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Abstract
This dissertation is structured as a critical policy analysis employing historical methods. It examines how the post apartheid government's economic growth and development polices have informed the higher education system and how this has changed women's financial, occupational, political, social, and educational prospects in South Africa. Through the telling of this history, the paper provides understanding of the relationship between economic growth and development, higher education, and women within the social, cultural, and political context of the country from 1994 to the present.

This is also a story about the lives of South African women. It examines how South Africa's patriarchal culture, the apartheid system, and the 1996 constitution and other government gender specific initiatives have influenced the lives of women, especially Black South African women. What this study does is to bring understanding as to why, despite one of the world's best written and designed policy frameworks for women's empowerment and gender equality and a constitution based on non-sexism, a significant number of women continue to live in poverty, have higher incidences of HIV/AIDS, are increasingly victims of rape and violence, and continue to experience low graduation rates. By recognizing and understanding why women continue to face significant challenges, thirteen years after the establishment of a national framework for women's empowerment and gender equality, we can chip away at the poverty, low graduation rates, and violence that are still pervasive in South Africa.

This study did not attempt to find the answers or solutions to the pressing economic, education, and gender issues facing South Africa today. The primary focus is on understanding the relationship between economic growth and development and higher education policies and how they have changed women's prospects. Although race is often the lens used when examining the country's past and current opportunities and challenges, this study takes a different perspective and looks at the country through the framework of gender.

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Marybeth Gasman

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Subject Categories
African History | Economics | Gender and Sexuality | Growth and Development | Higher Education | Inequality and Stratification | Political Science | Public Administration | Women's Studies

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INTERPRETING THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT
POLICIES OF POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: ITS INFLUENCE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN

Diane E. Eynon

A DISSERTATION

in

Higher Education Management

Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Doctor of Education

2010

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Professor of Management

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2010

Diane Elizabeth Eynon
Dedication

This is dedicated to Thomas Richard and Ruthann Riggs Eynon, my parents, and Lorretto Higgins.
Acknowledgements

Like any journey that requires great effort, this dissertation is the result of the combined assistance, support, and encouragement of many individuals and institutions. It began with the support I received from The Wharton School that enabled me to attend the executive doctorate program in higher education management at the University of Pennsylvania. Special thanks to the faculty, university administrators, archivists, government officials, and leaders of nongovernmental organizations from South Africa who very graciously gave of their time to participate in this study and who trusted me with their stories and sensitive information.

I am indebted to my dissertation committee who contributed to this study in many ways. I would like to thank Mary-Linda Armacost and Mauro Guillen for their guidance and support. I am particularly grateful to Marybeth Gasman, who as the chair of my dissertation committee, assisted and encouraged me on my dissertation journey and bolstered my confidence as a researcher and writer. Special thanks to Matt Hartley, without his assistance and encouragement, this dissertation never would have made it past the concept stage.

Without the love, patience, and support of my family, friends, and classmates, none of this work would have been possible. Special thanks to my sister Debra Exarchos for making the journey with me.
ABSTRACT

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POLICIES OF POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: IT'S INFLUENCE ON
HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROSPECTS FOR WOMEN

Diane E. Eynon
Marybeth Gasman, Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation is structured as a critical policy analysis employing historical methods. It examines how the post apartheid government’s economic growth and development polices have informed the higher education system and how this has changed women’s financial, occupational, political, social, and educational prospects in South Africa. Through the telling of this history, the paper provides understanding of the relationship between economic growth and development, higher education, and women within the social, cultural, and political context of the country from 1994 to the present.

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HIV/AIDS, are increasingly victims of rape and violence, and continue to experience low graduation rates. By recognizing and understanding why women continue to face significant challenges, thirteen years after the establishment of a national framework for women's empowerment and gender equality, we can chip away at the poverty, low graduation rates, and violence that are still pervasive in South Africa.

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<td>AIDS</td>
<td>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>AsgiSA</td>
<td>Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative-South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEE</td>
<td>Black Economic Empowerment</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Constitutional Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>CGE</td>
<td>Commission on Gender Equality</td>
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<td>CHE</td>
<td>Council on Higher Education</td>
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<td>CODESA</td>
<td>Convention for a Democratic South Africa</td>
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<td>COPE</td>
<td>Congress of the People</td>
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<td>COSATU</td>
<td>Congress of South African Trade Unions</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>Democratic Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DHET</td>
<td>Department of Higher Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>FEDSAW</td>
<td>Federation of South African Women</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GEAR</td>
<td>Growth, Employment and Redistribution</td>
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<td>GNU</td>
<td>Government of National Unity</td>
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<td>HAIIs</td>
<td>Historically Advantaged Institutions</td>
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<td>HDIs</td>
<td>Historically Disadvantaged Institutions</td>
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<td>HEC</td>
<td>Higher Education Council</td>
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<td>HEIs</td>
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<td>HESA</td>
<td>Higher Education South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immune-Deficiency Virus</td>
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<td>IFP</td>
<td>Inkatha Freedom Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>JIPSA</td>
<td>Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition</td>
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<td>MCTHE</td>
<td>Mandate of the Committee into the Transformation in Higher Education</td>
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<td>MERG</td>
<td>Macroeconomic Research Group</td>
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<td>MPNP</td>
<td>Multi-Party Negotiating Process</td>
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<td>NCHE</td>
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<td>NGM</td>
<td>National Gender Machinery</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>NOW</td>
<td>Natal Organization of Women</td>
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<td>NP</td>
<td>National Party</td>
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<td>NPHE</td>
<td>National Plan Higher Education</td>
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<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualification Framework</td>
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<td>NSFAS</td>
<td>National Student Financial Aid Scheme</td>
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<td>NWC</td>
<td>National Women’s Coalition</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development</td>
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<td>OSW</td>
<td>Office on the Status of Women</td>
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<td>PAC</td>
<td>Pan-Africanist Congress</td>
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<td>PWG</td>
<td>Parliamentary Women’s Group</td>
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<td>RDP</td>
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<td>SACP</td>
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<td>South African Development Community</td>
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<td>SALGA</td>
<td>South Africa Local Government Association</td>
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<td>SAQA</td>
<td>South African Qualifications Authority</td>
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<td>SASO</td>
<td>South Africa Student Organization</td>
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<td>Sector Education and Training Authorities</td>
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<td>STATS SA</td>
<td>Statistics South Africa</td>
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<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Province</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>Free State</td>
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<td>Gauteng</td>
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<td>NW</td>
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<td>Western Cape</td>
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Chapter One: Introduction

South Africa: The Promise of the “Rainbow Nation”

Of all the continents in the world, Africa remains the poorest and has borne the brunt of colonialism, famine, disease, persistent poverty, and civil unrest. Yet one country has emerged as the exception, South Africa. South Africa is a country whose recent past was marked by racism, segregation, and oppression yet today holds promise as a model for the rest of the continent.

The apartheid government had formalized, institutionalized, and legalized racial discrimination and segregation for the majority of its citizens. When the African National Congress (ANC) and Nelson Mandela came into power in South Africa in 1994 they inherited the economic and social legacies of apartheid. Great numbers of workers were unskilled or unemployed. There was widespread and deep poverty, as well as limited access for a majority to education, health care, and other basic public services. For a time the new government still felt the impact of the economic sanctions and political isolation imposed on South Africa by many countries around the world in protest to the apartheid government. In essence, South Africa was economically cut off from the rest of the world when the ANC came into power. ¹

For many African countries, independence from colonial rule allowed for the first generation of Black African politicians. These politicians were responsible for the construction of legal, social, and political structures during the state-building process. “It was during this process that they were able to articulate the intended social development and national reconstruction of their country after extensive and intensive colonial rule.
Many of these politicians imagined a government and citizenry to include all the African populations, males and females. The promise of this was especially true for South Africa in 1994 when the white minority apartheid government transferred political power, without massive civil unrest or violence, to the black majority through the African National Congress (ANC) under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.

It was in 1994 when the term “Rainbow Nation” became a symbol of South African unity. The Archbishop Desmond Tutu first used the rainbow symbol during the march of church leaders to Parliament in Cape Town in 1989, and again at ANC leader Chris Hani’s funeral in 1993. The rainbow symbol gained widespread popularity in 1994 when Archbishop Tutu led a televised thanksgiving service to celebrate the peaceful elections and announced to the crowd: “We are the rainbow people of God. We are free—all of us, black and white together!” The symbol of the rainbow is the Old Testament symbol of reconciliation that affirms God’s covenant with Noah after the flood. At the thanksgiving ceremony, Tutu spoke not of a covenant with a Chosen People, but of a covenant with all South Africans, irrespective of origin, religion or color. Nelson Mandela again referred to the symbol of the rainbow at his inaugural address on 9 May 1994 in Pretoria: "We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without and fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."

In just fifteen years, the country has rewritten its constitution, restructured its macro-economic growth and development policies, restructured its higher education system, and made a commitment to provide opportunity for all its citizens, specifically
those who have historically been marginalized, women and blacks. Gender equality and women’s empowerment and education were considered key drivers to South Africa’s transformation. In the March 2008, Global Economics Paper No: 164, Goldman Sachs states education is key to gender equality:

Educating girls and women leads to higher wages, a greater likelihood of working outside the home, lower fertility; reduced maternal and child mortality, and better health and education. The impact is felt not only in women’s lifetimes, but also in health, education, and productivity of future generations. The economic growth that results from higher education feeds a virtuous cycle, supporting continued investments in education and extending the gains to human capital and productivity. 6

No other country has undertaken such transformation in such a relatively short period of time. What have been the results for South Africa? Has the country been able to engage and compete in the global economy? Does the education system contribute to and support the country’s social and macro-economic policies? Can or does a significant percentage of the country’s population, specifically women, benefit from this transformation? There is no other country that provides such a rich and complex landscape to research and explore these issues.

South Africa Today: Conditions, Challenges, and Prospects

It has been fifteen-years since the end of apartheid rule and the beginning of a new democratic South Africa. There is no question the country was vulnerable economically, socially, and politically in 1994. Yet South Africans were hopeful and believed in the promise of a Rainbow Nation and the prospects of a better future. While significant changes have occurred, the conditions, challenges, and prospects facing the majority of South Africans today are similar to those fifteen years ago.
The macro-economic policies adopted by the ANC in 1996 have led to considerable achievements and stabilized a very weak economy. The fiscal deficit was reduced from 9.1% in 1993, to less than 2.5% by 2000. Public sector debt decreased from 64% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1994 to 50% by 2004. The country’s credit ratings improved which allowed the Finance Minister to raise debt at better rates. Monetary policies adopted by the government also achieved favorable results. By 2004 the inflation rate dropped considerably—to the lowest rate since 1959—and interest rates were brought down to levels last seen in the 1980s. And, by 2005 the central bank’s reserves had grown to US $15.1 billion. The growth rate in the country has increased steadily since 1994, giving the country its most consistent growth performance ever. The growth rate, however, is still lower than that of most developing countries—and more in line with that of advanced economies whose average per capita income is six to seven times higher than South Africa’s.\textsuperscript{7}

The government’s commitment to social services is reflected in the 22% increase in government expenditure on these services since 1994. The government has also extended physical infrastructure—including water, sanitation, housing, electricity, and communication—to a greater number of South Africans. In 2004 housing subsidies were offered to two million people, and the number of households with electricity increased from 32% in 1994 to 70% in 2000, although 43.3% of South Africans still lack modern sanitation.\textsuperscript{8}

The South Africa economy took a hit, as did every other country in the world, with the 2008-09 economic downturn. However, the country has fared much better compared to other countries. This is due in part to the policies of the government, which
prohibited banks from investing in the kind of credit derivatives that fueled the crisis in Europe and the U.S. Also helping the country’s economic picture is the government’s massive public investment in preparing for the 2010 World Cup and a government stimulus package of 690 billion rand over the next three years.\textsuperscript{9} However, there are areas of concern including the decreased demand for South African exports and rising unemployment. Unemployment has been a persistent problem in the country. In January 2009 unemployment remained high at 23.2\%, despite an annual growth rate of 5\% the past five years, which has been the fastest in South African history; it increased to 23.6\% in June. While the unemployment rate seems to be stable, it has been estimated to be as high as 30\% if those who have given up looking for employment are included. The number of people who stopped looking for employment in June 2009 jumped by 302,000 to 1.5 million people.\textsuperscript{10} The persistent unemployment rate since 1994 has contributed to crime, poverty, and inequality. The problem is often attributed to the shrinking demand for workers in the traditional mining sector and an education system that fails to prepare poor students for the workplace.\textsuperscript{11} Researchers from the South Africa Human Science Research Council found that 52\% of the 3,321 people surveyed in October 2008 were unhappy with the state of the economy. The survey also showed that 65\% of those who were identified as economically disadvantaged were unhappy with democracy.\textsuperscript{12}

Other persistent problems include poverty, crime, violence against women, and HIV/AIDS. The ANC currently provides cash benefits to 12.5 million people compared to 3 million in 1996 and it has built 2.7 million low-cost homes housing approximately 10 million people. The poverty rates have not changed significantly between 1996 and 2001. Approximately 57\% of individuals were living below the poverty line by 2001.
However, what has changed is the degree of poverty people live in. People have sunk deeper into poverty making it increasingly difficult to get out of it. In addition, the gap between rich and poor has widened.\textsuperscript{13}

Since 1994 there have been 275,000 murders in the country. South Africa is one of the world’s most criminally violent countries. Every day, around 50 murders, 100 rapes, 700 burglaries and 500-plus violent assaults are officially recorded in a population of 50 million. The murder figures are believed to be accurate although it is thought that only one in ten rapes are reported to the police. South Africa has one of the world’s highest murder rates, six times higher than the U.S.’s rate and twenty times higher than Britain’s. This is not to say the government has ignored the problems. The police just released a report in September 2009 which shows the crime rate for the most serious offenses has fallen by a fifth, the murder rate by half, and rape by a third in the past fifteen years. However, violent house robbery has doubled in the past five years and armed robbery at businesses has increased significantly.\textsuperscript{14}

Out of a projected population of 48.5 million people in 2007, 761,090 were enrolled in public higher education representing 1.6% of the total population; 126,641 graduated. By 2006, 8.9% of South Africans had received a degree, which is high for countries in sub-Saharan Africa but low compared to other parts of the world. The overall budget for higher education in 2007/2008 was R13.3 billion, representing 0.65% of GDP. Other sub-Saharan African countries such as Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, Senegal, and Swaziland spend a greater percentage of their GDP on
higher education. Since 1994 the proportion of the national budget going to higher education has declined.\textsuperscript{15}

Since the end of apartheid the number of students attending universities has increased tremendously, particularly historically disadvantaged students. By 2006, the percentage of African and mixed-raced students attending university rose by 268\%, just twelve years after the end of apartheid rule.\textsuperscript{16} While the numbers are impressive, they don’t tell the whole story. The increase in access has also meant an increase in the financial burden students and their families carry. As a result, dropout rates for first generation students from low-income, less well-educated families is very high and fewer than one in three students graduate on time. Of all students with a low socio-economic status, 73\% are black and 12\% are white whereas only 9\% of black students and 47\% of white students come from a high socio-economic status. Many of the poorest students receive aid through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). In 2008, 125,000 students out of the 735,000 enrolled (17\%) received grants and the NSFA is expected to spend $180 million on loans and bursaries this year, which is double the amount awarded two year ago.\textsuperscript{17} There is no doubt the government’s focus on access has been successful. While access has improved, though, retention rates are low and the cost of attending university is high. In the end, the higher education still remains a place for those with resources and social capital.

It is well known fact that former President Mbeki denied the existence of HIV/AIDS, as defined by medical experts, and suppressed the widespread use of the drug AZT. Mbeki believed the root cause of HIV/AIDS was poverty, allowing him to ignore the pandemic in his country. This was at a time when South Africa became the country
with the largest number of AIDS victims for a middle-income developing country; all of the poorest African countries at that time reported lower AIDS rates. The only country at the time with a higher AIDS rate was Botswana.\textsuperscript{18} Harvard researchers estimate that 365,000 premature deaths due to AIDS could have been prevented had the government acted sooner and provided antiretroviral drugs. By 2008, the overall death rate related to HIV/AIDS increased to 756,000 from 573,000 in 2007. At this rate, deaths could eventually outnumber the number of births.\textsuperscript{19}

On April 22, 2009 South Africans went to the voting booths to elect a new government. This election was unique in that a splinter group of the ANC emerged, Congress of the People (COPE), to compete against the ANC in the elections. In addition, President Mbeki was forced to stand down a year before the elections, signaling friction within the ANC. And, the mood of the country was very different from past elections, with increasing discontent among South Africans who traditionally supported the ANC. While it was no surprise that the ANC was victorious in the election, having gained 65.9\% of the vote, it was the first time since coming to power the ANC failed to gain a two-thirds majority. What was surprising about the election results was the opposition Democratic Alliance’s out-right victory in the Western Cape, capturing majority rule. It is the first time since 1994, when the nine provinces were established, that one of the provinces went with a party other than the ANC.\textsuperscript{20}

Jacob Zuma is now President of South Africa. He is a colorful and controversial figure whose past legal problems include an accusation of illegal arms trading and a highly publicized rape case, both of which have been dismissed. There were concerns
about Zuma’s connection and reliance on the trade unions and the communist party during the elections and soon thereafter. He appointed members of the South African Communist Party (SACP) to the post of Finance Minister and Minister of Higher Education and Training. However, President Zuma has not, seven months into his term, made any major policy shifts. This has caused some rumbling and protest from those who supported him during the election, the SACP and the trade unions. Zuma has recently announced new efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and has pledged to improve government services, create jobs, and curb violence in the country.

**Economic Growth & Development, Higher Education, and Women**

Critical elements in South Africa’s transformation include a change in its economic growth and development policies, the restructuring of the higher education system, and the pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment. South Africa pursued these initiatives knowing the potential benefits they would bring to the country. What follows is a brief introduction to each of these elements and the prevailing thoughts and opinions about their role and/or value in current-day South Africa.

The post-apartheid South Africa government’s macro-economic and growth policies were created at a time when globalization, as we know it today, had just taken hold. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and Russia’s transition from communism marked the beginning of this era. Globalization, the removal of barriers to free trade and the pursuit of greater integration of nations’ economies, changed the way the world communicated, engaged, and operated. The most powerful and developed countries along with international organizations such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary
Fund (IMF) encouraged, persuaded, and pressured other countries to play in the global arena. Today, as we live through one of the worst economic downturns since the 1930s, the extent to which nations are interconnected and driven by a global knowledge-based economy, is quite apparent. No longer is any country or individual isolated or insulated from what happens in another part of the world.

Even before the global economic downturn, developing countries and their allies in non-governmental organizations were questioning the merits of globalization. For many developing countries, especially in Africa, the benefit was nil. Some would argue they have been marginalized and are even poorer.

What are some of the key characteristics of developed countries that allow them to benefit from today’s global economy? One is they take a neoliberal\textsuperscript{21} approach to economic growth and development; second they have a well-developed educational system that is also well-matched to the country’s economic needs, and third, a significant percentage of the country’s population have a high standard of living. South Africa has tried to cultivate these characteristics in its attempt to transform itself.

Since the 1960s, educational reform has been a symbol of “freedom and self-determination for African countries”\textsuperscript{22}. In many post-colonial African nations like South Africa, education became a vehicle to redress past inequalities and a tool for training the labor force to meet the country’s economic plans. Higher education in particular is an important element in the process of state building\textsuperscript{23}. It has been argued that educational reform can be considered part “symbolic gestures designed to indicate governmental
awareness of problems and sympathetic intentions, rather than serious efforts to achieve social change.”

A key concept in understanding the relationship between higher education and economic development and growth is the concept of human capital. Human capital is the skills and knowledge available to participate in labor, which results in economic value. A well-known application of the idea can be found in Gary Becker’s book, “Human Capital.” According to Becker, human capital is similar to physical assets (factories and machines) in that one can invest in it—via education and training. One’s output as a worker depends on the human capital one possesses. In this model, additional investment yields additional output.

The role of education as an input in the production process and its contribution to economic growth can be looked at in a variety of ways. One way is to view the level of education of each worker as an efficiency unit. This view holds that if you keep the number of workers the same and increase the number of years of schooling per worker you increase the efficiency unit, generating greater output. Growth in the number of years of education per worker increases the growth output per worker. Another view holds that an uneducated worker has a different input than a worker with a higher level of education. This difference in input requires different production processes for each group. If a country relies more heavily on exports it will focus on production processes such as those found in the apparel industry—which do not require a high level of education. If it relies more on technologically oriented goods, it will require a labor force with a higher level of education. In trade literature there is evidence that as developing countries increase their education levels to those of developed countries, they can move
from an export based economy that relies on less educated workers to an economy based on the export of more technologically advanced products and participate more fully in the knowledge economy.\textsuperscript{29}

The global economy is increasingly knowledge intensive, putting pressure on higher education to produce highly skilled labor as well as to teach people how to access, produce, and use knowledge.\textsuperscript{30} Increased participation rates in higher education are viewed by the international community, policy makers, governments, and the private sector as a key factor in achieving economic and social development, wealth creation and poverty reduction.\textsuperscript{31}

Today’s global knowledge-based economy is prompting development organizations and institutions like the World Bank to look to at the role higher education can play in the development and growth of emerging economies.\textsuperscript{32} These institutions previously viewed higher education as an expensive and inefficient public service that largely benefited the wealthy and privileged. Today higher education is considered essential in a country’s ability to successfully boost productivity, competitiveness, economic growth, innovation, and performance across economic sectors.\textsuperscript{33} There is increasing recognition that both private and public benefits can be gained. The benefits for individuals include better employment prospects, higher salaries, and a greater ability to save and invest. These benefits may result in better health and improved quality of life, creating a virtuous cycle in which life expectancy improvements enable individuals to work more productively over a longer time further boosting lifetime earnings. In a knowledge economy, higher education can help economies keep up or catch up with more technologically advanced societies. Higher education graduates are likely to be
more aware of and better able to use new technologies. They are also more likely to
develop new tools and skills themselves. Their knowledge can also improve the skills and
understanding of non-graduate coworkers and may generate entrepreneurship, with
positive effects on job creation.  

Historically, studies measuring the return analysis of higher education have been
limited to the traditional rate of return on the financial rewards accrued by individuals
and the tax revenues they generated. Today, studies are examining the broader benefits
of higher education such as entrepreneurship, job creation, good economic and political
governance, improved health, and social benefits. In particular, there is increasing interest
in understanding the speed at which an emerging country can adopt technology and what
impact this has on the rate of its economic development and growth.  

While there is growing recognition of the role and contribution of higher
education in the global knowledge-based economy, questions remain as to who benefits
from the expansion of higher education. According to Shavit et al. “it is debatable
whether educational expansion reduces inequality by providing more opportunities for
persons from disadvantaged strata, or magnifies inequality by expanding opportunities
disproportionately for those who are already privileged.” Despite the progress many
countries have shown in increasing the participation rates of less-privileged groups, the
majority of students still come from privileged groups in society. Shavit et al. question
the timing of low-income countries’ emphasis on policy initiatives focused on increasing
participation rates in higher education. They believe the “most significant” reason is the
World Bank’s policy reversal on higher education. Historically, the World Bank
focused on primary and secondary education, believing the return on investment was

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greater than in higher education. In 1998, the World Bank Task Force on Higher Education and Society and UNESCO issued a report which concluded the present globalised, and knowledge economy, higher education was necessary. Two years later, the World Bank acknowledged the “need to embrace a more balanced, holistic approach to the entire lifelong education system, irrespective of a country’s income level.”

In 2007 The World Bank released its new strategic report for Africa, “Expanding the Possible in sub-Saharan Africa: How Tertiary Institutions Can Increase Growth and Competitiveness”. In this report, the World Bank states that a more knowledge-intensive approach to development is essential for African countries. It holds that education is the only path that can lead to sustained outward-oriented development, given the circumstances in Africa and the global economy. This report maintains that a knowledge-intensive strategy requires a greater focus on tertiary education and on research.

Women account for half of the world’s population and talent. The costs associated with not developing this talent and resource, for any country, are significant. By enabling and encouraging women to be active participants in economic development and growth, many emerging countries increase their potential to participate in the global economy while at the same time boosting their capacity at home.

At the macroeconomic level, female education has been identified as a key source for long-term economic growth. It has been linked to higher productivity; higher returns on investment; higher agricultural yields; and a more favorable demographic structure. The 2002 UN Population Fund Report states that one of the most effective ways to increase and sustain development is through the “improvement of women’s skills and
their access to tools such as credit, training, and technology. It is well understood and recognized that African women can and do make significant contributions to the economic development and growth in their communities and country. The challenge is to make sure that policies and decision-making reflects and supports this understanding and recognition.

Blackden, Canagarajah, Klasen, and Lawson present eight arguments, supported by theoretical literature, which show that gender inequality in education and employment reduces economic growth. The first argument suggests that gender inequality in education reduces the average amount of capital in a society and as a result creates market distortion and harms economic growth. In many countries, women account for half the total population. Therefore, if women are lack the educational knowledge and skills necessary to participate in the formal economy, economic growth is hampered. The second argument relates to the external benefits to be lost by the failure to promote female education or earnings. These benefits include reduced fertility rates and child mortality levels, as well as the likelihood of education for the next generation. The third argument is that gender gaps in employment artificially diminish the talent pool, thereby reducing the average ability of the workforce.

The fourth argument is that the competitive advantage of large gender gaps in pay is erased when there are also large gender gaps in education and employment—that is, women are not trained and hired in large numbers. The fifth argument, supported by a significant amount of research, and is related to the second argument related to external benefits, is based on the fact that female employment and earnings increase women’s bargaining power at home—leading to greater investments in the health and education of
children. Without these earnings, the potential for improvement in the next generation is diminished. The sixth argument is that when women’s productive activities are under-resourced and capitalized it reduces the overall aggregate and production levels of a country. The seventh argument is based on women’s responsibility for the home and family, which leaves them with less time to participate in the formal economy. The work they perform at home and for their family is not measured in income growth or poverty statistics and as a result is not counted in GDP growth. The eighth and final argument, as suggested by a small but growing literature, is that women are less prone to corruption and nepotism. By increasing the number of women in the workplace and in decision-making bodies there is a better chance of improving governance in business and government. 47

An important influence on gender relations in South Africa has been the women’s movement in Africa, which is often referred to as African Feminism. African Feminism has played a key role in the transformation of gender relations in South Africa and the movement towards gender equality. 48 African Feminism is multi-dimensional in that it focuses on the politics of gender and the power relations between men and women; it is pragmatic, group oriented, and action-oriented. It focuses on creating independence and dignity out of oppression created by colonial, western patriarchal and African patriarchal cultures. Women are committed to developing their own voice, which they feel, has often been silenced by Western and European feminists who spoke for them, thereby denying them the opportunity to voice their own thoughts. 49 Tshoedi believes South African culture is still extremely patriarchal. In this culture women are expected to take care of the home and family whereas men focus their attention outside the home to
establish a career. The issue is not so much the duties they each perform, but rather is how these duties are rewarded and valued differently and unequally.\textsuperscript{50}

In addition to the cultural and social norms that make it less likely that women will aspire to attend school, access is also an issue for those who do wish to attend. Access to education has been denied the majority of Africa’s women and girls. The widespread and persistent inequality of women and girls is especially prevalent in higher education. As was discussed earlier, the lack of access to education for women and girls is an economic and political issue with socio-economic consequences.\textsuperscript{51} “Lost learning opportunities, especially in today’s globalized world and what is also referred to as knowledge-based society, constitute a loss of full participation in the development of families, communities, countries, sub-regions, the continent as a whole and global Africa.”\textsuperscript{52} Many of the concepts, issues, concerns, challenges, and benefits identified in this section related to economic growth and development, higher education, and women’s empowerment have been and continue to be played out in South Africa.

**Evolution of this Historical Investigation**

This study is structured as a critical policy analysis employing historical methods. In it, I will examine how the post apartheid government’s economic growth and development polices have informed the higher education system and how this has changed women’s financial, occupational, political, social, and educational prospects in South Africa. Through the telling of this history, the study will give background information on the relationship between economic growth and development, higher
education, and women within the social, cultural, and political context of the country from 1994 to the present.

As noted earlier, there are a variety of reasons why women are essential to the future of the country. At the macroeconomic level, the education of women has been identified as a key source for long-term economic growth—and as noted above, its absence leads to lost potential. It has been linked to higher productivity; higher returns on investment; higher agricultural yields; and a more favorable demographic structure. The 2002 UN Population Fund Report states one of the most effective ways to increase and sustain development is through the "improvement of women’s skills and their access to tools such as credit, training, and technology." It is well understood that African women can and do make significant contributions to the economic development and growth in their communities and country. The challenge is to make sure that policies and decision-making reflects and supports this understanding and recognition.

This is also a story about the lives of South African women. It examines how South Africa’s patriarchal culture, the apartheid system, and the 1996 constitution and other government gender specific initiatives have influenced the lives of women, especially Black South African women. This is by no means an exhaustive study. What this study does is to bring understanding as to why, despite one of the world’s best written and designed policy frameworks for women’s empowerment and gender equality and a constitution based on non-sexism, a significant number of women continue to live in poverty, have higher incidences of HIV/AIDS, are increasingly victims of rape and violence, and continue to experience low graduation rates. By recognizing and understanding why women continue to face significant challenges, thirteen years after the
establishment of a national framework for women's empowerment and gender equality, we can chip away at the poverty, low graduation rates, and violence that are still pervasive in South Africa. Well written policies, speeches, and theoretical papers—while important—can only do so much. If women are to live in the kind of world set-forth in the constitution, an honest assessment—one based on the testimonies of those involved—of the challenges still facing women and recognition of why they still exist must be made. Until that happens, women will continue to carry the burden of poverty, illness, violence, and lack of education in the country.

The Research Question

I am undertaking this study to demonstrate the complex and significant ways South Africa's economic growth and development and higher education policies influence women's lives. These policies, like any, are formulated, negotiated, and implemented with specific intention—yet it is often unknown how they will meet their stated objectives, let alone the effect they will have outside the intended target. This may be particularly true for South Africa as the influence of that country's macro-economic policies have played a key, but little understood role in the country's transformation since the end of apartheid rule.

The overarching research question guiding this study was: What have been the implications and consequences of the macro-economic growth and development policies and the gender equality and empowerment policies adopted since 1994 by the post-
apartheid South African government on the higher education system and the prospects for women? This question comprises two sub-questions:

(1) *What have been the implications for the country of the macro-economic growth and development policies adopted in 1994 by the post-apartheid government?* These neoliberal economic policies have been widely debated and were a factor in the recent national election. While the country has experienced economic growth and a strong black middle class has emerged since 1994 it has also seen an increase in unemployment, poverty, and violence against women. How have those consequences influenced the higher education system and the prospects for women? Will the recently elected government move the country towards economic policies that are more redistributive and equitable, in an effort to curb poverty, reduce unemployment, and improve the social and economic conditions for the majority of South Africans?

(2) *How have the prospects for South African women changed since 1994?*

The laws, bills, and commissions focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-apartheid government serve a very important purpose. The Government established the Commission on Gender Equality, National Gender Forum, and the Office on the Status of Women to support efforts by higher education leaders to become more inclusive and equitable. The question now is how effective have these laws, bills, and commissions been in achieving their objectives? Do patriarchal, cultural and social norms still have a strong influence on women? If so, how do women balance this with the progressive gender framework set forth by the government? How does this influence their decision and ability to access higher education? Have higher education systems become more supportive, inclusive, and equitable for female students and
faculty? What challenges do women experience in accessing the higher education system and what barriers do they face once in the system? What are the employment opportunities for female graduates? And, what influence does race, class, and geography have on women as it relates to access and retention in higher education and employment opportunities?

**Context and Plan for the Historical Dissertation**

This study did not attempt to find the answers or solutions to the pressing economic, education, and gender issues facing South Africa today. The primary focus was on understanding the relationship between economic growth and development and higher education policies and how they have changed women’s prospects. Although race is often the lens used when examining the country’s past and current opportunities and challenges, this study takes a different perspective and looks at the country through the framework of gender. Doing so sheds new light on how half of South Africa’s population—women—have faced the complexity, opportunities, and challenges of that country’s recent period.

This study is focused on post-apartheid South Africa. However, it is important to understand the final years of apartheid rule, the key political players, and the conditions and terms under which the African National Congress (ANC) came to power. The beginning chapters provide background information necessary to appreciate and understand the transformation of the country. This understanding allows the reader to contextualize the challenges and opportunities facing the country today. These chapters
look at the early 1990s, which was the beginning of the end of apartheid rule. They focus on individuals who were instrumental in engineering the end of apartheid and provide a glimpse into the political landscape, the economic challenges, the condition of the higher education system, and the role of women at the time.

South Africa is country that has gone through significant changes since 1994. The new government, led by the ANC, set out to transform the country. The third chapter looks at the key initiatives undertaken by this new government to rebuild the country: a new constitution, macro-economic growth and development policies, the dismantling and rebuilding of the higher education system, and the building a national framework for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The chapter also highlights key debates and questions that arose during the creation and adoption process of these policies that continue to play out today.

The aim of the fourth chapter is to illustrate the far-reaching influence of the macro-economic policies adopted by the ANC, and in particular their effect on the higher education system. The macro-economic policies of the ANC have played a significant role in the country since the 1994 election campaign. What started as a policy of redistribution and equity during the election campaign gave way to a western neoliberal market based approach with the introduction of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) in 1996. This shift in policy had a tremendous impact on the country economically, socially, politically, and culturally. Chapter four focuses on the influence of GEAR on economic growth and development, higher education, and prospects for women since its inception in 1996. It also examines the potential for changes in these macro-economic policies given South Africans growing discontent with
the economic direction of the country and the pressures facing the newly elected
government under the leadership of Jacob Zuma. There is expectation by those who
supported the candidacy of Jacob Zuma—including the poor, trades unions and the South
African Communist Party—that the new government will re-examine GEAR policies and
shift to a more redistributive model with increased government intervention. The chapter
will end with an examination of what if anything, the new government is proposing as it
relates to economic growth and development initiatives and policies.

The South African higher education system has undergone unprecedented change
since 1994. Three key higher education policies have been implemented which provide
the foundation for higher education in the country. The first policy is the 1995 White
Paper, which called for increased access, development of a single coordinated system,
and expansion of distance learning. The second is the 1997 White Paper that emphasized
managerial efficiency and abandoned equity goals. In 2004 another White Paper was
released calling for the reorganization and merger of higher education institutions. The
high expectations and rapid changes called for in these policies has put tremendous stress
on the higher education system as the South African government and its citizens view
that system as one of the main vehicles for fulfilling the promise of the country. These
policies have sometimes perpetuated problems from the past and have also created new
challenges—and the discussion of these issues is the subject of chapter five. Specifically,
the chapter discusses the need to provide quality of education, overcome language
barriers, prepare students well, improve the low graduation rates of black and
underrepresented groups, ameliorate teacher shortages, and meet the country’s need for
skilled workers who can contribute to the global knowledge-based economy. In addition,
chapter five examines the unique challenges associated with merging multiple universities with historically different curricula, students, language, and standards into one system. The chapter ends with an analysis of how the recent organizational and structural changes to the Ministry of Education may alleviate some of the challenges currently facing the higher education system.

The next several chapters examine and analyze how women’s prospects have changed since the end of apartheid rule. These chapters bring understanding to the role and relationship between economic growth and development, higher education, and gender in post-apartheid South Africa. This understanding is framed by the cultural, social, and political context in which the country operates. Since higher education is considered key to gender equality, higher wages, a greater likelihood of working outside the home, lower fertility, and reduced maternal and child mortality, the discussion starts by examining the role higher education has played in improving women’s prospects, the gains they have been made, and the challenges that remain. Issues related to access, retention, and field of study are explored, as is the role race, class, geography, and social and cultural norms play in either increasing or decreasing the likelihood of women’s success in the higher education system. The discussion then turns to the prevalence of rape, sexual harassment, pregnancy, and HIV/AIDS on campus and how they influence a woman’s ability to stay in school.

The last chapter highlights the gains women have made, the challenges that remain, and the role race, class, geography, cultural and social norms, and education continue to play in their lives. This is evident by the fact that the majority of black South African women are still in the poorest socio-economic sector of the population, they
continue to work in the service and agricultural sector, and occupy a small percentage of those in the professional sector. While women continue to make tremendous strides, they are paying a price for the gains they have made. This is reflected in the level of violence against women, including rape, and the high incidence of HIV/AIDS. There is a general sense of backlash against women from men in the country, including its leaders, and it is palatable. The chapter ends by examining these disturbing trends and attempts to explain why it is happening.

The concluding chapter will discuss the challenges that remain for women, suggestions for moving forward, and thoughts about what the future may hold given the current trends and conditions in the country.

**Potential Contribution of this Historical Investigation**

There is a significant amount of literature--articles, books, and research--that discusses, examines, and debates the merits of the Growth, Employment, and Redistribution Policy (GEAR) adopted by the post-apartheid government, from a political and economic perspective. This study brings a deeper understanding to the implications of this policy by focusing on its effect on the higher education system--a topic about which less has been said--and on women, where there is little to no literature. This study fills a void by examining how GEAR has influenced two key elements necessary in meeting the economic growth and development initiatives of the country: higher education and the full and active engagement of women. It is anticipated the presidency of Jacob Zuma will bring political, economic, and social change to the country, and in
that regard, this study takes into account the social, cultural, and political context of current conditions and events to offer a unique perspective on South Africa's future.

South Africa is a country whose history is told as a racial story. These histories, the country's formal histories, confront and tell the story of South Africa in racial terms. There are new ways of telling the story which are slowly emerging. This study is an attempt to show that race is not the only player in keeping the story of the country going. There are other crucial factors and events—including those related to gender—which are important in shaping and giving character to this story. In this study, I tell the story of South Africa in gendered terms, in a way that will help to better understand the complexity of the country today and to view it in a more comprehensive way. It weaves economic growth and development, higher education, and gender together to create a new tapestry and way of viewing the country.

Chapter One Endnotes

3 Archbishop Desmond Tutu is a leading figure in South Africa. He is an activist who rose to worldwide fame during the 1980s as an opponent of apartheid. Tutu was the first black South African Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa, and primate of the Church of the Province of Southern Africa (now the Anglican Church of Southern Africa). Tutu chaired the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, the Albert Schweitzer Price for Humanitarianism, the Gandhi Peace Prize in 2005 and the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.
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42 Mariama Williams. 4.
43 Ibid., 9.
47 Ibid., 73.
49 Ibid., 128.
52 Mariama Williams, Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 1.
53 Ibid., 2.
54 Boko, Women in African Development, 3.
55 Ibid.
Chapter Two: The Years Leading Up to 1994 and the End of Apartheid

The Shifting Political Tide

When F.W. de Klerk campaigned as the Presidential candidate for the National Party in the 1989, he promised voters it would be the last time blacks would be excluded from an election. He and the National Party knew the days of the apartheid system were numbered; it could no longer be maintained. The global recession in early 1980s had an impact on South Africa’s economy, as with other countries, but it was all the more difficult for South Africa as companies found it increasingly difficult to justify doing business in the country due to increasing anti-apartheid attitudes.¹ By the middle of the decade, limited trade, commercial sanctions, and the demand for repayment on outstanding international bank loans had cost South Africa an estimated $32 to $40 billion and an additional $3.7 billion in capital flight. The country was in a recession and state debt was escalating, forcing the government to use domestic savings to fund development and pay off their creditors.²

On February 2, 1990, in a speech before Parliament, President de Klerk lifted the state of emergency, unbanned political parties such as the ANC, the Pan-Africanist Congress, the South African Communist Party, and thirty-one other illegal organizations. He announced the release of many political prisoners and detainees, and unbanned many people, including Nelson Mandela.³ The National Party was prepared to dismantle apartheid and negotiate a power-sharing arrangement with the ANC. Interestingly enough, three years earlier, Gavin Reilly, the chairman of Anglo-American, the largest company in the country, made public remarks calling for the freeing of political
prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, the unbanning of political parties such as the ANC, and the dismantling of apartheid. While there were certainly other factors that contributed to de Klerk’s announcement on the 2nd February, such as the lack of commitment on the part of younger Afrikaner leaders to maintain the apartheid system, it appears the key drivers were the realization that the country’s economy was at stake and the increasing pressure on the government from the business community and external investors.

As negotiations began between the government and the ANC it became clear, very quickly, that de Klerk’s proposition of power sharing was a non-starter for the ANC. The ANC and Nelson Mandela insisted on a system of “one person, one vote democracy.” As pressure grew from the west and from within, de Klerk decided to drop the power sharing proposal to keep the talks moving and to avoid an outright conflict with the ANC and the potential of bloodshed. Both parties agreed to move forward and to the formation of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) where the ANC, National Party, and other political parties, including the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), would come together to discuss, create, and negotiate a plan for moving the country forward.

Although things were progressing towards a democratic South Africa, not everyone welcomed the turn of events. In a poll conducted in 1991 of white South Africans, only 15% believed they would be “better off” in a new South Africa. There was also a level of discontent and rumbling among conservative Afrikaners. The Afrikaner Conservative Party and other right wing organizations referred to de Klerk’s speech on February 2, 1990 as the start of the Afrikaners’ “third war of liberation.” The
Conservative Party tried to organize and disrupt the negotiations but with little success. There were also some very difficult moments during the negotiation process. Perhaps the most contentious one came when Nelson Mandela accused de Klerk of not doing enough to curb the violence that had broken out in the country. The ANC was convinced and publicly stated its belief that within the security forces of the National government, a “third force” was provoking intra-black violence. At this point, the ANC was coming to the end of its role as leader of a liberation movement and moving to a position of governing. It had black labor on its side, represented by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). But, there was also friction within the liberation movement, particularly between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). This friction had over the years become violent resulting in the deaths of a number of black South Africans. It came to a head in 1990 when violence broke out in the province of Natal between the ANC and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) resulting in many deaths.\(^8\) Mandela insisted de Klerk had to do more to end the violence and demanded he call off the security forces. De Klerk insisted the security forces were not involved and he too wanted to see the violence come to an end. It was a difficult moment in the negotiating process and some feared it would derail the negotiations.

On December 20\(^\text{th}\) and 21\(^\text{st}\) 1991, the first session of CODESA (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) was held at the World Trade Centre in Johannesburg. It was attended by 228 delegates representing nineteen political groups. The purpose of the gathering was to discuss the process of transition from apartheid rule and the constitutional process for change. At the end of the meeting, all parties agreed to support
the Declaration of Intent, which said that they would begin writing a new Constitution for South Africa.

In March, 1992 a referendum took place asking white South Africans if they supported the continuation of negotiations with the ANC for a democratic government. Based on an 89% turnout, 69% said they supported the negotiations.⁹ At this point, it was clear the country was moving forward with the constitutional process.

On May 15, 1992 CODESA met again at the World Trade Centre. After three days it was clear that there were many tensions. Agreement had been made on the basic principles for a constitutional document; the problems began when the discussion turned to the question of what defined a majority to adopt the new constitution. The ANC wanted a two-thirds majority and the National Party a three-fourths majority. At the end of this meeting, the ANC and COSATU decided to begin a “rolling mass action” consisting of strikes, demonstrations, and boycotts. The date of June 16th was chosen as the start date for mass action to coincide with the anniversary of the 1976 SOWETO uprising.¹⁰ On the 17th June, violence erupted in Boipatong, resulting in forty-six deaths. Once again, Mandela and the ANC accused de Klerk’s government of complicity and the security forces of instigating the violence. The ANC suspended talks.¹¹

By February 1993, talks had resumed, and it was agreed that an election would be held in April, 1994. In March, 1993 full negotiations began at the World Trade Centre. The parties present decided to use the name Multi-Party Negotiating Process (MPNP) instead of CODESA. There were twenty-six parties taking part in the MPNP. The MPNP had to write and adopt an interim Constitution to say how the government would govern
after the elections on 27 April 1994. The MPNP drew up the Interim Constitution, which was to last for two years. The MPNP also adopted 34 Constitutional Principles that would guide the Constitutional Assembly (CA) in the writing of the final document—for example, that there should be a bill of rights. All the parties at the MPNP agreed that if the final Constitution did not encompass all the Constitutional Principles then the Constitutional Court would not be able to certify it.\textsuperscript{12}

The end to apartheid rule and the transformation to a democratic state was the result of intensive bargaining and compromise. There were certainly moments of violence and tension that could have easily ended the negotiations process, but that did not happen as both groups were determined to find a way forward. In 1993 Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

**The Economic Challenges Facing the Country**

The apartheid system is associated with racial discrimination, oppression, repression of civil rights, and to a lesser extent, the repression of economic rights. By the time the National government announced the dismantling of apartheid, it was clear that an economy built on exploitation through segregation and a migrant labor system was no longer viable and was instead hampering the country’s ability to compete globally.

The economic climate during the final two decades of apartheid under the leadership of the National Party was difficult. Economic growth was stagnant, with the average rate of growth over the entire period at 1.7%. This meant personal hardship, as per capita income declined averaging -0.7% annually, unemployment increased and debt
went from less than 3% of GDP in 1989 to more than 9% in 1994; government debt more than doubled. By 1993, one year before the end of apartheid, only 30% of Black South Africans had electricity, 35% of the population was illiterate, and 60% lived in absolute poverty. Most of South Africa’s national income went to whites, who had personal incomes per capita of about 9.5 times those of Black South Africans, 4.5 times those of coloured, and 3.0 times those of Asians. A World Bank report in 1994 reported that South Africa’s health status relative to income was one of the worst in the world.\textsuperscript{13}

Up until the 1970s the apartheid economy had performed well. The country’s growth rate in the 1960s was among the highest in the world, along with Japan, South Korea, and Brazil. Inflation, job creation, savings, and investments were all at levels that allowed the country to prosper and provide a good standard of living, albeit for a minority, of its people. The foundation of the economy was the strength of the price of gold and the country’s manufacturing capabilities. Up until 1971, gold was fixed to the US dollar; this meant the only factor affecting profits was the cost of inputs, including labor costs. This gave South Africa an advantage as the labor pool was stable and wages were low. The manufacturing sector remained the main contributor to GDP with close links to the mining and energy sectors. Unlike the gold sector, manufacturing was competitive regionally, contributing little to exports. For example, 90% of locally manufactured cloths were domestically consumed with only 10% going out for export.\textsuperscript{14}

In the early 1970s, South Africa’s economy began the decline. There were a number of factors contributing to the country’s decline, including the end of the gold standard which allowed the price of gold to fluctuate, the oil crises in 1973 and then
again in 1979, and worldwide inflation and the debt crisis. After the second oil crisis ended in the early 1980s, the liberalization of international capital markets and the elimination of trade barriers along with the introduction of new technologies created competition in gold production from the United States, Canada, Australia, and Russia. Not only did South Africa see its share of world gold sales drop, but the prices dropped as well when the International Monetary Fund and then the European central bank began selling off their gold. This was also the time when economic sanctions against South Africa were tightening. In response, the government began pumping resources into the economy through infrastructure projects such as roads and dams. By the time Nelson Mandela was elected as President in 1994, the government’s expenditures exceeded its revenue. The economic picture was bleak from the 1980s until the mid-1990s: domestic investment as a proportion of GDP fell from 27% to 15%; domestic savings fell from an average of 23.5% of GDP to 17%; 40-45% of the population who were actively working were doing so outside the formal economy; net job creation saw less than one in ten people entering into formal employment; and conditions in rural areas regarding growth, employment, or bare subsistence were at the point of collapse.

The combination of economic sanctions, a weakened economy, lack of growth, and the increased cost to maintain the apartheid system left the country’s economy in bad shape for the post-apartheid government. Yet some strong economic foundations remained. Although these were all racially skewed, the country did have a strong infrastructure that included roads, electricity, railways, harbors, bridges, and water system; a strong financial system, by international standards; human resources; technological capabilities; a strong business community; and an annual income per capita

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that put the South Africa in the upper middle-income bracket for developing countries.\textsuperscript{17} Yet in the end, the economic liabilities inherited by the post-apartheid government outweighed the assets. The new government’s challenge was to leverage the assets, minimize the liabilities, and create a new economic direction that would benefit all South Africans.

**The Higher Education Landscape**

The educational system in South Africa was divided along racial and ethnical lines. Due to this divide, there were fourteen different education systems administered by a large bureaucracy with centralized control. The state was spending seven times more per capita on whites’ education than on black South Africans’. The white population consumed approximately 45% of the education budget and 70% of the higher education budget although it accounted for only 20% of the total population. The disparity in funding, curriculum, and student/teacher ratios contributed to lower literacy rates, enrollment rates, graduation rates, and employment opportunities for non-whites.\textsuperscript{18}

The key legislative policies related to higher education during apartheid were the 1953 Bantu Education Act which transferred and centralized all responsibility for the education of Africans from local governments and missionaries to the state under the Native Affairs Department; the 1959 Extension of the University Act which created separate higher education facilities for Africans, Coloreds, and Indians and forbade these groups from attending predominately white universities without approval from the state; the 1959 University of Fort Hare Transfer Act that established that institution for Xhosa
students; and the 1983 Universities Amendment Act which provided the legal framework for the establishment of higher education institutions as part of the Bantu self-government policy. As a result, by 1988, eleven universities were operating in the self-governing territories.  

A statement by the Minister of Bantu Affairs in 1953 explained the rationale for a separate higher education system for blacks: “More institutions for advanced education in urban areas (white areas) are not desired. Deliberate attempts will be made to keep institutions for advanced education away from the urban environment and to establish them as far as possible in the Native reserves. There is no place for the Native in the European community above certain forms of labor. Within in his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive training which has as its aim absorption into the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze. This led to the much discussed frustration of educated natives who can find no employment which is acceptable to them...it must be replaced by planned Bantu education...with its roots entirely in the Native areas, and in the Native environment and community.”

The Extension of the University Act of 1959 essentially was an act to enforce apartheid on higher education. The Act reconfigured higher education by steering black students away from the established white universities and creating black universities, which offered a completely different quality of education and curriculum. The government specified that from December 1960 forward no black students would be
allowed to study at an “open university.” Prior to the University Extension Act, two white universities, Wits and University of Cape Town, admitted blacks, although there were segregated living spaces and sporting facilities. The year after the Act was passed, 190 black students applied to white universities, four were given approval, and only two were admitted, one to Wits and the other to University of Cape Town. This meant that by 1960, only two black students in the entire country were attending a non-black university. Admittedly, there were not a large number of black students enrolled in white universities prior to the 1959 University Extension Act but the decline in enrollment the following years demonstrates the effectiveness of the government’s effort to segregate and control education along racial divisions. The numbers are revealing. In 1960 14.8% of all students in the higher education system were attending an ethnic university; by 1976 46.9% were attending an ethnic university. Of course, a consequence of the 1959 Act was a period of growth within the black universities. Between 1960-1968, black student enrollment increased 83% at the University of the North, Zululand, and University of Western Cape. The establishment of black universities in black areas created what the government intended, the education of different ethnic groups in their own culture and learning in subjects that would reinforce and support the apartheid system. Despite the fact that in these universities the student body was black and the universities were located in black areas, the administration, staff, faculty, and governance of the institutions were Afrikaans. This created two cultures within the institutions, resulting in tension and conflict and creating a climate ripe for protest.

The 1983 Universities Amendment Act coincided with the adoption of a new Constitution. The Act established education as part of the “own affairs” structure in the
new Constitution. The Constitution called for the establishment of separate Houses of Assembly (for whites), Representatives (for coloreds), and Delegates (for Indians) allowing each group to direct its "own affairs."\textsuperscript{24}

As the new framework provided no representative body for them, nothing changed for black South Africans. Their education was to remain separate with a white minister in charge. From 1983 onward, there were three sub-sectors of higher education based on the own affairs and homeland government structure. The Department of Education no longer had other education departments or higher education institutions reporting to it. The role of the Department of Education was monitoring and setting financial and academic norms and standards for the higher education. The three Departments of Education had separate responsibilities for all higher education institutions within their racial classification. A Department of Education and Training was responsible for a few higher education institutions for Africans. The self-governing territories\textsuperscript{25} had six Departments of Education responsible for some technikons and colleges. And, there were four Departments of Education responsible for universities, technikons, and colleges of education in the "independent states" of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei.\textsuperscript{26} The structure remained in place until the end of apartheid. Thus the post-apartheid government inherited a fragmented, inefficient, ineffective, discriminatory higher education system operating under different governance models.

The apartheid government brought higher education into the apartheid system to control the ability and number of black South Africans who could obtain positions of leadership or authority in politics, government, business, or the sciences. What they
didn’t realize was they were creating a strong foundation and platform for black resistance and protest. A black student organization based on the Black Consciousness philosophy emerged in 1968 called the South African Student Organization (SASO). The objectives of SASO were to promote contact and coordination among students and to represent non-white students nationally. SASO played a key role in the early 1970s on the campuses of black universities and in the anti-apartheid movement. By 1976 the perfect storm was brewing with the Soweto uprising, the increased number of students enrolled in higher education, the visibly repressive environment of apartheid on campus, the obvious material differences and conditions between black and white, and black student mobilization. These elements all came together to begin a period of ongoing protest and resistance by black university students against the apartheid government. From the mid-1980s until the early 1990s, universities became key sites for anti-apartheid activities with weekly protests or other disturbances.

In addition to the protests, the mobilization of black students on campuses led to the creation of different liberation slogans that would become rallying calls for the anti-apartheid movement. The first slogan, “Liberation Now and Education Later” emerged in the mid-1980s in opposition to apartheid education. This slogan was not well received by the ANC which saw education as a critical tool in the struggle for freedom, viewed the campuses as important sites for protest, and believed the university provided structure for young people and engaged them in the fight against apartheid in a constructive way. The ANC proposed as an alternative slogan, “People’s Education for People’s Power,” which shifted the focus of protest against apartheid education to the development of alternative education in the schools. This shift in focus allowed the ANC and those in the higher
education system to begin thinking about the new strategies, policies, and structures that would be needed in the future, in a new democratic South Africa.

By the time the ANC government came into power in 1994 there were almost twelve million students at over 27,000 schools including 350,000 at the twenty-one universities with another 135,000 students in technikons. These students were being taught by 375,000 educators with approximately 100,000 staff. The government was spending 22.5% of the budget and nearly 7% of GDP on education.31

**The Women Insist: Having a Voice in the Formation of a New South Africa**

South Africa is a patriarchal society. It is deeply rooted in its past pastoral economy and way of life. In this setting, men controlled the weapons and livestock while the women were primarily responsible for crops and taking care of the children and elderly. Household decision-making was done by men in a very authoritative manner with clan-based councils or chiefs controlling important decisions like land-use allocation. Up until 1998, African women were regarded as minors in Customary Law.32 Customary Law significantly limited women’s property rights. By eliminating many of the discriminatory elements of Customary Law in 1998, including the restrictions on property rights, women’s position in the household shifted significantly.33

The European settlers were more individualistic and afforded individual control over property ownership and other financial matters. However, theirs was still a very patriarchal culture as well in that men typically controlled capital and land while women
were responsible for children and the home. Under Dutch-Roman law it was very
difficult for married women to independently own property or enter into contractual
agreements. These laws created a culture in which women were very limited in their
ability to participate in the formal economy.\textsuperscript{34}

The apartheid system created racial, class, and gender structures. The division of
labor under apartheid greatly influenced women’s lives. The recruitment of Black South
African labor by Europeans brought the men to the fields and later to the mines. African
women in turn were brought into Europeans’ homes to supplement or relieve European
women of their household and child rearing responsibilities. While both genders were
pulled from their local communities, men were needed in greater numbers than women.
However, the Europeans were reluctant to have “too many” Black South Africans in their
mining or farming communities. As a result, a policy was established that essentially
kept most African women in rural areas and moved the working-age men back and forth
as migrant workers.\textsuperscript{35}

The policies created by the apartheid government restricting the movement of
women contributed to African women’s lack of participation in the formal economy and
blocked their upward mobility. And, as will be discussed later, women’s protest against
this restriction became a defining moment in the future role they would play and
contribution they would make in the anti-apartheid resistance movement. What these
policies also did was to create a lack of urgency for the training and education of African
women. Since African women weren’t key drivers in the formal economy and their
unemployment rates were higher than male rates in all provinces, it was easier to ignore
their education.
An important influence on gender relations in South Africa has been the women’s movement in Africa, which is often referred to as African Feminism. African Feminism has played a key role in the transformation of gender relations in South Africa and the movement towards gender equality. It is multi-dimensional in that it focuses on the politics of gender and the power relations between men and women; it is also pragmatic, group oriented, and action-oriented. It focuses on creating independence and dignity out of the oppression created by colonial, Western patriarchal and African patriarchal cultures. Women are committed to developing their own voice, which they feel has often been silenced by Western and European feminists who spoke for them, thereby denying them the opportunity to voice their own thoughts.

Another key idea of the feminist movement was the notion that women had different interests then men and as a result, could not be represented by men. The South African women’s movement saw what had happened in the 1970s in Norway when Norwegian women were finally able to enter politics in significant numbers. Norwegian women shifted their argument from a gender-neutral approach to one that focused on the relevance of gender differences. Essentially, they argued “women and men have fundamentally different experiences in terms of how they live and see the world, mainly because of the division of labor by sex, and thus only women can truly bring the views of women into government and other institutions.” By making the argument for the need for representation of women in governing institutions, the country established party based gender quotas of 40 percent beginning in 1973.

It is important to understand that there were deep divisions within the South African Feminist movement, some racial, that became hostile at times. These hostilities
and the divisions within the movement came to a head in 1991 during a conference at Natal University. Although it was difficult, the conference did allow women to openly discuss the issues and concerns they had and to reaffirm their commitment to the movement, recognizing that their divisions and differences would continue to challenge them.\textsuperscript{40}

From the early 1950s, the African National Congress (ANC) Women’s League began to establish a branch structure in the township and to participate actively in ANC campaigns. The Pass laws, which applied only to men, were extended to women in 1959 despite opposition and protest by the ANC’s Women League and the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW).\textsuperscript{41} The FEDSAW Federation was launched at a conference on April 17, 1954 with the intent of promoting women’s rights. Its members included women from all races across the country. A Women’s Charter was created, setting out the basic groups basic demands: equal opportunities for women, equal pay, maternity rights and benefits, and the removal of control and racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{42} FEDSAW increasingly organized and protested the government’s attempts to introduce pass laws for women in 1952 as the women saw this as a threat to safety, employment in urban areas, and the unity of their families. On August 9, 1956 20,000 African, Indian, colored, and white women marched and then demonstrated at the Union Buildings in Pretoria in protest against the extension of the pass laws to African women. It was at this demonstration where the words: “wathint’ abafazi, wathint’ imbolodo uzokufa” (you have touched the women, you have struck a rock) were spoken to mock then Prime Minister J.G. Strijdom.\textsuperscript{43}
In the mid-1980’s two attempts were made to re-launch the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW). The group had been inactive since the 1960s, although never formally dissolved, when its leaders were detained, banned, imprisoned, put under house arrest, or forced into exile.\footnote{44} In the November 1989 FEDSAW Newsletter called on women to unite despite their differences: “the nature of women’s oppression might well differ for different groups of women, but the underlying causes are the same.”\footnote{45} It is still unclear why both attempts to re-launch FEDSAW failed but two theories have emerged. One theory is that powerful men in the resistance movement wanted it blocked because they felt threatened by the presence of a strong and independent women’s organization. The second theory is that it was blocked due to concern that it would allow Winnie Mandela\footnote{46} to build her personal power base at a time when the Stompie Seipei incident was gaining press.\footnote{47} The failure to reestablish FEDSAW left many women feeling disillusioned and confused.\footnote{48}

The 1980s was also a time when women began debating whether women’s organizations like the ANC Women’s League should be autonomous or remain a sub-set of organizations under male leadership and control. The argument for keeping male control was that by becoming autonomous women could potentially be weakening the national struggle against apartheid rule. These debates and women’s active engagement in the resistance movement throughout the 1970s and 1980s allowed for the emergence of a strong women’s leadership that carried women’s interests in the 1990s.\footnote{49}

Mass strikes and popular protest increased significantly during the 1980s and with them the strengthening of trade unions. Women became increasingly involved in the labor movement as African women were entering into the industrial workforce in greater
numbers. They were concerned about poor wages, working conditions, sexual harassment, maternity benefits, and the use of strip-searching as a means of controlling theft.\textsuperscript{50} Although women made up the majority of workers in many industries, it was rare for unions to elect women in leadership positions. In 1988, at the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) conference, there was a divisive debate among women from the different unions about whether they should organize within the COSATU structure or create a national women’s organization. A resolution was drafted and the women decided to create structures within COSATU designed to address women’s concerns in the workplace, and other structures outside of COSATU dedicated to uniting women in the community.\textsuperscript{51} As was the case in political organizations, patriarchy continued to dominate how and what women did within their unions. Women were expected to follow traditional gender roles in which men would go about changing the world and the women would tend to the children and family—sometimes assisting the men in their quest for change.

It was common for many of the women’s organizations to be seen as an extension of or to be strongly affiliated with other organizations that were led and managed by men. For example, the Natal Organization of Women (NOW) was strongly affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF), responsible for massive anti-apartheid protest. However, many women’s organizations were formed not only to fight the injustices of apartheid but to also give voice to women’s issues and the women’s movement. These women’s organizations challenged the limitations imposed on them by men in the movement as well as the patriarchal values imposed on them in their personal lives.\textsuperscript{52}
The leadership of ANC did recognize women’s efforts and the challenges they faced within the resistance movement. ANC president Oliver Tambo said to an ANC women’s conference in exile in 1981:

The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women.53

In 1990, after the National government unbanned political parties, the ANC’s Women’s League began to operate again in South Africa and other organizations such as NOW began to disband. The ANC women who had lived in exile began to come back into the country brining with them the ideas and strategies they had advocated for within the ANC related to women’s roles and rights. These women were pushing the envelope, as the ANC was still a patriarchal organization—although it recognized the important role women played in the resistance movement both within the country and in exile.

Once again, at the National Conference of the ANC Women’s League in April 1991, ANC president Oliver Tambo recognized the important role women played in the fight against apartheid, the importance of women’s issues, and the difficulty women face within the ANC:

Comrades and Friends, women constitute the overwhelming majority of our population. This majority, especially black women, suffer the worse form of oppression under apartheid rule. This much is accepted by the ANC and indeed the entire democratic movement in the country. Accordingly, many of us have accepted the reality that any liberation which does not result in the emancipation of women will be just a shadow of what would otherwise have been a true liberation. This correct principled view is enshrined in the many resolutions the ANC has passed over the years. However, we all share in the guilt of failing to systematically implement programmes which must result in the liberation of women within our ranks let alone our society in general.54
In 1991, despite the many challenges and differences the women's faced within and outside the movement, the National Women's Coalition (NWC) was launched and ninety organizations came together by 1994. The NWC drew women from very diverse social, economic, educational, and political backgrounds. The NWC established a gender committee to advise the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) on gender issues as the end of apartheid was fast approaching.

During the CODESA negotiations that produced the framework for the final constitution, women's organizations lobbied heavily for the inclusion of women in the process. Frene Ginwala, who was a key player in the formation of the coalition, and elected convener, made the following remarks:

Our experience has been that the more powerful the committee, the fewer the women. The exclusion of women in the CODESA process is both a symbol of our present society and a grim warning of the future. They will talk of non-sexism, they will not practice it. The air around us is thick with talk of change, of the end of racism and apartheid, of a new era of democracy. Is the change we are talking about going to mean simply adding some black men where white men sat before?

Shortly after the formation of the NWC, Pregs Govender was appointed to head the NWC Women's Charter campaign. The objective of the campaign was to take up the work of the Women's Charter of 1954 and to mobilize women across the country to take part in a research campaign to ensure women's voices were heard during CODESA's negotiation sessions. To do this, the campaign needed to bring women's issues to the attention of political parties, trade unions, academia, the media, and the nation's legal institutions. The NWC was concerned that women would be excluded from the decision-making process if they did not have the strong support of their comrades throughout the
country—support which would be demonstrated by the success of the research campaign and the Women’s Charter. The Women’s Charter campaign was introduced and launched on International Women’s Day on March 8, 1993. The event generated extensive publicity and the media positioned it as an indication—given that half the voters in the country were women—of their intent to leverage their numbers in the upcoming election. In April, during CODESA negotiations, NWC was able to get each political group and organization in attendance to agree to appoint an extra woman to their delegation. In June 1993 a national workshop was held with women from all the regional coalition groups participating. The primary purpose of the workshop was to lay out a set of five issues that had emerged as most critical to women: legal status, land, violence, health, and work. With the focus on these issues, the regional coalitions went forward and rolled out the campaign in their respective regions.56

It is important to understand the issues women were facing related to gender, poverty, and vulnerability in the 1990s as the NWC was advocating for a voice at the negotiating table. Several women’s organizations described women’s suffering as the “triple yoke of oppression” whereby women were oppressed on the basis of sex, class, and race.57 By the mid-1990s, women represented the majority of the poor in rural and less-urbanized provinces and were a minority in the most urbanized provinces. The percentage of people living in rural areas was estimated to be 43% in 1995. The rural African population accounted for 71% of poor households in South Africa. Black South Africans at the time were carrying 95% of burden of poverty with the rural population carrying 75% of the burden.58 The apartheid system had successfully discouraged and then banned rural African women, with the introduction of pass laws in 1959, from
coming into towns. This significantly reduced the options rural women had to earn a living. The only possibilities were to perform basic agricultural work, work in the informal sector, or rely on remittances and transfers.\textsuperscript{69}

Women were particularly vulnerable, especially those in rural areas who relied heavily on remittances from absent male partners who often were not reliable. When a woman lost her source of income, for whatever reason, she risked of loss of property; this risk increased given the lack of inheritance and property rights or the ability to enforce these rights in areas where African customary law prevailed. The percentage of single-parent families headed by women reported in 1989 varied between 4.7 for whites, 5.8 for Asians, 9.3 for blacks and 9.6 for coloureds. Multi-generational families had a significantly higher number of female-headed households, 6.2 for whites, 11.4 for Asians, 21.4 for coloureds and 25.5 for blacks.\textsuperscript{60} Female-headed households, especially black households, were significantly poorer than average households and female-headed families in rural areas were “at the bottom of the economic pyramid” in South Africa.\textsuperscript{61} By 1995, 49% of female headed households were classified as poor in contrast to 31% of male headed households and 65% of black female-headed households in rural areas were poor.\textsuperscript{62}

Education was also an important issue for women. About 50% of the poor had incomplete education or none at all. The rate was 35% for the overall population of South Africa compared to 53% of rural poor. For women in the age group 25 years and above, the percentage who lacked education was higher (18% overall and to 23% for blacks) than for men (12% overall compared to 16% for blacks). Persistence was a problem as well: in 1993 girls accounted for 57% of matriculation candidates but
represented only 45% of those who passed. Several reasons were identified for this problem, including sexual harassment and abuse, inability to go to school at night due to concerns of violence, burden of domestic responsibilities, and pregnancy.\textsuperscript{63} Women were the primary caregivers for the family and were responsible for taking care of the home. A 1993 assessment of living conditions for the poorest 40% of households in the country showed 35.3% living in shacks, only 21.4% had access to electricity, only 27.5% had piped water in the home, only 18.4% had a flush toilet, and as many as 47% relied on wood as the main source of cooking.\textsuperscript{64} The lack of access of basic services meant that women and young children, most often girls, spent a considerable amount of time collecting water, firewood, and performing other tasks related to the care of the family and home.

Other issues of concern to women included the incidence of violence, rape, and HIV/AIDS. The lack of economic options for women, especially the poor, made women vulnerable to these problems, as did the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes and norms. From 1990 to 1996 the rate of HIV infection was increasing at a higher rate for women than men.\textsuperscript{65}

Before 1993, men had legal power and control over their wives and family, except in cases where an ante-nuptial contract (one that governs that status of assets and liabilities on death or divorce), had been signed. However, even with an ante-nuptial, the husband remained the legal guardian of the children unless a court order allowed for other arrangements. Several Acts were passed in the early 1990s giving married women more rights and power. The Domicile Act 3 of 1992 allowed woman for the first time to determine the jurisdiction of the court during divorce proceedings. The General Law

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Fourth Amendment Act 132 of 1993 abolished "all exclusively male marital power, although consent by both parties for important transactions was required." Women also were entitled at the end of a marriage, whether due to divorce or death, to half of any assets accrued during the marriage. Unfortunately, despite these acts, many Black married women were still subject to the traditional authority of their husband's family, the clan, and chiefs.

Thus the women of South Africa, especially African rural women, were facing significant economic, social, legal, and political challenges when the National Women's Coalition (NWC) was negotiating to have women's rights incorporated into the Interim Constitution. Their efforts materialized in November, 1993, when the Interim Constitution did include women's rights provisions, and the Women's Charter was finalized in February 1994. To CODESA's credit, the women were formally included without too much resistance. This was due in part to the role women's organizations played during the anti-apartheid movement, particularly in the African National Congress (ANC). As a result, many of the men responsible for driving the formation of a new government were open to the issues and challenges facing women in the country. This allowed for men and women to negotiate gender into the constitution. An outcome of this negotiation process was ANC's commitment to list women--at least 30 percent of the total number of candidates--on their ticket for national elections. The apartheid government, too, took the women's groups seriously; many women were detained, tortured, imprisoned, and murdered for their work in the resistance movement.

The Women's Charter was presented to the Constitutional Assembly in August 1994 but it came too late to have a major influence on the writing of the final
constitution. The preamble states, “South Africa is poorer politically, economically, and socially having prevented more than half of its people from fully contributing to its development. Women’s subordination and oppression has taken many forms under patriarchy, custom and tradition, colonialism, racism and apartheid.” The Women’s Charter sets out twelve articles to ensure equality in all aspects of women’s private and public life: equality; law and the administration of justice; economy; education and training; development, infrastructure, and the environment; social services; political and social life; family life and partnerships; custom, culture and religion; violence against women; health, and media. The final constitution adopted in 1996 did not, as was anticipated, make the Women’s Charter part of the Bill of Rights, although it did reflect the ideas of gender equality. The December 1994 report of the ANC Commission on the Emancipation of Women did not paint a favorable picture of the ANC’s attitude and commitment to gender equality by its members. It reported that many women were still filling the role of secretary in ANC departments, and little was being done to empower them or integrate women into the mainstream activities of the organizations policymaking or decision-making. The NWC fell apart after the adoption of the South African Constitution partly due to women’s shift in interest to party politics.

Many laws were changed in South Africa after apartheid rule and the 1994 elections. Many of these new laws, acts, policies, and the Constitution reflected the desire to create and establish a society based on women’s empowerment and equality. However, old patriarchal attitudes, practices, and traditions still have a very strong hold on South African society and culture. Even though women’s empowerment and equality is considered important to the development of the country and reflects the spirit of the
country's democracy, the idea does not permeate individual households. For many men, "democracy is for the government of the country, not the family home."^72

The persistence of patriarchal traditions posed challenges for men and women during the constitutional negotiation process. While the men were supportive of gender empowerment and equality they felt the need to respect and maintain traditional African customary law and authorities. The end result was a constitution that supported both interests, thereby creating a "power struggle between patriarchal traditionalists and feminists over the social and economic content of South African democracy."^73 This power struggle continues today as women continue to grow and benefit from post-apartheid laws, policies, and initiatives. However, as will be discussed in length in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, women have and continue to pay a price for their advancement.

Chapter Two Endnotes

4 Freund and Padayachee, 1173-1180.
5 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
9 Giliomee, 634.
10 Mandela, 602.
11 Freund and Padayachee, 1173.
17 Habib and Padayachee, 245-263, and World Bank Southern African Department, 3.
20 Cited in Hirsch, 18, and Lulat, 288.
21 Thiven Reddy, *Higher Education and Social Transformation: South Africa Case Study* (Pretoria, South Africa: Council on Higher Education), 13. Black students could not enroll for the following disciplines at the open universities: physics, zoology, botany, mathematics, applied mathematics, geography, psychology, agriculture, Afrikaans, English, history, economics, commerce, sociology, social work, anthropology, native administration, bantu languages, classical languages, philosophy, political science, law or divinity, or in the faculty of education.
23 Ibid, 16.
25 Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/683115/Bantu, (accessed December 24, 2009). The self-governing territories were designated by the government as national homelands for black Africans (classified by the government as Bantu). A major administrative device for the exclusion of blacks from the political system and other parts of life, Bantustans were organized on the basis of ethnic and linguistic groupings; e.g., KwaZulu was the designated homeland of the Zulu people, and Transkei and Ciskei were designated for the Xhosa people; North Sotho, South Sotho, Venda, Tsonga, and Swazi were each designated for their people as well. Despite the efforts of the government to promote the Bantustans as independent states, no foreign government ever recognized the Bantustans. The Bantustans were renamed “homelands” in 1959 with the 1959 Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act. Later in 1970, the
Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act defined blacks as legal citizens of the homelands designated for their particular ethnic groups, in essence stripping them of their South African citizenship and the few civil and political rights they still had.

26 Seehoile, 21.
27 The black consciousness movement was a grassroots anti-Apartheid activist movement that emerged in South Africa in the mid-1960s out of the political vacuum created by the jailing and banning of the African National Congress and Pan-Africanist Congress leadership after the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960. The BCM represented a social movement for political consciousness.

28 Seehoile, 30.
29 Seehoile, 34.
30 Seehoile, 38, and Reddy, 26.
31 OECD, 326.
32 Customary law is developed from the bottom up and requires widespread acceptance. Customary law is recognized, not because it is backed by the power of some strong individual or institution, but because each individual recognizes the benefits of behaving in accordance with other individuals' expectations, given that others also behave as expected. Typically if a law is imposed from above (government), then that law will require much more force to maintain social order. Reciprocities are the basic source both of the recognition of duty to obey law and of law enforcement in a customary law system. That is, individuals must "exchange" recognition of certain behavioral rules for their mutual benefit. Bruce Benson. 1990. The Enterprise of Law: Justice Without the State. Pacific Institute for Public Policy Research, San Francisco, CA. pp 12-15.http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=131192
35 Allen, 33.
37 Higgs, 128.
39 Geisler, 34.
42 History of the Federation of South African Women, AL2457, 1, The Original South Africa History Archives Collection, South Africa History Archives, Wits University, Pretoria, South Africa.
43 History of the Federation of South African Women, AL2457, 2, The Original South Africa History Archives Collection.
44 Chronology of Resistance of Women in South Africa, The Original South Africa History Archives Collection, AL2457, 1, South Africa History Archives, Wits University, Pretoria, South Africa.
46 Winnie Mandela was the wife of Nelson Mandela until their divorce in March 1996. She is an activist and politician who has held several government positions and headed the ANC Women’s League. She was convicted in 1991 for the kidnapping of Stompie Moeketsi. Despite her conviction, she was permitted to run for public office and was selected as an ANC Member of Parliament candidate in the April 2009 elections.
47 In 1991 Winnie Mandela was tried for the murder of a 14-year-old activist Stompie Moeketsi. She was accused of ordering his kidnapping and torture. She was convicted for kidnapping and fraud. R. W. Johnson. 2009, South Africa’s Brave New World: The Beloved Country Since the End of Apartheid, (New York: Penguin Group, 2009), 127.
48 Govender, 135.
49 Biden, Hasim, and Meintjes, 8 and Geisler, 72.
51 Govender, 138, and Biden, Hasim, and Meintjes, 7.
54 Statement of the President of the African National Congress, Comrade Oliver R. Tambo to the National Conference on the ANC Women’s League, Kimberley, April 1991, AL 2517, South Africa History Archives Original Collection, South Africa History Archives, Wits University, Pretoria, South Africa.
55 Govender, 126.
56 Govender, 129, Geisler, 81, and Frene Ginwala, Maureen Mackintosh, and Doreen Massey, “Gender and economic policy in a democratic South Africa,” (Ann Marie Wolpe


58 Reconstruction and Development Programme, Key Indicators of Poverty in South Africa, (Pretoria: Ministry in the Office of the President, 1995) 15.


61 Wilson and Ramphele, 179.

62 Biden, Hasim, and Meintjes, 41.

63 Ibid., 43.

64 Reconstruction and Development Programme, 17.

65 Biden, Hasim, and Meintjes, 44.

66 Viviene Taylor and Ina Conradie We Have Been Taught by Life Itself: Empowering Women as Leaders-The Role of Development Education, (Pretoria: HSRC, 1997) 93,

67 Taylor and Conradie, 57.

68 Allen, 5.


70 Ibid.

71 Geisler, 84.

72 Allen, 137.

73 Allen, 6.
Chapter Three: Building the Rainbow Nation

The Building Blocks: The Constitution and Bill of Rights

The Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed after the April 27, 1994 election. The new government consisted of the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party (NP), and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Working as the Constitutional Assembly (CA), their task was to create a new path for the nation by writing the final constitution that would take the country into the future.¹ The ANC, as the lead party, had a significant task at hand: to set the course and direction of the country. The challenge was to create a constitution that would reflect this new South Africa and embrace its entire people, as complex and diverse a nation as it was. For the ANC in particular, this was the final stage of its transition from resistance and protest organization to governing body, requiring a completely different set of skills, resources, and knowledge. The burden was clearly on the ANC leadership and its supporters to ensure that what they created would begin the healing and recovery process, address the multiple and complex challenges facing the country, and set the course for the country’s future.

The end of apartheid in 1994 allowed for the reconstruction and transformation of the country from a one-party bureaucracy to a democratic system. In order to make this change, the country had to dismantle the framework that had created apartheid and create and integrate new democratic structures. And, an economic model had to be created that would allow the country to move from a state-led to a market-led economy.
While the ANC was the leading group in the constitution negotiations process with the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party, other organizations such as the South African Communist Party, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATA), and the ANC Women’s League had a strong influence on what the negotiations. They worked with the ANC to ensure their respective concerns and vision for the country was reflected in the new constitution.

To fully appreciate the magnitude of the task facing the ANC and the Government of National Unity in creating a new constitution, it is important to keep in mind what they had to dismantle. The apartheid government had formalized, institutionalized, and legalized racial discrimination against and segregation of the majority of its citizens. When the ANC and Nelson Mandela came into power in South Africa in 1994 it inherited the economic and social legacies of apartheid. As mentioned above, the country had a large pool of unskilled and unemployed labor. There was widespread and deep poverty, poor access for a majority of its population to education, healthcare, and other basic public services. The economic sanctions and political isolation imposed by other nations to protest the apartheid government were still in place. In essence, South Africa was cut off from the rest of the world when the ANC came into power.²

The promise of the new South African government was constrained by the pact negotiated with the apartheid government and from pressures imposed by the external global environment. These two factors, which will be discussed at length, had a great influence on the construction of the new government, which had to develop policies that were globally relevant while at the same time pursuing major transformation based on social justice, democracy, and equity.³ It was a delicate process and balance
Just two years after the election of 1994, on 8 May 1996, the Constitutional Assembly adopted the final Constitution as put forth by the Government of National Unity and approved by the Constitutional Court in September 1996. In the final constitution, the Government of National Unity was replaced by a government which recognized majority rule. This meant that the majority party, the ANC, did not have to share executive power and could appoint cabinet members without consulting the minority parties in the National Assembly.\(^4\)

The constitution of the Republic of South Africa was formally proclaimed on 18 December 1996 and become effective on 4 February 1997.\(^5\) From the very beginning, in the Preamble of the Constitution, South Africans were asked to recognize their past, to embrace their diversity, and to believe in the promise of a united South Africa.

\begin{quote}
We, the people of South Africa,
Recognise the injustices of our past;
 Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
 Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
 Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.\(^6\)
\end{quote}

In chapter one of the Constitution, *Founding Provisions*, South Africa is described as a democratic state founded on the following values: (a) human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; (b) non-racialism\(^7\) and non-sexism; (c) supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; and (d) universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.\(^8\) The Founding Provisions are followed by the Bill of Rights, found in Chapter Two. The Bill of Rights is described in the Constitution as “the cornerstone of democracy in South
Africa.” This section guarantees the rights of all South Africans and recognizes the values of “human dignity, equality, and freedom.” There are over twenty-seven rights recognized in the Constitution, beginning with equality. The Bill of Rights states that the government may not discriminate against anyone directly or indirectly on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth. Other rights include the freedom of trade, occupation, and profession; the right of workers and employers to fair labor relations; the right of everyone to have an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; the right to access adequate housing; and the right to access health care, food, water and social security.\(^9\) There are four issues addressed in the Constitution that are of particular relevance to this paper: gender equality; the recognition of cultural, religious and linguistic communities; education; and language and culture. Understanding the Constitutional framework around these issues will assist the reader in seeing how these issues are interconnected yet at times contradict one another.

The Constitutional framework related to gender equality can be found in both the Bill of Rights and in Section 9, *State Institutions Supporting Constitutional Democracy.* Although not explicitly stated, women’s rights are protected in the Bill of Rights by prohibiting discrimination based on gender, sex, marital status, and pregnancy. In Section 9, the Commission for Gender Equality is established. The purpose of the commission is to “promote respect for gender equality and the protection, development and attainment of gender equality. It has the power to monitor, investigate, research, educate, lobby and advice and report on issues related gender equality.”\(^{10}\) 

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In Section 31 of the Bill of Rights, individuals who belong to a particular cultural, religious, or linguistic community cannot be denied the right to practice their religion, enjoy their culture or use their language and may form, join and maintain those associations. However, these rights must be consistent with the other provisions in the Bill of Rights. A Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities is established in Chapter Nine with the primary purpose of promoting respect for the rights of these communities with the power to “monitor, investigate, research, education, lobby, and report on issues of concern to cultural, religious, and linguistic communities.” 11 Section 29 of the Bill of Rights gives everyone the right to a basic education and adult basic education. The Constitution establishes eleven official languages of the country: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. 12 Individuals have the right to their education in one of the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions. The issue of language is addressed in Section 30 of the Bill of Rights which states everyone has the right to use their language of choice and to participate in a cultural life of their choosing.13

Gender equality rights, cultural, religious and linguistic rights, educational rights, and the right to speak in any language are important as they all seek to redress many inequalities that existed under apartheid. In and of themselves, these rights serve a good purpose. However, when several of these rights intersect, one can become diluted or in some cases one can conflict with the other. An example, which is playing out in various forms in the country today, is the conflict between gender equality and the recognition of traditional and tribal customs as provided under the right to cultural and religious and
linguistic communities. As will be explored in detail in Chapters 5, 6, and 7, Black South African women, particularly those in rural areas, are still living under the customary and tribal rules of their communities. These customs and norms are at times counter to the rights provided women in the Bill of Rights. Although the legitimacy of customary law and practices are secondary to the rights granted in the Constitution, according to Dr. Elaine Salo, Professor, University of Pretoria and Director of Gender Studies, many South Africans abide by, and identify themselves through these customary laws and practices. And, the reality is that these laws and practices continue to be supported by the government. For example, the Recognition of Customary Marriage Act of 1998, enacted in Section 15 (3) of the Constitution, recognizes polygamous marriages, the practice of ukuthwala, the abduction of a girl to another family household in order to force the girl’s family to give permission for the marriage), and lobolo (negotiation of marriage based on the price of the bride). These practices, which are recognized in the constitution, are seen by some as contradictory to the rights of women as guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Part of the difficulty and debate related to the recognition of customary law is that whereby the Bill of Rights recognizes individual rights, customary laws reflect the rights of a community or collective. This debate will only intensify as Jacob Zuma’s Cabinet recently approved a ministry of traditional affairs. The purpose of the ministry is to give traditional leaders a more structured way to engage with the government. The acceptance of a ministry of traditional affairs is seen as a political move to satisfy traditional leaders, who hold sway over many voters.

An example of when two individual rights intersect and the exercise of one right dilutes the other is when the right to education and the right to speak in any language
creates an unintentional consequence for students when they enter the higher education system. This happens when the language of the university they attend is not the language they choose to learn or use. By exercising their right to choose any official language they may have diluted their right to education because they struggle to learn in a different language. Although there are eleven official languages the majority of universities use on of two languages, English or Afrikaners. According to a draft report produced for the vice chancellors association Higher Education South Africa (HESA) by the National Benchmark Tests Project, 47% of the students who took the test were proficient in English, the dominant language in higher education, while 46% were intermediate, and 7% had basic academic literacy. Half the students in the higher education system were African first-language speakers, 42% English, and 8% Afrikaans speaking. The report found that many students had difficulty performing at a level necessary to be successful in their classes which has an impact on retention rates. What this means is that many students are effectively learning in a language for which they have limited proficiency. There are no easy solutions to this problem. On the one hand, every South African has the constitutional right to use their language of choice and the right to basic education and adult basic education. Yet, as the National Benchmark Tests Project shows, for people entering into the higher education system, this right to language of choice can result in significant challenges in the higher education system. These challenges affect not only the students but the faculty as well, who need to connect with students who have a language barrier. In addition, there are costs to the students who hire tutors to help them to complete assignments in their own language. The state recognizes and has tried to address the issue. Starting in the 3rd grade, students are to be taught in English or
Afrikaans—but in fact, many teachers don’t know English or Afrikaans so they go on teaching in native languages. The challenge is to create a solution that minimizes the language barrier for students entering into the higher education without minimizing people’s right to choice of language. These issues are explored in detail in Chapter 5.

The Constitution of South Africa is one of the most progressive of any country in the world. This of course helps to explain why South Africans, and others around the world, had high hopes and expectations for the country and the new government. Today, fifteen years post-apartheid, the promise and hope South Africans had for themselves and the country is being challenged. Unemployment, poverty, violence, and lack of housing continue to rise and the incidence of HIV/AIDS is one of the highest in the world. South Africans are disenchanted, disappointed, and frustrated with the country’s current state of affairs. After the country’s transition to democracy, only 42% of those polled thought their lives were better, while 17% thought they were worse, and 14% much worse.

In fact, the high expectations created by the document itself may have increased the sense of disappointment felt by some of the respondents. The Constitution and Bill of Rights are indeed very powerful, and go beyond the narrow definition of rights given by many other constitutions. They provide the basis and foundation of the new South Africa, a country based on human dignity, equality, and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. It has only been fifteen years since the end of apartheid and the beginning of democratic rule. The South African constitution is a statement that tells its citizens and the world what kind of country it hopes and strives to be, but not necessarily what it is. To help put it in perspective, the United States is 230 years old yet it continues to struggle to live up to the full promise of its constitution. South Africa’s journey has in many ways
just begun. Discussing the disconnect between the reality of gender equality in South Africa and what is guaranteed in the Constitution, former Minister of Education for the Western Cape Cameron Dugmore stated, “it’s not as though the consciousness of the society has been totally changed in that we have a kind of gender sensitive and non-patriarchal society, no way. But the fact that those policies are in place, and that the legislation is in place has opened up opportunities, and attitudes have also begun to change.” 21 The challenge now is for the government and the people of South Africa to work together to lift more South Africans out of poverty, violence, unemployment, and the ravages of HIV/AIDS so they may realize the full promise of their rights under the constitution.

Macro-Economic Growth & Development Policies: Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP) to Growth, Equity, and Redistribution (GEAR)

As mentioned in Chapter Two, major economic indicators showed significant decline during the final two decades of apartheid rule. By 1993, one year before the end of apartheid, only 30% of Black South Africans had electricity, 35% of the population was illiterate, 60% lived in absolute poverty. A World Bank report in 1993 reported that South Africa’s health status relative to income was one of the worst in the world. 22 The economic problems facing South Africa when the ANC came into power included: (1) the need to increase the rate of economic growth; (2) the need to increase the rate of investment to stimulate growth and modernize production; and (3) the need to pursue these goals in a way that would increase employment, wages and promote a more even distribution of wealth. 23
The first comprehensive economic statement from the ANC was the 1994 pre-election draft of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The ANC had begun working on a plan to map out a reconstruction and development program for the country before the elections. The RDP was the result of months of discussions, consultation and negotiation between the ANC and its alliance partners, the Congress of South African Trade Unions and the South African Communist Party, as well as organizations in the wider civil society. The RDP drew heavily from the 1993 economic policy of the ANC’s Macro Economic Research Group (MERG) which was supported by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). MERG focused primarily on social and economic inequalities that needed to be addressed by the new government. MERG made the argument that the economy could be restructured through improved training and higher wages as well as building the structure and operation of business.\(^{24}\)

The plan was designed to address the social and economic problems facing the country: violence, lack of housing, lack of jobs, inadequate education and health care, lack of democracy, and a failing economy. The RDP recognized that these issues and problems were connected and as such the government could not build a successful economy if millions did not have homes or jobs. At the time RDP was written South Africa was, among the nations of the world, one of the most unequal in terms of the distribution of wealth: the economy benefited a minority while about 17 million, including 11 million in the rural areas, lived below the poverty. Approximately 12 million people lacked access to water, 21 million did not have adequate sanitation, and millions were without healthcare.\(^{25}\) Essentially, the RDP was designed to allow the government to create, steer, and fund economic policies that would improve the quality
of life for the poor and reduce inequalities through a redistributive process while at the same time spur economic growth through opening up the domestic market and increasing the efficiency of the economy.26

Once the ANC came to power in 1994, the ANC had to turn the RDP’s promises into action. It went through a process of review, debate, and discussion. From this process a White Paper was written and released in September 1994. The White Paper stressed two goals: (1) the creation of employment and (2) to alleviate poverty, low wages, inequality of wages and wealth generated by the apartheid system and to ensure that every South African has a decent living standard and economic security. The document emphasized the need for the government to bring about a more equal distribution of income. The paper signaled a departure from the RDP document by stating the need for macro-economic stability. The RDP White Paper, unlike the original document, recognized that neither economic growth alone nor redistribution alone would resolve the challenges facing the country. The government continued by stating that its policies will now focus more on an equitable pattern of growth, equitable distribution of assets, and ensuring macro-economic stability.27

When the RDP White Paper was presented to the South African Parliament in September 1994 it was heralded as a completely new macro- and socio-economic framework which recognized the need to create an achievable and sustainable strategy that would meet the objectives of freedom and democracy, improve the standard of living and quality of life for all South Africans, and provide a peaceful and stable society that was characterized by equitable economic growth. 28
The RDP policy was focused on five sub-programs to meet basic needs with each program meeting a specific aim: (1) the basic needs program was aimed at creating jobs and improving working conditions; improving access to services such as water, health, and education; and creating a social security system for the poor and aged; (2) the human resources program focused on overcoming the legacy of apartheid by lifting the level of education of the whole nation and restoring access to education to those who were excluded from doing so; by opening access in the arts, sports, recreation; and by regaining a balanced representation of the country’s diverse cultures; (3) the macroeconomic program emphasized the need to address the issues of economic stagnation, inequalities among people and regions, the lack of productive efficiency related to human resource capacities, and re-entry into the world economy; growth was to be linked to development; (4) the democratization program would attempt to redefine the balance of political power by providing all citizens access to a democratic state; it advocated the empowerment of civil society to determine the shape and direction of the government through measures focused on improving access, accountability, and responsiveness of government; and (5) the nation building program was responsible for identifying the processes and institutions needed to carry out and implement the first four programs.\textsuperscript{29} It was specifically designed to alleviate poverty and address the shortfalls in social services across the country. The alleviation of poverty and building of the economy were seen as interrelated and mutually supportive objectives: development without growth would be lead to financial instability, while growth without development would fail to bring about the structural transformational change needed to bring equity and prosperity to all South Africans. The RDP clearly set the tone and direction for post-
apartheid South Africa where growth, development, reconstruction, and redistribution were all key components of the country's macro-economic framework. It sought growth and redistribution with the government taking a lead role in directing the mixed economy through reconstruction and development.\textsuperscript{30}

There were conflicting approaches and philosophies about how to address these problems within the African National Congress (ANC), the ruling party of the post-apartheid government. Some within the organization were still more inclined towards redistributive policies as outlined in the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP). This thinking and approach gave way to neo-liberal policies, as incorporated in the Growth, Equity, and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy that was adopted by the government in 1996. Essentially, the neoliberal model is based on (1) minimum state involvement or intervention; (2) market is not only a substitute for the state but also preferred because it performs better; (3) resource allocation and utilization is based on market prices; and (4) national political objectives, domestic economic concerns or boundaries should not act as constraints on economic policy. Those who support this model believe globalization promises economic prosperity for countries that engage in this model and economic deprivation for countries that do not. The foundations of globalization are based on the neoliberal model. Globalization is perceived as a means of ensuring not only efficiency and equity but also growth and development in the world economy.\textsuperscript{31} This shift to a neoliberal approach led to the rise of the Department of Finance and the formation of policies which tended more toward fiscal austerity and less toward the redistribution policies originally state in the RDP. These fiscal austerity policies were accomplished through deficit reduction, expenditure restraint and with tight
monetary policies, along with trade liberalization. The shift from RDP to GEAR took approximately two years.\footnote{32}

GEAR became the macroeconomic plan of the South African government. Unlike previous documents, GEAR did not mention reducing inequality as a policy goal. Its focus was on cutting back government expenditures, maintaining private and public sector wages, tariff reform, and to increase economic growth rate by an average of 4.2\% between 1996 and 2000.\footnote{33} The shift from a redistribution and equity approach, as found in the RDP, to the neoliberal economic approach of GEAR was due to several factors. Once in power the ANC had to move from the policies of a resistance movement to those of a government. This required an open dialogue with other interest groups within and outside the county including international organizations and the governments of major industrialized nations. These groups often stressed and pressed for the need of the new government to understand that the world was operating in a global economy and that South Africa needed economic policies that would appeal to international capital markets. Western countries and international organizations had, since the 1970s, been moving towards a neo-liberal approach to economic growth and development. From the 1940's to the late 1960s many ideas, theories, and concepts for economic and social development came out of the United Nations (UN) system. In general, the UN focused on employment and basic-needs oriented development strategies. By the 1970s, two opposing trends in development thinking emerged. One group of economists advocated for widening development strategies by including social considerations such as education, health, nutrition, employment, income distribution, basic needs, poverty reduction, environmental considerations, gender, and other social issues. Another group of
economists called for a return to classical economic thinking. The reliance on government actions to promote industrial growth was coming under heavy criticism in the wake of the Asian crisis. In the 1980s and into the first half of the 1990s, the countries of East Asia were experiencing rapid economic growth and development as they were becoming newly industrialized countries. The governments in these countries followed economic paths that were market-oriented but with a high degree of government intervention. They were doing this at a time when Latin America was experiencing severe debt crises. The inflow of capital into the region showed confidence in the regions ability to continue on this path of growth. Other developing countries looked to East Asia as a model. Economists began studying these countries economic policies but were unable to provide an explanation for the rate of growth and development that was occurring in the region. And then quite unexpectedly, in late 1997 and into 1998 East Asia experienced an economic reversal that created a financial crisis in the region. It was the first time a financial crisis in the South had a significant impact on capital markets in the North. Critics believed East Asian growth may have been even stronger had there been less government intervention. In the case of the Third World, the prevailing thought was that even if government involvement did contribute to East Asia’s growth rates it wouldn’t work in those countries because unlike the East Asian countries, they lacked a strong state.\textsuperscript{34}

By the 1980s the neoliberal approach to development took hold. This approach was soon adopted by all the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) countries\textsuperscript{35} and soon became the conventional approach of the industrialized
world. This meant growth was emphasized more than income distribution and social objectives. In this era of globalization, governments across the world became very focused on the need to attract foreign investment and to deregulate and liberalize national economies so they could integrate into the global economy. This has shifted governments’ focus to being responsive to the needs of the private sector and privatizing public goods. Although it was the Western nations that adopted this approach at first, The World Bank and International Monetary Fund soon adopted it as well. It was not long before the entire globe, with the exception of a few East Asian countries, was operating under these principles—and not always voluntarily.  

This was the global economic environment South Africa faced after two decades of economic isolation under the apartheid government. Nelson Mandela and the ANC leadership believed the country had to move in this globalized neo-liberal direction to meet its economic growth and development objectives. As stated in an ANC Discussion Document, “South Africa must resist the illusion that it can elaborate solutions that are in discord with the rest of the world”. The document goes on to say that South Africa should abandon “command economics and take on board the globalization of trade and financial markets”. It was this conceptual framework that informed the government’s macroeconomic policy – Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). This represented a significant shift from RDP.

The government positioned GEAR as an integrated strategy for building and restructuring the economy and one that was in keeping with the goals set in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The government’s main assumption for this integrated strategy was the belief that sustainable growth at a higher
level required the country to pursue a competitive outward-oriented economy. In order to accomplish this, GEAR proposed an accelerated program of privatization, deregulation, and fiscal restraint which would help to attract foreign investors. This shift of emphasis on containing government expenditures, lower deficits, deregulation, privatization, and minimum state intervention were opposite to the basic policies and developmental focus of the RDP and were seen as a clear move toward more liberal economic policies with an emphasis on a market-based economy and little government intervention.\textsuperscript{39}

The South African government has been criticized for moving from the original RDP to GEAR, essentially caving in to neoliberal policies at the expense of equity goals. The government has stood firm in implementing the measures outlined in GEAR, in spite of strong opposition from the governing party’s alliance partners, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), as well as civil society organizations. To many critics, GEAR was a neo-liberal strategy associated with the Washington Consensus—a set of informal rules for instituting structural economic reforms. The consensus is considered an acceptance of structural adjustment programs (SAP) often used by the International Monetary Fund in developing countries. COSATU felt the South African government was essentially following the IMF formula which in their view limited economic transformation. COSATU continues today to criticize GEAR as an inappropriate policy tool for addressing the socio-economic and political problems of South Africa. It continues to advocate for the reversal of GEAR’s restrictive policies to stimulate economic activity and has proposed that legislation be passed allowing parliament to amend the budget to meet the socio-economic needs of the people of the country.\textsuperscript{40} The government has been able to continue
on the neo-liberal path despite the opposition, in part because it has insulated the National Treasury from political pressure. In fact former Minister of Finance Trevor Manuel was a strong advocate of GEAR and former President Thabo Mbeki one of its main architects. Nelson Mandela has also offered his continuing support for GEAR. The government has consistently emphasized that sustained economic growth is a necessary and vital condition for South Africa’s transformation.

By sticking to the fundamentals of GEAR, the South African government has been able to bring macro-economic stability to the country, unlike many of its neighbors on the continent, who have struggled in their post-colonial existence. South Africa has avoided some of the pitfalls of some developing countries like Zimbabwe, where an unbalanced spending cycle has led to financial collapse. The government’s vastly increased spending on social services in the 1990s led to a ballooning budget deficit; which the government financed through monetary expansion. The massive inflation that ensued left many Zimbabweans unable to pay for basic goods. In the end, the very people the government was trying to help through redistribution policies were hurt.

The South African economy in 1994 was confronted with the challenge of integrating itself into the competitive landscape of international production and finance while at the same time confronting the challenge of reconstructing domestic, social, cultural, and political structures to redress the inequalities that were shaped and institutionalized by apartheid. The challenge of pursuing equity, redress, and economic growth and development created difficult political and social choices for the new government and raised the issue of trade-offs between principles, goals, and strategies to pursue.
Dismantling & Rebuilding the Higher Education System

The 1994, 1997, and 2004 policies provide the framework for South Africa's higher education system. The Higher Education Act of 1997 and those following addressed the issues of access, equity, and quality of higher education.

As mentioned, the ANC inherited a higher education system that was racially and socially fragmented with four education departments, one for each race. Each department had its own philosophy, curriculum, governance system, and resources. In no other country in the world has there been such a discriminatory, and frankly, odd, educational system. Likewise, no other country has ever done a complete restructuring of its higher education system, with the possible exception of eastern European countries. The country had a few good universities and the rest were mediocre or extremely poor. The challenge before the ANC was to create a uniform system across the country and to eliminate the inequalities that existed under apartheid. The ANC saw education reform as a priority and a way to redress many of the injustices of apartheid. It focused on the creation of a single unified national system, increasing access, decentralizing school governance, revamping the curriculum, improving higher education, and adopting funding policies for the poor.

As mentioned above, the educational system the ANC inherited in 1994 was massive, with millions of students scattered across twenty thousand different schools and the government spending 7% of GDP to maintain the system. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in 1953 with the passage of the Bantu Education Act, the government
of the National Party brought education for Black South Africans under central government control as a means to reinforce racially and geographically segregated schooling. Although the Act was designed to apply to all levels of education, the government passed the Extension of University Act of 1959 specifically to enforce apartheid in higher education—keeping black South African college students out of certain universities. Again, there were three Departments of Education responsible for universities, colleges, and technikons (provide vocational education on a tertiary level) for Whites, Indians, and Colored as well as one Department of Education and Training responsible for Africans. And, there were six Departments of Education for the six self-governing territories (Bantustans) and four Departments of Education for the independent states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei). There were in total twenty-one universities; four were English universities reserved for white students; six were Afrikaans reserved for white students; seven technikons were reserved for white students; six universities and five technikons reserved for black students; two urban universities and two technikons reserved for colored and Indian students; two urban universities reserved for African students; and two distance education providers. Not surprisingly, infrastructure, curriculum, quality of educators, and resource allocation differed tremendously across these universities and technikons. To say the system was fragmented, inefficient, and discriminatory is an understatement.

In 1994, under the new government of the ANC, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was formed. The commission was the beginning of a formal process designed to provide a space for policy debate, negotiation, and consensus-
building on creating a higher education policy for the country. In 1995, the National Commission on Higher Education produced The First White Paper on Education and Training calling for increased access, the development of a single coordinated system, and expanding the role of distance education. The South African Qualification Authority (SAQA) Act of 1995 provided the structure for the education and training system in the country and established the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The act defined the qualifications for each of the eight levels of the education system with higher education and training occupying levels five through eight. The SAQA provided an outcomes-based system where skills and knowledge could be measured at the end of each level. It was set up to manage all the processes and to address issues of access and redress, as well as socioeconomic development of the nation at large. SAQA had three main deliverables: (1) create a system to create qualifications and standards, (2) create a quality assurance system, and (3) create an information system which became known as the National Learner’s Records Database. In essence, the NQF was a structure that brought together schooling, higher education, and training under a single qualifications framework. This was followed in 1996 with The Green Paper on Higher Education published by the Ministry of Education. This paper made a commitment to the principles of equality, redress, justice, and redistribution using mergers as a way to restructure the higher education system. In 1996, the Constitution of South Africa identified higher education as a national government responsibility with administrative responsibilities falling under the national Department of Education. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 provided the legal foundation and framework for the administration of higher education.
In 1997 a second White Paper on Higher Education was published emphasizing managerial efficiency and abandoning equality goals. This last paper was seen as a major shift from redressing conditions that led to inequality in higher education to addressing the problems in higher education and its inefficiency. It was seen as a shift to align with the objectives of GEAR. The government appointed a National Working Group to provide advice to the Minister of Education on how to reconfigure and restructure the higher education system.\textsuperscript{46} The National Working Group presented its report in 2002 with recommendations to restructure the higher education system to make it more equitable in the distribution of resources and to provide more opportunities for all South Africans.

In June 2001, the National Plan for Higher Education was introduced by Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal. The plan was based on advice provided by the Council on Higher Education on the restructuring of the higher education system. The National Plan established the targets for the size and shape of the higher education system, including overall growth and participation rates, institutional and program mixes, and equity and efficiency goals. It also provided the framework and outlined the processes and mechanisms for restructuring the system. The National Plan set a target participation rate in higher education of 20% over a 10 to 15 year period.\textsuperscript{47}

A new White Paper on Higher Education in 2004 called for the reorganization and merger of institutions within the higher education system based on the work of the National Working Group. It was Kader Asmal, Minister of Education, who literally came in and called for the dismantling of the old structure with the intent to create a new system and way of strengthening central control over the higher education system. The
number of institutions was reduced from 36 to 23 creating universities of technology, comprehensive universities, and two institutions of Higher Education. It would be a huge undertaking involving the merger of students, faculty, facilities, and campuses. The result would be similar to a corporate merger, which sometimes results in confusion, disruption, stress, anxiety, and uncertainty. One key element of the merger of higher education institutions was the decision to eliminate Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDI). Due to the apartheid system, South Africa had two main types of higher education institutions, Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAI) and Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDI). The HAI were attended by mostly white South African students while the HDI by Blacks. One of the recommendations of the National Working Group was to merge most of the HDI using efficiency measures as a way to divide institutions. These mergers resulted in the disappearance of HDI which have served disadvantaged and rural communities.

One key focus of higher education policy has been on improving access to higher education for all South Africans. As mentioned, the government has set a target rate of 20% enrollment by the year 2015. While the country is trending towards that number there are significant questions about who is enrolling and the quality of the education they are receiving. Today universities are swamped with students—in some cases universities have seen a 100% increase in student numbers—resulting in large classes which leads to a growing concern over the caliber of student graduating from the higher education system. The government tends to look at overall enrollment rates as an indicator of progress, but when we take into account the percentage of the rural population, women, and poor enrolled in colleges and universities, the numbers reveal a
system skewed by class instead of race. The Higher Education Act of 1997 and the 2004 White Paper have in many ways helped institutions who historically were attended by predominately colored and black students. By placing all higher education institutions under the same quality umbrella as set up by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), these schools have been able to improve their offerings and expand programming.

While there was clearly a need for these initiatives there is concern about the ability to maintain good standards while at the same time meeting the expectations for opportunity and change. There is also concern about how to keep ahead of all the government initiatives and acquire the financial resources required to make them happen. The plans are good and the democratic aspects of reform welcomed, yet there is growing uneasiness that they could very well lead to a breakdown in the higher education system.

All this is not to say that the government has not tried or is not committed to making higher education accessible for all South Africans. Much progress has been made and the changes the government has undertaken will take time given the deep roots of the apartheid and colonial education systems of the past. The Higher Education Act of 1997, which brought higher education under one centralized system, and the 2004 White Paper, calling for the reorganization and merger of higher education institutions were attempts to create a uniform system for all schools and put all the institutions in one basket as a way to create an equal education for all. These reforms were necessary but in actual practice the intended outcomes have not materialized.

As of 2006, there were 23 higher education institutions with 741,383 students and 16,077 lecturers. 65% of all students are black, 25% white, 7.4% Indian, 6.6% colored,
and 54.5% female. Between 2000 and 2006 the total female enrollment rate increased by 34.5% from 303,794 to 408,718, while male enrollment increased by 21.3% from 274,159 to 332,665. In 2007, The Department of Education spent over ZAR 14 billion on higher education. Spending on higher education has increased at an annual rate of 10% per year since 2004. It is expected to continue to grow at the rate of 10% per year until at least 2010.53

It has been 15 years since South Africa became a democracy and it is clear that significant changes have occurred. The apartheid government’s higher education structure has been dismantled through structural and policy reforms. These policies and the reforms have resulted in the desegregation of higher education institutions, increased enrollment rates for a wide segment of the population, and greater efficiency as separate administrations and institutions were consolidated. In addition, the Council of Higher Education was established to monitor and oversee the quality of higher education and its outputs.

The challenges moving forward include preparing rural and poor South Africans students for higher education, ensuring that standards are maintained as the government continues to press for increased enrollment rates, and creating initiatives and programs which better support the economic growth and development strategies of the country.

There are clearly huge expectations placed on higher education. There is a sense that it is going to be the cure for building the human capital needed to spur economic growth and development unemployment, a better life, professional mobility, and equality. This is a heavy burden to carry. The South African higher education system has made impressive progress but the reality is that the apartheid system has been difficult to break
completely, and the transformational change called for in the constitution difficult to attain. These continuing difficulties will be discussed at length in Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

Building a National Gender Machinery

Since 1994 the South African government has created and passed legally binding initiatives to promote gender equality, establishing a national gender machinery to implement and monitor these initiatives. The emphasis has been on increasing the representation of women in multiple institutions and creating an environment where women’s voices could be heard. The government did this by creating formal structures and laws in an effort to bring concerns for gender equity into the mainstream. While these laws and structures are an important first-step they alone do not guarantee equality. Attitudes, norms, perceptions, and cultural practices regarding women must also change. And therein lays the problem for women in South Africa, as will be seen repeatedly in this paper. The attitudes of both men and women must change along with the institutions. To illustrate, in a 1999 study based on a survey administered in the Eastern Cape, Northern Province, and Mpumalanga it was found that 82% of women believed that wives should obey their husbands; about 60% felt that women do not have the right to refuse sex with their partners; 50% thought that a husband has the right to punish his wife; and 10% said that hitting by husbands is sometimes or always acceptable.  

In 1993 the Joint Standing Committee on Justice met to consider legislation promoting equality between men and women and the prevention of family violence.
Numerous legislative measures addressing the status of women have passed with the onset of the new democratic government. The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa recognizes and protects the right to equality, including gender equality. In January 1996, the government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This legally bound Parliament and the Executive Office to work actively towards the abolition of gender discrimination in the governance of the country. In September 1997, the Heads of State or Government of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), including South Africa, signed a declaration committing their governments and countries to ensuring the equal representation of women and men at all levels of their decision making structures as well as in SADC structures; to promoting women’s full access to and control over productive resources; to the repeal and reform all laws and the changing of social practices which subject women to discrimination; to enhancing access to quality education by both women and men and removing gender stereotypes from the curriculum, career choices and professions; and take urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women.\textsuperscript{56}

Other legislative measures include the Maintenance Act of 1998; the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998; the Recognition of Customary Marriages Act 120 of 1998; and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Draft Bill of 2000. The Government also established the Commission on Gender Equality, National Gender Forum, and the Office on the Status of Women to support efforts by higher education to become more inclusive and equitable.\textsuperscript{57} But as it turned out, the Office on the Status of Women had little authority, resources, or power. The person appointed as
minister in charge of the office was Essop Pahad, a close friend of President Mbeki’s from their days together at university. He had little experience or knowledge on the issues facing women.  

In 2000, the Office of the Presidency, which has jurisdiction over the national gender program, proposed that the Cabinet adopt the policy framework prepared by the Office on the Status on Women. The Gender Policy Framework outlines South Africa’s vision for gender equality and how it intends to realize this ideal. One of the key recommendations made by the Office on the Status on Women was the creation of a National Gender Machinery (NGM) for the purpose of providing a structure that would support gender empowerment and equality initiatives and laws throughout all layers of government and civil society. What follows is a description of how the NGM is structured within the government.

Within the executive branch of the national government the primary structures concerned with gender equality are the Cabinet, the Office on the Status of Women in the Office of the Presidency, and the Gender Desks or Focal Points in governmental departments. The Cabinet is responsible for policy making with all national policies being approved by Cabinet before being introduced to parliament or implemented by government departments. It is the responsibility of the Cabinet Cluster Committees and Clusters of Directors-General to ensure that national gender policies outlined in the Gender Policy Framework are adopted and implemented. They are also responsible for making recommendations on policy and legislation as they relate to gender for discussion and approval by the Cabinet. The National Office on the Status of Women (OSW) is located in the Office of the Presidency. It advises and briefs the President, the Deputy
President, and the Minister in the Presidency on all issues related to the empowerment of women. The OSW is considered the “nerve center” and principal coordinating structure for the nation’s gender framework. It develops national gender plans and is responsible for creating strategies for implementation. OSW is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of these strategies and plans. Another key responsibility of OSW is to serve as a liaison between the government and NGOs dedicated to women’s and gender issues. They are to prioritize key concerns and from that initiate policy and conduct research.60

The main responsibility for seeing that the National Gender Policy is actually implemented rests with the individual national and provincial government departments. All the departments are required to establish dedicated Gender Units or Focal Points to assist in the design and implementation of plans to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality in the work of the individual departments. In addition, departments are responsible for the coordination of staff gender training and education within their departments; monitoring and evaluating departmental projects and programs to determine if they are consistent with national gender policy; and creating relationships with civil society organizations related to gender issues.

Parliament plays a key role in facilitating women’s empowerment and gender equality. The Joint Monitoring Committee on the Quality of Life and Status of Women were established to ensure that all legislation passed by parliament was “engendered.” The Joint Monitoring Committee on the Improvement of the Quality of Life and the Status of Women monitors and evaluates the country’s progress in improving the quality of life and status of women. It specifically monitors the country’s performance related to
its international commitments to women’s empowerment and gender equality.\textsuperscript{61} There are several women’s committees and groups focused on legislative issues. The Women’s Empowerment Unit (WEU) identifies and addresses obstacles women face in participating in the law-making process. There is the Parliamentary Women’s Group (PWG) which is a multi-party women’s caucus established in 1994 that works to make parliament more gender sensitive.\textsuperscript{62}

There are several Independent Statutory bodies involved in gender issues. They include the Commission on Gender Equality; the Human Rights Commission; the Independent Electoral Commission; the Public Protector; the Public Service Commission; the Youth Commission; the Land Commission; and the South African Law Commission. What follows is a brief description of each of these statutory bodies and the focus of their work. Chapter 9 of the Constitution calls for the establishment of The Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) which is to act as an independent statutory, advisory, consultative and research body. The Commission on Gender Equality plays the primary role in advancing the empowerment of women and gender equality whereas the other groups complement their work. The CGE’s main role is to monitor, evaluate and make recommendations on all policies and practices of the government, organizations, and institutions in South Africa to ensure they promote gender equality in their work. An important part of the CGE’s work is to recommend to Parliament or the provincial legislatures the adoption of new legislation which would promote gender equality and the status of women. They are also responsible for developing, implementing, and managing education programs promoting gender equality. South Africa recognizes women’s rights as human rights. As a result, the Human Rights Commission is an important part of the
National Gender Machinery. The Human Rights Commission works with the 
Commission on Gender Equality and often receives referrals from CGE.

The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) was created by the Constitution to 
promote and safeguard democracy in South Africa. It is responsible for strengthening 
constitutional democracy and promoting the democratic process. The IEC helps to 
involve women in the political and electoral process.

The Public Protector’s role within the National Gender Machinery is to receive 
complaints from individual women or groups about a government agency or official. The 
Public Protector has the power to investigate any case of unfair practice, impropriety or 
prejudice.

The South African Law Commission is responsible for legal research and legal 
reform. This commission was responsible for the analysis of the relationship between 
Customary Law and the Equality clause in the Constitution which led to revisions to 
customary law.

The Land Commission is concerned with restitution and redistribution of land. As 
women’s access to land is an important part of economic empowerment, this commission 
plays an important role for women.63

South Africa’s National Gender Machinery (NGM) also includes a number of 
independent women’s organizations, recognizing that the government alone cannot shift 
public opinion or policy without the cooperation and participation of these groups. 
Several bodies within the NGM are responsible for interacting with women’s 
organizations. The purpose is to create close and effective relationships, assist
organizations with capacity-building and education, provide resources, and get input on key government initiatives.

South Africa has nine provinces. The country’s gender policy framework calls for each of the provinces to establish a structure parallel to the NGM. Some of the provinces have established gender structures within their governments and legislatures. Likewise, some have established independent statutory bodies. In many ways the most important and critical piece of the national gender machinery is the local government. This is the level of government is literally the closest to the people and consequently its actions have the most impact on people’s lives. This is especially true for those who are marginalized. Most local governments do not have a coherent approach to women’s empowerment and gender equality, and lack the resources to promote these objectives. As discussed earlier, many of the traditional customs and laws allowed by the Constitution, are often in tension with the national gender framework. Recognizing this challenge, the Office on the Status of Women (OSW) recommended in the national gender framework that the Department of Provincial Affairs and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) work together to lobby local government councils to create gender structures. The OSW also calls on civic and community-based organizations to get involved.  

Women’s access to political power and decision-making has improved since the 1994 general elections. In 2000, women constituted eight of 27 Ministers and eight out of 13 Deputy Ministers in the national government; 30% of the Members of Parliament; and 24% of Members of Provincial Legislatures. Women are less well represented at the local government level, where 19.4% of Councilors and 14.4% of Executive Committee
positions are held by women. In 1994 the Parliamentary Women’s Group (PWG) was established as a multi-party women’s caucus to work on gender issues and to make parliament more gender-sensitive. While great strides have been made and several women’s caucuses have been established to work on gender issues, they still run into road blocks. Often they receive inadequate funding, are given limited time to meet outside the lunch hour, and experience hostile resistance from other members of parliament. They also continue to struggle as a group in agreeing on what the gender issues are and what they are willing to bring forward and support.

In 2004, President Thabo Mbeki established a Women's Working Group to advise the government and help with the challenges facing South African women. To date, a woman has not held the country's highest political position, but South Africa ranks eighth in the world for women's representation in government.

Although South Africa's National Gender Machinery is recognized as one of the best in the world, it lacks the skills, resources, and accountability necessary to be effective. In addition there are major challenges related to the integration and coordination of efforts between government agencies, between national and provincial and local governments, and civil society. An example of the inability to deliver and a lack of accountability can be found at the Commission for Gender Equality. In April 2008 Chana Majake, chief executive of the Commission for Gender Equality, was escorted by police out of her Johannesburg office. The commission immediately announced her suspension after staff members passed a no confidence vote on her leadership. Majake had been under investigation in 2006 after her staff accused her of mismanagement and corruption. She was cleared of the charges but was found to have
failed for almost two years to deal with a sexual harassment case against one of the Commission for Gender Equality’s provincial heads. An investigation has begun to address the staff’s recent charges against Majake. The Gender Commission, since its inception, has experienced conflict between its staff and management. The former chairperson of the parliamentary review committee, Kader Asmal, believes the commission has failed to understand its legal and constitutional mandate.\textsuperscript{68}

As is often the case, laws and policies are the first-step in bringing about change. They provide structure, legal protection, and a foundation to build upon. But, they are only the first-step and perhaps the easiest. These laws and policies alone cannot carry the weight of the task. To make real change requires personal and collective will; the changing of long-held attitudes and norms; time; and resources. And, changes must be implemented and enforced. It is at these stages that a breakdown between intention and realization occurs, especially for women who live in rural areas and in a tribal society, or in a more traditional cultural environment. It is clear that some women have benefited tremendously since 1994, and there are those who believe that women have been liberated by South African democracy to a greater extent than any other group. But what is also clear is that others have not benefited, and in some cases, life has become even more difficult.

South Africa remains a patriarchal society. The prevailing attitude is that men are in charge and women should be obedient and are in fact, the weaker gender. This is reflected in the prevalence of gender violence and rape. As long as women are controlled financially, physically, and emotionally, things will continue as they are. It’s not clear what will change men’s attitudes. Some organizations, such as Sonke Gender Justice
Network, are working with men and boys to understand their attitudes and more importantly, to educate them and try to change their views and conduct towards women. It is recognized that laws and policies are but the first-step in a long process of creating gender equality and the empowerment of women. It could be argued that the laws and policies are ahead of current cultural and social norms of the country. These laws and policies have created a contradiction of opportunities. On the one hand they have begun the process of breaking-down stereotypes and creating a greater independence for women. On the other hand, women still find themselves having to exercise those choices in a context of a conservative and patriarchal society and family structures.69

Rural women in particular do not seem to be benefiting from the gender equality and empowerment laws and policies of the country. Do women in rural areas know their rights? And if so, what happens when their rights have been violated? Do they have access to courts or to a lawyer? Or, does customary law prevail--as it, too, is recognized in the constitution? Orly Stern, human rights lawyer working at the Sonke Gender Justice Network, believes rural women need to be taught about their rights. Presently, there is a campaign underway to do just that but it is happening in the cities. Orly recognizes the difficulty of reaching people in the rural areas and worries about the women who do know their rights but do not have the money to pursue a case and are too far away from courts and lawyers. Strengthening the police system and legal aid mechanisms as well as getting reports in more remote areas and building up a justice sector would help tremendously. There need to be mechanisms in place to enforce the laws.70

Thus, benefits to women from South Africa’s transition to democracy have been uneven. It is true there are a significant number of women in parliament and most
corporations have women in their divisions (both dictated by law). But were these women from the middle class who have simply moved to the upper middle class? Amina Mama wrote about this question in a 1995 article using the term “femocracy” to describe the phenomenon. Mama suggests that what has been created is actually an anti-democratic female power structure which claims to help women but in fact does not because it is dominated by a small group of women whose power is derived from being married to powerful men. This idea is being spoken about more and more in South Africa and could help explain why some organizations such as the Gender Commission are paralyzed by power struggles and have not been able to do anything substantive.

Women have made great strides in increasing their presence and influence in government. For Dr. Gillian Godsell, Wits School of Public and Development Management, who is writing a high school text book that is the story of Helen Suzman’s life, the number of women coming forward and serving in Parliament since the time Helen served in 1953 is extraordinary. In 1953 there were just three women who were members of Parliament. That number dwindled until it was just Suzman. In 1989 the country had its first woman Cabinet minister, Dr. Rika Venter who served as Minister of Health and Welfare from 1989-1994. And today, almost half of Parliament is women. Increasingly, there has been some rumbling that the women in parliament are not willing to take up disempowered women’s issues—that instead they serve for their own benefit through a system of party patronage.

The question then becomes why, despite all the laws, policies, initiatives and a strong national economy, do a majority of South African women continue to be at the bottom of the pyramid socially, culturally, physically, and economically? Part of the
answer lies in the continued support of traditional practices and a patriarchal mindset, by both men and women, which allows for continued gender inequality and limited power of women. It can also be linked to a lack of implementation of polices, laws, and initiatives put forth by the government related to women’s empowerment and gender equality. The debate about gender equality among women in South Africa has called their attention to the fact that what is formally written in a document does not guarantee or secure equal treatment. According to Assie-Lumumba, “What has become clear during the debates over this contested issue is that, unless there is a radical restructuring in the sexual division of labor as well as a concomitant change in the consciousness, discourse and behavior of men and women about gender roles, women will be trapped as wives, mothers and lovers instead of being accorded citizenship in their own right.”

The adoption of laws and policies that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment is just the first, but critically important and necessary, step in this long journey. They provide the promise of what should be. Nevertheless, it is important not to let power mask the reality of life for many disadvantaged women in South Africa.

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Chapter Three Endnotes

4 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1240.
6 Ibid. Preamble, 1243.
The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines racism as the “belief that all members of each race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races.” The term racialism defines racialism as the “belief in the superiority of a particular race.” The OED records racism as a synonym of racialism. At the end of World War II, racism acquired the same connotations as racialism where “raceism implied racial discrimination, racial supremacism, and a harmful intent.”

Ibid., Chapter 1: Section 1; Founding Provisions, 1243.

Ibid., Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, Section 9, Equality, 1245.

Ibid., Chapter 9: State Institutions Supporting Constitutional Democracy, Section 187-1331 (15).

Ibid., Chapter 9: State Institutions Supporting Constitutional Democracy, Section 185 and 186, 1331 (14).

Ibid., Chapter 1: Founding Provisions, Section 6, 1245.

Ibid., Chapter 2: Bill of Rights, Section 30, Languages, 1257.

Dr. Elaine Salo, interview by author, September 23, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.


Ibid., 5, 7, and 8. Ukuwala is the abduction of a girl to another family household in order to force the girl’s family to give permission for the marriage. More often than not, the girl has agreed to the abduction. The Recognition Act requires permission of both individuals to the marriage. Lobolo is defined in the Recognition Act as “property in cash or kind … which a prospective husband or head of his family undertakes to give to the head of a prospective wife’s family in consideration of a customary marriage.” The validity of a customary marriage is based on the agreement to pay lobolo.

Government Wooling Chiefs with New Ministry, September 1, 2009. www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article35967.ece?service=print. (accessed November 21, 2009). The new ministry will cost an estimated R135 million a year for taxpayers. The Minister for Provincial and Local Government, Sydney Mufamadi introduced the proposal. Mufamadi’s spokesman explained the new ministry is "about the work they do in communities around improving service delivery and working together with local government in achieving that goal." It is not clear if the new ministry will be replicated in each of the nine provinces.

Karen MacGregor, “Shocking results from university tests,” University World News, issue 0035 (August 16, 2009). The National Benchmark Tests Project was commissioned in 2005 by Higher Education South Africa (HESA). The objectives were to gauge entry-level literacy and math proficiency of students, to explore the relationship between university entry requirements and school outcomes, to assist in curriculum development, and to provide information which would help universities place students. More 13,000 students from the universities of Cape Town, KwaZulu Natal, Rhodes, Stellenbosch and
the Witwatersrand, and Mangosuthu University of Technology in commerce, education, engineering, the health sciences, humanities, law, and science took the test.

19 Dr. Elaine Salo, interview by author; Ian Whitman, interview by author, by phone, February 11, 2009, Paris, France; Sharmala Govender, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.


21 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa. Cameron Dugmore lost his position as Minister of Education when the Democratic Alliance won majority rule in the Western Cape Province in the June 2009 election.


27 Ibid., 6.

28 The RDP White Paper is the document which sets out strategies for the implementation of RDP by establishing a policy-making methodology and outlines the government’s implementation framework. However, when presented in September 1994 it had not been adopted by Parliament in order to allow further discussion and debate provided by the Base Document.


30 Claude Kabemba and Tobias Schmitz, Understanding policy implementation: An explanation of research areas surrounding the Reconstruction and Development Programme, Centre for Policy Studies, Johannesburg, South Africa, research report number 73 (2001), 16.


32 Sehoole, Democratizing Higher Education Policy: Constraints of Reform in Post-apartheid South Africa, 82.


35 The 30 member countries of OECD are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland,
Portugal, Slovak Republic, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States.


38 Ibid.


46 OECD, 320.


48 Council on Higher Education, South Africa higher education in the first decade of democracy, The Council on Higher Education (CHE) Pretoria, South Africa (2004). The current institutional structure of public South African higher education includes: 8 separate and incorporated universities (University of Cape Town, University of Fort Hare plus Rhodes University East London Campus; University of Free State plus Vista University and University of the North Qwa-Qwa; University of Pretoria plus Vista University Mamelodi; Rhodes University; University of Stellenbosch; University of the Western Cape plus University of Stellenbosch Dental School; and University of Witwatersrand); 3 merged universities (University of Durban-Westville plus University of Natal--now the University of Kwazulu-Natal; The University of the North plus Medical University of South Africa--now the University of Limpopo; Potchefstroom
University of Christian HE plus University of the North-West plus Vista University--now the North-West University); 2 separate and incorporated universities of technology, or technikons (Technikon Free State plus Vista University Welkom--now Central University of Technology; Vaal Triangle Technikon plus Vista University and infrastructure and facilities of Sebokeng--now Vaal University of Technology); 3 merged universities of technology (Cape Technikon plus Peninsula Technikon--now Cape Peninsula University, Mongosuthu Technikon plus infrastructure and facilities of the Umlazi campus of the University of Zululand--now Durban Institute of Technology, Technikon Pretoria plus Technikon Northern Gauteng plus Technikon North-West--now Tshwane University of Technology); 2 separate comprehensives (University of Venda now University of Venda for Science and Technology; University of Zululand); 4 merged comprehensives (Rand Afrikaans University plus Technikon Witwatersrand plus Vista University East Rand and Soweto--now University of Johannesburg; University of Port Elizabeth plus Port Elizabeth Technikon plus Vista University Port Elizabeth--now Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University; Technikon South Africa plus Vista University Distance Education Centre--now University of South Africa; University of Transkei plus Border Technikon plus Eastern Cape Technikon--now Walter Sisulu University of Technology and Science); and 2 national institutes (Nkululeko Institute of Higher Education; Northern Cape Institute for Higher Education).

49 Federici, Caffentzis, and Alidous, 47.
50 Ian Clarke, interview by author, September 22, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
51 Crain Soudien, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
52 Ian Clarke, interview by author; Ian Whitman; Thomas Koelble, interview by author, by phone, February 25, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
53 South Africa Department of Education, Country Background Report (Pretoria, South Africa: Wits Education Policy Unit, 2008), 13
59 Office on the Status of Women, 10.
60 Ibid. 27.
61 Ibid., 28.
62 Ibid., 34.
63 Ibid., 37.
Ibid., 16.
69 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author; Harold Herman, interview by author, September 27, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Ian Clark, interview by author; Orly Stern, interview by author, by phone, October 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Trevor Schoole, interview by author, September 22, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
70 Interview Orly Stern.
72 Venitha Pillay, interview by author, by phone, February 16, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
73 Helen Suzman was elected to parliament in 1953 as a member of the United Party. She switched to the Liberal Party in 1959. She was the sole parliamentarian to unequivocally oppose apartheid from 1961-1974. She was often harassed by the police and her phone was tapped. She was known for her strong criticism of the National Party’s policies of apartheid which was unusual for an English-speaking Jewish woman in a parliament dominated by white Calvinist Afrikaner men. She served in parliament for 37 years. Helen visited Nelson Mandela several times during his imprisonment and she was present at the signing of the 1996 constitution. She was nominated twice for the Nobel Peace Prize. She passed away on New Year’s Day 2009 at the age of ninety-one.
74 Dr. Gillian Godsell, interview by author, by phone, October 7, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
75 Elaine Salo, interview by author, September 23, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
76 Assie-Lumumba, 145.
Chapter Four: GEAR Thirteen Years Later: The Implications

As discussed in the previous chapter, there were significant economic and social demands on the government in 1994. The new government went through a process of prioritizing these demands, creating strategies to address them, and then finding a way to finance them with the resources available. The government struggled with such difficult fiscal policy questions as how much to borrow to finance development, how to pay down the debt inherited from the apartheid government, and how to reduce the budget deficit. The answers would determine what resources were available for social spending. The new government was also facing the challenge of how to move the country onto the global world stage, accelerate economic development, and maintain its independence—without going the way of many Latin American countries who essentially gave up their sovereignty to institutions like the World Bank. They did not wish to forfeit the opportunities that foreign investment might provide or the chance to create sustained economic growth, which the country had not seen since the boom years of the 1960s. The ANC also came to the realization that it could not rebuild an economy strictly on the basis of social welfare and instead had to try and bring poor people into the formal economy with redistribution following economic growth—in essence, a neo-liberal approach. The government understood it was being more pragmatic than it had originally intended; it moved forward despite opposition and criticism.¹

There are many reasons to believe that the ANC’s decision to take a fiscally conservative, market based approach to growth and development was the right decision for the time. Essentially, with GEAR, the government put in place an economy that was

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investor friendly, provided a sense of security for people who may have otherwise taken their money out of the country, encouraged those who had previously taken their money out of the country to reinvest, drew new investors to South Africa, and provided development for the middle and upper class who are thriving today.\(^2\)

A key point made in GEAR was that significant economic growth required an outward-oriented economy. The focus then was to concentrate on capacity building that would allow the country to meet the demands of competing in the global economy. According to the architects of GEAR, this strategy would allow for a growth rate of 6% per year and create 400,000 jobs per year by the year 2000.\(^3\) Neither has happened. However, today there are financial reserves for infrastructure development, housing, education and health.\(^4\)

Given this mixed performance, a social movement has emerged in South Africa to campaign around “bread and butter” issues. Farm workers, shack dwellers, job seekers, and domestic workers make up a large majority of those participating in this social movement. Police statistics show there has been on average 8,000 protests per year in South Africa making it the country with the highest number of protests, on a per person basis, in the world. South Africa has been identified by *The Economist* as the riskiest emerging market.\(^5\) The continuing pressure on the government to make changes from the grassroots is also being met with increasing pressure from COSATU to shift economic policy. The defeat of former President Mbeki, who was an advocate of GEAR, was considered a signal from members in the left wing of the ruling party who were anti-GEAR.
The macro-economic growth and development strategies of the country are closely linked to the higher education system and to gender equity as the government considers both to be instrumental to economic growth and development. The government looks to higher education to produce skilled workers who can bring the country into the globalized, knowledge-based economy of the 21st century and it looks to women, who represent half the country’s population, to participate in that economy. What follows is an examination of where the country is today in meeting the economic targets set by GEAR, what challenges remain, and the influence of GEAR on the higher education system. The country’s macro-economic policies have influenced women’s professional and personal lives—as will be discussed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

The Economic Health & Well-Being of the Country

GEAR laid out a macro-economic strategy for the country and set performance targets that were to be achieved by the year 2000. As noted, the results have been mixed. When looking at targets related to fiscal debt reduction, reduction in government consumption, and inflation, the results have been good.6 However, South Africa has had persistent problems with unemployment, poverty, and income disparity. In 2006, the official unemployment rate was 25.5% with rates much higher in the poorer provinces of Eastern Cape and Limpopo. And within these provinces the numbers are even higher for blacks (30.5%) and African women (36.4%). Poverty continues to be prevalent with 61% of blacks classified as poor compared to 38% for coloureds, 5% for Indians, and 1% for whites. According to 2003 figures, 13.9% of the country lacks access to water, 21.3% have no electricity, and 43.3% lack proper sanitation. The poverty level in rural areas is
particularly high. Approximately 45% of the population lives in rural areas where people are very poor and lack formal schooling. While the average South African grew wealthier, distribution is uneven and disparities growing. In 2000 the poorest 20% of households received 1.6% of total income, a smaller percentage than in 1995. These persistent problems present the greatest challenge for the country, its citizens, and its future.

Like other governments that have adopted neoliberal economic policies, the ANC-led South African government believed redistribution would follow economic growth. Money did start to come back into the country and a new wave of economic growth and development did happen benefiting the middle and upper classes in South Africa. And with this growth the government could begin to deploy financial reserves into housing, education, health, and so on. The hope was that resources would trickle down to the less fortunate. But therein lies the problem for South Africa: the trickle needed to allow for the redistribution of the majority of the country and this required extraordinary economic growth, resources, and capabilities.

There has been and will continue to be criticism and debate about the macro-economic decisions made by the ANC in 1994. For some, the decision to abandon RDP and adopt the economic principles found in GEAR was a missed opportunity. Not just communist party or trade union members, but many other South Africans sense that in 1994, the ANC and the country had a wonderful opportunity create a social democracy on the Scandinavian model.

Although the rhetoric of South Africa’s government, politicians and academic leaders is that of liberation, equity, and equality, they have not delivered on that promise.
The levels of unemployment, disparity between rich and poor, and poverty are evidence of this as is the level of corruption that is creeping into the system due to increasing nepotism.\textsuperscript{10} “It is as though the government has become more focused on how to perpetuate government power for its own sake rather than how to use this power for transformational change.”\textsuperscript{11} Legislatively, the country looks quite democratic--but not for the working-class population, which is gaining very little.\textsuperscript{12} In a COSATU policy statement made July 2001:

In contrast to this political progress, in socio-economic terms the legacy of apartheid remains entrenched and, with the massive loss of jobs in the past decade, even appears to be worsening. Wealth is still concentrated in a white minority. The nature of capital remains largely the same- concentrated in the mining-finance complex- which continues to dominate the commanding heights of the South African economy. Serious inequalities persist, with signs of worsening particularly among the formerly oppressed. The number of people living in poverty is staggering. Almost half the population lives in poverty, including many of the employed- the working poor. Unemployment and underemployment are on the rise as more jobs are shed and people rely on survivalist activities to make ends meet. The complex nature of the transition emerged in deeply contradictory government policies.\textsuperscript{13}

It is this reality that is creating difficulties for the government. Many South Africans have been very patient and supportive, and believed the ANC would and could deliver on its promise of transformational change where the majority would no longer be the economic, social, or political minority. People were willing to give the government time as long as they felt their children would be better off. The problem is the promise is beginning to fade and people are becoming increasingly frustrated. This was evident in the election this past spring last when for the first time a splinter group emerged from the ANC, Congress of the People (COPE), to compete against the ANC in the election.\textsuperscript{14} People have begun to question what the ANC has done for them as more people than ever
have experienced quality of life decreases and are eligible for government social grants. In rural areas, economic activity has actually gone down since 1994; the only bright side is that social policy payouts have increased.\textsuperscript{15} According to Thomas Koelble, Professor in the Graduate School of Business, University of Cape Town, "when you drive through Zambia or Malawi you will see that people are trading on the street corners and all along the trade routes, when you drive through the Eastern Cape you see little economic activity at all. These are not good signs!"\textsuperscript{16}

The unemployment rate in South Africa is 25.5%. Although high, it has remained relatively stable.\textsuperscript{17} But stability in this case does not indicate a turning tide. Instead what is happening is that the number of people who are actively looking for a job has decreased significantly. For example, the number of people who haven’t actively looked for a job in the month of July 2009 increased by 302,000 bringing the total to 1.52 million people. These “discouraged workers” reduce the number of people registered as unemployed allowing the unemployment rate to remain steady.\textsuperscript{18}

Who are these unemployed? Seventy-percent of the people unemployed in the country are under the age of thirty-five with many never having had a job. “That’s like a social time bomb. There are a significant number people in this country between the ages of 18-35 who have never had a job. That’s like the prime of you know when people are really building their lives and are their peak years of productivity. And that’s a high cost for any country to pay.”\textsuperscript{19} In most countries, 60% of working age people work, but in South Africa only 40% work. “In this country, you get a sign saying no jobs. That’s what you see all over, it’s shocking.”\textsuperscript{20} A lack of jobs is certainly contributing to the increase in the number of “discouraged workers” but there are also cultural and social factors that

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come into play. According to Elaine Salo, Director of Gender Studies, University of Pretoria,

Psychologically, as South Africans, we’ve all been affected by the past as well. Assuming that somehow things would remain the same in these sectors (employment), okay, and that the excesses of the old white sector would remain intact, and all it would take is for black people to enter. And actually, no, that’s not the situation. Actually those excesses are unaffordable. And so necessarily conditions of employment and salary packages and all of those have changed. And you’re seeing a lot of resentment around that. You’re also seeing a devaluing of work as a result of it.  

However when you look at the unemployment situation, the reality is there are not enough jobs in South Africa. According to Kerrin Myers, Director of Centre for Entrepreneurship, Wits Business School, “We’ve got 27 million unemployed people. There’re just no jobs. Jobless growth--that’s what we’ve had. And yet at the same time, if you talk to the big corporates, they’ll say a huge shortage of skills, brain drain, everybody’s leaving the country, blah, blah, blah, but I mean there are a whole lot of different factors at play.”

The results related to job creation have been disappointing. The government set a target of 2.9% for job growth in the formal sector. The actual rate was 2.5% during the period 1995-2003, but only if jobs in the informal sector are counted. Job creation in the formal sector has been a major economic challenge over the years. A big part of the problem in South Africa is the mismatch between the supply of labor, which is mainly unskilled, and the demand for labor requiring skills. It has been estimated that 300,000 jobs remain unfilled due to the shortage of skilled workers. If there are not enough skilled workers, companies are not going to set-up shop and certain industries will not prosper. This in turn has an influence on the rate of foreign investment in the country, which

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limits growth.\textsuperscript{24} This also means the government, but mainly the private sector, has to seek those skills (engineering, information, communication, technology, and to some extend financial) from outside the country's borders.\textsuperscript{25} The other reality is that because of globalization, many young graduates from university are being recruited by global companies.\textsuperscript{26}

And so, there is an impasse socially and economically. Industry cannot expand because it lacks demand for orders; demand for orders is low because, without skilled labor, industry lacks the capacity to fill them. Yet the country has huge numbers of chronically unemployed workers, and the government continues to struggle with how to move these workers into the skilled category. Critics of the market economy bring up this problem as evidence that it is time for the government to use industrial engineering, in the same way that the Soviet Union, Korea, and China have utilized social and economic engineering.\textsuperscript{27}

It is one thing for a worker to lack skills in a particular industry but many South Africans cannot find jobs because they can't read or write at a level necessary to perform basic tasks and function properly in the workplace. And for those who find employment despite these limitations, their wages may be so that it is not worth their while to go to work.\textsuperscript{28}

While the shortage of skilled labor certainly contributes to unemployment and difficulty in creating jobs in the formal sector, the reality is there are just not enough jobs for the millions of unemployed in the country—even if each one of them were skilled.\textsuperscript{29} Given this reality, a new attitude seems to have taken hold in the government as it
concerns the creation of jobs and the unemployable in the country. According to Crain Soudien, Acting Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town,

...the basic approach, by the government, and I've heard them say so, is that this large reserve of unemployable people in the country, you can do nothing about. They're so under skilled and it will take so much investment to be able to turn that situation around, that the best the country can to do is to provide reasonable safety nets for them. And it's a kind of patronizing policy, which effectively – in some ways condemns the poor, and that’s a problem.  

In essence, there are two economies operating in the country, one that is globalized, industrialized, and modern and the other where people live on the margins with little skills and no full-time employment.

This indifference on the part of the government may have taken root after the most recent initiative to address the shortage of skills had mixed results, at best. In response to the lagging growth rates and shortage of skills, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) and Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA) were introduced. These initiatives focused specifically on skills in science, engineering, math, and technology that were and remain a major blockage to economic growth and job creation. The initiatives were an attempt to bring direct funding to the development of these skills, in alignment with specific sectors of the economy.

The government launched ASGISA in 2006 as a complimentary economic plan to GEAR. The core objectives of the initiative were to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 through accelerated growth of 4.5% or higher through 2009 and at least 6% during 2010 and 2014. ASGISA identified six constraints that were blocking accelerated growth; it identified skills shortages as a key constraint and called for the development of a separate initiative to address the problem. Three months later, in March 2006, JIPSA
was introduced. Five high priority skills were identified: engineering; city, urban, and regional planning and management skills; artisan and technical skills; management and planning skills in health and education; and mathematics, science and language competence in public schooling.\textsuperscript{34}

In essence, JIPSA was a massive state infrastructure project that failed to achieve its objectives. Part of the criticism related to JIPSA is that it fell short in the training and development of the less technically oriented jobs such as boilermakers, fitters and turners, which are in drastic shortage in the country. Jenni Case, Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Chemical Engineering, University of Cape Town, expressed her frustration with the program thus: "I heard people saying the other day that JIPSA was a damn screw up that never went anywhere. It's easy to write big amounts of money for infrastructure to get people training but it's not enough. In a sense the state has failed."\textsuperscript{35} Many believed that the initiative failed because it was initiated about two years before the end of President Mbeki's term when the economic and political environment began to shift and the focus turned to developing new economic strategies related to education, health, and safety.\textsuperscript{36}

The government still believes and understands the lack of skills remains a major block and obstacle to economic growth. The new government, under President Zuma, must create a national plan and strategy for skill development.\textsuperscript{37} "No matter what approach President Zuma selects, it is important that any growth and development strategy has its main focus on human capital—making sure that skills are aligned with the economy."\textsuperscript{38}
Given the inequities in employment opportunities under apartheid, two key pieces of legislation, the Employment Equity Act of 1998 and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act of 2003, were passed to bring employment equity and balance into the private and public sector. Affirmative action was launched with the Employment Equity Act of 1998. It has been successful in creating a workforce in the public sector that is trending towards a fair representation of the overall population. Of those employed 72.5% are black, 3.6% Indian, 8.9% coloroured, and 14.7% white. Surprisingly, the numbers are not much different for the private sector. Gains have been slower in the higher echelons of employment. Since 2000, there has been a 1% increase in each level of management in the private sector with middle management and professional levels trailing slightly behind. By 2001, only thirteen percent of top managers were black and sixteen percent of senior managers.\(^\text{39}\)

While Affirmative Action has been successful in creating a public sector workforce that better represents the overall population, it has also created challenges. Hiring of members of underrepresented groups in the civil service has grown over the years but many new hires lack the skill level necessary to effectively perform their jobs.\(^\text{40}\)

There was a big and thriving civil service during the apartheid years mostly dominated by white Afrikaners working in small municipalities. Black staff replaced many of the civil servants who worked in the apartheid government after the passing of Affirmative Action. However, many were not trained to run the systems or departments. This has created high levels of dissatisfaction related to the delivery of government services, which has resulted in social problems and civil unrest.\(^\text{41}\) According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education, University of Johannesburg, “Our civil service is imploding. It’s
about the enactment and the ability to deliver. You’ve had people put in positions on a quick basis to get them jobs, to get the right people in with the right kind of faces into these positions, but they’re not able to deliver. Those are systemic issues."42

There is controversy about when Affirmative Action is going to end. South Africans are increasingly expressing their frustration with the system as they feel that black people are getting all the top jobs, but are pushed through with no merits.43 The other concern with Affirmative Action is that it isn’t helping the majority of black South Africans, just a small portion of the population. And, there is concern that it is creating a culture of entitlement. These concerns are expressed by South Africans who have been supportive of Affirmative Action but now believe it has run its course.44 According to Harold Herman, Emeritus Professor of Comparative and International Education, University of Western Cape,

I know a lot about affirmative action. I’ve taught it and I have supported it. But, I have spoken persistently at graduations and elsewhere about this culture of entitlement, which is now happening in this country. It’s become a big problem. The people who are benefiting from it are the upper middle class and the bourgeoisie. The people who are not benefiting from it are the working class.45

There are government officials, academics, business leaders, and leaders of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who agree, and believe some of the Affirmative Action policies, such as professional employment, will be dropped within the next five years. Unlike the United States, where blacks are a minority, in South Africa they are the majority. The fear is the continuation of Affirmative Action would lead to a complete culture of entitlement based on race. Where most agree that Affirmative Action should be continued, however, is among black rural women, who continue to be underrepresented in all areas of employment.46
The second major piece of legislation to address employment inequities was the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Act of 2003 created to encourage the transfer of assets and promotion of black participation in business management and operations. In 1992 there were only 14 (1.2%) black directors on the top 100 Johannesburg Stock Exchange companies; that number increased to 156 black directors (13%) by 2002. In 2003, after the passage of BEE, there were for all companies listed with the Johannesburg Stock Exchange 432 black directors and 435 in 2004, which represents 16.6% of the total.47

The goal of BEE is to have 25% black ownership of South African companies by 2014. The approach is voluntary. An integral part of the legislation is the measurement of a company’s empowerment progress in four areas: (1) direct empowerment through ownership and control of an enterprise and its assets; (2) management at senior level; (3) human resources development and employment equity; and (4) indirect empowerment through preferential procurement, enterprise development, and corporate social investment. All government bodies and public companies must abide by and are required to apply these codes of good practice to win government contracts.48 The program calls for white-owned and managed firms to turn management and ownership over to black businessmen. Many companies believe if they don’t comply now it will only be a matter of time before they will nationalize. The new black capitalists are expected to pay market price for their acquisitions. In 2006 the value of BEE deals totaled 56 billion rand, and by 2007, 153 transactions valued at 96 billion rand were carried out under BEE. At this rate, forecasts predict that 52% of South African privately held businesses will change ownership in the next 10 years.49
Under the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) policy, the government wanted to engineer a more representative role for the black majority. Yet polls show that the majority of South Africans view BEE as a program that benefits small portion of the population. Those who benefit are a handful of politically connected black tycoons who have made fortunes at companies who were obliged to conduct “equity sales.” The criticism of the program is that the only beneficiaries have been the senior members of the ANC.

The following story is an example of how the BEE program is regarded. In June 2009, First Rand Bank—the nation’s second largest financial services group—announced the appointment of Sizwe Nxasana as the bank’s next Chief Executive. He is the first black chief executive of the bank. But analysts raised concerns about the appointment, saying the decision to appoint Nxasana was influenced by politics, considering he joined the group less than 4 years ago and had no hands-on baking experience.

While Affirmative Action and BEE were created to correct gross inequities in employment and business opportunities, they are increasingly criticized for benefiting just a few South Africans and for creating a culture of entitlement. The debate and predictions about the future of these policies will only continue.

There has been a shift in South Africa since the end of apartheid, a shift from a society defined by race to a society defined by class. This shift is a story of social mobility and the emergence of a black middle-class in South Africa. The black middle-class represents about 10% of the total population; its members are often referred to as the “black diamonds” of South Africa. They are the first generation of black middle class who are providing the foundation for future generations. An estimated 2.6 million
of South Africa’s 39 million blacks (approximately 80% of the total population) earn at least 6,000 rand a month. It may not sound like much but it is more than half of what other black South Africans make. The way of life for these black middle class South Africans is worlds apart from the majority of their compatriots and women.

The contrast between first and third world in South Africa is particularly marked. There are huge areas that lack running water, sewage systems, and electricity. At the University of South Africa, a distance education institution, up until a few years ago, teachers were still talking about some of the students’ assignments coming in with candle wax on them. So on one hand, there are a significant number of South Africans who do without the basics and on the other end of the spectrum, there are people who live a very comfortable lifestyle; then there is everything else in between.

The degree of disparity between rich and poor in South Africa is reflected in the country’s Gini Coefficient, which measures income or wealth inequality in a society. The coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds perfect. South Africa’s 2009 Gini Coefficient is .76, the highest it has ever been. Only one other country in the world has a higher coefficient than South Africa, Namibia. Of great concern is that inequality continues to increase despite government interventions to decrease it. In 1993, the poorest 10% of the population held 0.6% of total income, while the richest 10% accounted for 72.7% of total income. In 2007, the numbers were 0.6% and 72.5% showing a slight decrease with a Gini Coefficient of .66. However, the number increased to .76 in 2009 making South Africa one of the most inequitable countries in the world. The disparity is most worrisome when looking at rural areas, where the inequities are at an extreme.
Part of the problem for South Africa is the inability of the economy to create jobs with incomes that allow the poor to accumulate wealth. Most of the jobs have been created are in the informal economy and do not provide the income necessary to alleviate poverty. In June 2009, President Zuma stated South Africa must close the gap between rich and poor and address the issue of poverty. He went on to say that ignoring these issues would only lead to serious problems and consequences: “If that happens you are certainly sitting on a situation that will explode one day.”

To date, the country has contained social pressures by throwing a wide and deep safety net over the problem. This approach does not address the root problem, but only increases the number of people on welfare. In 1994 the government spent 10 billion Rand on social grants for 2.6 million South Africans. By 2003 the government was spending 38.4 billion Rand for 6.8 million people. Today, a quarter of all South Africans are receiving welfare grants. As important as social grants are as a way of ensuring that people have bread on their table, they do not transform lives nor deal with the basic problem created under the apartheid system: a culture that thought less of certain people and thus took away their sense of dignity.

What apartheid basically did was to alienate a large portion of the population, giving them little sense of investment in the society. This is reflected in township culture where many people are taking whatever they can from the government and feeling no obligation to move toward independence; their goal is simply to survive. There is increasing recognition that social grants will not bring about the fundamental change that is necessary to move people out of poverty and address the enormous disparity in the country. According to Crain Soudien, Acting Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town,
It's that disparity that I think that the country misunderstands, and that the leadership in this country misunderstands every single day. And it doesn't realize how that bottom is not something that you can simply in a politely way appease. And you can't just say to people, social grant here, a lot of people here are living on social grants. So when you come, and with this new GEAR policy, you simply feed this community with kind of handouts, you're not dealing with social allays which this community has inherited from apartheid, which you're needing to actively turn around, in a whole range of kinds of ways.\(^\text{67}\)

The challenge in South Africa, as in other parts of the world, is to really empower people to take charge of their lives, make meaningful contributions, and not just rely on the government.\(^\text{68}\)

It would be irresponsible not to mention the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa when discussing the economic health and well-being of the country. This scourge is taking its toll on the country socially and economically. The impact of the pandemic was made worse by the complete lack of action by the government during the Presidency of Thabo Mbeki. During his almost ten years in office, former president Thabo Mbeki questioned whether HIV caused AIDS and suggested antiretroviral drugs were harmful. Harvard researchers estimated last year that Mbeki's lack of action led to the death of 35,000 babies and that 330,000 people died prematurely due to lack of treatment.\(^\text{69}\)

The number of deaths related to HIV/AIDS rose from 573,000 in 2007 to 756,000 in 2008. Statistics South Africa estimates 15% of the adult population is HIV positive and this figure will only continue to rise. Demographic projections suggest around 20% of the current population may be lost over the next decade. The government made a decision in August 2003 to provide anti-retroviral drugs through the National Health System. While this is good news, the country will need to upgrade the facilities, management, and personnel needed to handle the number of cases.\(^\text{70}\)
The pandemic has taken a toll on communities, families, and the country; it will take years to recover from the loss of life. According to Elaine Salo, “Communities were just dying everywhere people died it was incredible, and how quickly people are just passing away everywhere you look, young people, in their 20s, their 30s that just shouldn’t be dying. And I think that’s just unconsciously devalued life.” Today, thanks to the availability of antiretroviral drugs, attitudes and behavior are beginning to change. People are starting to realize HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence as more people are seen living positively with HIV. This has shifted people’s attitudes and behavior about getting tested, knowing their HIV status, and seeking treatment. Jacob Leif, President of Ubuntu Foundation, a group working with women who are HIV/AIDS positive, is feeling upbeat about this recent shift, “I think we’re going to start to see real behavior change and in fact, we’re seeing it already. We’ve dedicated a sector, a group of our community, a large community of South Africa, that’s living positively with HIV. We need to see that. And that’s where if you look at the gay community in America, when people were able to live with HIV that translated into action. I’m hoping to see that in South Africa.” While the availability of antiretroviral drugs and new government leadership have contributed to the recent shift in attitudes and behaviors, the everyday reality of the pandemic is increasingly hard to ignore. The death rate due to HIV/AIDS is still at over 950 per day.

It is certainly simplistic to suggest one thing alone can influence the outcome of a pandemic. On the other hand, it has been shown over and over again, particularly in Africa, that the presence of strong leadership is a major factor in combating HIV/AIDS. Jacob Zuma is the first South African president to publicly address HIV/AIDS and to
recognize the social, economic, and personal toll it has taken on the country. Unlike his predecessor Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma acknowledges the threat of HIV/AIDS and the important role antiretroviral drugs plays in combating the virus. South Africa now has the largest antiretroviral treatment program in the world. This is a step in the right direction; the country cannot afford to do anything less.75

The state is trying hard to address the multiple problems of poverty, unemployment, lack of housing, education, and health. It has used every strategy to deal with the country’s ills, from pouring money into education to increasing the visibility of the police,76 but the comprehensive policy needed for the poor is not there. There is no coordinated effort like that suggested in RDP, which looked for ways in which communities could utilize state assistance to give themselves a boost. The government does sometimes think in these terms—for example a Department of Trade and Industry program focuses small business development—but such programs are “one-offs.” Initiatives that support growth and development, such as educational spending, small business development programs, and grants for community development are all taking place, but not as part of a plan.77

This fragmented approach throws money away and gives South Africans the impression that the government does not care about them. The government must find a way to keep economic growth and development moving but they need to be thinking far more strategically about how to improve the issues facing many (40%) South Africans—lack of housing, employment, health services, education, etc. The approach must enlist both the public and private sector to deal with the country’s economic woes. South Africa
cannot let 40% of its population continue in this way, as it will work to everyone’s
detriment.\footnote{78}

A South African academic who grew up in rural South Africa and was
marginalized under the apartheid system provides an interesting perspective on the
country’s problems. He recalled a time when the apartheid government, with the
assistance of the Carnegie Foundation, constructed a comprehensive plan to lift from
poverty a large population of poor white Afrikaners. According to Harold Herman,
Emeritus Professor of Comparative and International Education, University of Western
Cape,

It was a deliberate and focused plan. Why aren’t we involved in that kind of plan?
We can’t even build a million houses in this country, with all the riches that we
have here. We’re building these stadiums now for FIFA and the World Cup, not
for South Africa but for FIFA. We’ve proven that we can do it. I mean, you’ve
got one just around the corner here, another potential white elephant in many
ways. But there it is. We can do it. South Africa can do it. But what are we
doing at the level where – sort of the RDP level. We’re actually not delivering.
So, what are we doing?\footnote{79}

Part of the problem is that the government has tried to develop on almost every
front simultaneously: politically, economically, socially, and technologically. Has it tried
to do too much at the same time? There is no doubt the country has one of the most
progressive constitutions in the world, and a development strategy based on solid macro-
economic policies, yet poverty, unemployment, inequality, violence, and disparity
continues.\footnote{80} For a variety of reasons, the program set forth by the government to alleviate
economic disparities has not worked, and many of its citizens are disillusioned. “It’s
always going to be the few people benefiting from whatever opportunities are there.”\footnote{81}
GEAR and Higher Education

The government has placed a great deal of emphasis on gains in the higher education system. While he was president, Mbeki met frequently with university vice chancellors to convey his expectations. Through these interactions he made it quite clear he expected universities to organize themselves around the national initiatives related to economic growth and development. He saw higher education as the engine to economic growth. President Zuma has yet to engage in similar conversations with higher education leaders.82

For academics, the link between the macro-economic policies of GEAR and higher education is not so clear. Their perception is that for the most part, GEAR has not had a direct influence on the higher education system or its policies.83 When those in higher education do speak of a link it is based on these elements: financial aid, the restructuring of higher education in 2005, pressure to meet the government’s objective of educating students for a knowledge-based economy, and the shift to viewing higher education as commodity.84

When it inherited the old system in 1994, the government believed that extensive restructuring was the best way to decrease costs, improve access, and break down the racial and geographical divides was to restructure the higher education system.85 However, some have come to believe that this approach has had a negative impact on universities by “starving” them of the funds needed to redress the inequities that still exist.86

For Cameron Dugmore, former Western Cape Provincial Minster of Education, the government’s initiatives have resulted in greater access to those sectors of the
community who under apartheid had not been able to attend. Increased spending on the national student financial aid scheme, coupled with efforts to ensure that every demographic was represented in the system helped open colleges and universities to all. The only regret expressed is that financial aid was not offered to even more South Africans.87

An area where the relationship between GEAR and higher education is most clear is the government’s strategy to increase the number of students in math, science, technology, and engineering as defined in the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA) and the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (JIPSA), introduced in 2006 as complimentary plans to GEAR. The need to increase the number of graduates in the technological arena as well as accounting and financial services has been identified in numerous studies as key to economic growth. According to these studies, not enough students have such skills when they leave the higher education system.88

There are a number of ways AGISA and JIPSA influence higher education. First, the government allocates more bursaries or funding to the above-mentioned academic programs that align to the sectors they feel will accelerate economic growth.89 This is true in teacher training programs as well as those geared toward academic research, as the government seeks to increase the number of math and science teachers in the country. The government has also made teacher salaries in these disciplines very attractive to ensure there is incentive for students to go into the profession and to stay.90

At the University of Cape Town the Department of Chemical Engineering and its students have experienced first-hand the benefits related to the government’s
commitment to the development of engineers. The Chemical Engineering building is new and very modern, with the latest technology and amenities; it is partially funded through industry. The Department has also seen a steady increase in the number of qualified applicants to the program. According to Jenni Case, Director of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town, "young kids who are good at school want to do engineering in this country. And if you ask them why, they'll often say they want to contribute to the development of the country." She equates the government's push for engineers, scientist, mathematicians, etc. to the development and reconstruction efforts that took place in post-war Europe.

The push and the financial commitment the government is making to the sciences, engineering, and math have influenced how higher education institutions view themselves and their students. There is a sense that higher education has become commoditized and corporate jargon has crept into the system where students are referred to as clients, programs need to be marketed, and staff and faculty are managed. According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education, University of Johannesburg,

Higher education has become much more corporate in nature. It's definitely being driven by how much money do we make? How do we position ourselves relative to other higher education institutions? There's a lot of competition between institutions in a particular area. It has also increased cooperation as we have come to realize that we are all competing for the same market. Let's see how we can work together to serve a market so that none of us get left out of the pie.

This narrowing of higher education's goals is dismayng to some. For a developing country such as South Africa, given its particular history under apartheid, pushing students and resources into specific disciplines, at the expense of others, may be doing the country and its students a disservice.
While there are varying views on how GEAR has influenced the higher education system, there appears to be consensus that RDP would have changed the system in a fundamental way by redressing the inequalities of apartheid. The thinking goes something like this: if the country were operating under macro-economic policies of the RDP, there would have been less emphasis on the present market-related student fee system that universities operate under now. Under the current system, universities set fees according to their perceptions of the market whereas under the RDP the government would have regulated fees in order to maximize access. For example, in the UK tuition and fees are held to a certain level but in South Africa there is no such regulation.\textsuperscript{95} RDP would not only have been regulated tuition and fees but also provided more funding for higher education, in general. The shift to GEAR also creates a competitive market place between the higher education institutions.

The majority of people with whom the researcher spoke felt the shift to GEAR has not been good for higher education due to the level of inequality in the country. According to Martin Hall, Former Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Cape Town, “In extreme inequality I actually don’t think you can have a market in public education or private institutions but there is one and that is of course very consistent with the neoliberal principles of GEAR.”\textsuperscript{96}

Not surprisingly, as higher education’s role in meeting the economic growth and development goals of the country increases so does the controversy.\textsuperscript{97} One of the core debates is the question of whether higher education serves a broader public good or simply empowers individuals to be more economically viable. The debate continues.
The Future of GEAR

When Thabo Mbeki was ousted as President of South Africa in September 2008, economist and investors worried the new government would shift the country's economic policies. Jabu Moleketsi, the deputy finance minister at the time of Mbeki's ouster was quoted as saying, "In this current environment to talk about fundamental change of economic policy is suicidal." 98

However, there is now expectation from the working class, the trade unions, and the communist party that the government should change the policies adopted under GEAR, especially given the fact that Jacob Zuma, the recently elected President, relied heavily on the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) during his presidential campaign. 99 COSATU is becoming vocal in its demand that Zuma enact more populist economic policies. The unions and the unemployed, now 23.5% of the population, expect Zuma to turn things around and to create jobs. Their expectations are understandable given the fact that Zuma made job creation the cornerstone of his campaign. During his State of the Nation Address on June 3, 2009 he pledged to create 500,000 jobs by the end of the year and set out plans to create 14 million jobs by 2014. Economists are very skeptical, that the current economy has the strength to create 500,000 jobs within 6 months. 100 It has been seven months since Jacob Zuma was elected President; indications seem to suggest he will not make any significant changes to the country's macro-economic policies.

The pressure by COSATU, SACP, and citizens on the government to re-evaluate the country's macro-economic policies will continue with the increasing levels of poverty.
and unemployment, lack of housing, and the widening gap between the rich and poor.\textsuperscript{101} Recent polls and surveys reveal South Africans’ continuing dissatisfaction with the economic direction of the country. They are increasingly expressing these concerns and demands through demonstrations, strikes, and open criticism of the government.\textsuperscript{102}

South Africa announced it was officially in a recession in May 2009. It is the first time the country has been in a recession in seventeen years. The statistics were not good—GDP fell by 6.4%, manufacturing by 22%, and mining was down 33%. The only sector to show improvement was construction, which is not surprising as the country prepares for the 2010 World Cup.\textsuperscript{103} Since the recession began, there has been recognition that some good work was put into the development and management of the country’s economic growth and development policies. Even though South Africa has been affected by the recession, many believe the fiscally conservative policies adopted by the previous government have allowed the country to weather the global economic downturn better than other countries.\textsuperscript{104}

It will be some time before we know if the government will make significant changes to the country’s macro-economic policies as they continue to navigate through the current global recession. Early indications from the government seem to suggest they will stay on course and continue with the current policies, even after the recession. There may be a slight shift but overall the government has maintained the wisdom acquired from its previous leaders—that the country cannot operate as if it is an island. Economic policies of countries are interconnected and therefore governments cannot ignore the relations they have with the outside world as they go about making changes.\textsuperscript{105}
Thus Zuma's challenge will be balancing the interests of the unions that helped him get elected with those foreign investors who are worried he will take the country to the left. In May 2009, just a few weeks after the election, Matthew Phosa, the ANC Treasurer, was in London meeting with foreign investors to discuss the newly elected government's intentions for the country. Phosa told those in attendance that President Zuma intended to keep his campaign promises to make social and institutional changes that would tackle poverty, unemployment, and economic inequalities but it would keep spending within the country's means. He went on to say the government would not "lurch to the left" to please trade unions or the communist party.\textsuperscript{106} The problem is that the new government still does not appear to have a strategic, comprehensive, or coordinated plan to address the country's persistent problems related to unemployment, poverty, the lack of housing, health care, and education for the majority of South Africans.\textsuperscript{107} Instead, it appears the government will continue to propose, drive, and support individual policies, initiatives, and projects. It will also shift its focus towards improving service delivery. According to Matthew Phosa, ANC treasurer, "our view is that we have beautiful policies. There is cash. But the skill level in the public service is very low. If you have no project managers to implement policy you will not deliver. The government will lay off lazy officials and strive to improve civil services training and performance."\textsuperscript{108} Although Zuma's approach at the moment is to focus on service delivery it has the broader goal of getting people to feel a sense of ownership of the social space they find themselves in.\textsuperscript{109}

Whatever the future holds for GEAR, it has and continues to be viewed by many South Africans as a roadblock to housing, employment opportunities, and a better way of
life that were all promised in 1994 with the advent of a new South Africa. This has been and continues to be a challenge for the government: maintaining strong conditions for economic growth and development while improving the social and economic well being for a significant majority of the population.

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Chapter Four Endnotes

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Chapter Five: The Present State of Higher Education

There is no doubt South Africa has spent considerable thought, time, effort, and resources to restructure and transform the higher education system. This chapter looks at the status of the higher education system today. It begins with an overview of performance indicators such as enrollment and retention rates and moves to a discussion about issues that continue to linger from the apartheid era. A critical part of the restructuring was the consolidation, beginning in 2005, of universities set up separately under apartheid. It has been a disruptive process but one that was necessary. How are these institutions doing today and has it been worth all the effort? The chapter ends with a discussion about the newly formed Ministry of Higher Education and Training and what this potentially means for universities.

Performance Overview: The Usual Suspects

Like many higher education systems around the world, South Africa uses certain indicators to measure the success, effectiveness, and progress of its system. These indicators include enrollment and graduation rates, enrollment by field of study, the cost of education, and funding for higher education. South Africa has set specific targets for many of these indicators through the various White Papers and higher education acts adopted since 1994. What follows is an overview of South Africa’s higher education system today looking at specific performance indicators. It also examines lingering issues such as racism and student preparedness; provides an update on universities performance
and adaptation after the consolidation and merger of universities, colleges, and technikons; and it discusses potential changes on the way as a result of the splitting of the Ministry of Education into a Ministry of Basic Education and a Ministry of Higher Education and Training.

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) set a target participation rate of 20% over the next 10-15 years.\(^1\) Access and participation for historically disadvantaged South Africans has been a high priority for the government since the end of apartheid. With an estimated population of 48.5 million in 2007, 1.6% of the total population was enrolled in higher education. The participation rates increase when looking at the number enrolled between the ages of 20 and 24. The enrollment rate for this age group in 2007 was 15.8%, which is significantly higher than the total population but still below the 20% target rate. The rate has held steady since 2004 but has shown a slight decrease since then.\(^2\)
Although the enrollment rates by percentage of population aged 20-24 is below the target rate of 20% there has been growth in the number of headcount enrollments across the system from 744,489 in 2004 to 761,090 in 2007.3

While there has been success in improving access to the higher education system, the goal of ensuring the racial profile of the study body reflects the profile of the entire South African population, as set in the 1997 White Paper, has been more difficult achieve. There is no doubt the number of African students enrolled in higher education has increased, from 49% in 1995 to 63% in 2007. While the trend is positive, it is still
16% less than the percentage (79%) of Africans in the country. Coloured students are also underrepresented, while Indians and whites are overrepresented.⁴

![Figure 5.2: Proportional enrollments (headcount) in public higher education by race](chart.png)

Source: HEMIS, Stats SA

It would be easy to look at the increase in access and assume the goal of making higher education more accessible to historically disadvantaged South Africans is working, but there are complicating factors. What has shifted is access not by race but by class. In other words, the universities have become overwhelmingly universities for the middle class. The middle class is now multi-racial but it is a very small percentage of the overall population. And for people who are not part of that middle class life it is still very tough and the dream of access and opportunity to education has still not materialized. It is a tough criticism but it is one that needs to be addressed.⁵
Martin Hall, former Vice Chancellor of the University Cape Town, used the shopping mall as a metaphor for universities to put in perspective the level of inequality that exists in the higher education system. Hall described the situation thus: Like a shopping mall, the university is open to everyone—but only those who have money come in. In South Africa, only eight million of the 48 million citizens have the means to participate in the formal economy; the situation is the same for the university. As a result 40 million people are excluded from opportunities that come from higher education. And in this way, the government’s policies and initiatives to increase access for historically disadvantaged South Africans has not been as successful as is often portrayed.

According to Hall,

If you came and walked, I can take you to two very different places in Cape Town, I can take you to the steps of the University of Cape Town and you could go around and talk to all sorts of young, smart black students about their dreams and prospects, find them full of hope, brilliant human beings and leaders of the future and you could actually say well the Mandela dream is alive and doing well. Next I could take you out to a school in a neighborhood outside Cape Town where for the past five years not one graduate from high school has actually achieved entrance into higher education. And there you get an image of overwhelming despair, lack of opportunity, and the dream betrayed. It is your two South Africas.7

Thus, the emergence of a black middle class is affecting higher education. A different group is now able to access the system but the system is still leaving behind the majority of the black community.8

The affordability of higher education is an issue for many South African families. To some, this notion of open access to higher education is “nonsense.”9 “It’s so far out of reach that it’s just impossible. So the greatest tragedy is a whole bunch of young people all over the country sitting in little villages, brilliant, talented, have finished high school,
got the marks, can’t go to university. No money. It is the single biggest reason for the dropout rate. No money.\textsuperscript{10}

As stated previously, the higher education system has been and is increasingly viewed as a key player in the government’s initiatives to create a skilled workforce-one that can contribute to economic growth and job creation. That higher education is a priority for government is evident in the move by the new government of President Jacob Zuma to split the Ministry of Education into a separate Ministry of Higher Education and Training with many of the Department of Labour’s initiatives around skill development coming under the umbrella of the new ministry. At the same time, the government has been promoting higher education institutions by providing funding for them to enroll more students into fields of study related to technology, engineering, and science.

The National Plan for Higher Education (NPHE) set enrollment target rates by field of study as follows: 40\% in the humanities and social sciences; 30\% in business and commerce; and 30\% in science and engineering.\textsuperscript{11} The enrollment rates in the humanities and social sciences has gone from a peak of 58\% in 1995 to 42.3\% in 2005, slightly higher than the target of 40\% but significantly lower than the 1995 figure. At the same time, enrollments in the fields of study in business, commerce, science, technology, and engineering have almost doubled, although they too remains below the NPHE target rates.\textsuperscript{12}
The numbers and trends indicate the government’s efforts to increase student enrollment in fields of study conducive to economic growth and job creation have been relatively successful and the NPHE targets will likely be achieved. While the government put tremendous value on enrollment in certain fields of study they also sought to create racial balance across the system. When looking at field of study by race, imbalances are evident. White students are enrolled at percentages disproportionate to the overall population, except in the field of education. African students’ enrollment in education has decreased from 82% in 2004 to 77% making it proportionate to their makeup of the overall population. African student enrollment in human and social sciences, science, technology, and engineering has also increased since 2004 yet the numbers are still disproportionately low. As will be discussed later in the chapter, student preparedness in quantitative literacy is one key challenge African students face.
An important indicator of success in any higher education system is the number of students who graduate from its higher education institutions. Less than 40% of all university students complete their degrees in the allotted time and dropout rates are very high.\textsuperscript{14} South African graduation rates have been and continue to be disappointing. When looking at graduation rates, it is important to keep in mind that the government’s primary focus has been on increasing access to the higher education system, with much less emphasis placed on retention and graduation. That focus is just beginning to change.

In 2000, the South African Department of Education conducted a cohort study-tracking students who entered the higher education system in 2000 through to 2004, five years after entering the system. By the end of the study period, only 30% of the total
first-time entering students graduated; 56% left their original institution, and 14% were still in the system.\textsuperscript{15}

**Table 5.2: 2000 intake cohort, all first-time entering students**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Grad. within 5 years</th>
<th>Still registered after 5 years</th>
<th>Left without graduating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universities excluding UNISA</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNISA</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All universities</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technikons excluding TSA</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technikons SA</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All technikons</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All institutions</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: add here

The category “left without graduating” does not take into account those who may have left one institution, enrolled in another, and eventually graduated. The Department of Education estimates that approximately 10% of the students who fall into this category have transferred to another institution. Assuming 70% of the transferring students eventually graduated, the overall graduation rate for cohort 2000 would increase to 44%, which means the higher education system lost at a minimum over 65,000 of the students who enrolled in 2000.\textsuperscript{16}

When looking at the period between 2004 and 2007 the overall graduation rate was close to 16%. This is significantly lower than the graduation figures cited in the Department of Education study cited above. The increase in the total number of students enrolled since 2000 may be a factor in the decrease in graduation rates. The graduation rates across institutional types shows that the comprehensive universities are the least successful with graduation rates of 11%, compared to traditional universities graduation rates of 22% and universities of technology, or technikons with 20% graduation rates.\textsuperscript{17}
The variation in graduation rates from 2004 to 2007 in the institutions can be, to a certain degree, attributed to the change in enrollment rates. The comprehensive universities have had a slight decrease in graduation rates but the enrollment rates have been rising. On the other hand, the traditional universities showed an increase in graduation rates when their enrollment rates declined in 2006, only to fall again in 2007 as enrollment rates increased. Although the universities of technology have shown consistent improvement in their graduation rates, the number of students enrolled from 2004-2007 has decreased.
When looking at graduation rates by race, African students represent 57% of all graduates yet they account for 63% of all those enrolled across the system. On the other hand, coloured and Indian graduation rates are equal to their percentage of the total enrollment, and whites' graduation rates are greater than the percentage enrolled. African enrollment and graduation rates have increased since 2004 but the gap between enrollment and graduation continues to exist.\(^{18}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004 enrolled</th>
<th>2004 graduated</th>
<th>2007 enrolled</th>
<th>2007 graduated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEMIS

As noted, there has been so much emphasis on access that it has only been recently that attention is being given to retention rates. While there are many elements contributing to lower retention rates for African students, one key factor is the low expectations placed on students once they enter the system. This is especially true in some of the historically white institutions like the University of Cape Town or Wits University.\(^{19}\) Once students enter the higher education system attention, needs to be paid to what happens to students; institutions must identify enabling conditions that will allow students to be successful.

As discussed earlier, the government is working to ensure the higher education system produces graduates in fields of study that support and fuel economic growth and
job creation. While the enrollment targets set by the NPH in these fields of study are close to being met, the percentage of graduates in these fields is significantly less than the percentage of graduates in the human and social sciences.\(^{20}\)

![Figure 5.5: Percentage graduations from public higher education by field of study (CESM)](image)

When looking at graduation rates by race across fields of study, African students account for at least 50% of all graduates in every field with the exception of human and social sciences. The number of African graduates in business and commerce is growing while the number of white graduates is decreasing. African students enrolled in and graduating from education continues to represent the highest proportion of students—over 75%, although the number of white graduates is increasing in the field. The human and social sciences, science, engineering, and technology, have also seen an increase in

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the number of African graduates although there are still a disproportionate number of white graduates.²¹

![Figure 5.6: Graduations (headcount) from public institutions by race and field of study (CESM)](image)

Source: HEMIS

Always an important factor in access and retention rates is the cost of education. There have been numerous student actions on campuses across the country to protest the increasing cost of attending university. Students cite the increase in fees, exclusion based on financial circumstances, and inadequate student financial aid as cause for protest. The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) has calculated that the full-cost of
study in 2007 ranged from R 25,983 to R 49,253 with an average of R 35,806. In 2004, 13% of all students enrolled received grants from the NSFAS; the percentage increased to 15% by 2007. The majority of the grants (93%) went to Africans with 4% going to coloured students, 2% to white students, and 1% to Indian students. While the number of grants has increased, the number of students who apply for grants but have been declined is increasing.

The NSFAS is linked to academic merit with the criteria being the means test of the family income. NSFAS has worked to ensure poorer, rural students with potential are able to access the university. Often there is no income in a black rural family, only a social grant or pension; most do not have an income from employment due to extended periods of unemployment. Usually, the bursaries cover the majority of the tuition amount, and often times, the amount of the bursary is greater than the income of a particular family in a year, making it difficult to determine what percentage of poor family income goes toward higher education.

The cost of education as a percentage of total household expenditures increased from 2% to 4% since 1994 representing a real expenditure increase of 60%. There is a significant difference between what rich and poor households pay as a percentage of total household expenditures, with the poorest households paying on average twice as much of their incomes on education. In a Student Pathways Study conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council, 70% of the students who dropped-out of university were from low-income families. Black Africans make up 73% of the students from low-income families compared to 12% of the white students.
In June 2008, the vice-chancellors' association of Higher Education South Africa (HESA) told parliament that while the "explosion" in the number of students accessing the higher education system has been positive, the increasing financial burden on families is contributing to high drop-out rates.\textsuperscript{28} Another factor in lower retention rates for many African students is the societal and family pressures they face. As we will see in the next chapter, many African students are expected to provide support at home and an income to help pay for family expenses. Often times these pressures are so great that students work one or two part-time jobs and eventually opt out of school because they are unable to keep up with their studies.\textsuperscript{29}

Another significant problem, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, is that of students diverting bursary money from their studies to their impoverished family back home. Many students lack adequate housing or adequate transportation to and from their off-campus living quarters. This is particularly true for poor black students from rural areas. Even if the bursaries the student receives is good what happens is there’s such a level of unemployment back home where the students come from in the rural areas that 80 percent of the bursary that’s meant to maintain them at the university is sent back home because that’s what the family lives on. It isn’t uncommon to find students who haven’t eaten in days because they have sent their money home. Another problem for these students is that they live off-campus but often don’t have money to travel back and forth between school and the place they’re staying at. And, it is not uncommon to find many students crammed into one room because of the exorbitant prices people ask for knowing they are students and need a place to stay. Many of these
students don’t know any better because they come from rural areas and have never had to deal with these issues. All these factors contribute to drop-out rates.\textsuperscript{30}

In mid-September 2009 students rioted on campuses after the announcement of a 15% increase in tuition. The effect of this rate hike is that many students will not come back. For first generation university students, the entire family, community, or village provides support for them to study. For example, every student at the university’s Cedar City Campus, a private university located in the center of Johannesburg, is on a scholarship. The school will go out and find very smart underprivileged children and bring them to the university. The entire village or community pays for any expenses not covered by the scholarship. These students will have a very difficult time finding the means to come back to university next year given the 15% hike in tuition and related school expenses.\textsuperscript{31}

The South African constitution specifies rights and access to education. It is a formal right but it has not been realized in practice. The challenge for South Africa’s education system is how to make the transition from formal rights and goals in the constitution to real outcomes. For substantive change to occur there needs to be institutional changes and the resources to make it happen. As an example, the majority of the country’s 100,000 teachers, teaching in 12,000 different high schools, have had inferior professional training. This has an impact on how and what children learn in school and their level of preparedness to enter into the higher education system. So, no slate of constitutional rights or legislative acts can suddenly produce educators who are competent in teaching mathematics and science. The government is often criticized for not accomplishing more in the 15 years since the end of apartheid. This criticism is not
justified as it does take time to make institutional change; the real criticism is the
"inconsistently, direction and lack of vigor of policy implementation."³²

Lingering Issues: Enough Already

Despite all the higher education acts, initiatives, and policies that have been put in
place since 1994, the higher education system is still struggling with some of the same
issues it faced 15 years ago. They include but are not limited to racism, lack of student
preparedness, inefficiency, and language barriers.

Race is still very a highly charged issue in the higher education system as
incidents continue to flare up in very public ways. Among the most telling is that of the
"Reitz Four." This incident occurred in the Fall of 2009 when four white students filmed
a racist video at the University of the Free State. The video shows four white students
forcing four black female custodians and one black male custodian worker to run and
drink urine.³³ The incident is now referred to as the "Reitz Four"—the name of the
building where the four students lived, an all-male residence hall. The video was
shocking and resulted in the creation of the Mandate of the Committee into the
Transformation in Higher Education (MCTHE), Chaired by the Acting Vice Chancellor
of the University of Cape Town, Dr. Crain Soudien.³⁴ The case clearly illustrates the
continued struggle for race reconciliation and tolerance in South Africa.

The MCTHE was comprised of nine academics appointed by former Minister of
Education Naledi Pandor. Using questionnaires and visiting all 23 of the country's

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universities, the committee concluded that the intolerance behind the Reitz incident was typical of “pervasive racism” among students, staff, and management across historically white universities.\textsuperscript{35} The committee also found that historically black universities were guilty of sexism, ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and racism—for example, where coloured students refuse to share rooms in the residence halls with African students.\textsuperscript{36}

The allegations given to the committee via interviews and the questionnaires were not verified, which has led to a fair amount of criticism of the Committee’s findings and recommendations, especially those that are more far-reaching. As an example, the Committee’s findings state the “entire academic syllabus was divisive and euro-centric...to put it bluntly, a white project...and the committee recommended the curriculum be ‘Africanised’.”\textsuperscript{37} Dr. Soudien anticipated, as did the rest of the Committee, they would receive “lots of flak” and knew the report “was vulnerable because at no stage have we been able to verify what people were claiming.”\textsuperscript{38}

Shortly after Reitz Four video became public in early 2009 but before the MCTHE released its report in May 2009, Professor Jonathan Jansen, previous dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, was selected to become the first black vice-chancellor of the University of Free State.\textsuperscript{39} Dr. Jansen is a renowned education professor and a much-published scholar who has explored the issues of racism and reconciliation.\textsuperscript{40} In his statement of intent, Dr. Jansen said that Free State had to “find a way of integrating classroom life while at the same time ensuring the promotion of Afrikaans, an important cultural trust of the institution, as well as Sesotho and other indigenous languages.” He went on to say the university has to bring faculty, staff, workers, students, and the parents behind “a compelling vision of transformation that
works in the interest of all members of the university community.”41 It wasn’t long before Dr. Jansen found himself in the middle of controversy and was accused of being a racist.

On October 16, 2009, the day of his inauguration speech as the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of Free State, Dr. Jansen announced, “in a gesture of racial reconciliation, and the need for healing”, the University of the Free State would withdraw its charges against the four students. He went on to say “the deeper issues of racism and bigotry that conflict our university — and many others — will not be resolved in the courts.” Based on this decision, the four students were allowed to continue their studies, the workers who were abused in the video were to be paid compensation, and the Reitz all-male residence hall would re-open and set an example as “a model of racial reconciliation.”42

Archbishop Desmond Tutu was quick to release a statement of support for Dr. Jansen and his decision—but this did not quiet down the uproar that came in the incident’s wake. Two days after Tutu’s endorsement, the Ministry of Higher Education called on Dr. Jansen to suspend his decision saying it was “insensitive and taken without consultation.” The Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, requested a report be submitted in two days on the process Dr. Jansen used to come to his decision. Minister Nzimande claims Dr. Jansen never spoke to him or his staff about the process or his decision.43 The next day Parliament announced its displeasure over the Reitz Four decision. Four days later, on October 26, 2009, just ten days after his announcement to withdraw university charges against the four students, the University of Free State announced the re-opening of university discussions about the incident and what action, if any, to take with the four students. On October 27th, Thebe Meeko, Chair of the ANC
Youth League in the Free State, was quoted in the national daily newspaper, *The Times*, threatening Dr. Jansen with physical harm. In a speech he was giving Meeko was quoted as saying, “like President Jacob Zuma when he said the police must meet fire with fire, the shoot-to-kill approach must also apply to all the racists, including Jansen—because he is a racist. He must know that we have removed more powerful people than him before. Jansen is equally a criminal like those others racists. We will shoot to kill racism and those who are racist. Jansen must go.”44 Within two days, Julius Malema, ANC Youth League President, was at the University of Free State to meet with Dr. Jansen. Upon leaving campus he announced his full support of Dr. Jansen and his remaining as Vice-Chancellor saying, “we do not agree with any call that he must go.” And later when meeting with students on campus he said, “we cannot feed Jansen to the enemy.”45 Five days later, the ANC made a statement of support for the University of Free State’s plan for transformation as called for by Dr. Jansen and the opening of further university discussions.

The outcome of this has been the reinstatement of two of the four students; the other two have since graduated. All four currently face charges in criminal court. Their case was postponed to February 24, 2010.

This story illustrates how fragile race relations still are in the country and specifically in the higher education system, and to a certain degree, the lack of tolerance and the ease in which old patterns of discourse emerge. In this environment, it is difficult to move beyond rhetoric and resolve issues in a way that allows everyone to move forward.
The MCTHE final report concluded, “Transformation is clearly a challenge facing all South African higher education institutions.” One of the key barriers to transformation was a lack of implementation of the very comprehensive policies created by all the universities to address discrimination. According to the report, the continuing prevalence of racism and sexism on campuses is due to the lack of information, awareness of polices, and a lack of institutional will in implementing these policies.46

Dr. Soudien has requested that all the universities prepare a report on how they plan to address the issues identified in the MCTHE findings. A major summit conference will be held in March/April 2010 where universities will account for the strategies they have put in place to deal with the mandate set forth in the MCTHE report. The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Blade Nzimande, has taken an active interest in the outcome—although he has no direct authority over the institutions. According to Soudien, he does have a certain “moral authority in the sense that the universities would find it difficult to tell the minister to take a hike.”47

Another problem that continues to plague the higher education system is student preparedness. The National Benchmark Test Project was commissioned by the association Higher Education South Africa (HESA) in 2005 to assess the entry-level literacy and mathematics proficiency of students entering into the higher education system. By looking at the relationship between university entry requirements and students’ proficiency when existing the K-12 school system, universities hoped to gain information that would help to place students and assist in curriculum development. The initial results, based on a pilot project, revealed that only 7% of the first-year students
were proficient in mathematics and only a quarter fully quantitatively literate; fewer than half had the academic literacy necessary to be successful in university.48

This is worrying for several reasons: first, lack of student preparedness plays a role in student drop-out rates, and second, with the current emphasis on science, engineering, and technology the lack of quantitative literacy is particularly challenging. So there is a mismatch between expectation of the government and the higher education system and the feeder line, the primary and secondary schools. There is increasing recognition of the problem but no action has been taken since Mbeki’s ouster from the presidency. Division within the ANC has put policy making in general on hold the past nineteen months, although there have been some signs of movement since the April 2009 elections.49

In response to poor learning outcomes, the minister of education launched a three-year “foundation for learning strategy” in March 2008.50 The Department of Education identified the main problems experienced by learners at school, in order of priority: a lack of books, high fees, poor facilities, large class size, a shortage of educators and poor teaching.51 Teachers have been held responsible for the lack of student preparedness. In June 2009, in his first State of the Nation speech, President Jacob Zuma warned teachers that they need to take their jobs seriously; additional training would be made a prerequisite to promotion. He also shared what he believed were the government’s non-negotiable expectations, “teachers should be in school, in class on time, teaching with no neglect to duty, and no abuse of pupils.”52 Yet teacher performance in the primary and secondary sectors of education has been and continues to be an issue.

Many new ideas have been tried to address student preparedness. Educators and the government have implemented programs, projects, and even special schools to help
the children. In certain schools in the townships, for example, a teacher is assigned to track each student through secondary education. Every time a student misses a homework assignment or is late for school, that teacher reminds them. Not surprisingly, students at these schools do better on their college entrance tests. They have a 94% success rate in secondary school. However, over 98% of them drop out after the first semester in college, perhaps because there is no one to follow them once they get to the university. Although these students obviously have the talent to perform in the higher education system, this particular method of helping them to succeed is too resource intensive to be sustainable.\textsuperscript{53}

South Africa has made a significant investment in higher education. What has been the return on this investment? It is a question that is increasingly being raised and debated. Some would argue that the inefficiency of the system has diminished gains. For example, all the universities, including top tier institutions such as the University of Cape Town and Wits, lose at least 20-25% of their students at the end of the first year. This is in part due to the fact that the imprint of apartheid is still on the system. Today the most deficient institutions have overwhelmingly black students and black staff whereas the better performing institutions are still heavily white. According to Martin Hall, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, “it is a politically difficult area for anyone to talk about. A very significant number of students are being graduated with degrees that are relatively worthless in the marketplace.”\textsuperscript{54} The government does spend a lot of money on education—close to 23% of the national budget—but has yet to see the results it wants. There is a “large scale debate” going about what is actually going wrong.\textsuperscript{55}
Language continues to pose a problem for students and professors alike. Only five percent of South Africans claim English as a first language, but English is used in public engagement and economic interaction. It is the language of teaching in most of South African universities. This means that most university students are actually learning via a language that is their second or third language. The question, then, is why not ratchet up of the teaching of English throughout all levels of the education system? While this clearly creates all types of problems for students, a likely answer is that there have been strong feelings, in the post-apartheid era, about the need to preserve native languages.

There are nine local languages in the country in addition to English and Afrikaans. By the 3rd grade teachers are suppose to start teaching students in either English or Afrikaans. By the time a student is ready to enter the higher education system their choice of university is limited on the basis of language. A student who went through primary and secondary school speaking English would not survive in the University of Pretoria whose classes are taught in Afrikaans. While this is a limiting factor in student choice, the bigger problem is that the teachers in primary and secondary school don’t know English or Afrikaans and go on teaching in native languages. The issue of language is a problem for everybody who comes from a rural area. Getting from a rural school into any post secondary education is a big challenge.

There are several educational foundations that have created special programs to assist students who are struggling with language barriers and to work with teachers on how to connect with students given these language barriers. In addition, many universities are offering extra tutoring to students on campus to help with their language.
skills. This is to help students who are having difficulty in class and reading assignments. The tutors will work with students in their own language to complete reading and written assignments.58

Although reform efforts have not yet met the goals set forth in the constitution, there is still reason for hope. Much progress has been made in bridging enrollment gaps. More progress is needed in retention, graduation, and above all, making sure higher education is available to the poorest South Africans. These changes require a deeper shift in South African society, and will take time.

Post-Mergers: The Jury is Still Out

Since 1994 the higher education system has been going through a restructuring process. The Higher Education Act of 1997, which brought higher education under one centralized system, and the 2004 White Paper, calling for the reorganization and merger of higher education institutions, are two key policies driving the restructuring process. In 2005 the reorganization and merger of higher education institutions began. To date, the number of institutions in the system has been reduced from 21 to 11 universities and from 15 technikons to 5 universities of technology and 6 comprehensive universities.59 See Appendix 1 for the current institutional landscape of South African public higher education. In total, 14 higher education institutions have closed. In addition to the closing of the universities and technikons, all but a few of the 100 teacher training colleges have been absorbed into the new structure.60 Restructuring, especially by way of merger, is difficult under the best of circumstances. Imagine the complexity of merging
South Africa’s higher education institutions given the history of education under the apartheid system.

What has happened consistently since 1997 with the Higher Education Act and with a series of amendments is the strengthening of central state control over the higher education system. This has of course led to greater control over the funding of the 23 higher education institutions that now exist. A key to coordination across any system lies in the way revenues from government are actually handled. This shift to centralized control over funding is linked to the economic policies of GEAR, which advocates for the strengthening of science, technology, and engineering sectors of higher education. By having more control, the government can allocate funds into programs that are focused on these key sectors.\(^{61}\)

Under the apartheid system, South African higher education institutions could be seen as belonging to one of two main types: Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAI) and Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDI). The HAI were attended mostly by white South African students and the HDI mostly by blacks.\(^{62}\) One of the recommendations in the 2004 White Paper was to merge most of the HDI using efficiency measures as a way to divide institutions. These mergers resulted in the disappearance of HDI, which have served disadvantaged and rural communities.\(^{63}\) The pursuit of a single system was driven by the National Commission on Higher Education, which believed a single system would address “inherited inequities, inefficiencies and be able to plan and manage increased access.”\(^{64}\)

The merger of universities was driven in part by the government’s desire to redress the inequities that existed in the system which were deeply rooted in apartheid.

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and colonial education systems. But essentially they have not been able to remove the inequality that the apartheid system created. The government has certainly tried to make money available for the historically disadvantaged and poorer schools by shifting money away from the better schools. However, the advantaged schools have always been supported by the social and economic capital that existed in their circles. They were able to tap into parent and alumni networks to fill in the gaps, whereas schools in the rural areas and in the townships had no such support. There is no doubt the reforms made in the higher education system were all necessary and good in terms of bringing some kind of equity and evenness into the structure of governance of education. However, those in higher education and the government need to examine the results closely in order to establish why it is that some reforms have made change, some have not, and still others have made matters worse.65

By putting every institution under the same umbrella of quality as defined and monitored by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), the single system has helped to address the problem of quality in the smaller schools that were historically for colored and black students. The CHE is implementing a system of quality with peer review and other mechanisms to monitor and increase the level of quality in all the schools. In general, this move has had little effect on the major universities.66

As was discussed earlier in this chapter, the issues of inequity, inefficiency, and to a lesser degree access continue to challenge the higher education system. The reality is although the mergers began four years ago, in 2005, the process of consolidating, merging, and creating new institutions sometimes takes years of effort before the desired
results are achieved. For many institutions it has been a difficult process for the students, faculty, and staff.

The process of restructuring began when former Minister of Education, Kader Asmal (1999-2004) came into office and quickly began “ripping stuff apart or putting them together in new ways that a lot of people found extremely stressful.” Asmal’s legacy to this process has been the higher education mergers. He essentially told people how it was to be done, who would merge with whom, and how they were to do it. People did not take it very well. One of the key challenges in any merger is bringing different institutions with different cultures, systems, and people together to form one cohesive institution with a shared culture and purpose. Management of the process is key, and in many cases, the mergers have not been managed very well. According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education, University of Johannesburg,

I have many colleagues around the country where there have been mergers where things haven’t gone great. Five, ten years into the merger, people are still complaining about the same kind of issues, precisely the kind of issues you talk about – different work ethics, different institutional processes and so forth. I think 2005, 2006, and 2007 were really difficult years for us.

It is astounding to think that every single higher education institution in the country has gone through or is still going through of stress, uncertainty, and the complexity of this procedure, with some still working on the problem years later.

Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education, University of Johannesburg, has first-hand experience of a merger of two institutions that had fundamentally different missions, student bodies, and curriculum. The University of Johannesburg was created in 2005 with the merger of what was called Rand Afrikaans University and a technical school, located near Rand Afrikaans. Rand Afrikaans was a traditional higher education
institution that was set up to serve working class Afrikaner students under the old apartheid government. It was a relatively well-endowed university that catered specifically to this class. Under the reconstruction process, it was merged with an underfinanced technical institution nearby. Prior to its merger with Rand Afrikaans, this technical school had itself incorporated a small section of another institution, which was previously disbanded and broken up into different parts; this piece was established as the technical school’s western campus. All of these institutions, before merging as the University of Johannesburg, had a distinct and homogenous student body. One school had a white and privileged student body and the other institutions a black student body.  

Dr. Petersen spoke about some of the difficulties at the faculty and staff level related to problems around perceptions of academic standing. “Each institution, as well as administrators [sic], was operating under different systems of remuneration and ways of working. This in turn influenced how people perceived the process. People struggled about how to accommodate people.” There were also issues of faculty expertise—where faculty from the merging institutions would teach in the new institution. There was a perception that people who were at the larger, formerly white, institution received “special treatment.” It has been five years since the establishment of the University of Johannesburg and things are now a lot better, “there has been resolved and deliberate attempt by our upper management, but also by middle management at student’s level and so forth – to really look at issues of equity, so who’s getting what, and to make sure the environment is inclusive.”

Other difficulties include the perception that some people are carrying others because they either don’t have the expertise or the work ethic that’s required of an
academic. As a result of the merger, there are people who sit on the same level as others but do not have the same qualifications, experience, or expertise.⁷⁶ At the University of Johannesburg there are senior lecturers from both institutions; one has been expected to and does publish, while the other has never published and can’t work at the level expected. This creates animosity and an unpleasant work environment for all involved. The response from the University of Johannesburg has been to try to get those who are lagging to catch up. The University is now embarking on a drive to ensure that all the staff, at a minimum, have a master’s degree.⁷⁷ This is certainly a long-term solution and will serve the University well in the future. The problem is how to deal with issues related to this in the short-term as well.

The mergers have put higher education institutions in a situation where they are jockeying for position within the higher education hierarchy. The top management sets objectives for growth and change according to the type of institution they want to become. It is then up to the faculty and staff to achieve these very ambitious goals. This is taking a personal toll.⁷⁸ Academics are increasingly finding it difficult to fulfill all their duties. Class sizes have increased tremendously, research is becoming increasingly important to many institutions, there are community service obligations, and there is a need for members of various departments to generate funding.⁷⁹

One of the immediate outcomes of the mergers has been the ability of universities to expand into new areas of study, setting up research units in the university that did not exist before. The University of Pretoria is a good example of this.⁸⁰ Students there have benefited from the changes, which have expanded degree offerings and created more of a
university atmosphere. There is now a larger pool of professors and a wider range of
courses to choose from. 81

It appears the comprehensive universities—often created by the merger of
universities and technikons—have experienced the most difficulty. These mergers have
created challenges related to curriculum, institutional identify, and “market relevance.” 82
As mentioned above, the University of Johannesburg has struggled since the merger.
Part of the problem was after the mergers the university did not have a clear idea of what
the institution was or how to deliver on the mandate given to them by the government.
The temptation was to copy the model and approach of traditional universities. The
danger of this is that the school will spread itself too thin: by trying to do everything, it
will do nothing well. Professor Angina Parekh, University of Johannesburg describes the
situation; “We are struggling with how to brand ourselves in the marketplace. Do we
produce technicians or mid-level careerists or high-flying professionals, or all of them but
as master to none? We do not want to confuse the market, or it will simply move
elsewhere.” 83

One of the biggest challenges for the comprehensives is how to respond to market
needs. They must expand the number and type of their course offerings, offering a variety
of qualifications and programs from undergraduate to doctoral degrees, and a mix of
types of knowledge, including technical, vocational, career-oriented, and professional.
The comprehensives need to choose what they are going to be and that may be multiple
institutions within one organization 84

A new higher education qualifications framework is expected to go into effect in
January 2010. This framework is in response to the consolidation of the higher
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education system. The new system will set common qualifications, ensure consistency across different institutions, and allow for transferability between institutions. At the same time, according to the former Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, the new guidelines will allow for diversity and innovation by each of the institutions and provide "ample scope to design educational offerings to realize their different visions, missions and plans, and to meet the varying needs of the clients and communities they serve."85 The framework sets minimum admissions requirements, allowing the universities to set their own admissions policies beyond those minimums. It also will recognize students' prior learning and work-related qualifications as part of the application process.

As was discussed previously, the number of students enrolled across the higher education system has grown since 2004. The growth has been uneven between the various types of institutions in the system. The number of students enrolled in universities of technology has decreased since 2004 while the number enrolled at the comprehensives has increased. Enrollment at the traditional universities is growing after decreasing between 2004 and 2006.86
One of the main objectives of restructuring the higher education system was to create racial balance across all types of institutions. Under apartheid there were two institutional types, universities and technikons. The majority of Africans were enrolled in technikons. African enrollment percentages in universities grew from 50% in 1995 to 53% in 2003 and in technikons, enrollment grew from 47% in 1995 to 77% in 2003. During the same period, white student enrollments at both types of institutions decreased. Enrollment percentages for white students at universities decreased from 38% to 32% and at technikons from 41% to 14%.\(^\text{87}\) Beginning in 2004, data was available for enrollment rates by the three institutional types established as a result of the restructuring of the higher education system. When looking at enrollment rates across the three institutions...
by race, Africans make up 50% of the students at universities, 63% at comprehensives, and 77% at universities of technology. Of the three, the universities of technology come closest to representing the overall population. The representation of African students at the comprehensives is also moving towards a more representative profile of the overall population; this may be attributed to the incorporation of technikons into these universities during the mergers. When looking across all institutional types, white and Indian students are overrepresented and coloured and African students are underrepresented.88
It is really too early to tell how successful the mergers will be and if the investment will pay off. As difficult as the mergers and consolidation has been, the higher education system had to be transformed and restructured.89

Change is on the Way: The Restructuring of the Ministry of Education

In his first day of office, President Zuma announced the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education and Training with Dr. Blade Nzimande as Minister. Dr. Nzimande is also the Secretary-General of the South African Communist Party.90 The splitting of the National Department of Education was expected. In December 2007, at the ANC national conference, policy priorities in higher education were identified, including the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education. Other policy priorities included re-opening teacher colleges that were incorporated into universities, revisiting institutions that were merged during the 2005 restructuring process, and offering free “first degree” education.91 The new Ministry of Higher Education will include all universities and colleges and encompass 1.5 million people including students and staff.92

Reaction to the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education has been mixed. Some welcome the division of basic and post-secondary education, given how large and complex it is for one minister to effectively run both. In addition, a Ministry of Higher Education would bring more attention and management to skills training.93 Others are concerned about the lack of planning related to the split, the cost of creating a separate department, and the ability to staff the department with qualified people, which was difficult enough under the single ministry of education.
The Department of Labour has been trying for quite some time to identify the critical skills needed in the South African workforce. The preference is for developing these skills within the country and to only go outside the country when needed. The sense is that they have been "chasing their tails for a very long time."\textsuperscript{94} Interestingly enough, the original macro-economic policy of the ANC, RDP, envisaged the combination of education and training to redress some of the practices under apartheid, which relied on unskilled labor. Many South Africans were never formally trained or had formal qualifications under the old system. Now with the split of the education department, the RDP's original plan for aligning higher education and training will finally happen. If business and industry need particular skills, they will have to come to higher education. The hope is that this move will give universities and the higher education system in general a way to ensure university students are acquiring the skills needed for industry and economic growth.\textsuperscript{95}

Yvonne Shapiro, Director, South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA), is among the people who view the new ministry as a positive development. Her job requires her to work closely with the Department of Labour. She describes how relieved everyone is about the recent split because of the constant fighting between the Ministers of Education and Labour. "We were like children of parents that were just about to get divorced all the time, and then of course, they were squabbling that the children didn't get any crumbs from the table. And we really were feeling like that for a very long time, so it was horrible."\textsuperscript{96} It is now clear that the SAQA is now under the major umbrella of Education. Although it will take time before everyone is certain that it was a good decision, there is a general sense of optimism. According to Yvonne Shapiro, "it's taken

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a while for everybody to finally fit in the new South Africa, and now there's more. Everything just keeps changing because change is the only constant. ²⁹⁷ For Shuray Bux, Director, Manufacturing Industry Development and Economic Development and Tourism, who also worked with the Department of Labour on skills development and training in the Western Cape, the new ministry is a positive move. ²⁹⁸ In his view the increased priority on higher education will compliment his department’s efforts to improve the relationship between industry and higher education. His department will now focus even more on creating linkages among those working in higher education to ensure the country is moving forward in its efforts to create a skilled workforce. Although Bux, too, is optimistic, he does admit it is too early to know if the new structure will be a success.²⁹⁹

The New Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) takes responsibility for higher education, colleges, and all post-literacy adult education, including workplace skills development. The workplace skills development includes the infrastructure of SETAs, the National Skills Authority, and the National Skills Fund¹⁰⁰, which will all be transferred from the Department of Labour to the new DHET.¹⁰¹

During a public lecture at Wits School of Public and Development Management, Minister of Higher Education and Training Dr. Blade Nzimande stated that people should stop thinking about education and training as two separate things and recognize they are part of an integral whole. He explained why the ministry was taking over skills training from the ministry of Labour: in essence the two departments could not get along; respective institutional interests clashed, and each department thought too narrowly, leading to a lack of cooperation between the two groups. Minister Nzimande went on to ¹⁷⁰
say DHET is the "glue" that will hold everything together. For him, the goal is to prepare post-school youth for the labour market and to help them to further develop the "skills, values, and ethics needed to participate usefully in the social, political, and cultural life of their communities and society as a whole." Minister Nzimande believes one of the key obstacles to the country’s development is the shortage of skilled workers. He sees higher education and training playing a critical role in helping with economic growth and the creation of more jobs. He acknowledges that much improvement is needed in the quality of education and the capacity to educate and train more young people. Minister Nzimande referenced a recent report, commissioned by former Minister of Education Naledi Pandor, which looked at post-compulsory school provisions; the report showed 41% (2.8 million) of the country’s 18-24 year olds are neither employed, enrolled in educational institutions, nor participating in a workplace-training program. Nzimande attributed this to “very limited access to post-school education and training opportunities, poor resources, the lack of financing, and the restricted availability of jobs.” Nzimande referred to the situation as a “huge waste of human capital.”

Minister Nzimande believes that workers’ prior learning, and not just formal university entrance qualifications, should be taken into consideration during the admissions process. He also believes experienced workers should not have to take metric exams. Last year, only 18% of matriculants were exempted from those exams. Nzimande believes that this barrier is not allowing young people to reach their full potential, and is calling on universities to modify the tests so that more students might gain access.
The transition of departments and programs to the Ministry of Higher Education and Training was to be completed in November 2009. At that time, more concrete plans were to be adopted on how to move further towards the goal of an integrated system of higher education; vocational colleges were to be further developed, and the worker’s training program was to be upgraded. 108

While South Africa’s higher education system continues to face significant challenges, no other part of the world has completed this comprehensive a restructuring program—with the possible exception of Eastern Europe, which went through the same sort of restructuring after the collapse of the communist block. Former University of Cape Town Vice-Chancellor Martin Hall’s story about his visit to Princeton University in the late 1990s illustrates how extraordinary the changes in South Africa’s higher education have been. When he arrived at Princeton he was welcomed by his counterparts there, who noted that they were going through changes as well. They explained that for the first time since the end of Second World War Princeton was to make a change to the undergraduate course requirement, and this had led to a rift in the institution and a bitter debate that lasted for two and a half years. For the Ivy League institution, that was considered radical institutional change. 109 When weighing the successes and failures of South Africa’s system, it is important to remember what it has tried to accomplish in the short time since the end of apartheid: not just a change in the course requirements, but an entirely new curriculum, new campuses, and a new educational bureaucracy. Institutional change is difficult under the best of circumstances. In many ways, South Africa’s higher education system has made great strides despite the challenges it currently faces.

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3 Ibid., 17.
4 Ibid., 17, figure 5.
5 Martin Hall, interview by author, by phone, March 3, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Nadine Petersen, interview by author, October 8, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
6 Hall, interview by author.
7 Hall, interview by author.
8 Petersen, interview by author.
9 Kerrin Myers, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
10 Myers, interview by author.
11 Ministry of Education, 27.
12 Organization of Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *Reviews of National Policies for Education: South Africa* (Paris: OECD, 2008), 344, Figure 8.3.
13 Ibid., 22, figure 7.
14 Hall, interview by author.
16 Ibid., 12.
17 Ibid., 34-35, figure 16.
18 Ibid., 30, table 13.
19 Trevor Sehoole, interview by author, September 22, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa. He is referring to the commission Soudien chaired on racism.
21 Ibid., 32, figure 13.
22 Department of Education, *Information on the State Budget for Higher Education 2007*, (Pretoria: Department of Education, 2007), 25. The NSFAS assesses the cost of students to study by adding the registration fee per student, to the average cost of tuition and the average cost of residence. The average cost of tuition is calculated as the tuition fee income divided by the number of enrolled students and the average cost of residence is calculated as the residence fee income divided by the number of students in residence.
24 Ibid.
25 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Sehoole, interview by author.
29 Dougmore, interview by author.
30 Petersen, interview by author; Martin Hall, interview by author.
31 Schoole, interview by author.
32 Hall, interview by author.
34 Crain Soudien, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
36 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
40 Dr. Jansen is one of South Africa’s leading—and most outspoken—intellectuals. A former biology teacher, he went on to obtain a master’s degree from Cornell University in the US and a PhD from Stanford. He was dean of education at the University of Pretoria from 2001 to 2007, and a Fulbright Scholar to Stanford in 2007-08. Jansen's recent books are *Knowledge in the Blood* (2009) and he co-authored *Diversity High: Class, Color, Character and Culture in a South African High School* (2008).
41 Karen MacGregor, “South Arica: First Black Leader for Free State.”
47 Soudien, interview by author.
49 Hall, interview by author.
50 OECD, 57.
54 Ibid.
55 Thomas Koelble, interview by author, by phone, February 25, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
56 Elaine Salo, interview by author, September 23, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa; Bev Thaver, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
57 Whitman, interview by author.
58 Sharmala Govender, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
59 OECD, 338. Comprehensive universities were expected to combine formative and career-focused technological higher education through student access to a wider variety of courses with different entry requirements, student mobility between career-focused and formative courses, expanded research opportunities that linked applied research to basic research. It was thought that with this increased scope and capacity they would be able to meet regional needs. The following is a chart of current institutions of higher education in South Africa. See Appendix 1.
60 Thaver, interview by author.
61 Hall, interview by author.
63 Ibid., 101.

65 Koelble, interview by author, by phone, February 25, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.

66 Whitman, interview by author.

67 Yvonne Shapiro, interview by author, by phone, October 12, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.

68 Shapiro, interview by author.

69 Petersen, interview by author.

70 Shapiro, interview by author.

71 Petersen, interview by author.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.,

80 Whitman, interview by author; Salo, interview by author.

81 Whitman, interview by author.

82 OECD, 338.


84 OECD, 338.


87 Ibid., 20,

88 Ibid., 20-21, figure 6.

89 Hall, interview by author.


91 Ibid.

92 Ibid., 2

93 Schoole, interview by author.

94 Shapiro, interview by author.
Schoole, interview by author.
96 Shapiro, interview by author.
97 Ibid.
98 Shuray Bux, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
99 Ibid.
100 SETA stands for Sector Education and Training Authority. SETA organizations were established by Minister of Labor Membathisi Mdladlana in 2000. There are at 23 SETAs operational in South Africa. The main function of a SETA is to improve workforce skills—to bring new skills to the employed, and help those wanting to be employed in a given sector acquire the skills they need. SETAs follow the National Skills Development Strategy; their goal is to ensure that people learn skills that are needed by employers and communities, Training must be to agreed standards within the National Qualifications Framework wherever possible, CTFL SETA. http://www.ctflsa.org.za (accessed November 29, 2009). National Skills Authority: The 29-member National Skills Authority was established in the Skills Development Act and is made up of representatives from business, labor, government and community organizations. Its main function is to advise the Labor Minister about a national skills development strategy and its implementation, http://www.southafrica.info/business/economy/policies/labourbodies.htm (accessed December 5, 2009). National Skills Fund: The National Skills Fund (NSF) was established in 1999 under the terms of the 1998 Skills Development Act, to support the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), “The Act seeks to address the structural deficiencies of the labour market, and develop a workforce that can respond to the modern economic environment, taking into account the equity considerations that are peculiar to South Africa,” National Skills Fund Strategic Projects 2006-2009, Department of Labour, Republic of South Africa, 1, http://www.labour.gov.za (accessed December 5, 2009).
102 Ibid., 3.
103 Ibid., 3.
104 Ibid., 4.
107 Kgosana, “All Deserve University Education-Nzimande.”
108 Nzimande, 7.
109 Hall, interview by author.
Chapter Six: Women and Higher Education- The Successes & Challenges

On 28 August 2007, Deputy President Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka told those present at the 4th annual Women’s Parliament Conference in Cape Town, “Educate a woman, you educate a nation.” Deputy President Mlambo-Ngcuka’s remarks reflect the government’s commitment, since 1994, to increase women’s access to higher education and its belief that the education of women is a key factor in the country’s future. In many ways the government’s initiatives, plans, and laws related to women and education have succeeded as women’s access to and retention rates in higher education has increased significantly.

In spite of these accomplishments, many women still have limited access to higher education and for those who are in the system, the challenges are significant. The combined effect of race, class, and geographical location create inequalities between groups of women in South Africa. Acknowledging these differences between women in South Africa allows for a closer examination of the challenges that remain. It should be pointed out that available data on gender and higher education lump all women together rather than looking at access and retention by race, geographical location, or socio-economic status. While there is recognition that some women have benefited significantly more than others, the lack of qualitative and quantitative data seems to indicate the view that all women are created equal and have similar challenges and opportunities. The following chapter clearly illustrates this view is skewed and in fact, for many women, access and retention continues to be a challenge.
In addition, this chapter focuses on the progress that has been made since 1994 in bringing more women into the higher education system, their enrollment in fields of study considered critical to South Africa's economic growth and development, and the challenges they still face in their pursuit of higher education.

**Access: The Promise Fulfilled? It Depends**

Educational achievement for South African women, particularly black South African women, has historically been lower than for men. For example, in 1998 data on educational achievement by gender and age group revealed that more women ages 25 years and older had no education compared to men in the same age category. It showed 18% of all women in this category and 23% of black women in the category had no education compared to 12% overall for men in this category and 16% of black men. The statistics also revealed 22% of women and 28% of black women had not completed a minimum level of education for basic literacy. The post-apartheid government recognized the problem and began efforts to increase girls and women's access to education.²

Higher education statistics were more promising. In 1995, for the first time ever, more women were enrolled in higher education institutions than men. Female headcount enrollments increased by 44% between 1993 and 1999 as compared to male enrollments, which grew by just 1%. And, the numbers have only continued to increase.³ Between 2000-2007 women's enrollment rates increased by 34.5% to represent 55.5% of total enrollments in public higher education while male enrollment rates increased by only 21.3% accounting for 44.5% of total enrollments.⁴
Table 6.1: Enrollments (headcount) in public higher education by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2004</th>
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<th>2007</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
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<td>Headcount</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>403,462</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>401,042</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>408,718</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>422,535</td>
<td>55.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>341,022</td>
<td>45.8</td>
<td>334,030</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>332,662</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>338,549</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>744,489</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>735,073</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>741,380</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>761,080</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEMIS
*Slight discrepancies are due to some enrollments with gender unknown

Women also have a slight edge in enrollment rates in post-graduate programs but are still the minority at the doctoral level. Today, women represent 56% of all undergraduate students although they only make up 52% of the South African population. There is variation in women’s enrollment rates across different types of institutions. While women represent 57% of all those enrolled in the comprehensive universities, they represent 56% of enrollments in traditional universities and 51% in universities of technology.

The increase in women’s enrollment is certainly due in part to the efforts of the government and the various laws and gender specific initiatives that have been put in place over the past fifteen years. There are also other factors in play, including a shift in attitudes about the value and need to educate women. In South Africa, communities still hold an influence over how people think and what they do. Increasingly, communities are seeing the value and worth of why women need to be educated. Many communities have bought into this and as a result, they encourage women to go to the university.

There is also an increasing awareness and understanding of what higher education can provide in terms of the opportunities it opens up for women. While this change in
attitude has had a positive influence on young women’s interest in pursuing education, many are at a loss to know how to access the system. They are often the first in their family to do so.\(^9\) As a result, they lack role models to help them make decisions about what to study, where to stay, how to pay for school, or what to expect. Often times the questions, effort, and frustration far outweigh the opportunity.\(^{10}\) There is no doubt that changing community attitudes and government efforts to make higher education more accessible for women have given women a taste of their own potential. They now need the support to pursue it.

Women from rural areas who are able to enroll in universities must often adapt to city life. For many of these women it is the first time they have lived outside their communities and away from their families. They are becoming more independent, more mature, finding jobs, and sending money back home. It is a new virtuous cycle for those who succeed.\(^{11}\) Unfortunately, not many women fall into this category.

In fact, the students who account for the increase in female enrollment are disproportionately white women.\(^{12}\) Other groups of women lack access to higher education, particularly those who are black and from rural areas.\(^{13}\) This represents a significant number of women. By the mid-1990s women represented the majority of the poor in rural and less-urbanized provinces and were a minority in the most urbanized provinces.\(^{14}\) At the turn of the 21st century, 46% of the South African population lived in rural areas with women accounting for 53% of the rural population. Black women represented 96% of all women living in rural areas.\(^{15}\) This is the population of women who have not gained access to higher education.
Some would say it is difficult to give everyone an equal opportunity. Yet South African rural black women represent a significant percentage of the country’s population and human capital. It makes sense to see to it that rural women have the opportunity of upward mobility within the educational system.\textsuperscript{16}

Perhaps the first step is to recognize that women in rural areas have different and more difficult challenges than other women. Issues of transportation, communication, and language restrict them. They don’t have access to basic tools like the internet, email, or fax machines. This makes it extremely difficult to communicate outside their villages or gain access to information. To deal with these problems, there has been an increase in community-based programs at the tertiary level. These programs put student body groups together who go out to rural areas and work with women to teach them about the opportunities that are available and how to access them. They also use vehicles equipped with technology that allows them to access the internet and assist them with applications and bursaries.\textsuperscript{17}

While programs to help poor rural women access higher education are helpful, the magnitude of the problem requires a strategic, comprehensive plan and resources. There are no indications that this has happened. Perhaps this is due in part to a lack of understanding of the issue and the specific challenges women face. As mentioned previously, there is a little data on female undergraduates as it relates to race, socioeconomic status, and geography. In conducting interviews for this study it became apparent that South Africans are not accustomed to framing discussions around race and rarely look at women as a category, let alone sub-categories of women. Jenni Case,
Director of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town expressed it in this way,

You see it's interesting you frame the discussion in women because we're not used to talking in that way. I can talk about the difficulties of black students and white students and women is often -- is hidden within that, you know. And the challenges for a middle-class, white woman from a family of three generations of tertiary to the challenges for a black woman from a township whose mother is a domestic worker and whose father is a security guard -- they obviously would see themselves as facing quite different challenges.18

**Fields of Study: The Move Towards Non-Traditional Programs**

The government and universities have been working to increase the number of female students enrolled in engineering, science, technology, and mathematics. As noted, this is in an effort to create the human capital necessary for South Africa to compete in a global knowledge-based economy—to generate economic growth and development, and to create jobs. Unless women, who constitute 52% of the country's population, are consciously recruited and trained, the government's objectives for increasing the number of engineers and scientists cannot be met; the recruiting base for the skills gap includes women, not just from men.19

South African corporations have been ahead of the government in recognizing the need to increase the potential pool of students in engineering, science, and technology. In the 1980s, the University of Cape Town's (UCT) engineering program was predominately white and male. There were a few coloured students who were attending on "permits" but they were a clear minority. By the mid-1980s industry started pushing for black engineers. They saw the writing on the wall and encouraged and supported universities like UCT to produce more black engineers. Corporations worked with
universities to help students who came from less qualified schools to prepare for university and to open up access to engineering. Jenni Case, Director, Chemical Engineering at UCT arrived at the university in the 1990s. The demographics of the chemical engineering classes in the 1990s are not very different from what they are today, with approximately 30% are white students and the majority black. The increase in black students brought an increased number of black female students.²⁰ Women have made significant progress in these fields of study although men continue to dominate, with 57% of enrollments compared to 43% for women. Enrollment rates by women in these fields continues to grow.²¹

Figure 6.1: Proportional enrollments in public higher education by gender and field of study (CESM), 2007

Science, Engineering & Technology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Humanities & Social Sciences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business, Commerce & Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEMIS
Although the percentage of women enrolled in science, technology, and engineering is less than men, when breaking down the category into more detail, there are twice as many women than men enrolled in industrial arts, trades, and technology, health care and health sciences. Women also make up a higher percentage of those enrolled in life sciences and physical sciences. The greatest gender imbalances are in engineering and engineering technology, where only 24% of the students enrolled are women and in health care and health sciences where only 32% of the students are men.\textsuperscript{22}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-field</th>
<th>% Women</th>
<th>% Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Arts, Trades and Technology</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture and Environmental Design</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and Renewable Natural Resources</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical Sciences</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences and Physical Sciences</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Health Sciences</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and Engineering Technology</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HEMIS

There is no doubt progress is being made but women are still being tracked into particular kinds of careers that are feminized and remain in professions and careers that pay less and have less social status than men’s.\textsuperscript{23} Sharmala Govender, CEO of Big Brothers and Big Sisters, lectures part-time first year students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Johannesburg. Most of her students are female. “You look at any field pertaining to human activity or social development or community services it will be 90% females. And you will get the one or two odd males sitting there, but most of the time it’s only out of curiosity that they would be there.\textsuperscript{24}
As more women enter into engineering, science, and technology fields so does people’s acceptance of their participation in these programs. Even better, young girls are becoming increasing confident in their ability to pursue these fields. Those interviewed reported that it is not unusual to hear young girls say they are going to be aeronautical engineers, and that there was for a great deal of excitement among these young women around careers. Convincing women they can fulfill the skills required in historically male dominated disciplines of science, engineering, and technology is critical. Women still tend to gravitate towards the humanities, which are biased in favor of women. More could be done to target women and provide more funding opportunities and special preparation programs. It would also help to identify these young women earlier, while in high school, and to match them with a mentor. It is not uncommon to hear female scientist say that she stumbled into engineering, science, or technology. Mentoring as a social service engagement would go a long way to encouraging more women to consider these fields of study.

Retention Rates: The Numbers Look Good Despite the Challenges

As with access rates, retention rates for women are impressive. Yet women face significant and troubling challenges once they enter the system, particularly poor, rural, black South African women. In 2007, 59% of graduates were women although they account for only 55.5% of all enrolled students. At the universities of technology, 55% of the graduates were women compared with 51% enrolled; in comprehensives 62% of the graduates were women compared to 57% enrolled; and at universities 59% of the
graduates were women compared to 56% enrolled. Overall, women are successful in their studies.\(^\text{29}\)

![Figure 6.2: Enrollments (headcount) in and graduations (headcount) from public institutions by institutional type, 2007](image)

As in enrollment figures, it is only in science, engineering, and technology that more men graduate than women, although by a small margin. In education, 70% of the graduates are women and in human and social sciences 60% of graduates are women. Business, commerce, and management show less of a difference between genders, although slightly more women graduate than men.\(^\text{30}\)
Those women who overcome the barriers to enrollment still face impediments to retention and graduation. It is important to understand the conditions that assist women to succeed and the challenges they face. In many ways, the problems they encounter in the system are similar to those they face outside the system. And, as was the case in the discussion about access, different women experience different problems depending on their race, class, and where they grew up.

The university setting itself and its structures are often the first challenge female students face. As women enter the higher education system they find themselves within a structure defined by patriarchal attitudes. As Crain Soudien, Acting Vice Chancellor of University of Cape Town noted, these institutions remain “geared towards the production of masculine privilege.” This is the space that women need to navigate, often with little preparation. Women in many ways feel isolated and become self-conscious, yet
understand the forces that are in play and what they need to do to survive. To survive they must be alert, self-aware, and to hold their own. This is particularly true for black women, who often come into the higher education system with even less preparation in how to cope than their white counterparts.³³

When asked what key issues were facing female students, Venitha Pillay, Professor of Education at the University of Pretoria replied, “I think the biggest issue is that all our higher education institutions are extremely patriarchal institutions. In a way that it is so engrained and so much the norm that nobody actually sees it, women themselves don’t even see it and I think that’s the other part of the really big challenge to keep women in the system.”³⁴ A by-product of this patriarchal attitude is that in some cases, not much is expected of women in terms of their performance. This in combination with lingering racist attitudes makes it particularly difficult for black female students. There was a time when university lecturers used to say that blacks were not intelligent enough to major in programs like mathematics and if you were a woman, they made you feel as if you were wasting your time and everyone else’s. These attitudes are still prevalent and continue to create significant challenges to female students, especially those enrolled in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs.³⁵

The recent resignation of a professor in Durban Kwa-Zulu Natal illustrates just how prevalent patriarchal attitudes are in higher education. This individual decided to resign rather than being led by a female head of department, saying quite candidly that given his upbringing and culture, he could not take orders from a woman.³⁶ He has been out of a job for almost a year.
Patriarchal attitudes are still prevalent in many students’ families and communities as well. It is not uncommon to hear stories about woman who withdraw from school due to family pressures and expectations. This is especially true for female students who come from rural areas as customary and tribal traditions and laws still rule everyday life. In many of these communities, men still come first.\textsuperscript{37} If a family can afford to send a child to university it is likely to be the boy and if they send both a son and daughter and someone is needed back home, the chances are high the girl will be asked to drop out and go home. And, if the family’s finances change and they can no longer afford tuition or transportation for both, again it is the girl who is expected to drop out. In general, there is a huge amount of pressure on a woman to provide care at home, and also to generate income.\textsuperscript{38} Customary gender roles put additional pressure on female students. Many who commute to school must learn to re prioritize tasks so that the provision of the family meal, cooking and other domestic duties take a backseat to reading for the next day’s class or studying for an exam. The student’s entire family must learn to accept these new priorities.\textsuperscript{39}

Women who graduate from the university are not immune to these pressures. Jenni Case, Director of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town told the story of a black female student who graduated with a Master’s degree. She married her college boyfriend soon after graduation. The pressure from her family was so strong that she’s gave up a scholarship to study for her Ph.D. overseas in order to start a family. She didn’t feel she had any other choice.\textsuperscript{40} There are of course other issues at play when it comes to women and retention rates. According to Bev Thaver, Associate Professor of Education at the University of Western Cape, it is important to separate women into
groups when discussing retention rates. "You may find that retention levels for white women may be higher than they are for black women. For it is the architecture of the past that continues to influence what happens in the present. I mean, the old kind of Gramscian term, you know. The past has put a high mortgage on the present, so that's the first point."41 Typically, when discussing race, retention, and higher education, women are hidden in the discussion. It seems as though black women’s stories in particular are lost.42 The Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions heard, during visits to universities across the higher education system, about incidents in which black people, in general, but black women in particular, had low expectations placed on them—especially by lecturers.43

In the case of some of the historically white institutions, such as the University of Cape Town or Wits University, the Committee heard stories of young women who were complaining about the fact that they went to former white schools, multi-racial schools, where they performed well—sometimes better than white students. During their first year at the university they continued to perform on par with the white students but during the second year, as the white students passed to the next level they were channeled into foundation classes where they often had to pay extra tuition.44 These students became very frustrated by the experience and concluded that the environment is not necessarily supportive. They instinctively adjust and learn to survive in the system. Crain Soudien, acting Vice Chancellor at the University of Cape Town interviewed many black women during the Committee’s visits across the university system and recalled one interview in
particular. For him it illustrated just how complex the university experience can be for young black women, and the lasting impression it can make on her life,

I spoke to a young – she's not a young woman any longer, she's a mature woman in fact, she has a lot of worldly experience, and her children are these incredible, new era products and they're living in Australia and Switzerland – all over the world. But she herself is still having to kind of come to terms with the fact that she's a supplicant in this space (university). So she has to continually be kind of doffing her cap and being this posture, and this demeanor, of almost asking for favors all the time. And it's a complicated space, each space because she knows very well what the possibilities of what this space might provide. But she still feels a sense of inferiority, like it's that complexity that I have think that we're not sufficiently attuned to.\textsuperscript{45}

While students from poor families and rural areas are expected to come home from university if their family is experiencing difficulties, this expectation seems to be more prevalent among young black women. There are many stories of young black women who have done very well in school, show tremendous progress, and have received financial support to continue their studies, including full residence scholarships at the university. In the midst of this success, the students’ families called them back home to earn money and support them. The family’s attitude was that the young woman was needed right away and could not be “tucked away in residence learning to be this thing that would get her to earn money later.”\textsuperscript{46}

This story is unfortunately not uncommon. The lack of financial support, too, is a major factor contributing to dropout rates. This is particularly true for poor black students who come from rural areas. Poor students do receive bursaries but because of the high level of unemployment in the students’ rural home towns, often times 80% of the bursary meant to maintain a student at university is sent back home to support that student’s family.\textsuperscript{47} It isn’t uncommon to have students at university who have not eaten
in days because they have run out of money, having sent most of it home. Others miss school because they lack the funds to travel back-and-forth to campus. Many of these students’ families do not have men at home, as the fathers have left to work in the cities. Thus pressure mounts for a young woman to take care of immediate family needs by sending money home or taking on a job while in school.

While the pressures of family and home life can make it very difficult for female students to stay in school, the university setting brings a whole set of challenges. The sophistication level of women when they enter the higher education system is a factor, especially for students that are coming from a rural area to an urban area. It can be quite a culture shock for many young women. For the first time there is no parental guidance, and beyond the university itself, no authority figure to whom they must answer. At the university, they enter a new, fascinating, and unfamiliar place that tests their values in many areas, not the least of which is sexuality. This brings a whole new set of issues that can put women in difficult situations. As Sharmala Govender, CEO of Big Brothers, Big Sisters of South Africa, describes the situation,

It’s a whole new experience being at university and there’s boys everywhere. Young women will have relationships, multi relations, increasing the likely hood of picking up HIV/AIDS. It's all the secondary issues that now come into play. And this is what affects woman the most because men don’t have to go through all this as woman does. They leave their homestead much earlier than a woman does. She only leaves when she’s ready for higher education. Other than that, she doesn’t step foot out of there. Women enter the system very immature, yet females do mature much quicker than males.

It is not uncommon to hear stories about violence on university campuses against women, including murder. These are horrible and real stories, and the kind we do not expect to be associated with an academic institution. Women find themselves victimized
in the very system that is supposed to be promoting knowledge and civility. In actuality, the campus environment does not always respect the rights and the dignity of women. 51 Maria Phalime, Deputy Director of 2010 FIFA World Cup at Provincial Government, described first-hand what it felt like to be a woman on campus and how she worried about her safety and her friends.

Strangely, university was not a safe place. I remember my Varsity days there was fear around going out at night, and going to parties, which is what university’s partly about really. Those are your party years. In my circle of friends, there were experiences of rape and abduction, and all of that. 52

In 2008, Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, announced the establishment of the above-mentioned Ministerial Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions in response to the Reitz Four incident, discussed in Chapter Five. The main purpose of the committee was to investigate discrimination in public higher education institutions, with a particular focus on racism, and to make recommendations on how to eliminate discrimination and promote social cohesion. One of the key findings to emerge from the committee’s work was the prevalence of sexism and the sexual harassment of female students. In the committee’s view, “the impact of sexism is as pernicious as that of racism. If you are black and a woman it is doubly painful.” 53

Students shared with the committee the prevalence of sexual harassment in the form of sexual favors that lecturers often expected of female students in exchange for good grades. Rape and violence was also prevalent on many campuses, although these incidents were often kept quiet as a result of institutional policies. Rhodes University, a historically all-male institution, is an example of one whose policies perpetuate violence
against women. During the committee hearings, students from the institution reported that a culture had developed over time at Rhodes that undervalued women. Complaints of gender inequality, sexism, and sexual harassment have been met with resistance and "denial of responsibility" by school officials. Incidences of rape were not publicly known about, records weren't kept, and women who were abused or raped were not encouraged to report the incidences. The committee concluded, "there is no doubt given the endemic rape and sexual harassment in South African society that it is equally prevalent in higher education institutions. It is therefore cause for concern that sexism and sexual harassment have not featured significantly in the institutional submissions." Further complicating women's lives is the material culture that exists on many campuses. There is a need to have the right clothes, the right cell phone, and other items that define status. One way that older men on campus gain power over younger women is by becoming "sugar daddies"—providing material possessions to them. This puts the men in a position to make particular sexual demands, and leaves the woman in a position of weakness. The woman in these situations is not, for example, able to demand that the man use a condom or be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. This can result in unwanted pregnancies and/or the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

The threat of violence outside of the university even has ramifications for students and faculty when they are on campus. Dr. Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg, recalls her experience teaching an evening class,

I teach a class in the evenings, and two-thirds of my black students, particularly women, have to leave at a particular time halfway through the class. Already they're at the disadvantage because of language, etc, and then the time that is allocated to them, they have to leave halfway through the class that's allocated
because they have to get public transport at a particular time. If they miss that transport at that particular time, they've had it.\textsuperscript{58}

To deal with the safety issues Petersen's has described, many of the women make arrangements with a particular taxi driver to be picked up as a group at a certain time. They must do this because South Africa does not have a safe or reliable public transportation system. According to Petersen, the problem affects the ability to students to maneuver around campus, to access library facilities after hours, or simply to travel from university and home again.\textsuperscript{59}

As if these challenges were not enough, there appears to be, based on the interviews I conducted for this study and various newspaper articles, an increasing number of young women who become pregnant while at university, although no one could tell me the exact numbers nor could I find statistics.\textsuperscript{60} There are no clear answers as to why there is an increase in unwanted pregnancies with college students. It is particularly surprising in the age of HIV, where unprotected sex is a very dangerous proposition. Although they are being educated about these things on campus, clearly that message is not getting across to students. It is especially perplexing given what many female students have to do just to get to university. With some, it seems an act of self-sabotage: giving up an opportunity for advancement by becoming pregnant. On the other hand, gender roles probably play out at the university the same way they do at home. Just because a young woman or man are at the university does not necessarily mean they are going to change their attitudes about sex, and allow the woman greater input on the use of contraception.\textsuperscript{61}
If a woman does become pregnant, there is considerable pressure on her to give birth to the child. So for students who become pregnant during their studies, the challenge is to ensure that there is support in the home environment that will allow them to continue studying. In fact, this is usually not the case. There is considerable societal pressure on them to become caregivers for their own children. This social obligation in combination with a lack of assistance for women who become pregnant makes it unlikely that they will return to the university. If they are able to stay in school, they must then juggle two obligations, school and parenting. Although attitudes vary, men are not typically active in helping out in the home. Without support, a young, pregnant woman’s obligations usually lead her to drop out.

Yvonne Shapiro, Director at South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) expressed her frustration with the increasing number of young women who become pregnant during their higher education learnership program. These are special programs, which include financial support, designed to prepare talented students in a particular field of study.

I have been frustrated three times with students who have become pregnant during their learnership. What has been upsetting for me is things like timing – people coming into the learnership, and then getting pregnant fairly early on and completely distracting themselves. I mean the first cycle that we ran of the learnership, there were three pregnancies, and two of them failed outright, and the other one sort of borderline passed with nothing left to actually go into the second year, and then the poor thing also miscarried, which was very unfortunate for her.

For Shapiro these young women’s behavior is irresponsible. In each case the young woman’s pregnancy was unplanned. In her view, these women are throwing away an opportunity. “They failed the exams and then left. And that was just me seeing three
people out of the ten of my intake of that year – I’m trying to remember. I think I had six
women and four men. So that was then half the women of my intake did that. And I do
think that those sorts of issues do affect women more than men, and not just pregnancy,
but various kinds of perhaps other health issues.  

Universities are trying to help students who become pregnant by offering student-
counseling services. This includes assistance for students who leave university to have
their baby and later come back and finish their degree. The likelihood that a rural woman
will return is small whereas women from upper-class families tend to return at a greater
rate. There are also a number of programs run by NGOs and the government designed
to help students who become pregnant. Some universities have special dormitories in
which a student can leave a child under the care of a nanny during the day.  

Sexism, racism, sexual harassment and abuse, and the inability to go to
classrooms to study at night due to fear of violence, the competing demands of family,
and pregnancy are all cited as contributing factors in reducing retention rates for
women. The Committee on Progress Towards Transformation and Social Cohesion and
the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions has brought
these issues to the surface. The response will be difficult, as these problems are endemic
to South Africa as a whole. Many of the issues are also intertwined, making it hard to
untangle the causes and find simple solutions. What is clear is that they must begin to
deal with these difficult and painful problems soon as higher education has a significant
role to play in the uplift of women in South Africa.

Looked at strictly by the numbers, the situation for South Africa’s women in
higher education is good. Women’s access and retention rates continue to increase and
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more women are entering into traditionally male dominated fields of study such as engineering, technology, and science. Yet all is not well. The incidence of sexual harassment, violence, pregnancy, and patriarchal attitudes and norms make the university a very difficult environment for many women. And, under closer examination, it becomes clear that poor, black, and rural women are not making the same progress as other communities of women. As shown here, if they wish to gain a clear picture, academics and higher education institutions must look at gender from a multi-dimensional perspective. Women are white, black, rich, poor, and everything in between. How do these differences influence their ability to access higher education and their likelihood of success once in the system? What are their shared experiences? It is premature for higher education institutions and the government to declare victory in their efforts to increase women’s access and retention in the higher education system.

Chapter Six Endnotes


6 Karen MacGregor, South Africa: Gender Divide Breached.
7 Elaine Salo, interview by author, September 23, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
8 Maria Phalime, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
9 Maria Phalime, interview by author.
10 Maria Phalime, interview by author.
11 Sharmala Govender, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
12 Crain Soudien, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa and Harold Herman, interview by author, September 27, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
16 Harold Herman, interview by author.
17 Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
18 Jenni Case, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
19 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
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22 Ibid., 2.
23 Crain Soudien, interview by author, and Nadine Petersen, interview by author.
24 Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
26 Gillian Godsell, interview by author, by phone, October 7, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
27 Venitha Pillay, interview by author.
28 Elaine Salo, interview by author.
30 Ibid., 34.
31 Trevor Sehoole, interview by author.
32 Crain Soudien, interview by author.
33 Crain Soudien, interview by author; Elaine Salo, interview by author.
34 Venitha Pillay, interview by author.
35 Trevor Sehoole, interview by author.
36 Trevor Sehoole, interview by author.
37 Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
38 Gillian Godsell, interview by author; Cameron Dugmore, interview by author; Ian Whitman, interview by author, by phone, February 11, 2009, Paris, France.
39 Elaine Salo, interview by author.
40 Jenni Case, interview by author.
41 Bev Thaver, interview by author, September 25, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
42 Jenni Case, interview by author.
43 Trevor Schoole, interview by author.
44 Trevor Schoole, interview by author; Crain Soudien, interview by author.
45 Crain Soudien, interview by author.
46 Yvonne Shapiro, interview by author, by phone, October 12, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
47 Nadine Petersen, interview by author.
48 Nadine Petersen, interview by author.
49 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author.
50 Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
51 Trevor Schoole, interview by author.
52 Maria Phalime, interview by author.
54 Crain Soudien, interview by author; Trevor Schoole, interview by author.
57 Gillian Godsell, interview by author.
58 Nadine Petersen, interview by author.
59 Nadine Petersen, interview by author.
60 Gillian Godsell, interview by author; Cameron Dugmore, interview by author; Orly Sterns, interview by author, by phone, October 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Marie Phalime, interview by author; Ian Whitman, interview by author; Yvonne Shapiro, interview by author; Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
61 Marie Phalime, interview by author.
62 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author.
63 Orly Stern, interview by author.
64 Orly Sterns, interview by author.
65 Yvonne Shapiro, interview by author.
66 Yvonne Shapiro, interview by author.
67 Sharmala Govender, interview by author.
68 Ian Whitman, interview by author.
Baden, Hasim and Meintjes, 42.
Chapter Seven: Women’s Prospects

One could reasonably assume South African women have made great strides since the end of apartheid rule given the fact they have been the beneficiaries of a constitution, laws, policies, and initiatives focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is a reasonable assumption but not entirely accurate. This chapter discusses how opportunities have opened up for women, explores the factors influencing a women’s ability to pursue these opportunities, and the conflict they often experience in their pursuit of gender equality and empowerment.

Women’s Opportunities: Advancement and Progress....for Some

In many ways women have been given the opportunity to do things that they never did before. There are now a group of successful black businesswoman who are adding value to the private sector, while powerful black women leaders are taking important roles in the government. Many of these women have earned a high level of trust from those who work for them or for whom they represent. They have been able to work through the system’s obstacles and are recognized for their efforts.¹ The opportunities women have to acquire skills and find suitable jobs are significantly improved since 1994. The constitution’s specific commitment to redress gender imbalances and promote the representation of in electoral politics—its identification of women in general, and black women in particular, as a category requiring affirmation in the work place has resulted in increased opportunities for women.² In general, women do seem to be doing better than men at all levels. As Gillian Godsell, Wits School of Public
and Development Management says, “If a women has an education and some skills that will enable her to compete in business, the world is her oyster.”

Where women, and particularly black women, were greatly marginalized, in the years leading up to the end of apartheid, they are now becoming important players in the South African economy. There are more opportunities now than there used to be but unfortunately not all women have access to those opportunities. Women who have some level of education, and skills, and training are positioned to take advantage of the opportunities that have opened up for women.

Black South African women who are educated are “gold” at the moment. There is a lot of support for black women by corporations who want to recruit them for management and ownership positions. In the words of Maria Phalime, Deputy Director of 2010 FIFA World Cup at Provincial Government, “it pays so to speak, to be a black woman in South Africa in certain respects.” Some of the top companies in the country have a significant number of black women in upper management and on their Boards. Large corporations are increasingly placing black women in top positions or on boards as they recognize the importance, as Sharmala Govender CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters says, of having a “black image and keeping up the status of being a progressive and open organization.” Corporations are also empowering women within their companies, especially black women. If a company sees that a person has the potential but not the skills, they will pay for this person to go through a training program and then place them in a higher-level job. In this way, companies are improving the skill set of its employees and fulfilling affirmative action requirements.
Although black women as a category have been given a boost in corporations, there has been significant advancement for white women as well. More must be done to ensure greater representation of black women at senior management levels.\textsuperscript{10} Where white women have an advantage in that they know how to play “the game”\textsuperscript{11} in the corporate sector, this is an entirely new space many black women as race and class had marginalized them during the apartheid years. White women, in fact, have been able to move into leadership positions much more easily than black women.\textsuperscript{12}

The government established Black Economic Empowerment and Affirmative Action programs in an attempt to bring more historically marginalized South Africans into the formal economy. The state created specific requirements in the finance, management, science, engineering and technology sectors, which has created many opportunities for both men and women. For women graduates with skills in these areas, the opportunities have opened wide up. However, as was discussed in Chapter Six, the number of women graduating from these programs relative to others is still small. As a result, women with these skills, particularly black women, are rare and sought after.\textsuperscript{13}

Because of the shortage of qualified black women, many companies will hire one who is less than qualified to fill their quotas. But many in South African society feel that the necessity of affirmative action legislation supersedes these potentially negative results. In the past, even highly qualified women would never have been given a chance in the corporate world. There is also a belief that, given an opportunity, many women will rise to the occasion and quickly fill any gap that exists in their skill set.\textsuperscript{14}

A case in point is Nadine Petersen, a faculty member in the Department of Education at the University of Johannesburg who was a beneficiary of affirmative action.
When she was just starting out in higher education, the university where she worked recognized the need to hire black staff. Petersen readily admits she was not qualified to teach and was only halfway through her honors degree when she was offered a job. “I think at that stage, there was also paucity of black women particularly for those who could speak both languages and hold the academic potential to be able to be nurtured as a future academic, so to speak.” In the end, both Petersen and the university benefited.

Of course there is a downside to this. When an institution hires someone who is not qualified, it can create resentment in the workplace. According to Yvonne Shapiro, Director of South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA),

But I do sometimes worry that people are – I don’t know what term to use – they’re sort of getting into things just on the basis of being women or being black. What I’m really trying to say is sometimes there’s a huge amount of unfairness in that because people are applying quota systems and setting people up for failure. And I object to that, on a personal level, and also at the level of a lot of the work that I used to do as a consultant and dealing with employment equity, and trying personally to inculcate in the organizations I worked with that if the person can’t do the job that you have advertised that they should be fitting into, please don’t put them in there. You can create a thousand other ways of doing that, and along the way, I have helped to do that.

Shuray Bux, Director of Manufacturing Industry Development at the Department of Economic Development & Tourism for the Provincial Government of the Western Cape has experienced the frustration of being under pressure to employ a woman because there are too many males in the organization. He has also been in the situation where posts have been left unfilled because there are not enough women with the education, skills, and/or experience to fill them. He speaks of these situations as the “side effects” of affirmative action which nobody is willing to discuss.
The question for South Africans is whether to put people in jobs when they are not qualified or only hire qualified candidates, knowing that a significant portion of the population is still trying to catch-up from the inequalities suffered under apartheid rule? There are no easy answers. What is clear is that people who are not qualified are getting into positions and spending little time in between positions. Once in the door, they are often recruited to another company at a higher position within a short time. In fact, they may not actually have developed the skills that are required in that time to do the job at the next level, but affirmative action quotas create pressure to recruit them regardless.\textsuperscript{18}

The issue of putting people in jobs who may not have the necessary skill levels also plays out in the civil service. As mentioned, a vast number of civil service posts were, under the apartheid government, filled by white Afrikaners. A large portion of the sector was replaced with black staff when affirmative action was introduced—but the move wasn’t accompanied by any training. The new workers lacked the skills to handle a civil service bureaucracy and today the system is in disarray.\textsuperscript{19} According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg, “That’s another sector of our society that’s falling apart. I don’t know if you’re aware that in the last year or two, we have developed massive social problems and unrest, and they were around issues of no service delivery. It’s easy to give people jobs, but if you don’t give them the prerequisite training, people fall flat. Our civil service is imploding.”\textsuperscript{20}

Affirmative action is coming under fire these days over some of the issues just discussed.\textsuperscript{21} It appears the program will be revised and that some groups will be dropped as beneficiaries—for example white women. It is not clear when this might happen. For those who agree affirmative action has run its course there is a feeling that black South
Africans are getting all the opportunities and top jobs without merit, as the main priority is getting the right number of people with the right color of skin. Some argue, too, that affirmative action is having a negative impact on the economy. An unqualified workforce costs organizations due to lost productivity, customers, innovation, lost opportunities, and in the case of the civil service, civil unrest.

The discussion about affirmative action is very difficult. The policies have produced some good results and were needed to correct inequalities from the past. It is true that women were promoted into positions they were not prepared for; however, many of these women were not to blame, as they did not, in the past have the chance to acquire the necessary knowledge or skills to perform in the formal economy. The question is not about women’s ability to do the work, but whether the system can give them the education, skills and experience necessary to perform well. Unfortunately, the side effects of affirmative action controversies have left negative impressions about gender equality and the empowerment of women.

If affirmative action policies are revised there are certain groups that will likely be dropped. For example, there is a strong push to remove white women as a group under the gender equity umbrella. “Affirmative action programs have benefited white women. There is now debate and argument that there needs to be monies to review that because white women have been the beneficiaries of affirmative action.” Another area of scrutiny is policies related to professional employment. “That’s going to come to an end because I think that’s going to become – it’s already counterproductive. Because you must remember, we’re (black South Africans) a firm majority here, unlike the United States, where you’re a firm minority. So it has to come to an end. Otherwise, we’re going to have...
a complete culture of entitlement of because I’m black, I’m entitled to this.”27 The other problem with affirmative action policies related to professional employment is that they are benefiting the upper middle class, not the working class.28 In addition, Black Economic Empowerment policies also need to be examined as South Africa experiences the biggest rising black middle classes in the world, with one of the largest numbers of millionaires being created on an annual basis, while the disparity between rich and poor continues to grow as was discussed in Chapter Four.29

There are certain groups who must continue to be empowered through affirmative action policies. Working class, black, rural people, particularly women, have not been beneficiaries of the current policies, and are deserving of additional attention. There is no doubt they must be affirmed. The opportunities available to poor black women are still very limited.

It appears based on the description above that things are basically going well for women in South Africa. For some women, this is absolutely true. Life has improved and the opportunities are there. However, for a significant number of South African women, opportunities are limited while obstacles remain despite the laws, policies, and gender initiatives in place. On the whole, it hasn’t been the general black population that has benefited from these policies. “It’s all good to speak about it on paper, but the reality is that few people have had the benefits that have occurred for a small percentage of women.”30 As will be discussed later in this chapter, the vast majority of women are still employed in semiskilled and unskilled labor.31 What is important to remember is South Africa is still a very patriarchal society where the role of a woman was to be a housewife first. “That’s very much South Africa. In terms of black culture, women were expected
to be housewives and many had to work the land, which was not the case with the colored and the white culture. So, it is an uphill battle to get employment equality for these women." And, for women who are poor, uneducated, and living in the rural areas, they don’t even know that opportunities exist.33

Women living in urban areas and not working in the private sector, are doing more clerical, menial, domestic, and cleaning work. In the rural areas there are many households where the men have left to work in the mines or industries located in cities, returning only for once a year for holidays. What this means is that women are running the house and absolutely everything else. They are doing all the farming—mostly on a subsistence level—and selling whatever surplus they can produce. In essence, these women are earning money and finding their way to feed and clothe their children. They are engaged in the informal economy, chipping away everyday, without options for changing their situation.34 Many of these women have no access to work and rely on state grants. A rural woman who wished to enter the formal economy would have to go to an urban area and try to find domestic work, which pays little.35 As Harold Herman, Emeritus Professor of Comparative and International Education at the University of Western Cape puts it, “I think rural women have an enormous challenge: firstly, to get out of their traditional role, which is a subservient role, and secondly, to bridge that gap, the rural-urban divide, which we have in our society."36

As mentioned previously, most of the rural population is black; over half of these are women, and most are poor. With all the efforts, including affirmation action, the government and private sector have taken to engage more women in the formal economy the unemployment rate is much higher for women than it is for men according to 210
statistics from South Africa’s Human Sciences Research Council Center for Poverty, Employment, and Growth. This has been the case since 1995. From 1995 to 2003, women across all races had higher unemployment rates than their male counterparts. It is extraordinary to see the difference in unemployment rates between groups of women, particularly between black and white South African women. In 2003 Black female South Africans unemployment rates were 55% compared to 9.7% for white female South Africans. Coloured and Asian women had higher unemployment rates than white women but considerably lower than black women. While all race groups have experienced an increase in unemployment across the years, unemployment of black females is the highest in the country. The fact that women have the highest unemployment rates despite obtaining half of the new jobs that have been created between 1994 and 2005 is telling of the magnitude of the problem of women’s unemployment. And, the majority of those jobs were low-skilled or unskilled jobs like domestic work.
Employment rates only tell part of the story. A look at different industry sectors and women’s employment shows that as of June 2009 of all South African women employed, 26.5% worked in the community and social services sector, 24.7% in trade, 16% in private households, 13% in finance, 10% in manufacturing, 4% in agriculture, 2% in transport, 2% in construction, .06% in mining, and .04% in utilities. It appears women continue to be employed in what are viewed as traditionally female industries, namely the caring industries. When looking at employment by occupation, 21% of women are in elementary occupations, 17% are clerks, 15.5% are domestic workers, 15% are in sales and services, 14% are technicians, 5.5% are in management, 5% are
professionals, 4% are in crafts and related trades, 3% are plant and machine operators, and .01% are in skilled agriculture (due to rounding, numbers do not necessarily add up to totals). It appears women also continue to hold occupations considered traditionally female. The statistics do not paint a very favorable picture of women’s employment in general. What is particularly puzzling is that while close to half of college graduates are women, the percentage (5.5%) of women in management occupations are extremely low, and has actually declined the past three years. In contrast, the percentage of men in management occupations is almost double that of women. This statistic in particular is interesting because female undergraduate students make up the majority in the higher education system yet are the minority in management positions. Perhaps one reason for the dearth of female managers is that women continue to enroll in what are considered traditionally female programs such as education, nursing, psychology, and the humanities. However, as discussed in chapter six, the number of women enrolled in business has increased over the years. Dr. Kerrin Myers, Director of Centre for Entrepreneurship at Wits Business School, for example, has seen women’s enrollment increase steadily over the years at the business school at the University of Cape Town, and has been surprised to see the number of women in management positions decrease over the years. “It’s probably 40 to 50 percent of every class is female at the moment. It hasn’t been that high always. But, of course, most of those women would go into corporate jobs. Now I’m sure, since you were here, you’ve heard about the gender commission’s recent report which shows that women – the number of women in top management positions in South Africa is actually going down. I think that there’s an
enormous amount of implicit sort of sexism that's happening." This may be true, as
women tend to make less than their male counter-parts in the same jobs.47

The likelihood of a woman securing a job after graduation, assuming she has
demonstrated that she has the skills and capability, is good because, as mentioned,
affirmative action policies encourage organizations to employ women. However, there is
still a huge amount of sexism and nepotism, where jobs will go to men because of who
they know.48 As Trevor Schoole, Department Minister of Higher Education in the South
Africa Department of Education puts it,

The economy is a boys club, mainly led by men. South Africa has been very
proactive, in terms of promoting the interests of women and getting them to be
part of the economy. There have been a lot of opportunities for their participation
in the economy. But as you know, the nature of capitalism is such that there is
access, but not open access to everybody. So we have had a number of women in
empowerment schemes that have been made available for women in the economy
but the results have been mixed.49

When discussing women's progress in South Africa the representation of women
in government is often cited as a great example of women's advancement. As of
December 31, 2009, in South Africa, 44.5% of those in the lower house of parliament are
women and 29.6% of those in the upper-house.50 From 1994 to 2009, the speaker of
parliament was female: first Frene Ginwala, next Baleka Mbete, and then Gwen
Mahlangu-Nkabinde51 The first male speaker of the post-apartheid period was Max
Sisulu who was elected to the post in May 2009. Dr. Elaine Salo, Director of Gender
Studies at the University of Pretoria, recalled a conversation she had with Mr. Sisulu’s
wife, "she was saying, just to indicate how the gender of that position had become
institutionalized, that people are asking, ‘well do we address you now still as madam
speaker?’"52
The name Helen Suzman came up multiple times during interviews for this study. Her name was mentioned as a way to convey just how much progress has been made in women’s representation in government. One of the interviewees was actually writing a high school textbook about Helen Suzman’s life.\textsuperscript{53} Helen Suzman became a Member of Parliament in 1953 when there were just three women in that body; soon it dwindled down to just Suzman. For long periods of time she was the only woman member of Parliament. “I mean I do remember all those years ago – I was quite young at the time. There was the one and only woman in parliament in South Africa, her name was Helen Suzman. And it was quite astonishing. There she was, and she was in the opposition party, and she was all-alone. And if you compare that to what we have now, and to the speaker, and all of those kinds of things, it’s absolutely fantastic.”\textsuperscript{54} The visible presence of women in government and the very specific efforts by the ANC to achieve this is extraordinary.\textsuperscript{55} As Dr. Elaine Salo, Director of Gender Studies at the University of Pretoria put it, “the presence of women in our political systems means there won’t be one person, like Helen Suzman, being the lone moaner and shouter about injustice towards women and other historically marginalized groups.”\textsuperscript{56} Yet there is some concern that while there is a significant number of women in parliament, these women may or may not have the consciousness to take up what Salo calls the “disempowered women issues.” She believes that for some, parliament may just be “a means to self enrichment and that it’s just a system of party patronage. And that is true here.”\textsuperscript{57}

Due to the government’s efforts and the women who were involved in the creation of a new constitution and gender specific policies, as discussed in Chapter Three, Parliament, government departments, and the Office of the Presidency, places that used
to have almost no women, are now populated with a significant number of women.58 The benefit from this is the influence on the national psyche: having female, or black female ministers addressing the public, making decisions and giving direction has the potential to raise awareness about the rights of women.59 This is true, to a point, but awareness does not equal acceptance or approval. And, many challenges remain in terms of women’s representation in leadership roles in the government and other government influencing organizations. Examples include the ANC, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the opposition Democratic Alliance.

The trade union COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) criticized Democratic Alliance (DA) leader Helen Zille for not appointing any women to her cabinet after the DA won majority rule in the Western Cape during the April 2009 elections. Five months later, COSATU admitted, as it was opening its congress, that it too had a lack of female leadership. The majority of women in that organization still occupying junior administrative positions, in spite of a 50% equity target. COSATU acknowledged, “Male comrades deny their female counterparts an opportunity to rise through the ranks.”60 The most senior woman in the organization was appointed Minister for Women, Youth, Children, and People with Disabilities. The latest figures COSATU has on women are from a 1997 report which showed women represented 11% of branch or regional secretaries; 12% of organizers; 25% of legal, media, and research positions; 10% of education officers; and 94% of administrative support.61 These data, along with the fact that the organization has not bothered to measure women’s roles in the organization since 1997, is troubling for an organization that describes itself as politically progressive. In many ways, COSATU encapsulates the continuing power imbalance in
the country and the disconnect between making policy and the implementation of policy. It will be interesting to see what, if anything, COSATU does to create gender equity within its organization.

Before the April 2009 elections, Jacob Zuma spoke with journalists about his potential presidency and what his administration might look like. He admitted to journalists that internal divisions within the ANC result in women being overlooked for provincial chairman positions. He was concerned that at this point, the ANC had not come up with one woman as a potential chairperson of a province. He shared his belief that the ANC should consider gender when the provincial and national executive committee selects chairpersons and premiers. The ANC Women’s Committee wants “at least four women premiers.”

Influencing Factors: Engrained Attitudes & Norms

There are a variety of factors that make it difficult for women to progress and to leverage the opportunities that have been created as a result of the gender equality and women’s empowerment initiatives established since 1994. The degree to which these factors influence or hinder a woman’s ability to progress varies depending on her race, socio-economic status, level of education, and where she lives. Many of these factors are closely intertwined, and deeply rooted in South African culture. This in turn makes it difficult to minimize their influence on women’s lives.

Leaders are expected to behave in ways that reflect the laws, policies, and culture of a particular organization, government, or country. Their individual behavior formally and informally signals to others what is and is not acceptable behavior and sets an
example for others to follow. Many South Africans worry that Jacob Zuma’s behavior and public comments related to women have given South African men permission to behave in ways that are counter to the principles set forth in the constitution and established in the country’s laws and policies related to gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Richard Lapper of the *Financial Times* begins his review of a recent biography of South Africa’s then President-to-be Jacob Zuma thus: “a corrupt careerist, a veteran womanizer and a puppet of the left whose trademark song is ‘Bring Me My Machine Gun’, the leader of South Africa’s governing ANC and very likely the country’s next president, has earned a most unfortunate reputation.”63 Was that reputation or well earned? The answer depends on whom you speak to in the country.

In 2006, Zuma was on trial for the alleged rape of a 31 year old family friend who was HIV positive. Zuma’s remarks during the trial were appalling given the terrible record of rape and the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country. The trial provided a glimpse into the differing and often conflicting attitudes South Africans have towards women, sex, power, and the role of patriarchal norms and practices in South African society. During his trial, Jacob Zuma stated that the way in which he had sexual intercourse with the defendant was in accordance with Zulu cultural norms. He testified that the accuser had given him signs, such as wearing a knee length skirt and not wearing underwear underneath her kanga (wrap) that in Zulu custom signified sexual arousal. Based on this, he claimed the sex was consensual. He admitted during the trial that he had not used a condom but took a shower afterwards. He did this knowing she was HIV positive. Zuma was then president of the South African National AIDS Commission.64
The courtroom proceedings and particularly the defense attorney’s line of questioning and reasoning spoke volumes about the attitudes towards women and dispelled any illusions about the ease of implementing constitutional commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women. As it was known that the accuser had been raped several times as a child, the defense attorney suggested during the trial that she should have developed the skills and ability necessary to resist rape—that she could have defended herself if she really wanted to.65 Outside the courtroom crowds burnt photographs of the accuser were burnt with crowds shouting, “Burn the bitch, burn her” and “How much did they pay you bitch?”66 Surprisingly, women were in this crowd as well as men. Women supporters of Zuma believed that since he was a chief, the woman had no right to bring disgrace on him even though he may have raped her. It was her responsibility to remain silent. She had broken a norm; she accused a Zulu man and a leader, of rape.67 It was noted that Zuma’s wives sat in silence throughout the trial.68 In the end, Zuma was acquitted. The woman, whose home had been broken into and ransacked several times during the trial, now lives in exile as a result of threats on her life. Zuma is now president of South Africa.69

On January 7, 2010 Jacob Zuma married his third wife at his homestead in Kwa-Zulu Natal. It was actually his fifth marriage, as one wife committed suicide in 2000 due, to alleged trauma in the relationship; Zuma is also divorced from Home Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. In addition, Zuma is engaged to be married to fiancée Gloria Bongi Ngema. Zuma has paid ilobolo (dowry) to her family and she brought umbundo (wedding gifts) to the Zuma family, which is the last traditional event before the wedding. These traditional practices were discussed in Chapter Three. No date has been
set for his wedding to Ngema. Zuma is a Zulu and the practice of polygamy is part of Zulu traditional practice. The public’s response to Zuma’s marriage has been mixed; some defend it while others believe it has no place in a modern society. The controversy over Zuma’s marriage embodies the continuing struggle between the nation’s progressive concept of nation building as articulated in the constitution and the pull of traditional practice—as demonstrated when parliament recently approved the establishment of the ministry of traditional affairs.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, just a month after taking his third wife, journalists asked President Zuma if his belief in traditional practices, including polygamy, had divided South Africans. He responded by saying, “There are many people who say that symbolically this is a great step backward for the leader of South Africa to be embracing a practice that they say is inherently unfair to women. That’s my culture. It does not take anything from me, from my political beliefs, including the belief in the equality of women. Some think their culture is superior to others; that’s a problem we have in the world.”

Zuma’s latest exploit became public when he admitted on February 3, 2010 that he was the father of a baby girl born last October. The baby was born out of wedlock and is his twentieth child. Zuma’s personal behavior undermines his own comments and the government’s campaign against unprotected sex and multiple partners. He released a statement saying he remains committed to the HIV and AIDS campaigns of the government and blasted the media for revealing the names of his new daughter and the mother.
Zuma’s rape trial was particularly difficult for women. The statements made about women, the line of questioning permitted in the courtroom, and the antics outside the courtroom were appalling to many. Women felt as if they lost something during the trial. According to Jenni Case, Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town,

There is a sense of loss. It was a hard year for so many of us, you know, it was a loss of faith. It was a loss of faith in ANC. I resigned from the ANC. I joined the ANC in recent years and I had been supporting them. The statements on women are what pushed me totally over the edge. It was the Zuma things that flipped me.  

A question in many people’s mind is whether the president has any respect for women at all and what message he is sending out to men across the country. Women are detecting a “new sexism” emerging in the country. It is creeping into discussions, the media, and organizations. It stands in contradiction to all the legislative requirements, employment equity targets, and other gender specific initiatives—including a constitution based on non-sexism. It is strange that this system should produce a president whose public comments and private life run counter to gender equality.

The South African group Gender Links called on President Zuma, in wake of his comments on gender related issues before and during the campaign, to show his commitment to the “principles of gender equality enshrined in the constitution” by encouraging dialogue and debate to promote women’s rights and an open discussion about whether polygamy has a place in a country where gender equality is a “cornerstone of its democracy” and constitution. The organization found Zuma’s conduct and remarks highly “worrisome” and describe him as a polygamist. Although the practice is not
outlawed, Gender Links describes it as “self evidently patriarchal, unfair, and in all likelihood unconstitutional.”

It is an understatement to say women are concerned about what the Zuma presidency will bring. Zuma’s public comments about women, his acquittal on rape charges, his comments about HIV/AIDS, the recent marriage to his third wife and announcement of his engagement to his future fourth wife, and the disclosure of fathering his twentieth child with a mistress are counter to the country’s movement towards gender equality, the empowerment of women, and responsible sexual practices.

Zuma’s remarks and behavior convey the message that men can do as they please when it comes to women. They suggest that personal behavior need not be guided by laws and policies. According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg, “What kind of message does this send out to black youth? It’s okay to have the gendered attitudes. It doesn’t matter what the constitution says?”

As an example, Julius Malema, ANC Youth League President has publicly supported Zuma’s sexist practices. Malema is an important and influential person in the country as the Youth League is a powerful organization that has considerable influence within and outside the ANC. Nelson Mandela was once its president. Many believe Malema will be president of South Africa one day. But Malema’s remarks regarding Zuma’s rape case have been the source of contention. He has suggested that the woman who accused President Zuma of rape must have had a “nice time” because she stayed for breakfast and asked for money for a taxi. The Sonke Gender Justice NGO filed a hate speech complaint against Malema over his claims that President Zuma’s rape accuser enjoyed
herself with Zuma. Closing arguments were made on November 29, 2009. A verdict has yet been made.\textsuperscript{82}

Malema accused Helen Zille, the leader of the Democratic Alliance and a former anti-apartheid activist as being a racist and “colonist.” When she announced the appointments to her cabinet in the Western Cape province after the Democratic Alliance election victory in April 2009, Julius Malema posted the following on his Facebook account: “this bitch must get a life—it’s an all male cabinet, maybe she wants to do more porn movies!!!” \textsuperscript{83} He has also been quoted as saying the Youth League was “prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma.”\textsuperscript{84} These remarks caused such a strong public reaction that the ANC took the unprecedented step of reining Malema in.

Other high ranking government officials have shown their colors with regard to their attitudes towards women. Manala Manzini was South Africa’s National Intelligence Agency director-general until the end of August last year. He is a respected ANC and government leader. In 2007 Manzini left his wife Myakayaka-Manzini, chief director at the Department of International Relations and former deputy president of the ANC Women’s League. Manala Manzini is expected to marry another woman although he is still legally married to Myakayaka. Myakayaka has accused her husband of domestic violence and abuse. It wasn’t until Myakayaka expressed her shock and outrage at Manzini’s future plans to marry that Manzini confessed to the abuse. He defended his behavior by saying she “refused to cook or iron my clothes. She was so powerful in her work position and refused to cook.”\textsuperscript{85}

This high profile story of domestic abuse and patriarchal attitudes about women’s roles was mentioned several times during my interviews in South Africa as an example of
the continuing disconnect between what government leaders say about gender equality and women’s empowerment and their actual attitudes and behavior. “This woman was beaten up by her husband, who was Intelligence Chief in the past government, because he thought she was too arrogant to want to cook for him or iron his clothes. Now bloody hell, she’s a professional. What did you think? You know, you go – huh, what planet are you from? Why can’t you do it yourself? Don’t you have hands at the end of your arms? She was beaten up, beaten up. And now, he’s gone into another relationship, using the cultural notion of polygamy, to justify this relationship. And she’s saying, well, it’s bigamy, and he’s refusing, you know, he’s now wanting to not support.”

The question becomes, if people who are making policy are themselves guilty of gendered attitudes, how likely are they to ensure that policies are implemented? And are men willing to accommodate the possibility of their women partners and bosses holding power over them? Will women’s efforts to uplift themselves always result in a rash of accusations and derogatory comments? Many women are nervous about what the answers to these questions may be.

The attitudes and behavior of Zuma, Malema, and Manzini in many ways reflect South Africa’s patriarchal society. The degree to which patriarchal attitudes and behavior influence a woman’s life varies across the country. There are women who are in a family or an environment where they are treated as equals and then there are women who are still in the older, traditional cultural environment. Orly Stern, human rights lawyer from the Sonke Gender Justice Network comes from an upper middle class family in Cape Town. She describes life for a woman like her as “absolutely perfect.” She has never felt disadvantaged, and notes that women are highly valued in her family. Yet she
knows from her experience working at Sonke Gender Network, that life is very different story for different parts of the population. She works with women about gender practices all across the country and knows a significant portion of the women live in very patriarchal environments where domestic abuse is prevalent. These women have very little to no control in relationships or in their families. According to Orly Stern, "The man heads the household; the man makes decisions, from economic issues to running the family to sexual positions and safe sex, which is a very big issue in South Africa with HIV pandemic. So it's seen as the man is the head, and the woman is supposed to be obedient and supposed to listen to their man, and if she doesn't, this hurts the man."  

Thus, women in patriarchal families and communities do not have control over their own bodies. And as Jenni Case, Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Chemical Engineering at the University of Cape Town notes, attitudes about rape are disturbing, "a woman who says she's being raped will be seen as the offender. And the men will be seen as doing what men should do. I mean, we don't have a way of thinking about sex in this country. I don't see an easy change. It's kind of one woman's life at a time right now." The reality is that women aren't empowered to speak out against these attitudes and offenses. According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg, "Women do not have the authority, particularly black, African women to negotiate safe sex. It's just not possible. It's under the banner of culture. Every single year in my English class, the African male students will tell me, "That's my culture." How do you change attitudes around that? I have no clue. I can't do it in one little course in a semester. What they mean by that, I have no idea." Men's sense of entitlement in the sexual arena means that they give little thought
to safe sex or having multiple partners—which makes women extremely vulnerable.\textsuperscript{93}

While attitudes certainly play a role in men’s behavior towards women so do traditional laws; these were discussed at length in Chapter Three. Given the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes and behavior in the country, the creation of the new ministry of traditional affairs is a cause for concern. While there are those who argue that the ministry was created to monitor and evaluate the implementation of customary law and hence push it towards modernity, nothing has been communicated publicly as to the role, function, or purpose of the ministry.\textsuperscript{94} It is particularly worrisome because in the rural areas where customary laws apply more than anywhere else in the country, access to and the application of the judicial system is extremely uneven already and there is concern it will be pushed completely to the side. Today the country relies on the rule of law to give substantive meaning to citizenship but if the ministry of traditional affairs allows for even more latitude than is already given to chiefs, then women in the rural areas will have little to no recourse.\textsuperscript{95} The fear that the ministry may be pushing laws backwards is legitimate, given Zuma’s public comments about traditional laws and practices and a general sense of conservatism creeping back into public discourse.\textsuperscript{96}

As Nadine Petersen put it, “these are gendered socialization practices that come from growing up in particular homes within particular groupings within society. That picture hasn’t changed. We can have all the policies that we want that are so progressive, all these commissions, whatever you like, but if the policy doesn’t change for the people themselves, nothing will change.”\textsuperscript{97} This leads into another key influencing factor on women’s ability to progress, which is the fact that the constitution, laws, and policies of the country are ahead of the current social norms of a portion of the population. Women

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then must find ways to exercise these opportunities in the context of a conservative societal and family environment.98 There is no doubt the constitution, policies of the government, legislation, and the commitment to empowerment of women is very strong and has opened up opportunities for some women. What they haven’t done is to change the consciousness of society to be a gender sensitive and non-patriarchal society. This may be a matter of women becoming economically empowered and occupying more positions of authority and having more power across society. “When women have economic power they will gain social power, and I think when one reaches that stage, that’s when attitudes kind of change because they then begin to reflect a new reality.”99 While this may be true, it will take time for a critical mass of women to populate these positions and exert enough influence to bring about the necessary change and for many poor, black, rural women they have been waiting for fifteen years to see things improve. It seems a more proactive approach would be to focus on the implementation and enforcement of these policies and leaders whose comments and behavior are consistent with national policy. “There’s no shortage of policy frameworks and strategy, but on the ground, I think things are still very, very tough. If you talk to women who come from a township, their lives are very, very difficult. Something needs to be done.”100

A discussion on factors influencing women’s prospects would be incomplete without a conversation about HIV/AIDS. AIDS has been cited as the major cause of premature deaths in South Africa. In 2005, about 5.54 million people were estimated to be living with HIV in South Africa, with 18.8% of the adult population (15-49) affected. Women accounted for approximately 55% of HIV positive people. Women in the age group 25-29 are the worst affected with prevalence rates of up to 40%.101 The mortality
rates have increased by 79% between 1997-2004, with women experiencing a higher increase than men. Children in particular are vulnerable given the high rates of mother-to-child- transmission as well and the likelihood of becoming orphans.102

The 2007-2011 South African National Strategic Plan (NSP) on HIV and AIDS has as its primary goals the reduction of the number of new HIV infections by 50% and the expansion of access to appropriate treatment, care and support to 80% of all people diagnosed with HIV. By achieving these goals, the impact of HIV and AIDS on individuals, families, communities and society will decrease.103 The NSP recognizes the role unprotected sexual intercourse and multiple sexual partnerships plays in the epidemic but states “the fundamental drivers of this epidemic in South Africa are the more deep rooted institutional problems of poverty, underdevelopment, and the low status of women, including gender-based violence, in society.”104

The NSP recognizes that cultural attitudes and practices increase South Africans exposure to HIV infections. It cites the gender inequalities that are inherent in patriarchal cultures as a contributing factor because women’s their lower status significantly limits the choices that women can make about sexual intercourse. “Such decisions are frequently constrained by coercion and violence in the women’s relationships with men. In particular, male partners either have sex with sex workers or engage in multiple relationships, and their female partners or spouses are unable to insist on the use of condoms during sexual intercourse for fear of losing their main source of livelihood.”105 HIV infection is also believed to occur during some of the rituals conducted by traditional healers: one such practice recommends sex with a virgin as part as a treatment for disease.106 According to the NSP, other cultural beliefs and practices that increase
exposure to infection include:

...young men’s rites of passage to adulthood, rites of marriage such as premarital sex, virginity testing, fertility and virility testing, early or arranged marriages, fertility obligations, polygamy, and prohibition of post-partum sex and also during breastfeeding, and rites related to death such as levirate (or spouse inheritance) and sororate (a widower or sometimes a husband of a barren woman marries his wife's sister) are also believed to spread HIV infection. 107

The HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa is having an enormous physical, economic, and emotional burden on those who care for the sick or have been left behind. Women in South Africa are carrying a disproportionate amount of the burden. A national survey shows women provide eight times more care related to all illnesses and over two-thirds of the care for people living with AIDS 108. This burden is massive and it shouldn’t be overlooked. In fact, care is seen as a woman’s job in the country and consequently they have no choice in the matter. For many women it is a full-time job that keeps them from working outside of the home. However, many people do not that a woman is actually doing a job when she is caring for the ill. 109 Efforts are being made by some nongovernmental organizations to get men more involved in care work resulting from HIV/AIDS. 110

The main challenge is the loss of women to the pandemic. As cited above, women account for more than fifty-percent of people with HIV and young women from the age of 25-29 are the worst affected. Many women have a sense of hopelessness towards HIV/AIDS. They view the situation with a fatalistic attitude, believing that there is no way to stem the spread of the disease. Maria Phalime, Deputy Director of 2010 FIFA World Cup at Provincial Government Western Cape recalls the time when she was practicing medicine and working at a day hospital in the Western Cape:
The number of times I’ve spoken to women who say, ‘Well, we’re all gonna get it at some point.’ The sense of acceptance of it was overwhelming. I felt like shaking so many people. It’s like, ‘Your test results have come back, and show that you’re HIV positive.’ And their attitude would be ‘Oh, that’s the way it is. It’s god’s will,’ or ‘what can I do about it now,’ or ‘I’ll just tell my boyfriend,” or I’ll just tell my husband.’ I think this could really pull back gains that women have made.  

On World AIDS Day, December 1, 2009, Jacob Zuma announced South Africa’s new policy on pregnant women to ensure babies are born healthy. He also announced expanded access to treatment in an effort to reduce death rates and allow those infected to live longer. Zuma’s own risky behavior did not go unnoticed. During his speech, the South African leader promised to get another HIV test and urged the nation “to use condoms consistently and correctly during every sexual encounter.” It is difficult to say which message South Africans will take to heart—the one that emerged from his rape trial or that spoken on World AIDS Day. Actions typically speak louder than words.

The Conflict: Issues of Empowerment

Given the patriarchal and sometimes abusive attitudes toward women, it is not surprising to hear that South Africa owns an unfortunate world statistic: it has the highest rate of rape reported to police, with a likelihood that only a fraction are reported. Of the cases that are, 30% involve gang rape and 58% result in injuries. Any woman raped by a man over the age of 25 has a one in four chance of her attacker being HIV-positive. It is estimated that 500,000 rapes are committed annually in South Africa and that for every 25 men accused of rape, only one is convicted of the crime. This means only 7% of reported rapes lead to a conviction. Rape cases typically have long delays, rape kits are frequently misplaced, there aren’t enough prosecutors, and for the
prosecutors who are working these cases, they are overworked. And, due to patriarchal attitudes, the burden of proof typically falls on the victim. These factors contribute to a high number of women dropping charges.\footnote{117}

The South African Medical Research Council found the following in a survey of just under 2,000 men between the ages of 18-49 from all race groups and across the socio-economic ladder: more than 25% of the men said they committed rape and 50% of those said they had raped more than once; they also admitted to raping their partner, and participating in gang rapes; some raped other men and boys. Most of the men surveyed said they raped before they were twenty years old. In addition the men who admitted to having committed rape were more likely to be violent towards women, have multiple sex partners, engage in transactional sex with prostitutes, and drink heavily. The Director of the Council’s Gender and Health Research Unit, Rachel Jewkes again believes that South Africa’s overwhelmingly patriarchal culture is a factor:

We certainly have a dominant view/idea of masculinity that is really rooted in our overall patriarchal society and that idea is based on the fact that men are superior to women. That men should be leading women and one way in which men demonstrate the control is through the idea they should be able to get any women who they want to for, you know as a girlfriend, or for sex.\footnote{118}

Some traits have been identified as being more prevalent among men who rape. Men who were aged 20-24 were more likely to have raped than younger or older men. Men who had raped were also better educated although they were not likely to have graduated from the university. There were racial differences in those who raped: coloured men raped more than any other racial group. Men who raped were more likely to have occasional work but were less likely to have never worked.
The high prevalence of rape and HIV in South Africa can be attributed to the ideas of manhood, which includes the belief in men’s power over women and sexual entitlement.\textsuperscript{119} This belief in men’s power over women and sexual entitlement clashes with and is contradictory to all the gender equality and women’s empowerment laws, policies, and the constitution. Women who have benefited from the opportunities made available to them post-apartheid act from a sense of empowerment and control over their lives. As Kerrin Myers, Director of Centre for Entrepreneurship in Wits Business School at Wits University explains, “I think that when democracy came, the group that was most profoundly empowered was women. At the time, I was running a market research business and I was producing reports – kind of social research reports, and I did a report on women. And one of the things that I picked up was that women were feeling really, really strong and empowered by the fact that there was this constitution, and their rights were guaranteed, and they were gonna change the world.”\textsuperscript{120}

Increasingly these women are choosing not to marry. They are feeling strong and full of possibility. According to Elaine Salo, Director of Gender Studies at the University of Pretoria, “I think a lot of women have often personally made a choice, in terms of saying, okay, I’m going to stay single because my career trajectory is more important, and I don’t want all the other issues in terms of the energy, the diversions that families and dependents bring with it. A lot of women have made those kinds of choices.”\textsuperscript{121} Although these women want to remain single, they also want to have children. According to Maria Phalime, “I think what women are saying is, ‘I don’t want the hassle of a man, but I still want to have the experience of being a mother’.”\textsuperscript{122} The number of single women in the country with children is rising, although it is difficult to
know what percentage of women have chosen to be single parents and what percentage had no choice.\textsuperscript{123} If a rural woman is a single parent it is not normally by choice.\textsuperscript{124}

Women who have benefited from the new laws and policies pose a challenge to traditional concepts of masculinity; many men have difficulty dealing with a woman who is not obedient and wants to lead her own life.\textsuperscript{125} As Crain Soudien, acting Vice Chancellor of University of Cape Town says, “I think that there are huge, unarticulated issues around masculinity and women are unfortunately I think at the receiving end of these experiences, and these increases in the levels of rape are related to this idea of what it takes to be a man. I think this thing about what it takes to be a man is in such turmoil, and such fluidly in the country right now.”\textsuperscript{126}

Thus, there is a sense that the increase in violence and abuse against women is fueled in part by men’s frustration and struggles with these issues. According to Crain Soudien, “There’s such a high level of gender-based violence in this society for both historical and structural reasons. And, when you start opening access, in terms of women, they are seen as proposing a challenge to men.”\textsuperscript{127} When opportunities are open and suddenly one group, whom you never perceived as a challenge before, now becomes a competitor in the job market and at home, there is a backlash. And in South Africa that backlash is “visited upon” women’s bodies.\textsuperscript{128} In many ways men are feeling humiliated which is often times transformed into a form of sexual violence and abuse of women.\textsuperscript{129} In other words, women are paying a price for their advancement in the form of backlash from men.\textsuperscript{130} In response, women are finding new ways of surviving and protecting themselves. Yvonne Shapiro, Director of South Africa Qualifications Authority (SAQA) says, “If you’re going to survive, you have to behave like a man in order to get forward.
You don't behave like a woman because people are just going to backlash you and you're going to get a lot of abuse for being a woman, especially if you have a position of authority.\textsuperscript{131}

The clash between new and old values concerning gender in South Africa has resulted in a major crisis between men and women.\textsuperscript{132} Although democracy has empowered both, women have sometimes advanced more rapidly than men. There are those who view the competition for jobs and resources as a zero-sum game: one person’s gain is another person’s loss. If women advance in any capacity, men may feel threatened—as if somehow the push for women’s rights is taking away from theirs.\textsuperscript{133} This may be a contributing factor in the widespread abuse that is taking place, which has also found its way into the workplace as sexual harassment. According to Yvonne Shapiro, “Woman has got the positions that the man wants. Now, she's there so my best way to bring her down, to discredit her, is to sexually harass her or to make any sexual connotation towards her, and sexual remarks. And peers amongst themselves do the same thing to demean each other. It's such a common thing that's happening.”\textsuperscript{134}

The years after 1994 were filled with great promise—of political freedom and economic advancement. Yet South Africa has yet to realize the economic gains for all of its citizens. With lingering inequalities and a global recession, it has become increasingly difficult to convince people that the pie is growing for everyone. Many historically disadvantaged South Africans post-1994, and many men in particular, viewed the next chapters of their lives as the age of possibility. They are now finding that this possibility is fading, and they may be looking for someone to blame.\textsuperscript{135}
Of course black, rural women also anticipated an age of possibility, and were similarly disappointed. With hardship and turmoil all about them, women in South Africa have had to find their own way—to stake out their own ground. That ground is conflicted as they must reconcile their new role with how they feel about the men in their lives—their brothers, fathers, uncles, and grandfathers who may themselves have attitudes towards women that run counter to their aspirations.136

Despite the challenges that remain for women and the difficulties they have faced, it is important for women to continue on the path to gender equality and empowerment. Says Elaine Salo, “Look, thank God that change has come, because the aspirations, of especially young, black women, have just opened up wide, and the role models are out there. But it still is for too small a number of women.”137

Chapter Seven Endnotes

1 Ian Clarke, interview by author, September 22, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
2 Cameron Dugmore, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa; Sharmala Govender, interview by author, September 24, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
3 Gillian Godsell, interview by author, October 7, 2009, by phone to Johannesburg, South Africa.
4 Jenni Case, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
5 Maria Phalime, interview by author, September 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
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7 Phalime, interview by author; Govender, interview by author.
8 Govender, interview by author.
9 Ibid.
10 Dugmore, interview by author.
11 Crain Soudien, interview by author, September 28, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
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Nadine Petersen, interview by author, October 8, 2009, by phone to Johannesburg, South Africa.

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Ibid.

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Govender, interview by author; Bux, interview by author.

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The degree of disparity between rich and poor in South Africa is reflected in the country’s Gini Coefficient. The Gini Coefficient measures income or wealth inequality in a society. The coefficient is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds perfect. South Africa’s 2009 Gini Coefficient is .76, the highest it has ever been; Herman, interview by author.

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Department of Trade and Industry, A Post-Apartheid Economic and Labour Overview, April 2005, 44. Commissioned by the Johannesburg, South Africa Development Policy and Research Unit, School of Economics, University of Cape Town, Rondebosch.

Parker, “Women Still Struggle for Equality.”


The International Labour Organizations International Standard Classifications of Occupations defines elementary occupations as those that “consist of simple and routine tasks which mainly require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort.”
Tasks performed by workers in elementary occupations usually include: selling goods in streets and public places, or from door to door; providing various street services; cleaning, washing, pressing; taking care of apartment houses, hotels, offices and other buildings; washing windows and other glass surfaces of buildings; delivering messages or goods; carrying luggage; doorkeeping and property watching; stocking vending machines or reading and emptying meters; collecting garbage; sweeping streets and similar places; performing various simple farming, fishing, hunting or trapping tasks performing simple tasks connected with mining, construction and manufacturing including product-sorting and simple hand-assembling of components; packing by hand; freight handling; pedaling or hand-guiding vehicles to transport passengers and goods; driving animal-drawn vehicles or machinery. International Labour Organization, http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/9.htm, (accessed January 3, 2010).

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43 Parker, “Women Still Struggle for Equality.”
44 Statistics South Africa, appendix, 11.
45 Salo, interview by author.
46 Ibid.
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48 Shapiro, interview by author.
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73 Case, interview by author.
74 Myers, interview by author.
75 Case, interview by author; Myers, interview by author; Salo, interview by author.
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77 Gender Links is an organization focused on bringing about equal participation of men and women in all aspects of public and private life. In order to do this the organization focuses on three linked programs: media, governance, and gender justice. Gender Links work on a local, national, regional, and international level. The organization’s goals are to promote gender equality in and through the media; conductive effective campaigns to end gender violence, HIV, and AIDS; and to build the capacity for women and men to engage in democratic processes that advance equality and justice. http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/mission-and-vision (accessed November 9, 2009).
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109 Stern, interview by author.
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111 Ibid.
114 Jewkes et al., 3.
115 Smith, “Quarter of Men in South Africa Admit Rape, Survey Finds.”
117 United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “South Africa: One in Four Men Rape.”
120 Myers, interview by author.
121 Salo, interview by author.
122 Phalime, interview by author.
123 Case, interview by author; Phalime, interview by author; Soudien, interview by author.
124 Case, interview by author.
125 Myers, interview by author; Soudien, interview by author.
126 Soudien, interview by author.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Soudien, interview by author.
130 Clarke, interview by author; Shapiro, interview by author; Myers, interview by author; Dugmore, interview by author.
131 Shapiro, interview by author.
132 Phalime, interview by author.
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135 Soudien, interview by author.
136 Ibid.
137 Salo, interview by author.
Chapter Eight: Closing Thoughts: The Future

In this study I examined how the macro-economic growth and development, higher education, and gender equality and women’s empowerment strategies adopted by the post-apartheid government influenced South African women’s prospects. Each strategy was considered a key driver to transformational change in the creation of a new, democratic South Africa. The results have been mixed, as has been discussed at length in chapters four through seven. This chapter concludes the study with thoughts about the future and suggestions for moving forward.

Future Prospects for Women in South Africa

In just fifteen years, South Africa has rewritten its constitution, restructured its macro-economic growth and development policies, restructured its higher education system, and made a commitment to providing opportunity for all its citizens, specifically those who have historically been marginalized: women and blacks. No other country has undertaken such transformation in such a relatively short period of time. As a result of these ambitious plans, many South Africans looked to the future with hope and possibility for themselves and their families. Fifteen years later, this hope and sense of possibility is beginning to give way to frustration and anger as many black, poor South Africans continue to live in poverty, remain unemployed, lack proper housing, and watch as the disparity between rich and poor grows wider. The results of this frustration can be seen in the number of daily public protests, escalating crime rates, and in the recent election, a shift in the political landscape.
This unrest and frustration has created some subtle but important shifts in the country. There is a growing sense that it is time for the government to stop talking about the promises of the constitution, laws, policies, and initiatives and begin delivering on the basics like housing and job creation. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the Communist Party (CP), who were so instrumental in Jacob Zuma’s election, continue to put pressure on the government to reconsider its macro-economic growth and development policies. According to Trevor Schoole, Department Minister of Higher Education in South Africa’s Department of Education, “…there is a lot of expectation from the masses, from the working class, from the labor movement, from the communist party that government should do away with some of the policies, which were in place over the past 15 years and adopt new policies.”¹ It still isn’t clear what, if any, changes will be made to the country’s economic growth and development policies. As discussed, South Africa has weathered the economic downturn better than most countries due in part to the massive infrastructure projects currently underway in preparation for the 2010 World Cup. These projects will soon be coming to a close as the World Cup is only a few months away. There is growing concern as to what will happen once these projects and the resulting influx of revenue from tourism stops. Is the country prepared and able to absorb the loss of jobs and revenue once the World Cup ends? How this plays out may determine whether Zuma proposes a change in national economic policy.

There has been and continues to be concern that Zuma will bring a new conservatism to South Africa. This is partially based on his and his supporters’ behavior during the presidential campaign in 2009. During the campaign the offering of prayers to ancestors, the defense of polygamy as “African,” the denouncement of same-sex
marriage as a “disgrace to God”, and a campaign promise to bring back the death penalty were viewed as signs that if elected, Zuma would move the country back to tribalism and turn from the concept of nation-building as defined in the country’s progressive constitution and laws.² It is too early to say if this will in fact happen although the establishment of the ministry of traditional affairs may be the first step. It is still unclear what this new ministry will do. A shift to conservatism and tribalism could have significant ramifications for women, pushing back many of the advancements they have made in recent years and making it nearly impossible for black rural women to advance.

It was evident while conducting this study that South Africa continues to define and understand itself through a mostly racial lens. This limits the country’s ability to look at problems such as gender, poverty, and class in a multi-dimensional way. In order to address the problems South Africa faces, it is crucial that the country find new ways of telling the story of how these problems occur, making it clear that race isn’t the only source of tension in the country. For example, a gendered view of poverty, unemployment, and violence will help create an understanding of the complexity and challenges of the country today in a more comprehensive way as men view and experience these things in different ways.

Perhaps South Africans continue to define and understand themselves in racial terms because it is a familiar world view. It has only been fifteen years since the end of apartheid rule, and to achieve true transformation will require all South Africans to be the drivers of this change, a position they have not been in before. According to Elaine Salo, Director of Gender Studies at the University of Pretoria, “It’s having the willingness to confront the fear that challenge brings, and growth. And I think all of us, as South
Africans, face that because all of our comfort zones are shifting. And change and transformation induces large scale anxiety. It was bad before, but at least we knew what it was. You knew what the parameters and borders were. You didn’t like it, but you knew what it was. And this, you don’t know what it is, and now you’re responsible for it. That can be scary.”

A discussion about South Africa’s future must include the topic of HIV/AIDS. The number of those infected continues to increase and the toll it is taking on the country continues to grow. The good news is that the President and the ANC are now taking an aggressive approach to combat the pandemic after years of neglect and denial. There is much work to be done and organizations are on the ground working to reverse the rate of infection through education, distribution of antiretroviral drugs, and by creating ways for people to talk about cultural attitudes and sex. The Ubuntu Education Fund is an organization that performs all of these functions, focusing on young mothers. According to Jacob Lief, President of the Ubuntu Education Fund, “How do you keep the young mothers alive is what we quickly realized. The minute the mother dies, the child becomes that much more vulnerable, things lead to transactional sex, lead to robbery, and whatever it takes to survive, which is natural. We realized it was important to stabilize the home environment, and in our case, that was keeping a young mother alive. A generation of their mothers have been wiped out by HIV, so we got into HIV testing, treatment, and education”. South Africa’s future will be influenced by how well the country is able to control the rate of infection and increase the number of people who can live with the virus. If current trends continue, the country may find the social, economic, and emotional toll too heavy to carry.
These issues are certain to have an influence on South Africa in the near future. Despite a pervasive sense of anxiety about what the future may bring, those interviewed for this study remain cautiously optimistic. According to Nadine Petersen, Professor of Education at the University of Johannesburg,

I wouldn’t be in this country if I wasn’t hopeful. I love my country. I love what I do. I love the contribution I can make as a black woman teaching other students. Despite the gloomy picture I may have painted I still think there are enormous possibilities in this country if we work toward achieving a particular goal. I see the hope that women carry at all levels of society across all class levels. That gives me hope that we have the ability to make the change and force change, if necessary, where it needs to happen. Maybe that sounds idealistic. It probably does to somebody like you listening to me. Things are not good, not by a long shot. It’s our responsibility to create that critical mass.⁵

Suggestions for Moving Forward

The focus of this study has been on how women’s prospects and lives have changed since the end of apartheid rule. What is clear, whether one is discussing access to higher education or employment opportunities, is that poor, rural, black South African, women, who represent a significant portion of the population, have not benefited from the opportunities that have become available to women as a whole. For anyone familiar with the data presented in this dissertation, the recent 2009 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum was a matter of particular frustration. The report ranks countries based on how well they have decreased gender disparities related to economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. Inexplicably, it ranked South Africa the 6th best country in the world (it was ranked 22nd last year) with a score of 0.771 with 1.0 representing complete equality between genders.⁶
This is difficult to accept as South Africa is a country where polygamy is allowed, rape and sexual abuse against women are the norm, violence against women is on the increase, women are underrepresented in professional and management positions, and a significant percentage of the women in the country continue to live in poverty and lack access to basic resources. While it is helpful to attempt quantitative measurement of countries’ progress in decreasing gender disparity, these numbers are clearly skewed and should not be held up as evidence that all is well with South African gender relations. This is why it is so important to conduct qualitative studies about women in South Africa as it will create a more accurate, nuanced, and clear picture of what is happening.

It is also important to examine different groupings of women in the country. In a country as complex as South Africa and with a history of such bitter racial division, putting women in one category distorts the picture of their lives. This was evident when conducting this study. The opportunities for white South African women are completely different than those for a black South African or Indian women, and between women who live in rural or urban areas. This was true when it came to enrollment and, graduation rates in higher education, employment opportunities, and safety and health issues. Examining different groupings of women allows for a better understanding of the challenges each group faces and for the development of targeted solutions.

Early in the research process, after conducting a number of interviews, I noticed a pattern developing. Each interviewee began on a very optimistic note, saying that women were making progress, albeit not all women but in general there was a sense things were moving along in the right direction. Then the conversation would shift toward a discussion of men’s attitudes; interviewees would linger over issues of violence,
sexual abuse, rape, HIV/AIDS, and the difficulty of living in a patriarchal society.

According to Harold Herman, Emeritus Professor of Comparative and International Education at the University of Western Cape, “Just as apartheid has created this huge disparity between white and black, so the social system, the religious practices, the tribal culture, has created a disadvantage for women.” I came to realize that you could not talk about women’s opportunities without talking about men. Unfortunately, for many women, men have a negative influence on their lives and make it difficult to move ahead. It seemed the more women progress the more men become abusive and patriarchal in their attitudes. This cycle needs to be broken. Two things need to happen to begin working towards a solution: (1) men need to be engaged and a part of the process; and (2) as thorny as these issues are, they need to be brought to the fore; a national dialogue needs to begin between men and women on how to end the abuse and violence. Orly Stern, human rights lawyer for the Sonke Gender Justice Network, feels strongly about the need to work with men,

There’s a lot of work done in empowering women but, you know, if you want to stop rape, and if you want to stop gender violence, and if you want to work towards gender equality, you actually need to target the men. So the organization I work with works with men and boys to try and end their silence, and do a lot of work around HIV/AIDS advising men to get tested, not have concurrent partners, and to discuss violence and abuse against women.” Starting a national dialogue about these issues will be difficult. “We’re afraid. People are afraid to talk about it. People are embarrassed. It’s happening. Listen — understanding why it’s happening I don’t know— that’s so complex.”

The issues of violence, rape, HIV/AIDS, and crime in South Africa have been in international headlines as the country is preparing for the 2010 World Cup. The government and organizers continue to work hard to communicate and convince the world that South Africa is a safe place to come to enjoy the event. This occasion
provides a perfect opportunity for the government to begin a national dialogue about violence and abuse against women. It is doubtful Jacob Zuma will spearhead such a dialogue, given his personal life and the comments he made about women during his rape trial. It may, then, be up to the women in government to use their voice and begin to speak up about these issues. Up to this point, they have been silent. According to Jacob Lief, President of the Ubuntu Education Fund,

Why aren’t we talking about this? I’m not talking about the community voice. There are a lot of community activists. I’m talking about where’s the Members of Parliament? Where’s the first lady? Where are the people standing up and saying stop? We talk about a national crisis that is happening to our young girls, and until we have leadership we’re fighting a fight we can’t win. And it needs to happen at the top. Strong leadership is the key. I’m not saying we can’t push, and we’ll continue doing what we do, but we need to see someone. Do you know the deputy president of our country is a woman, and she didn’t utter one word about this? It’s inexcusable.\textsuperscript{10}

So what can be done? First, serious attention should be placed on changing practices, which have been discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, which have hindered women’s access to basic needs, the economy, and decision-making. Many of these practices are deeply rooted in cultural and traditional norms, which have been slow to change. It is critical for women who are currently in a position of power and authority to use their voice and set an example for other women and advocate for a change in these practices that continue to hinder women’s access to basic needs, the economy, and decision-making. In addition, men should be actively engaged in the process to help create new practices that are supported and encouraged by both genders. Second, a majority of women still live in rural areas and as such it is their local government and chiefs who have the most influence on individual’s daily life. A structure must be put in place at the local level and in public and private organizations to ensure policies related
to gender equality and women’s empowerment are implemented and laws are obeyed. The difficulty in rural areas is the lack of resources and infrastructure for the implementation and enforcement of these laws and policies. Additional resources should be allocated to rural areas to ensure women have access to the judicial system and the necessary legal services to bring a case or complaint forward and through the legal system. This will also require more police, judges, and attorneys in rural areas. Third, customary and cultural practices should be subject to the right of equality for women. As is too often the case, traditional customs often trump the law in rural areas. The rights of women, as defined in the constitution and laws, must be recognized, implemented, and enforced regardless of traditional customs. Fourth, economic empowerment and active engagement in the formal economy of women must be promoted and supported. As has been discussed at length, the majority of South African women are still engaged in the informal economy and continue to live in poverty. The government, private sector, and higher education and training should work together to design a comprehensive plan that would identify and create opportunities for women to actively participate in the formal economy. In addition, micro-financing, a tool that has been used extensively in India and in several African countries, has yet to take hold in South Africa. The creation of a micro-financing program in South Africa is just one example of how women could become more economy empowered and engaged. Fifth, since women’s bargaining power in households comes from empowerment in education, income, legal rights and religious or society validation, women who live in rural areas, who are at a significant disadvantage, should be targeted. With renewed efforts like these, it is my hope that
women will be able to continue on a path of progress without fear of abuse or violence and that the women who have been left behind someday realize their promise.

Chapter Eight Endnotes

1 Trevor Sehoole, interview by author, September 22, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
3 Elaine Salo, interview by author, September 23, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa.
4 Jacob Lief, interview by author, by phone, October 27, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
5 Nadine Petersen, interview by author, by phone, October 8, 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa.
7 Harold Herman, interview by author, September 27, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
8 Orly Stern, interview by author, by phone, October 29, 2009, Cape Town, South Africa.
9 Jacob Lief, interview by author.
10 Ibid.
Appendix A: The current institutional landscape of South African public higher education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Type</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Universities    | 1. University of Cape Town (UCT)  
|                 | 2. University of Fort Hare (UFH) + Rhodes University East London Campus  
|                 | 3. University of the Free State (UFS) + Vista University (Bloemfontein) + University of the North (Owa-Qwa)  
|                 | 4. University of Pretoria (UP) + Vista University (Mamelodi)  
|                 | 5. Rhodes University  
|                 | 6. University of Stellenbosch (US)  
|                 | 7. University of the Western Cape (UWC) + University of Stellenbosch Dental School  
|                 | 8. University of Witwatersrand (Wits)  
|                 | 1. University of Durban-Westville (UDW) + University of Natal = The University of KwaZulu-Natal  
|                 | 2. The University of the North (UNIN) + Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) = University of Limpopo  
|                 | 3. Potchefstroom University of Christian HE (PUCHE) + University of the North-West (UNW) + Vista University (staff and students of Sebokeng) = North-West University  
| Universities of Technology | 1. Technikon Free State (TFS) + Vista University (Welkom) = Central University of Technology  
|                 | 2. Vaal Triangle Technikon + Vista University (infrastructure and facilities of Sebokeng) = Vaal University of Technology  
| Universities of Technology | 1. Cape Technikon + Peninsula Technikon (Pentech) = Cape Peninsula University of Technology  
|                 | 2. Durban Institute of Technology (DIT) + Mongosuthu Technikon + infrastructure and facilities of the Umlazi campus of the University of Zululand  
|                 | 3. Technikon Pretoria (TP) + Technikon Northern Gauteng (TNG) + Technikon North-West = Tshwane University of Technology  
| Comprehensives  | 1. University of Venda = University of Venda for Science and Technology  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensives</th>
<th>4 merged comprehensives</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Institutions</td>
<td>2. University of Zululand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) + Technicon Witwatersrand + Vista University (East Rand and Soweto) = University of Johannesburg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) + Port Elizabeth Technikon (PET) + Vista University (Port Elizabeth) = Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. University of South Africa (UNISA) + Technikon South Africa (TSA) + Vista University Distance Education Centre (VUDEC)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. University of Transkei (Unitra) + Border Technikon + Eastern Cape Technikon = Walter Sisulu University of Technology and Science</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Npumalanga Institute of Higher Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Northern Cape Institute for Higher Education</td>
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