women who are part of the political and policy environments in South Africa. The interview data was collected using the snowball method, and most participants from the DA were willing to take part in the study, unlike the other two political parties. The primary limitation of snowball sampling is the potential for bias (Stewart, 2024). The sample grew based on the participants' referrals and was influenced by their social networks and preferences. This can often lead to a sample that is not representative of the broader population of queer-identifying individuals and women from other political parties in South Africa.

It may over-represent certain groups or opinions while under-representing others. The bias can limit the generalizability of the research findings to the wider population (Stewart,2024). The snowball method lacked randomness as a cornerstone of many traditional sampling methods aimed at ensuring representativeness. Participants were chosen based on their connections within a network rather than being randomly selected. The researcher attempted to conduct snowball sampling in the best way possible. This included meticulous planning and execution. The target population was clearly defined. Building trust ensures confidentiality and the ability to recognize data saturation when additional data no longer contributes to new insights (Stewart,2024). The researcher implemented a systematic referral process to ensure efficiency and monitored diversity and biases.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Political parties need to introduce deliberate policies to encourage queer-identifying individuals and women to participate in the political and policymaking environments. The introduction of mainstream queer interests throughout existing policies and the promotion of queer leaders is an ideal first step to achieving a representational democracy in South Africa. Queer issues should be considered independently of the issues of other vulnerable groups to avoid the development of gaps in the policymaking process. The impact of queer persons and a specific policy on the issues affecting the queer community will indicate to the queer voters that the party cares about them and will promote their needs and the same goes for feminists (Thorpes, 2018).

Incorporating respect for human rights of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in their party manifestos and constitutions is important. Making statements of support to make it clear that the party supports their human rights. Manifestos should explicitly mention queer persons as an interest group and constituency. This can be done by inviting queer and women centred organisations to do sensitivity training with the political and policymaking organisations to incorporate these perspectives. It is important to pursue the political education of party members as it is not safe to assume that all members of a political party are equally aware of human rights of queer persons. Holding regular discussions within all levels of the party to promote the upliftment of feminists and queer rights and the challenges that they face (Thorpes, 2018).

Holding party members who discriminate against women/ feminists and queer-identifying individuals accountable to avoid the perception that at some levels of government it is safe to be homophobic, transphobic or misogynistic. Such perceptions should be addressed through holding the party leaders accountable at all levels to ensure that the public is aware that the party takes issues of homophobia and misogyny seriously. The consideration for gender equality in party structures should consider the need to be more inclusive of gender diversity and sexual orientation.

5.5 CONCLUSION AND LINK TO FUTURE RESEARCH

Several key findings emerged from the interviews with queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the political and policymaking environments in South Africa. The findings point to the importance of increased political participation and the challenges that need adequate attention and prioritization of queer-identifying individuals and feminists. While it is important to celebrate the legislative milestones that have taken place over the years, when it comes to the human rights of women and queer individuals, these were often driven by civil society activism rather than government proactivity (Thorpes,2018). The strong partnership and networking within the queer community and the women's lobby. Certain levels of government are experienced as more progressive than others. In this research, most DA-affiliated participants expressed that they feel included whilst other members from the ANC and EFF expressed that they do feel included, but the prioritization of the issues related to them is not so much.

There are several barriers to the political participation of queer-identifying individuals and feminists including homophobia and conservativism. The lack of a coherent queer movement within the parties has limited the ability or willingness of elected queer persons at a political level. DA-affiliated members expressed that the party is welcoming and that there are more queer-identifying individuals and every sphere of their governance which can also mean that the party is progressive. Some EFF and ANC members expressed the need for strategies to be put in place for the advancement of the human rights of queer persons. Some respondents expressed that there is a shift in the political landscape and political priorities and on the other hand that there is also an increased number of efforts to address the human rights of queer individuals, but these had not necessarily been inclusive (Thorpes,2018). The engagements with queer people had an urban bias and there was a need for a more inclusive approach at the same time there was a perception that the government or even political parties had not maintained a clear policy position in the country.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The research study examined the increasing presence of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the political and policymaking environments. It examined the impact and contributions that both minority groups have made in both environments and the challenges that function as barriers to creating inclusive spaces for queer-identifying individuals and feminists. The research problem statement was aimed at examining the exclusion of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the political and policymaking environments. The representation of queer-identifying individuals remains limited in South Africa even 30 years after democracy.The research purpose statement was to examine the increasing presence and impact of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the political and policymaking environments and to discuss the contributions, challenges and the changing outlook of inclusivity.The increasing visibility of queer-identifying individuals within the political and policymaking environments allows for inclusive policies. The objectives of the study was achieved through discussions on the literature review and research findings on representation. Examining the influence of queer-identifying individuals and feminists on the outcomes of policies. The second objective on policy prioritisation was achived in the discussion on the literature review and the research findings. The third objective on barriers and challenges and the intersectional identities were discussed in the literature review and as part of the themes on the research findings. The research study aimed to examine the role that queer-identifying individuals and feminists play in democratising the political and policymaking environments. The political representation of queer people in parliament and their participation is significant for building stronger democracies and improving the human rights of all persons in South Africa. The rise of queer-identifying individuals and feminists in the political environment has positively impacted the adoption of legislation.

On the research question on whether political parties adequately address the issues faced by the queer community and feminists and whether necessary policy amendments have been made? The findings suggest that the political and policy environments still need to do some work in democratising the space for the inclusion and participation of queer persons and feminists. Black queer women continue to be denied the space to self-actualise on the basis that the space might recognise gender and race politics, but it is not very often that sexuality is placed at the central point of discussion and ways to create an inclusive space for all actively. There are significant barriers that prevent queer-identifying individuals and feminists from being included within the political and policymaking environments, however, it is significant to acknowledge the progress that has been made over the years and the contributions that both feminists and queer-identifying individuals have made in the democratisation process.

On the second research question on whether there are creations of safe and inclusive society for women and queer people? The findings suggest that representation of queer people and feminists in the highest levels of decision-making processes within the political and policymaking environments is low and that

harms how quickly the legislation process can be concluded and be representative. The key findings of the study indicate that queer representation within the political and policymaking environments is gradually improving and so does the legislation that protects queer people.

and the last question was around why should political parties care about feminists and queer representation, inclusion and participation in their manifestos and execution? The findings indicate the exclusion and underrepresentation, barriers to participation affect the policy prioritisation of the marginalised communities. The legal frameworks such as the Constitution promote equality for all persons and a nation that is free from discrimination based on race, gender, and sexuality, however queer-identifying individuals are significantly underrepresented in politics and policy spaces. All systems of power, such as homophobia, patriarchy, and sexism continue to create major barriers to political participation for both queer individuals and feminists. The limited voice of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the spaces creates a limited policy focus. A lack of participation happens when there are institutional and structural barriers such as discrimination that do not allow queer-identifying individuals and feminists to occupy higher positions of power within the political and policymaking environments.

The research study in total has six chapters, Chapter 1 focused on the introduction of the research study and includes the research problem statement, the research purpose statement, research questions and objectives. Chapter 2 of the study explored the literature review and theoretical framework. The first part on the literature review explored themes around identity as a social construction, different waves of feminism, the distinction between gender and sexuality, homophobia, representation, inclusion and participation and lastly the decision-making process in policies and political parties. The second part explored the three theoretical frameworks: namely intersectionality, social ecology and queer theory.

Chapter 3 of the study explored the methodology of the study, being the research approach as a qualitative method, constructivism paradigm, research tools and their applications, purposeful criterion, process of data analysis, narrative data analysis, limitations, feasibility and positionality, ethical consideration, validity, reliability and dependability. Chapter 4 of the study provided a presentation of the research findings, using axial coding and provided a thematic analysis of the findings and the discussion of the themes that emerged during the findings of the study, being representation, homophobia and intersectionality. Provided the policy implications, limitations and recommendations. Lastly chapter 5 concludes the analysis by providing a summary of the key discussions and findings of the research study.

The complexity of intersectional identities has shown that marginalisation can happen based on sexuality even if the gender and race aspect is spoken about in these spaces. Queer-identifying individuals and feminists have played a significant role in advocating for more inclusive and progressive policies even with the substantial resistance they face. The implications of the lack of queer

representation or inclusive policies within the political and policymaking environments enable the culture of creating incomplete legislation where the policies implemented overlook the specific issues and the needs of queer-identifying individuals and feminists, especially when it comes to understanding the intersections between the complex identities that individuals have.

The research was only based on fifteen participants, and this may not necessarily express the consensus of queer-identifying individuals and feminists within the political and policymaking environments. The use of the snowball sampling method may also present a biased study. Future research could explore the investigation around intersectional policies that can be implemented to ensure that the rights of the marginalised community can be met. It can also examine the progress around representation within the policy-making process and the political environments.

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Appendices:



Participant information sheets.

Dear Sir/Madam/Mx

My name is Atlehang Molefe. I am a master's in management in Governance (Public Policy), candidate at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Governance, in Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Rekgotsofetse Chikane. I am conducting a research study about the **Rise and Role of Feminists and Queer-identifying individuals in democratising Political and Policy environments.**

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. The time and the date will be dependent on your availability & the place that you are most comfortable in to do the research.

I would like to audio record the interview and the data will be stored in a secured archive and will not be accessible to anyone but the researcher until the end of the research. May you kindly grant the researcher permission to audio record the interview to aid with the writing after the interview.

During the research, I will need to ask for some personal information about you, such as your full name, age, occupation & sexual orientation. The interview will be confidential and anonymous to protect your identity. If you decide to take part in the interview, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part and you are allowed to stop being in the study at any time. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, rights, or benefits you would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research will not cost you anything and there is no remuneration

for taking part in the research study. I will make my way to you, and you are not required to travel anywhere for the research study. The risks for this research study are no more than what happens in everyday life and some of the questions may make you uncomfortable, kindly feel free to stop me when this happens, and I will stop the interview and continue at another time. This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be more than happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below: if you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee: **011 717 1408 or email: hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.**

Yours sincerely,

Atlehang Molefe,

1606597@students.wits.ac.za, 0712228380

Supervisor: Dr Rekgotsofetse Chikane, rekgotsofetse.chikane@wits.ac.za, 011 717 3809.

WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE

CONSENT FORM:

TITLE: The Rise and Role of Feminists and queer-identifying Individuals in democratising political & policy Environments.

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Atlehang Molefe (1606597)

Masters in Management (Public Policy) candidate.

I……agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please tick the relevant option below)

1. The research study was explained to me. **YES NO**
2. I understand what the research is about. **YES NO**
3. I agree that the interview may be recorded **YES NO**
4. I agree that the direct quotations from **YES NO**

My interview may be used by the researcher,

In their research report.

5. I agree that my participation **YES NO**

Will remain anonymous,

(My name or other identifying

Data will not be used by the researcher in their report).

6. I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interviews (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and identifying data will not be used or passed on. **YES NO**

Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher: Atlehang Molefe

Signature: A.Molefe

Date:

Interview Questions

Questions for queer-identifying people and feminists within the political environment:

- What is your affiliation with the political party and how long have you been a part of the party?

-Do you feel included in the decisions that are made in the party?

- Is there a priority for queer-related/ women issues at the party?

-Do you hold any executive position and are your issues and concerns relating to your position in the political party taken into consideration?

- What contributions to policy reforms on queer-related/women issues or policies have you made in your political position?

- Were you appointed in your capacity as a queer person or woman or another identity such as black or woman etc? Intersectional identities.

- How impactful is your role in the party? Around visibility. -What role do you think your affiliated party plays in the process of policymaking?

- How does the prioritization of issues look like in your party? Is there an exclusive desk/sector or group that focuses on queer-related issues or women's issues?

- Are there any safe-spaces for queer-identifying individuals/women to express their concerns and issues that they face within the party? i.e., homophobia etc.

Questions for queer-identifying people within the policy-making environment:

-What queer-related programmes have you been a part of and what were the objectives of the programme, did you achieve the objectives?

-How have you effectively used your position as an ally/queer/woman in a position of power to advocate for the voices of queer-identifying people within the political and policy environment?

-Who forms part of the decision-making process in the political and policy environments?

-What does the queer representation look like in those environments?

Are there any other documents that you have and can share with me?

TRANSCRIPTIONS (INTERVIEWS).

Respondent 1: Anonymous (EFF)

"I have been affiliated with the party for four years, I do not always feel included in the decisions of the party." "In the manifesto, the party addresses queer inclusivity and even in the region, I feel like it is more of tokenization because even when I was in the leadership position, I did not feel respected". I feel like I was just being there.

The participant further added that "when I was a peer councillor for the city of Cape town, and I was nominated as the national member of the SRC, in UNISA as a secretary general and declined the nomination". Queer people are somewhat given the space to have inputs when it comes to policies around queer policies, but I can still say that the space is still very much cisgender and straight males who are in control of the same policies".

"There is a lack of prioritization of queer related issues. I can name one queer member of parliament". Prior to 2024 I was the only queer person in the regional body, and I was not even consulted in the drafting of the manifesto that is more than 300 pages long and there is a section for queer people, and it is a very short section as well or LGBTQI+ section of the document even though there are not many queer individuals in the party who are outspoken". Even after 10 years of the formation of the party, queer people are still not prioritized".

"New division for the LGBTQI+ is not even headed by a queer person and I was elected as the convenor of the Western Cape section of the desk. I still feel that there is not enough prioritization when it comes to queer issues. As a student body I was able to create visibility of the queer people and I think because the youth are more progressive". I feel like I was elected to the position because I am party of the youth and queer. The party was more impactful about three years ago when it comes to queer issues, than it is now". Scale of 1-10, I would rate it 3 or 4 in terms of how impactful it is. When I joined the party, it was never my intention to uplift the queer agenda or make the party more pro-queer. In the last two years I have felt the cold shoulder in the regional level as a queer person".

"Aspirations of reforming the space to make it inclusive and increase participation – I want to do so but not now. I declined the appointment to be on the candidate list for parliament and I would like to be in the policy space where I can make marginal change for queer people". LGBTQI desk has not been prioritised because no internal meetings are allowed to sit leading to the elections (I am assuming that's the case)". I did not start any programme and there has been a programme for women and queer people

in the party and the interactions were very disappointing. Members who hold higher positions within the party did not show any interest in driving the project".

RESPONDENT 2: Yoliswa Nomampondomise Yako – Member of the National Assembly of South Africa (EFF). Participants agreed for their details to be disclosed.

"I joined politics when I was 31 and currently, I am 41". I am an MP of the EFF and have been since 2018 and before that I was a councillor at Nelson Mandela Bay before 2018 when I joined parliament. I have only been affiliated with the EFF for about 10 years now. EFF is a leftist militant party, and the higher structures decides on what happens in the lower structures of the party. I am part of the leadership structure of the party however it is difficult to be one voice in a party that you did not start and in terms of the LGBTQI community issues, I feel like it's not an EFF problem but the African political issue".

Prioritisation of queer related issues – "Not to patronise women's issues but the celebrations is during the months of women or queer people when these issues are prioritised. There is a subtle disregard for issues around queer people and women, you will always be there, but the issues are not really being looked after".

Expression of sexual identity – "I have never hidden who I am as a queer person. I can self-actualise, and I only hold a leadership position in the central commands team as the highest decision making in the EFF. No executive position at all. It is difficult to create safe spaces for queer people in the party and being queer is not all that I am. I like Economics and Justice and I am always placed in committees that I excel in. I am not using my queerness to get positions within the party. I do try fight for queer people, but it is not all that I am". Appointment to positions is not dependent on my identity but my strengths. I think I am too soft for politics, and I am not sure how long I can stay here. I want to teach and grow in spaces where I can add value".

"Decision making process for women and queer people policies – yes, I sat in the justice committee that decided on the three sexual laws, but it is unfortunate that we still don't have the sexual registers and that's what we were supposed to do in the 6th parliament. Internally I have written and hosted a session on let's talk about it in 2019 0r 2021 and we wanted to hear about queer-people's issues. Not the twitter and woke people but people who live in a family-oriented setting. Married queer people with children who wants to be accommodated in the clinic, wants to transition and those who wanted to be part of the school governing body (SGB). As a party that is at the back of the train, there isn't much that we can do but listen and voice those concerns. Violations of gay men who don't want to be seen or come out. Not everyone comes from the environment that accommodates their sexual identity and I am glad I come from a family that accommodates my sexual identity".

Any exclusive desk etc that focus on queer people's issues – "Can I hold a second amendment on that and not comment now. Things might change after the conference".

RESPONDENT 3: Busisiwe Nxumalo (ANC), Convener of the ANC LGBTQIA+ DESK in the Western Cape. Part of the Task Team on the LGBTQIA+ community responsible for provinces (Deployed in the KZN).

Participant allowed to be disclosed.

"I joined politics when I was 18 and I have been in the political space for 9 years now". I am non-binary and being in the ANC is the same mirror as being in society. The issues of patriarchy are still common in the political space. The experience of being in the space has been very difficult for me because the same patriarchy I find in society, I also find it in my organisation. What is written on paper is not the reality however what we have done well for ourselves was to push and not let patriarchy push us down. We have created an LGBTQI+ DESK within the party. Ideally when this was pitched in the ANC it was rejected and it was then taken upon in the women's league as a sub structure and that's why it was named the ANC women league LGTBQI+ desk. There was a lot of push backs about why it was party of the women's league. There have been very progressive moves that have been made in the same LGBTQI+ DESK. "As the convenor of the western cape and including the other members of the ANC LGBTQIA+ decided to take it upon myself as a branch committee member to write the letter to parliament about the hate crime and hate speech bill".

We wrote to the department of the justice and correctional services portfolio committee to for the bill that has been sitting in parliament for more than 10 years, I then decided to be strategic by forming alliances with the triangle projects and other organisations". We flooded the portfolio committee with the said request to pass the bill until it got to a point where our voices were heard. A task team for the LGBTQIA+ was formed following the positive response from the department of justice and correctional services and we sat down to draft the amendments". A consultation was made with all the queer related organisations in South Africa to create awareness. I presented the amendments. Political parties not showing up as if they do not have queer people within their organisations and they did not want to help our group. This is one of our successes.

Within the ANC -it is disappointing that the LGBTQIA+ are not given the platform. Only one queer person made it follow the recent South African elections. We wanted to a queer person to be part of the national executive structure and the hostility in the room was bizarre". We did not win the campaign then, but more consultations were made, and she was placed in the national structure even after 30 years of democracy". We have LGBTQIA+ structures within the provinces and they are responsible for doing the work for the LGBTQIA+ community but we always ask ourselves why it should be our labour as

queer people in the party if the ANC claims to be an inclusive and progressive party. I campaign for the local elections as a queer candidate within the UCT area and most people knew me from the SRC, and they said they don't believe in the party, but they believe in me as a person". It is not easy; it was very hard to campaign. I am disappointed that it took the ANC so many years to have more queer people but still grateful to have at least one person who made it.

"Inclusivity in the decision-making process – ANC is progressively doing better than the other parties. We had the LGBTQIA+ tags exclusively for queer people at the last Lekgotla". These inform government and the ANC committee in terms of our queer issues. They always ask about the correct procedures in terms of what to do. I do feel included because we can even directly speak to the President about what we need and what we thin government should do, and the party leader does listen to the plight of our issues". ANC is a party that is actively listening when it comes to the concerns to queer issues relative to other African countries".

"The responsibilities always fall on the queer people to do the work and not the entire party". Campaigning for the leadership position – I had a very positive experience, and it could be that I was in cape town".

ANC LGBTQIA+ desk – "Safe space and we do call each other out as queer people". Trying to reform the space in terms of being representational. Tokenization does not happen on the branch level but does happen in the National level.

RESPONDENT 4: Councillor in the City of cape town Roberto Quintas (DA), Defacto Chairperson of the DA Cape metro LGBTQIA+ committee.

Participant allowed to be disclosed.

"I have never hidden my identity in my entire political journey and even during my campaign as the ward councillor, I have been open about being a Gay cis male even during the campaign". "I was elected in 2016 and re-elected in 2021". It is always good to see people elect a person who identify as queer in such positions. DA has at least 40 out and proud LGBTQIA+ members around the country (National assembly, metros, legislatures etc). It is encouraging that the party I represent has afforded me the opportunity to serve in government. The DA means it when they say inclusivity, equality and diversity. It not just about race and gender but the inclusion of all South Africans. I was allowed and included as a queer person. There is not just inclusion and acceptance but promotion of the LGBTQIA+ persons within the DA and it has been a great privilege for me to represent the party and country in our discussions on the continent around queer issues.

“I have created access for queer people to attend prides using the transportation in the metro”. I have been part of politics/ policymaking since 2016 formally. In the executive governance (Mayoral committee) of the city, I have been there since 2021”.

“My voice is absolutely heard within the discussions even as an LGBTQIA+ member as an openly queer person. I have never experienced being sidelined. My identity has never made me feel not taken seriously. It is almost forgotten and not the central part even though it is a huge part of my identity”. I don’t even have to make it that clear for people to say I am queer, but people do know by now.

“Over the years, our party policies are formulated in line with the South African constitution”. Many members do attend the provincial councils and bring motions around then inclusion of LGBTQIA+ tick boxes etc for people who identify as queer”. We have policy workshops as the DA unwavering support for equality”. “Discussions of corrective rape or queer people not receiving healthcare assistance. It is an encouraging space to work in”. Where there has been and unfortunate cases of assault and murder in communities, I always try to assist (especially in communities like Khayelitsha). As the LGBTQIA+ committee we usually reach out to the relevant people to assist the families/ communities that are affected”.

Intersectionality – Yes, the policies of the party are intersectional, and we are aware of the different identities. The other elements of diversity are taken into consideration, and it is not just about race.

Respondent 5: Naledi Nokukhanya Chirwa- Mpongose - NCOP Member of Parliament & EFF member.

Socialist feminist.

Participant agreed to be disclosed.

Affiliation – Joined early 2015 and been a supporter of the party since inception.

Identifies: As a socialist feminist.

Inclusion in the party: “I feel included in the party”, in the position I sit in the committee, I must inform the party about the discussions that take place in parliament”. “Everything is primarily informed by the constitution of the party and the manifesto”. In internal meetings where decisions are made, we use democratic centralism. The majority informs the minority and the minority (HIGHER POSITION) have the responsibility of implementing policies based on the decisions that were taken. Setting up positions of the EFF is informed by the members of the party. “In 2019 I was one of the scribers of the EFF manifesto”. “When you get a mandate, you have a free reign on how you want to implement it and then just inform the party”. Even in the programmes that we hold, in communities and universities, there is

inclusion as it is more collective than individual. “The collective informs the individual decisions as well”.

Naledi further adds that:

Prioritisation of women’s issues: Yes, women’s issues are prioritised in the party. “They are even in the manifesto”. Land ownership being a woman’s issues makes it important to include women in the discussion. We do not have statistics on how much land women own and even being party of the strategic sectors has always been a feminist’s issue. We(women) are the downtrodden ones that don’t get jobs even though we are the ones who are the most educated. “The structural issues that affect women. The main fight is capitalism that gives rise to patriarchy, racism and all the other superstructures”. Women being the primary caregivers of their children and being rejected for employment at the age of 25 because they know you are going to fall pregnant and being rejected at the age of 32 because they know you have children and likely to miss work when the child is sick.

“EFF policy documents shows that they have the most representation of women on the structural level and also had the most representation of feminists and women’s concerns and issues in their manifesto amongst all the parties and even today EFF has the most representation of women in parliament, legislature and council”.

“Socialist feminism needs to be acknowledged for the work that they have done – EFF at its identity is a socialist feminism organisation. It advocated for women to be compensated for the work that they do in the domestic sphere. The party answers the question of class as black women face a myriad of issues/intersectional struggles.”

“Impactful of the role and visibility: “Do what we can we what we have”. Always trying to collectivize during patriarchy across all different generations of women as hard as it is. EFF is a very progressive party, the freedom that we have and even what we say on the public platform is informed by us as women and not the party”. We do not have a WhatsApp group where we get a mandate on what to say, we are allowed to be and to say what we want.

Creation of safe-spaces – “I believe in that so much, the creation of safe spaces for women, we are not a separate community, we still fall part of the community. I am surrounded by young women, to allow them to learn. Exposure and experience play a significant role. We must be intentional about wanting the same for other young women. I always open the door for young women to be chosen in spaces. In my subcommittee’s the majority is always young women. The space is already masculine in general, so women must be intentional about creating safe spaces for other women”.

Respondent 6: Sheila Barsel - Political Advisor to the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Lesbian feminist - Identity

(Participant agreed to be disclosed).

“I joined the ANC health sector in the 1990s” to redefine the health services and make it more accessible for poor people”. “I was deeply involved in the SACP than I was in the ANC in the political sense”. “I have been involved in the delivery of health services and my involvement in the gay and lesbian community was to the delivery of health services to the gay community especially when there was the HIV & AIDS epidemic”.

“I started being involved in a movement that focused on gay men issues especially during the time of the epidemic”. The focus was always geared towards men and not necessarily on women within the movement. “We set up a splinter oprganisation called the lesbians and gays against oppression”. We established this as a way to access people who were beginning to write up the constitution for South Africa”. We started the negotiations for the protection of gays and lesbians and we realised that can happen through the ANC and the new constitution. “We started to look at what we can do locally, especially with the constitution lawyers who were developing constitutions at the time”.

“What we did for the visibility of lesbians and gays at that time was to print t-shirts and collectivize” and this was also one of the ways of fundraising for the organisation to keep going. Many lesbian women were now part of the womens organisations and that also assisted with visibility”. Simon Nkoli was detained at that time and we were able to raise awareness around the issues affecting Simon until he was released. “Congress of PINK democrats was formed as an organisation and when we got closer to the constitution making time and then we knew we had to do alot of work with the committees that were formed in the new constitution. Coalition of gays and lesbians in action was established by the end of 1994”.

Affiliation with the ANC - “I have served on branch executives and attended many conferences of the party not just my involvement in the health sector but also my involvement is still with the SACP”. i was always involved with the ANC health desk.

“I have always been in a privileged position as an out lesbian who is white and i have not suffered similar experiences like other lesbians who are from the townships or even lesbian”. This is beacuse i am white and i do not particularly look queer but i have always identified as a lesbian”. There was more acceptance for white lesbians than a butch lesbian in the township.

Prioritization of issues - “I dont think the issues around feminists and lesbians were prioritized. There is still lack of understanding”. “It can also be tied to racism as white lesbians and gays can hide themselves. The middle class nature does insulate people from such discriminations”.

Contributions to the constitutions -"In our contributions to the formation of the constitution, we formed organisations and asking what rights the gays and lesbians wpuld like to see enshrined in the constitutions. "We were active in the ANC branches and we would go to meeting and raise gays and lesbian issues". When the constitution formatuion started we managed to start the conversation in the set up of committees that looked at different issues.

Respondent 7: Virginia Magwaza - Founder of PFSAQ (Parents, Families and Friends of South African Queers).

Black lesbian feminist. (Participant agreed to be disclosed).

"I have been part of the politics and policy-making spaces since 1995 when I was a student at Wits". "I started with being part of the student's movements then moved to the civic movements". I have worked with numerous organisations for women/ human and queer rights. I have worked in a programme that educates women in Zimbabwe and Malawi on how to engage politically. "I have been part of numerous campaigns around the changing of policies on queer rights, especially the civil union acts and the hate crime and hate speech and demanding the task team in the department of justice to tackle the hate crime against lesbian women in the townships".

"I have engaged queer people in various levels, from providing information about their sexualities and also how to stand up for their human rights".

"Queer related programmes and inclusion - I want to mention the process around the task team because we needed all departments to understand the plight of the queer issues. I was employed to set up the provincial task team. I was frustrated in the process because the government officials that were supposed to participate were not interested". They would always say that they do not understand and when we form a sensitization workshop to educate them, the would not come". "It looked like they were just ticking the box but not necessarily being active".

Concerns of queer/ who creates the policies: "We were always asked why we always want to be isolated, why do you always want people to know that you are lesbian or gay. why cant you be like everyone else". It made me realise that the people in positions of power did not understand our pain and made it seem like we were looking for special rights. Patriarchy and misogyny and bigotry we are unable to access the rights like everyone else. There were always contestations and people dictating how we access these rights". "Everyone that comes and works in the space, came with their own views. An example of this, is when we fought for the civil union act, the law, implementation and the attitude of the people are three different things. At home affairs they would not want to marry people of the same sex". It has been a challenge for queer people and we fought for the law to exist but it still cannot be

enjoyed by the queer people because the people who have to execute the laws have their own ideas of what it should be".

Effectively used position to advocate for the voices of queer people - "I have made alot of noise around the issues affecting queer people". "I always take action and demand what needs to happen when i can see that nothing is being done to respect what is on the constitution". "Activism is not easy because for us to be in spaces we constantly need to actively take it upon ourselves to fight".

Respondent 8: Alex Lansdowne - DA Councillor for the City of Cape Town.

Identity: Gay

(Participant agreed to be disclosed).

"I have been part of the DA for 14 years, i have always had the core ideologies that speak/ aligned with the DA since i was a student and this does not speak to the politics of the party because politics come and goes".

Included in the party decisions - "Yes, I feel included in the decision-making of the party". "There are many people who do not identify as straight who are part of the political party". I have never felt excluded in the party as a gay person. The party values professionalism, even if someone is conservative or otherwise, they are still expected to act accordingly. "There are channels that deal with issues such as bigotry. I feel safe to make my contribution as an individual".

Prioritization of queer-related issues - "DA was the kind of political party that looks at the most vulnerable, even the issues around corrective rape that happens to black lesbian women in the township, I learnt about it from the DA during their campaigns, even when I was still young and in high school". The party has what we call the DA LGBTQI+ network and it is a supporting body where the gays, lesbians and transgender representatives can come together and decide on a campaign to run for communities on behalf of the DA. The party sponsors Gay Pride in Cape Town". When you go to the LGBTQI+ forum meetings we sit around with the community and the DA is not hierarchical about this. There is an intrinsic inclusivity in how we deal with the LGBTQI+ community. There is more that we can do as a party.

Executive position - "I am currently a councillor for the city, and I form a party of the caucus and chair a whole committee in the country. I oversee the DA students' organisations in Cape Town". "I am also a branch chairperson and in the constituency executive". I sit with multiple executives.

Position as a gay person - I have never encountered any homophobia even as a gay person in these positions of power. In multiple causes that I exist in, I am not the only gay person and there are quite a

few other people. “You might even find that the DA has the highest percentage of queer people in the party”. 1 in 10 members of our parliament is a queer person. There is more homophobia in the people you meet than there are amongst the people in the party.

contributions to policy reform on queer-related issues - “In local government, we do not have constitutional or legislative obligations to the queer policies. There is no law that says that the city must do so but, in our administration, and staff do so”. I am a gay man who is not allocated to the space, but I am on the Cape Town LGBTQI committee, and I do participate and help as an additional member so i do contribute to that”. When I have been part of the campaigns I always look at where my principles should be and the community I need to speak to and I always ensure that my position is to try and speak to the LGBTQI+ community, on a one-on-one community or even in the forum”. “When an activist wants to speak to the mayor, I always ensure that I create the link between the government and the activists of the queer community”.

Respondent 9: Zinhle Ndimeni (Somzet)- Sectoral Head for the LGBTQIA+ desk, ANC member, Activist.

(Participant agreed to be disclosed).

“I have been affiliated with the ANC since 1981”.

Inclusion - “Yes, I feel included in the decision-making of the party. Since the ANC liberated me in many forms, especially because it addresses my gender very well and the policies speak to me because they are inclusive, and their policies are also inclusive.” I can express my political role.

“I am part of the ANC LGBTQIA+ desk, the issues around the queer people are prioritised and I am allowed to educate, especially as someone who resides in a rural area. Most people here know that same-sex people can be in a relationship, but they do not know the gist of what happens, so it is important to educate in these spaces to make people understand and know.” “As some who prefer to be addressed as he/ him, it allows for people to understand that they cannot refer to me in any other pronouns. It makes people understand quickly so that means I have a role to sensitize the people around me about queer people.” They know that the ANC must be inclusive in their policies, but the people never know how to feel included in the party. “I am where I am political because, in every space I am given to educate people, I always ensure that I do sensitization.”

Position - “I am a sectoral head of the lgbtqi+ in the region.”

Contributions to policy reforms - “Mobilization has been the first contribution i have made to policy reform then the education party comes about to the lgbtqi+ community or even the community at large”.

LGBTQIA+ desk - “Existing in the lgbqi+ in KZN means that we are dependent on the ANC women’s league and now that we do not have leadership in the KZN women's league as it was launched nationally and in KZN the conference did not sit which means that it delays us as the lgbtqia+ desk. So, we depend on the ANC women's league and now we are unable to perform the duties of the LGBTQIA+ desk”. The launching of the structures of the ANC women’s league will enable the ANC LGBTQIA+ desk to be able to perform their duties.

Respondent 10: Anonymous (DA)

“I am a DA member; I have been part of the party for 11 years”.

“Inclusion and prioritisation in the party – I feel included and prioritized. The DA is a liberal party.” There are different people in the party. “It has never been an issue for me and joining the DA made it much easier for me to come out as a teenager because it is such an inclusive space.”

Impact on issues around visibility: “My impact on issues around visibility has been huge. I have personally been able to contribute to policymaking internally in the position that I occupy.” Being able to do this has allowed me to change the city by-laws around the dress code. I felt very supported as a DA member.

Safe spaces for queer people in the affiliated party: “There are safe spaces for queer people. When you are in a party that claims and genuinely strives to be inclusive, it is easier for me. There are dedicated safe spaces that we have internally such as the DA rainbow network. The work has been done internally and even externally.”

Representation: “It reinforces my beliefs that the party is representative and that my party is congruent with my personal life, especially when I see things that are happening in other African countries around queer issues. It makes be proud to be part of the party and being South Africa. DA is not the party that will run around and say that everyone is gay, but we do have an inclusive language in terms of queer and gender representation. The first political head I had was a gay man.” At every level of the party, there is a gay person. There has never impeded my contribution to the party.”

Respondent 11: Anonymous

“I am affiliated with the DA, and I have been part of the party since 2009” in various positions.

Policy reform: “I have been part of the economic policies and how it impacts women.” I have never felt like I was not part of any policy or portfolio.”

Inclusion and prioritization: I think every woman experiences sexism in a different space and if I allowed sexism to get to me, I would not be able to do my job. Especially in politics, you need to have an elephant skin because if you start to respond to everything that everyone says in the space, you would not be able to do your job." Access and ability to do stuff, there are different mechanisms available to us to do everything in legislature etc. On the behaviour sometimes you find people speaking louder than you or someone who is male who says the same thing as you and then getting praised for it. In politics people expect you to take their style of leadership, especially a more masculine style of leadership. I do not think with everyone it is intentional to make you feel like you do not belong there. If you do not intend to act like this then I can tell but it is not always that you are sure if someone's intention in the space is to make you feel less and you also do not want to accuse someone of being sexist.

Representation: "I think it is difficult because I am in various spaces and it is not always the case that you will see/find the space being representative if the outcome from the outcome of your internal caucuses then you are going to have less representation because then the premier has less to choose from". I am not sure if my being a woman was the top priority for the premier to choose me, it could have been my experience and qualifications. My department is very representative of women, coloured people, and Black people. Fifty-nine per cent female representative and my ministry is very heavy women, coloured and black." In other areas, it is not as prominent. I would argue that I am more powerful because of the nature of my position. If you feel like there is not much representation in the space that you exist in, it is our responsibility as leaders to train and develop the people who look like us so that we can see more people who look like us and that there is a huge pool of people to choose from. It is often difficult to find equal representation."

Respondent 12: Benedicta Van Minnen (DA) – Member of the Western Cape provincial parliament

Liberal feminist

"I have been a ward councillor for about 8 years. I have just completed the 5-year term in the national government". "I am affiliated with the DA."

Prioritisation and inclusion: "I do tend to get annoyed when women are placed in the position of "soft issues." I do not usually gravitate into those spaces." My initial prioritisation has been policing and I tend to avoid issues that are typically associated with women because I do not like the concept of women having to always attend or occupy spaces in issues around them." I am a third-wave feminist and I do look more at the individual rather than grouping. Feminism is not as encompassing of all A lot of women who have been successful in existing in the political spaces have to understand and adapt to the male paradigm because the political space is a male paradigm. It is very often that you see yourself as the

only female in the room and I have made myself comfortable in that space. I end up asking myself the question of whether women who exist in male-dominated spaces ever find themselves comfortable with existing in those spaces because they are not used to doing that and are often used to dealing with women's issues.

"I do not feel excluded existing in the space, especially when it comes to my political development. I always say no to secretary positions because at an AGM they always look around and expect women to accept that role. It is something that is there but at the same time in the political party that I am part of, I never feel excluded, it is also because of the people I always work for. I rarely feel excluded. I am aware that can be a barrier to entry for other people, but I have always been in a privileged position because of my education because I can always speak up for myself. I am very aware."

Visibility – "The fact that women always go to spaces that are perceived as womanly positions and that also becomes their barrier to entry." I never shy away from going into spaces that are perceived to be manly." I always make myself visible in the spaces that are viewed to be manly, and I have made it a point that I do not conform to those stereotypes but make it a point that I do work that is in line with my experiences and educational background". "Which then stops people from pushing you into their confined spaces." "Women are limited in terms of their progress in the political space when they allow themselves or when they actively go into spaces that confine them."

Respondent 13: Andisiwe Kumbaca: Member of parliament in the National Assembly (ANC)

Political party: Been an ANC member for more than a decade and I started in student politics.

Inclusion in the party: "Yes, I do feel included and the one thing about our party is that it takes gender/women very seriously". "In any structure, we need to have 60% women and 40% men. Voices are heard in the party, and we are given so much space as women in the space and government as well. I believe that more can be done. The patriarchy is soft, and you can still feel it". "I commend the work that the ANC has done for women so far". "The ANC is trying to work towards ensuring that women find their expressions".

Women-centred policies prioritisation in the party: "Yes, they are but practically more needs to be done. The policies and resolutions can be there, but we need to make sure that the execution of the people on the grounds/implementing the policies need to have the willingness to change as there may be patriarchal people who implement these policies".

Representation in the party: "The ANCWL was formed to show the representation of women because the party was firstly established by men so the mbhokodos fought for the space as a way to express that women do have their issues as well". "The ANC has always been intentional about women's

representation". "It allows for the representation of all to find their expression through the respective desks that we have, LGBTQIA+ desk for queer representation and there is also representation for young people and representation for women as well".

Respondent 14: Molebogeng Sharon Letlape: Member of parliament in the national assembly (EFF)

"I joined the EFF two months after its inception".

Inclusion: "I feel very much included as the party is a very inclusive space. Every decision of the party runs through the party and there is a lot of prioritisations for young people in the party I have been given the platform to grow as an individual and a young person in politics. "I have grown in the party". EFF is about empowering women and young people". "There are a lot of efforts placed by the party to support us as young representatives of the party".

Prioritisation of women-centred policies in the party: "Yes, you could say that. The party makes sure that there is prioritisation of women". Women must be political, and the party is also trying to redress the injustices of the past, so it is always important for the party to prioritise women. This is a way of ensuring that there is equality in redressing the injustices of the past. Even when we must select a delegate, we are very intentional about prioritising women, especially in the political space". Women need to be recognised even when given the space, they deserve to be respected too". Women have always been disadvantaged within the space and it is important to ensure that they are recognised in the political space". "It is a systemic problem that women are not perceived to be individuals that are capable of being in positions and there is still a long way to go to improve the lives of women".

Respondent 15: Aluwani Chokoe (ANC) Gauteng Provincial government.

"I am affiliated with ANC, and it's been over 12 years". "Because of their progressive policies and the party being deliberate in their policies".

Inclusion: "I do feel included in the party. The ANC has different leagues, there are ones that advocate for different policies, there was the rise of feminism in the party, and this is where they advocated for the rights of women. The formation of the party was a gentlemen's club and the women expressed that they were also part of the struggle and deserved a seat at the table. It then became a norm for women to stand up". This has resulted in the policy formation in the party, and it has become a norm for women to be taken seriously in the party". You feel included because of the party taking these initiatives and feel a sense of belonging.

Prioritisation of women-centred policies: “Yes, I think the party does prioritise women-centred policies. Firstly, it was women in the ANC who first advocated for the legalisation of safe abortion to protect the reproductive rights of women. The LGBTQIA+ representation, party was the first to establish this desk. The Gender responsive budgeting was implemented to ensure that the government reaches the vulnerable groups.

Representation, inclusion and participation: “I do feel represented in the party because of their progressive policies and the good that they have done in government”.