GENDERED POLITICS

AND THE SECONDARY STATUS OF

FEMALE BUREAUCRATS

IN CAMEROONIAN GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS

CATHERINE MUDIME AKALE

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND LAW

OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE AWARD

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

MAY 2001

Abstract

Drawing on empirical research in Cameroon in collaboration with the *Ministère de la Condition Feminine* (MINCOF), this thesis examines inequality in women's access to and participation in Cameroonian governing institutions, and argues that institutional mechanisms to promote the advancement of women are inadequate. The findings of the work are based on the qualitative research approach. The exploration is through in-depth/elite interviews based on an unstructured interview guide, direct observation and content analysis which were identified as the most appropriate research methods. The transcribed interviews, ministerial documents, materials from periodicals, newspaper reports and political speeches, combined with fieldwork notes to constitute the data for this research. As informed by feminist theory within the qualitative approach, I have framed my work within feminist standpoint epistemologies, combined with feminist critiques of the social contract philosophy, interwoven with gender, as an analytical category.

The research begins with an exploration of inter-related concepts which have implications for the institutionalisation of gender within political parties and state bureaucratic structures in Cameroon. This institutionalisation is bound into a patriarchal culture of power and authority which leads to the concentration of men and women at different levels of the formal political arena. Even when women make successful inroads into what is considered a male occupation within the bureaucracy, evidence shows that a process of resegregation usually takes place.

The thesis also examines the steps the Cameroonian party-state has taken ostensibly in order to achieve gender equity and promote women's rights, and argues that these are fundamentally flawed and inherently unable to produce results compatible with human rights principles and freedoms. In spite of the creation of the MINCOF and the appointment of female bureaucrats --- women charged with the responsibility of consciously using their positions to promote women's interests in the government bureaucracy --- substantial inequalities still exist in the nature and extent of customs and practices that perpetuate Cameroonian women's secondary status. I argue that these inequalities in practical terms determine and restrict women's rights to personal choices in the social political spheres. I further argue that there is a direct correspondence between what happens in regard to the choice in decision-making in the private sphere and outcomes in the public sphere; in both cases, women's freedom and possibilities of

action are limited simply because they are women. Hence the thesis questions the principles on which the democratic Cameroonian party-state is built: far from promoting the right of all citizens, as a genuine democracy might be expected to do, in practice it entrenches male dominance and the subordination of women. For this reason, I argue that Cameroonian politics is gendered because the construction of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture of its governing institutions.

My study's main contribution to knowledge is the detailed insider accounts of the gendered politics of policy making. The generalisations of feminist theoretical propositions and previous empirical studies on gender gaps in political participation by women politicians and female bureaucrats in governing institutions are examined and expanded upon by relocating the problem area to the Cameroonian social context.

Acknowledgements

In my long academic journey to examine gender relationships within the Cameroonian State and politics, through the exploration of both policy and political participation, many people have helped me directly or indirectly. Although they are too numerous to mention individually, there are nevertheless a number of people and organisations to whom I owe a debt of financial, academic and emotional gratitude for their support, encouragement and concern for my welfare and success.

I was financed by the *Okumenisches Studienwerk e. V.* (OSW), a German Protestant Churches' non-profitmaking organistion. Their support enabled me to concentrate on researching and writing for the duration of my study. North Oxford Overseas Centre's Tim Rous, and his team, bent the rules to accommodate me beyond the two years stipulated in their by-laws. I am most grateful to them.

The gender-balanced team of supervisors was made up of Professor Susan McRae, who combined her demanding responsibilities as Head of School with those of directing my study. She was supported by Professor Barrie Axford. Together, the two of them provided academic help, stimulating challenges and much encouragement through academically provocative discussions of my work. This was undertaken in a forceful manner that empowered me to think deeper, and anticipate information and analytic gaps in my work which I then endeavoured to correct before our surgery sessions took place. Sometimes my strategy worked but, at other times, it did not. Their comments helped me enormously in improving the work presented in this thesis.

I also owe an enormous intellectual debt to the numerous scholars whose works are listed at the bibliographic section. I am indebted to Madam Yaou Aissatou Boubakary the femocrat at the time of my field research in charge of the Cameroonian MINCOF, the collaborating establishment which allowed me the uses of its facilities and resources and provided me with the legitimacy necessary to access information and carry out interviews. I am particularly grateful to the inter-Library loan staff of the University Library, the staff at the Queen Elizabeth House library and those at the Rhodes House, whose invaluable help in acquiring

wide-ranging material with such speed and expertise enabled me to use literature that greatly my work.

The invaluable moral support of Elizabeth Calvin of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church of the United State of America as a friend and 'sister', gave me the impetus to keep going.

Finally, my heartfelt gratitude goes to William Pollock Russell, a true friend whose unwavering faith in me and warm encouragement were a big source of inspiration.

I dedicate this work to my late mother, **Salome Ewombe Dibo**, for the great model of patience, tolerance, perseverance and encouragement she gave me, and my late father, **Joshua Ngange Akale**, whose struggle and sacrifice to bring hope through economic well-being to his children, sowed the seed of hunger for educational advancement that has brought me this far.

LIST OF TABLES

3.1	Women in Parliament in Africa as of March 8, 2001	65-66
3.2	Nature of parties in land conflicts	81
3.3	National Assembly, May 17, 1997. Seats held per Party	92-93
5.1	Gender-specific statistics of working patterns	154
5.2	Relative distribution per gender of each category of civil servants in normal activity as at June 30, 1991	155
5.3	The number of women in liberal professions	157
5.4	Distribution of legal staff per gender	157
5.5	Company heads per sector by gender	158
5.6	Membership distribution by gender in ECOSOC (Cameroon)	159
5.7	Schooling rate by gender, 6-23 years	160
5.8	Breakdown and level of education by gender in % terms	161
5.9	Graduate success rate by discipline and gender	162
5.10	Distribution of professional school students by institution and by gender of % terms	163
5.11	Statistics on municipal representation by gender	172
5.12	Women in Government	177
6.1	Percentage of seats held by women in Parliament, 1962-1997	195
6.2	Female MPs and Committee Assignments	200-201
6.3	Women Members of Parliament in Cameroon, 1960-1997	202-203
6.4	Women's Party Route to Parliament	206-208

Acronyms

AAC	All Anglophone Conference
ACAFEJ	Association of Cameroonian Female Jurists
AC	Africa Confidential
AI	Amnesty International
CAM	Cameroon Anglophone Movement
CAMCUL	Cameroon Credit Union
CDB	Cameroon Development Bank
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CNU	Cameroon National Union
CPDM	Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television
CT	Cameroon Tribune
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council (Cameroon)
EFECAM	*Evolution des Femmes Camerounaises*
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
Femocrat	Feminist Bureaucrat
FLS	Forward Looking Strategies
GAD	Gender and Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
KNC **KNDP** **KANU**	Kamerun National Convention Kamerun National Democratic Party Kenya National Union
LEFE	*Ligue pour l'Education de la Femme et de l'Enfant*
MP	Member of Parliament
MDR	*Movement pour la Défense de la République*
MLJC	*Movement pour la Liberte de Jeauness*
MSND	*Movement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie*
MP	*Movement Progressiste*
MINASCOF	*Ministère de l'Affiair Sociales et de la Condition Feminine*
MINAT	*Ministère de l'Adminitration Territotriale*
MINCOF	*Ministère de la Condition Feminine (Ministry of Women's Affairs)*
MYW	*Maendelo ya Wanawake* (Kenya)(the progress of women)
NAPWID	National Policy Declaration on Women in Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NWLG	National Woman's Lobby Group (Zambia)
NWM	National Women's Machinery
NWP	North West Province
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PD	*Partie Démocratie*
RDPC	*Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais*
SCNC	Southern Cameroons National Council

SDF	Social Democratic Front
SDM	Social Democratic Movement
SDP	Social Democratic Party
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TI	Transparency International
UC	*Union Camerounaise*
UDC	*Union démocratique du Cameroun*
UN	United Nations
UDRH	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNDP	*Union National pour la Démocratie et le Progres*
UNDP- A	*Union National pour la Démocratie et le Progres - Authentique*
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund
UNIP	United Independence Party (Zambia)
UPC	*Union des Populations Camerounaises*
USA	United States of America
WB	World Bank
WC	Women for Change
WCNU	Women Cameroon National Union
WCPDM	Women Cameroon People's Democratic Movement
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women in Development
YCPDM	Young Cameroon People's Democratic Movement

Table of contents

Page

Title Page

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Acronyms

Chapter one: Introduction and conceptual background

Introduction.....1

1.1 The conceptual background 2

1.1.1 The objective of the investigation.....2

Definition of concepts.....5

1.2 An overview of feminist theoretical themes.....5

1.2.1 Gender as an institution 9

Limitations.....13

The research problem.....13

The concept, meaning and structure of gender.....14

1.2.2 The general position of women in Cameroon's Family Law.....20

Bureaucracy.....24

1.2.3 The concept of 'femocracy'.....28

1.2.4 Women Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (WCPDM).....34

1.2.4 The thesis.....37

Chapter two: Methodology

2.1 Introduction.....38

2.2.1 The qualitative approach.....38

2.2.2 Feminist approaches 39

2.3.1 The research design.....41

a) Interviews 42

b) Narrative interviews.....43

2.3.2 Difficulties and omitted interviews.....46

2.3.3 Fieldwork reflection.....53
a) Confidentiality and anonymity.....54
b) Barriers 55
c) Direct observation.....56
d) Document review.....56
2.4.1 Data analysis.....57
2.4.2 Strengths and limitations.....58
2.5.1 Structure of thesis.....58
Conclusion.....61

Chapter three : Cameroon's political and social development
3.1 Background.....63
3.2 A brief history of the Cameroon State.....67
3.2.1 Cameroon: a name born out of mistaken identity.....67
Population.....68
3.2.2 Colonial institutions in Cameroon.....69
3.2.2.1 Direct rule.....70
3.2.2.2 Indirect rule.....72
3.2.2.3 Colonialism and Customary Law.....75
3.2.2.4 Cameroon's gendered colonial legacy.....78
Customary Law in Cameroon.....80
Customary Law in Practice 81
3.3.1 The one-party/single-party dominant Cameroon State.....83
3.3.2 The Ahidjo-Biya rift.....86
3.3.3 The attempted *coup d'etat*.....86
3.3.4 The final severance.....87
3.4 A faction-ridden and weakening opposition.....87
3.4.1 Ghost-towns: a failed opposition strategy for "democratisation".....87
3.4.2 Manipulating the elections, co-opting the opposition.....88
3.4.3 A disorganised, quarrelsome and divided opposition.....89
3.5.1 The specific character of the Cameroonian State.....93
3.5.2 Organisation and administration of elections.....94
3.5.3 Cameroon's democratic arrangements 96

Conclusion: Women's political participation and influence: more apparent than real.....99

Chapter four : Feminist theory

Introduction.....101

4.1 Feminist epistemology 102

4.2.1 Feminist epistemological alternatives.....105

Black feminism.....105

4.2.2 Relativist/ postmodernist feminist epistemology.....108

4.2.3 A critical review of feminist relativist/postmodernist epistemological alternatives.....110

4.2.4 Implications of postmodernist/relativist epistemologies for my study..112

4.3.1 Feminist empiricism: the facts speak for themselves 114

4.3.2 Critiques of feminist empiricist epistemology.....116

4.3.3 The inadequacy of feminist empiricism as an analytic devise.....118

4.4.1 Feminist standpoint epistemologies: seeing both ways.....122

4.4.2 A critique of feminist standpoint epistemologies.....128

4.4.3 Standing up for feminist standpoint.....130

4.4.4 Feminist standpoint epistemologies' practicality as a research tool.....133

4.5.1 Gender and citizenship.....137

4.5.2 Feminist debates of marginalised political citizenship.....140

Conclusion.....148

Chapter five : The gender culture of Cameroon's public sphere

5.1 Chapter issues.....151

5.2.1 Gender equality.....152

5.2.2 Gender segregation in working life.....153

5.2.3 Gendered aspects of Cameroon's educational system.....159

5.3 Gender in Cameroon's party political recruitment and structure.....164

5.3.1 Patronage politics in Cameroon.....164

5.3.2 Party political framework in Cameroon.....166

5.4.1 Gender and decision-making in municipal administration.....170

5.4.2 Women cabinet ministers and gender-specific job characteristics.....174
Conclusion.....181

Chapter six : The politics of women's political citizenship in parliamentary representation

6.1 Chapter issues.....183
6.2.1 Democracy and representation.....184
6.2.2 How party systems affect women's representation.....187
6.2.3 The electoral system.....189
6.3.1 Women parliamentarians : tokens of Cameroon's commitment to gender equality of opportunity.....191
6.3.2 Women's representation, political culture and party systems.....196
6.3.3 Some general remarks on women in political committees.....199
6.3.4 The gendered nature of assignments in Cameroon's parliamentary politics.....199
Implications for obstructing women's full participation in governing institutions.....208
Conclusion.....214

Chapter seven : An analysis of the personal narratives of three Cameroonian women politicians

7.1 Chapter Issues.....218
7.2.1 Julienne Keutcha.....221
7.2.2 Delphine Tsanga.....224
A note on the origins of Tsanga's political career.....231
Excursus on 'Women's Movements' in other African countries.....232
Further issues raised in Tsanga's personal narrative.....234
7.2.3 Rose Zang Nguele.....238
Analysis.....247
Conclusion.....250

Chapter eight : Cameroon's female bureaucrats and the MINCOF: Fitting the gender agenda into gendered political space

8.1.1 Cameroon's Initial Report to the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), (June 2000).....252

8.1.2. Insitutionalisation of gender in the Cameroonian state system.....254

8.1.3 Chapter issues.....257

8.2.1 The MINCOF's ghettoising objectives.....258

8.2.2 The bureaucratic context of Cameroon's female bureaucrats.....273

8.3.1 The degree of female bureaucrats' dependency/ autonomy 276

Chapter nine: Women, political participation and the Family Code

9.1 Introduction 281

9.2.1 A round table discussion on 'The Future of the African Woman in Politics'.....282

9.2.2 A 'reflection' on the Family Code in Cameroon.....285

9.2.3 Analysis and critique.....287

Conclusion.....291

CONCLUSION.....294

Bibliography, Sources and Interviews.....314

Chapter one

Introduction and conceptual background

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in the spirit of brotherhood.
(The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 1948, Article 1.)

Human beings, without distinction of race, religion, belief, possess inalienable rights. All citizens are equal before the law.
(Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon: 1972.)

The term that articulates citizenship in both universalist and particularist terms in the quotes above is equality; within which a great deal of attention is paid to the status of men and women. Trends in gender relations over the past decades are being questioned, with the public debate focusing on the characteristics of modern men, and what women have won and lost in their fight for equal status and equality of opportunity. Despite the debates, there are still several important areas where equal status has not yet been obtained and where further work is required in the Cameroonian social context. These include gender divisions and lack of flexibility in the labour market, and the low representation of women in powerful forums and political decision-making. Equal status is therefore an important element in ongoing feminist debates, with the concept based on the idea that no individual should be less equal in opportunity or in human rights than any other. The United Nations (UN) 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDRH) and the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are major milestones in the dignity and worth of the human person and the equal rights of women and men. The CEDAW in particular, is the first convention to comprehensively address women's rights within the political, cultural, economic, social, spheres and within family life. It essentially constitutes the international bill of rights for women. Its preamble recalls that the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of equality between men and women are central principles of the United Nations and constitute binding obligations under the Charter of the United Nations. The Convention provides the basis for realising equality between men and women, through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, for example, political and public life. Countries that have acceded to the Convention are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. Cameroon signed or acceded to it in 1994. Moreover, Cameroon's commitment to the UN 1948 declaration on Human Rights resulted in

constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights and freedoms meant to benefit all citizens. Pertinent questions to ask here include: What is the extent of Cameroon's equality agenda in regard to gender? How do the current conceptions of gender in the Cameroonian Constitution and social context structure the nature of politics itself? These questions are not easy to answer. This is partly because they incorporate a number of different elements, reflecting a combination of political, and social traditions. Nevertheless, the answers to these questions are of considerable significance in examining the way in which Cameroonian politics is gendered because, lying at the heart of the answers to these questions and therefore of politics, itself is the concept of power. Drawing on empirical research conducted in Cameroon in collaboration with the *Ministère de la Condition Feminine* (MINCOF), the findings of this thesis are based on an unstructured interview guide, direct observation and content analysis. Transcribed interviews, ministerial documents, materials from periodicals, newspaper reports and political speeches were combined with fieldwork notes to constitute the data of this research. A thorough examination of feminist theory was also undertaken as an integral part of the qualitative approach. As a result, the work is framed within current feminist standpoint epistemologies and feminist critiques of the social contract philosophy. This critique involves a reassessment of seventeenth-century contract theory grounded in a prior sexual contract that established new terms of access to women. This introductory chapter sets out the main and secondary research questions, contribution of the study to literature, and outline of the chapters. The thesis focuses on an issue that has been under-researched in the developing Sub-Saharan African country of Cameroon in particular.

The conceptual background

1.1.1- The objective of the investigation

Conceptually, the research presented here stems from an institutionalist critique of Cameroonian democratic participation whose policies produce differential adverse impacts on women through rules, practices and actions. The criticism points to the necessity to take into account the interrelations between gendered phenomena and the governing institutions in which they take place.

The thesis is therefore an investigation of the gendered politics embedded in the

Cameroonian Party-State and the secondary status of the MINCOF in Cameroonian governing institutions. These institutions define and devise a feasible framework for public policy in Cameroon. The reference to Cameroon as a Party-State is by virtue of the governing party's monopoly over all offices and control of advancement reminiscent of the one-party state era (1972-1990). It has complete control over all institutions. As a Party-State, it defines the offices of the state, determines their membership, and permits no organised opposition within them. It controls the making of laws, supervises their application, and is not often bound by constitutional restraint. I argue that one of the specific effects of Cameroon's Party-State, in which the ruling party controls, one way or another, many more spheres of activity than in a competitive system, is that the opportunity spaces available to women to break into public life are more limited.
The ruling CPDM party compels other parties to affiliate with itself. The aim of the investigation is therefore threefold, as I shall now explain.

The main objective of the thesis is to demonstrate that although the liberal political philosophy which underwrites the Cameroonian constitution and democracy commits itself to a political society of equality, in practice various social institutions at the core of Cameroonian political life still reflect gender inequalities in both rights and opportunities. Cameroon perpetuates a gendered occupational structure, which cuts off women from the source of higher wages and high status positions, allows unequal representation in parliament and parliamentary committees, and concentrates women's political participation in the women's wings of political parties which are controlled and manipulated by men. There is also occupational gender segregation in ministerial appointments with women appointed in the main merely to deputy positions of the ministries of health and education, and only two ministries – that of Social Affairs and Women's Affairs – ever headed by women. These ministries are responsible for the privatised social relations of care, parenting and familial responsibilities, and are identified with the promotion of women's vocational activities. This gendered state of affairs is inextricably linked to the French and British colonial administrative legacy, but it is also combined with Cameroonian cultural and social practices and assumptions of a more traditional kind. Hence, the largely patrilineal, patrilocal and patrimonial system coalesces with the apparently modern legal and political context in order to confirm and support gendered practices. These practices deny personal freedom to women to enjoy the opportunities of full participation in public

life, not perhaps in theory but certainly in practice. The objective is to illustrate how these gendered practices are actively promoted within Cameroon's popular political culture.

The second objective of the thesis derives from the creation of the *Ministère de la Condition Feminine* (MINCOF) (Ministry of Women's Affairs), the state structure formally responsible for advancing women's status and rights in Cameroon. As a National Women's Machinery (NWM), it is charged with drawing up and formalising draft legislative instruments aimed at promoting women's rights and integration,without discrimination,in the different domains of national life. The female bureaucrats charged with this responsibility are expected to contribute to greater understanding of the position of women as well as to provide avenues for change in social mentalities, in a Cameroonian culture which is typically male-oriented. Female bureaucrats in the context of this study, are women employed within the state and/or party system to work on advancing the position of women in the wider society. They are to do so through the development of equal opportunity and anti-discrimination strategies for change. The problem is that the work of the MINCOF is made difficult because it is structured by the gender-class dominance of men. It is in the interest of this gender-class to maintain the modern patriarchal gender division of labour. Inevitably, this raises certain dilemmas for MINCOF when their goals for advancing the status and rights of women become subordinated to patriarchal agendas. My second objective therefore is to analyse the extent to which the Cameroonian MINCOF, which is paradoxically intertwined with the governing Women Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (WCPDM) is able to achieve gender equality of opportunity within a gendered social, cultural, economic and political context of Cameroonian governing institutions.

Finally, the thesis focuses on the paradoxical role of the MINCOF and Cameroon's leading female bureaucrat. Herein lies the political paradox. As a female bureaucrat also presiding over the WCPDM, the MINCOF minister is accountable to both the party and state, firmly embedded in a gender-biased government structure yet expected to implement a supposedly gender aware agenda. The challenges and limitations placed on the MINCOF in achieving these goals derive from the framing of its mandate and objectives in a bureaucratic discourse typical of states which maintain a modern patriarchal gender

division of labour. This thesis illustrates that the mandate and objectives of the MINCOF, structured as they are by the politics of the party- state, and by MINCOF's close links with the male-controlled WCPDM, reproduce Cameroonian women's marginality. It is within this Cameroonian patriarchal culture of power and authority that female bureaucrats are expected to negotiate their way, strategise for the collective interests of Cameroonian women, and integrate women-centred values into the Cameroonian contemporary public life. These challenges and limitations are investigated for the first time in this study.

While doing so, I avoid any assumptions about a universal definition of gender. A global definition of the state is likewise avoided. I seek to solve both these problems by incorporating Cameroon's own conception of the state, and by offering a working definition of gender as dictated by the context of my study. The Cameroonian case constitutes an important example for illustrating the complexities of public policy and reflects the competitions and contradictions among various state and party agencies, from a gender perspective.

Definition of concepts

1.2. - An overview of feminist theoretical themes

Elshtain (1981) and Squires (1999) suggest that it has been common to distinguish between liberal, radical, Marxist, postmodernist and psychoanalytic feminisms. It is, however, no longer that simple as Squires (1999), for example, acknowledges that feminist debates have opened up the space for rethinking gender in more multiple ways that have moved beyond the male-female dichotomy. She suggests that feminist theorizing has transformed the terms of debate within political theory such that it becomes possible to theorise not only female subjectivity but also male and female subjectivities. Haraway (1990) has pointed out that with such an array of theories to choose from, it has become difficult to name one's feminism by a single adjective or a noun.

I draw on feminist political theory's reflection on gender to analyse gendered politics in Cameroonian governing institutions. The question to ask at this juncture, is, which category of feminist theory informs my analytical stance since there are currently different categories of gender theory, broadly located? Furthermore, Ferguson (1993) is cited by Squires (1999) as suggesting that the relative merit of the feminist frames is at least as

much political as it is epistemological, given that each frame allows one to ask particular questions; questions which may be more or less appropriate to the political task at hand. Jaggar and Rothenberg (1993) have also suggested that feminist theories ultimately are tools designed for a purpose, the purpose of understanding women's subordination in order to end it . They acknowledge the fact that there is no united feminist movement as feminists are profoundly, and at times bitterly, divided not only over political priorities and methods, but also over goals. They suggest that this divisions are based on the nature, causes and consequences of inequalities between men and women, and their relationships with other social divisions. These divisions no doubt produce deep-seated theoretical differences involving competing arguments and assumptions about the very nature of politics, the meaning of equality and the significance of gender (in Squires 1999:5).

It is important, at this point, to clarify the conceptual distinctions between the different schools of feminist thought in order to avoid the confusion they generate. The aim of this section is to determine the particular feminist school of thought that underpins this thesis in regard to gender as an analytical tool, and how gender might be related to the social inequalities in the Cameroonian political culture.

Grant (1995) has divided feminism's 'schools' into liberal, early radical, strong cultural or cultural radical, weak cultural, socialist, and postmodernist. She points out that a mixture of tradition and practical concerns have dictated her typology. She suggests that the classification of contemporary feminist thought into conventional schools is structured around equality, sameness and difference.

Bryson (1999) suggests that by the 1980s, many writers identified liberal, socialist/Marxist and radical feminism as feminism's three main branches. She adds that since then, many other categories have been identified . She lists them as including black and postmodernist, lesbian, cultural, standpoint, global, anti-racist, disability, power, victim, and new feminisms. She regards such classifications as being to some extent artificial and acknowledges that people often draw their ideas from more than one theoretical starting point , although they are usually not aware that they have done so. This is because these ideas will often reinforce each other, or interact to produce a deeper understanding than would otherwise be possible.

Donovan (1985) is also cited by Squires (1999) as working with the categories of cultural, Freudian, existentialist, Marxist and radical feminisms. Tong (1989) is attributed with categorising feminisms into liberal, Marxist, radical mothering, radical sexuality, socialist,

psychoanalytic, essentialist, and postmodernist.

Squires (1999) cites Ferguson (1993) as having neatly summarised the distinction between the three archetypal strategies. In the first, Ferguson argues that women's inclusion is problematized, in the second, men are problematized and in the third the gendered world itself becomes a problem. Squires (1999) also makes reference to Di Stefano's (1990) similar tripartite distinction which she identifies as rationalist, anti-rationalist and post-rationalist respectively. In the first frame, Di Stefano dissolves *she* into *he* as gender differences are collapsed into the masculine figure of Everyman. In the second, *she* is preserved at the expense of her transformation and liberation from the conventions of femininity. In the third, *she* dissolves into a perplexing plurality of difference, none of which can be theoretically or politically privileged over others.

It is Squires (1999), however, who has summarised the extensive use of the threefold/fourfold typology of liberal, radical, Marxist and social feminisms into three categories which she terms 'inclusion', 'reversal' and 'displacement'. Her aim is to map out three importantly distinct approaches to gender in political theory, a synthesis of which I present below at some length.

The first category, 'inclusion', is also termed objectivist forms of political and gender theory. This brand of feminism is said by her to pursue a strategy of inclusion which aims to include women in a political from which they are currently excluded.

The term 'political' as used here is in regard to its link to public life, the state, and political parties. A widespread recognition of broader and more historically and culturally variable connotation of the term the 'political' is given by Randall (1982). She identifies it in terms of the social nature of the political, its relationship to scarce resources and conflict over their distribution. She also sees politics as activity and as relationship.

Squires (1999) states that the 'inclusion' typology of feminism usually aspire to impartiality, conceive of people as autonomous and espouse an equality politics. She points out that they are often labelled liberal feminists. She suggests that feminists of this school of thought propose the recasting of political theory in order to realise its non-gendered ideal form. Preferred by feminist empiricists, this form of feminism is underpinned by the ideals of equality, justice, gender-neutral citizenship and the representation of ideas.

The third (second in my analysis) category as recast by Squires (1999) is termed 'displacement'. She suggests that those pursuing this strategy aim to destabilise the

apparent opposition between the strategies of inclusion and reversal. They usually adopt a 'genealogical' methodology, speak of the subject positions and of gendering (as a verb) rather than gender (as a noun) and espouse a diversity of politics. She reiterates that feminists of this school of thought are often labelled post-modern or post-structuralist feminists. They propose the rethinking of gender from a political perspective in order to destabilise dominant discourses of gender. This strategy of displacement endorses the ideals of diversity, transgression, heterogeneous citizenship and representation as itself constitutive.

The final category, recast by Squires (1999) as the second typology (third in my analysis), is termed 'reversal'. Those pursuing a strategy of reversal aim to reconfigure the political as currently conceived such that it becomes more open to their gendered specificity. They usually adopt an interpretative methodology, talk of 'Woman' or 'women' and espouse a difference politics. They are often labelled radical, maternal or cultural feminists. Analysis based on this approach endorse the ideas of difference, caring , gender-differentiated citizenship and the representation of identities.

It is the reversal strategy which underpins my analytical stance. This is because, as Squires (1999) has argued, this strategy implies, and I agree, that politics ought to be reconstructed to manifest distinctive perspectives of non-hegemonic gender identities which are usually female. This feminist form of interpretation, according to Squires (1999), comprises two elements. She names them as being the ambition first to reveal the patriarchal gender priorities within dominant knowledge claims and then to reverse them. Its primary task is the assertion of identities and interests in order to produce a different and better way of thinking. The aim of this strategy is not to break the link between experience and knowledge, but to enable a different set of experiences to provide the basis for new knowledge claims. Squires (1999) has further argued that from the interpretative frame, gender shapes political theory in order to reveal the ways in which political theory is currently gendered in patriarchal ways in alternative feminist ways.

I must acknowledge that occasionally I have been compelled to overlap this approach in my analysis with those aspects of the normative task for theorists aiming at displacement, also referred to as genealogists. This was done only as far as it enabled me to reveal the extent which gendered identities are themselves products of particular political discourses, like that employed, for example, in the Cameroonian Constitution, Customary Law and family code. I am encouraged in this regard by first, by Ferguson (19993) who supports a

positive engagement within the frames and argues against the merits of being wholly 'enframed'. Squires' (1999:5) comment that *'it does not lessen the significance or pertinence of the archetypes to recognise that one can (and must do) adopt the three political perspectives'*, she has delineated, is helpful for my analytical approach. She goes on to suggest that

> It may perhaps be possible, despite the theoretical tensions, to endorse both the genealogical frame in order to trace the heterogeneous and changing discursive regimes that constitute any particular subject position, thereby enabling one effectively to transgress their operation.
>
> (Squires 1999:110)

The genealogical frame enabled me to expose the role played by colonial administration in institutionalising gender in Africa generally and in Cameroon in particular. This has in no way obstructed my use of the interpretative frame in order to perceive structural discrepancies and power relations that I argue are responsible for gendered identities in the Cameroonian social setting.

1.2.1- Gender as an institution and the need for its empirical investigation

Social institutions are numerous and varied. They can have an official form, like the state, the church, or marriage; they might be a set of informal cultural rules, like family or gender; or they may be an analytical category used by social scientists, which is not necessarily or always perceived as an institution by people, like class. Giddens (1986) distinguishes between six institutions: class, technology, the state, urbanism, family and gender. Others might also play a role in the organisation of exchanges: ethnicity, age, religion etc. All of these could be deemed to play a part in the patron-client politics of Cameroon. Gender is one of the main social divisions that shapes society. Gender is a concrete case of lack of independence of the individual and of the collective nature of the individual's subjective preferences: women are frequently both dependent and depended upon and their preferences change with the nature and degree of their relations of dependence. My feminist analytical stance compels me to place gender above social class, age and ethnicity, which inevitably overlap with each other, as the primary tool of social analysis. This is because gender focuses on the manner of women's inclusion in the public arena. This affects the relationship between gender and politics. Grant (1995) has defined gender as

> 'a social construct, the persona that overlaps biological distinctions, such as they are. Gender is enmeshed in power and gender 'differences' stem from and express that power'.
>
> (Grant 1995:150-151)

Bryson (1999) has suggested that the meaning of gender, for example , cannot be established by a single act of definition as it is deeply contested and fraught with theoretical and political implications. She argues that gender is not simply about individual attributes. She points out that radical feminism has shown that gender means power. According to Bryson (1999-47), 'to learn masculinity or femininity is therefore to learn about subordination and domination.' Bryson uses the example of Britain's Margaret Thatcher to illustrate that in displaying the personal qualities deemed necessary to authority, a woman is also transgressing her gender role. If she succeeds as an individual, she will fail as a woman; and it is as a woman as well as an individual that she is likely to be judged. Much as I agree with both Grant's (1995) definition of gender and Bryson's (1999) analysis of it, it is important to contextualize both concepts of the term as it pertains to the Cameroonian situation. In this regard, the use of gender as an analytical tool in Cameroon, needs to be couched in the notions of gender that shaped its institution and its effects on gender relations manifested, for example , in Cameroon's family code (see 1.2.2 below). As explained in chapter 3, the views of the colonial administration on gender roles were based on their definition of male and female identity. These views led to the division of spheres between the sexes in, and the assignment of, social roles based on one's sexual identity. As explained in 4.3.3, the dominant model of separate spheres for male and female had its roots in the classical social contract philosophy which also underpinned the political ideology of Victorian times. As a result of this, colonial administration projected the gender representations of their own society on their perception of African gender relations. This, I argue, had the significant effect of shaping the economic and political order to suit colonial administrative aims. I further argue that this was an exercise that set the scene for gendered power relations in Cameroon. In effect, therefore, Western bureaucracy, itself a male-dominated system of governance, was extended to Africa/ Cameroon through this process. As Mohanty (1991) has argued, Colonialism bureaucratized gender (and race) and institutionalised ideologies of white masculinity as normative. Corrin (1999) argues in a similar vein when she suggests that the distinctions between the public (important political, external world of men) and the

private (unimportant, apolitical, internal/domestic world of women) are crucial in understanding broader conceptions of the political. She argues that

> Within colonial rule 'opportunities' were generally distorted by Western ideological presumptions so that legacies of 'democratic' structures and procedures from 'mother' countries included barriers to women's participation. (Corrin 1999:176)

In Cameroon, this intervention manifested itself in the Customary Law ideology that underwrites Cameroon's Family Code. As Boserup (1970) has pointed out, 'development' or 'modernisation' during the colonial period brought about a widening division between men and women of the same social group. When policies were devised to create scientific agriculture with cash crops, extension services were offered to men, despite the fact that in many areas women were actively involved in the production of food crops. With the expansion of education, boys were given advantages; the disproportion between the sexes becoming greater at each level of education. Science and new technologies were introduced to the men, while home economics and traditional crafts were deemed appropriate for women. Young men migrated to find jobs in the growing bureaucracy while young women were often excluded. Boserup's (1970) account demonstrates that as a result of colonial development policies which gave opportunities in the public sphere to males, colonised women experienced loss of economic and political power. In viewing gender divisions in terms of women in the domestic sphere and men in the public realm, colonial administrators created a gendered governing system on this basis. I argue that the process is responsible for the development of a gendered political culture in Cameroon, for example, as their policies reinforced male dominance. The present system of governance in Cameroon reflects the gendered colonial administrative culture passed on at independence in 1960/61 respectively. I argue that this has played a major role in differentiating between men's and women's participation in Cameroonian governing institutions.

Lorber (1994) illuminates the institutional characteristic of gender when she argues that

> My concept of gender differs from previous conceptualisations in that I do not locate it in the individual or in interpersonal relations, although the construction and maintenance of gender are manifest in the personal identities and in social interaction. Rather, I see gender as an institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organisations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics. (Lorber 1994:1)

Lorber (1994) not only locates gender in the dynamic of social order, outside the individual, but conceptualises gender as a social institution. She places emphasis on the institutional aspects of gender and further argues that

> The gendered microstructure and gendered macrostructure reproduce and reinforce each other. The social reproduction of gender in individuals reproduces the gendered societal structure; as individuals act out gender norms and expectations in face-to-face interaction, they are constructing gendered systems of dominance and power.
>
> (Lorber 1994:6)

Lorber's (1994) conceptualisation of gender is vital for the approach to gender in this thesis. It enables me to locate the institutional character of gender in combination with the gendered character of Cameroonian governing institutions. It further enables my understanding of the gender /power relations that pervade Cameroonian society both from a micro (family) as well as a macro (party-state) aspect.

As informed by Acker 1992 and Kenny 1996, gender as an analytic tool enables me to understand that focusing on gendered institutions means analysing gender in the processes, practices and ideologies of the Cameroonian party-state. It also involves looking at the distributions of power in various social sectors that determine gender relations.

There are two primary uses for gender as an analytic tool in this thesis. The first is that it plays a role in bringing abstract theory into contact with processed data. Second, the theories discussed in chapter three, are too general to be directly applicable to specific systems, like the one operating in Cameroon, and gender as an analytic tool is required for the job. Gender is a unifying factor that gives some understanding of the system, and that generates real data. Moreover, it can be localised. As a concept it is abstract in the sense that it allows the application of feminist theory. Therefore, gender is the social institution chosen for further investigation in this thesis because , as opposed to class or the state, gender seems to have been under-researched by Cameroonist social scientists, just as it has been underdeveloped in political theories. Gender underpins the identification and framing of the overall question of my thesis. In association with the literature review gender enables me to do the following:

- Establish the significance of the research for policy and practice, with an overview of the issues of gender equity concerns in Cameroon.
- Contribute to fundamental knowledge through expanding the generalisations of the previous theoretical propositions on gender-gaps in political participation, by relocating the problem area to the Cameroonian social context.
- Guide the development of explanations during data collection and analysis in seeking to explain, evaluate, and suggest linkages among events.
- Provide theoretical categories that can be used to organise the data, and discover new connections between theory and real world phenomena.

Limitations

The investigation is undertaken in the full awareness of the limitations involved.

I start from a specific standpoint, which some might term a bias, in which I deliberately and systematically emphasise the disadvantaged position of the marginalised Cameroonian women, among whom I include myself.

I neither investigate nor emphasise the unfavourable circumstances of subordinate men, who might be experiencing inequality in accessing scarce resources in the public sphere as well. Nevertheless, this personal interest will not bias the study because the terms of the social contract ensure that all men, even when they are subordinated as workers, are masters in the private sphere. I do not therefore see them as oppressed by gender stereotypes or as a social group that challenges male stereotypes and privilege. As a social group, all Cameroonian men benefit from the patriarchal male culture and privilege.

The third limitation derives from the ambiguous nature of the political-constitutional discourse. This makes it impossible to draw one unique and valid line concerning available equal opportunities, below which all women are denied access to the public sector. Gendered political and femocratic participation can, however, be deduced through a variety of alternative aspects which depict the boundaries within which women are allowed to take part in the public realm.

I will begin by outlining these aspects, and then go on to elucidate the thesis.

The research problem

Gender, in the Cameroonian context of my research, is significant specifically in regard to the positioning of individuals within the civil service bureaucracy that reproduces hierarchical gender relations; in regard to the nomination of political party candidates for winnable seats; to parliamentary committee assignments; in regard to the dilemmas arising for female bureaucrats when their UN-instigated feminist agendas become subordinated to party political patriarchal agendas; to the articulation of patriarchal relations within the family. Women, as a gender class, are held responsible for the privatised social relations of care and family ties. These are then transplanted into family roles and the society at large. This will be demonstrated throughout this thesis. These institutions identify gender as cutting across all institutional dimensions.

The concept, meaning and structure of gender

The concept of gender as an analytical category is contested by feminists across disciplines. Scott (1986) for example, suggests that these contests are an example of the effect of contradictions in liberal democratic theory which operates simultaneously as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. While not denying the ways in which the application on the concept of gender can sometimes exclude certain classes and groups like blacks and lesbians, I argue that as an ideal, it can provide a weapon in the hands of the disadvantaged. The use of gender as an analytic category will enable me to discover the reality of difference in my analysis.

Harding (1986) has advanced a defence of gender as an analytical category. She suggests that :

> The fact that there are class, race and cultural differences between women and between men is not, as some thought, a reason to find gender difference either theoretically unimportant or politically irrelevant. In virtually every culture, gender difference is a pivotal way in which humans identify themselves as persons, organise social relations, and symbolise meaningful natural and social events and processes.
>
> (Harding 1986:18)

Harding adds that the very pervasiveness of gender requires systematic feminist analysis. She urges that feminists must theorise gender, conceiving of it as:

> An analytical category within which human think about and organise social activity rather than as a natural consequence of sex difference, or even merely a social variable assigned to individual people in different ways from culture to culture.
>
> (Harding 1986:17)

Harding (1986) recognises that the fact that gender appears only in culturally specific forms in no way mitigates the force of gender analysis. She argues that on the contrary, gender as an analytic category illuminates crucial cultural processes as follows:

> Gendered social life is produced through three distinct processes: it is the result of assigning dualistic gender metaphors to various perceived dichotomies that rarely have anything to do with sex differences (gender symbolism); it is the consequence of appealing to these gender dualisms to organise social activity, dividing necessary social activities between different groups of humans (gender structure); it is a form of socially constructed individual identity only imperfectly correlated with either the reality or the perception of sex differences.
>
> (Harding 1986:17-18)

Scott's (1986:1067) definition of gender is as a concept involving two interrelated but analytically different distinct parts as follows: 'gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.'

Scott further expounds on gender as a constitutive element of relationships by emphasising that

> gender operates in multiple fields, including available symbols that invoke multiple representations; normative concepts that set forth interpretations of meanings of symbols; social institutions and organisations and subjective identity. Gender is a useful category of analysis because it provides a way to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction.
>
> (Scott 1986:1070)

Scott (1986) note that gender is always contextually defined and repeatedly constructed, thus pre-empting Black feminists' challenge (see Davis 1981, Collins 1980) that gender has been cast in terms of an instrument of segregation and exclusion. She adds that a self-critical deployment of gender analysis has provided and could provide meaningful explanations of historically and culturally specific relations obtaining between individual subjects and modes of social organisation. She suggests that

> if feminist scholars 'examine how things happened in order to find out why it happened,... their analytical investigations will enable them to reverse and displace binary and hierarchical construction of gender, refuting the naïve belief that gender is real or self-evident or in the nature of things.
>
> (Scott 1986:1066&1067)

My source of inspiration for adopting gender as analytical tool is, the defence which both Scott (1986) and Harding (1986) offer. It embodies, from my perspectives, concerns about the multiplicity of meanings accorded gender in contemporary feminist debates. They provide an account of gender as an analytical tool which suggests that feminist research into such connections can undermine the mistaken beliefs informing the natural attitude. Harding (1998) further suggests that individual gendered identities are a cause of gendered social relations and meanings because:

> Gendered social structures are produced by assigning some work and activities to women and others to men. Gendered meaning systems are produced by using putatively observed contrasts between women's and men's characteristics to give meanings to social phenomena that have little or nothing to do with biological sex differences. Thus gender is neither an outcome of sex differences nor a matter only of how each of us is identified by ourselves and others. …In different cultures, gendered social structures and meanings take on distinctive characteristics…. Gender relations are to some extent or other always heirarchically organised since men tend to control more social resources and manliness is more closely identified with the admirably "human".
>
> (Harding 1998:92-93)

Harding's (9186,1998) proposition that these differences are not sex-based is contested. Stoller (1968) is credited with formulating the distinction between sex and gender to differentiate the socio-cultural meanings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. (see Oakley 1972). This formulation is derived from the base of biological sex differences 'male' and 'female', on which they were erected. Stoller (1985) acknowledged the introduction of a number of important distinctions to illuminate the complexity of gender. These include sex, sexuality, sexual gender identity, gender role, gender role identity. Stoller (1985) argues that

> Gender identity typically refers to the individual's own feeling of being a man or a woman … that bears some relation to cultural conceptions of masculinity or femininity.
>
> (Stoller 1985:11)

Stoller's (1985) analysis support the theory that two genders positing dichotomous categories is not as a result of the perceiver's expectation. Gender is based on one's sexual orientation, on sexuality. As MacKinnon (1982) has argued, sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality because gender is based on an ideology that attributes its learned

qualities to nature. Gender is therefore a culturally shaped group of attributes and behaviours given to the female or the male. According to Firestone (1970), gender distinctions structure every aspect of our lives by constituting the unquestioned framework in terms of which society views women and men. Gender difference, she adds, is an elaborate system of male domination.

The focus of my work in this thesis on gender as a locus of power relations therefore sets the terms of debate for theoretical conceptualisation. Gender division of labour in the family, which give exclusive responsibilities for childcare and domestic work to Cameroonian women, produces gender-differentiated citizens with desires and capacities to continue the gender division of labour, in the Cameroonian public arena. These differences between men and women create a gender-gap in all spheres of Cameroonian life.

Based on her context, Eisenstein (1981) has argued that such gender-gaps reflect two contradictory realities simultaneously. First, it reflects the gendered reality of women's lives; the tendency to think 'like' women because they are nurturers. Simultaneously, women believe in their right to equality of opportunity and therefore attack patriarchy as a sex class.

In Cameroon, the gender gap seems to be greater in traditional political organisations, political parties and state bureaucracy. These institutions have imposed a traditional role on women that admits them in public sphere only on the basis of their nurturing roles. It is on this basis that I argue that participation in the Cameroonian governing institutions is gendered. Gender has traditionally been considered one of the main sources of inequality in participation leading Kenny (1996) to argue that

> To say that an institution is gendered, then is to recognise that constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture of an institution rather than existing in society or fixed within individuals which they then bring whole to the institution.
>
> (Kenny 1996:456)

Kenny (1996) has also argued that the experience of participants within an institution will vary according to gender. She cites Epstein (1993) as suggesting that not only will women most likely have fewer opportunities than men, but their perceptions of the obstacles and

existence of circumscribed opportunities will vary by gender. Kenny (1996) concludes that political institutions produce, reproduce, and subvert gender.

The crucial point for any work on gender is what the researcher determines gender to be. Much of the debate around gender revolves around procreation and sexuality, and physiological difference. Yet gender has been variously conceptualised. Lorber (1994) for instance, offers a new paradigm of gender – gender as a social institution. She sees gender as

> An institution that establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organisations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics and is also an entity in and of itself.
>
> (Lorber 1994:7)

Lorber's definition contradicts that of sex-role gender theorists who argue that what children learn produces masculine and feminine attitudes, and provides motivations and personalities that will fit children into their adult roles. MacKinnon (1982) had earlier argued that sex and gender are a world-wide system of domination of women by men through the control of women's sexuality and procreative capacity. In her view, the sex-gender system of women's oppression is deliberate, not accidental, and pervades other social institutions. These include the family, especially, which produces the justification for women's subordination. MacKinnon is particularly critical of such modern social-control as the law which imposed legal restrictions on women. MacKinnon (1990) argues that if men and women are alike, unlike treatment is inequality, but if they are not alike, dissimilar treatment is appropriate. For MacKinnon (1990), therefore,

> Gender is socially constructed as a *difference* epistemologically, and sex discrimination law bounds gender *equality* doctrinally. Socially, one tells a woman from a man by their difference from each other, but a woman is discriminated against on the basis of sex only when she can first be said to be the same as a man. A built-in tension exists between this concept of equality which presupposes difference. Sex equality becomes contradiction in terms of an oxymoron.
>
> (MacKinnon, 1990:215)

Lorber (1994) suggests that the answer to gender equality should be less emphasis on the masculinity and femininity in bringing up children, depicting diverse behaviour undertaken by both men and women, and encouraging men's access to jobs traditionally filled by women, and vice versa. This, she argues, will avoid creating unnecessary differences that

go beyond the biological. Speaking from an African perspective, I argue that gender as an analytical tool is implicated in gender as an explanan because, in my thinking, the two are inseparable. As an *explanan* gender justifies, accounts for the reasons for both the public/private distinction and the concentration of Cameroonian men and women in different sectors, occupations, and political organs. The debates illustrate the way gender might inform and shape the study of political theory as diverse as the conceptions of gender itself. In addition, the debate about gender as an analytical tool can be interpreted as a discussion within social construction. Such a construction depicts sex as biologically determined, and gender as socially constructed. For my part, a relational theory is essential. It embodies, from my perspective, concerns about the multiplicity of meanings accorded to gender in contemporary feminist debates. My definition of gender for the purposes of this study as influenced by these feminist theorists (see Pateman, 1988, 1989, 1990; MacKinnon, 1982, 1990;Lorber, 1994; Scott, 1986; Collins, 1990;Harding, 1986;) is as follows

> *Gender, in the context of my study, is the socio-cultural construction, in Cameroon, of stratified and hierarchical relations between male and female which pattern the structures of every aspect of the lives of Cameroonians including, in particular, the family, the workplace, the marketplace, politics, the state in all its dimensions, and the economy, which are also deeply embedded not only in the sexuality, language and culture of Cameroonians but also – and this a major focus of my research- in Cameroonian governing institutions.*

I expect to find within contemporary political participation in Cameroon, that political roles generally remained traditional, that is, fully separated by gender. This would lead me to conclude that political participation tends to be caught within the dominant agendas of the party-state, which maintains the gender division of labour. This factor especially in relation to women's marginalised political citizenship, leads me to define politics in the Cameroonian social context of my study as:

The scheming, manoeuvring for power, for personal, ethnic and linguistic advantage that occurs within and outside Cameroon's governing institutions . Participation is partially determined, regulated, controlled *and perpetuated by a wide range of social and political institutions, including gender.*

Such a political definition, where participation is partially determined raises two questions from a gender perspective. What has been the impact of such partiality within Cameroon's

governing institutions on women's participation in the public arena? What are the present expressions of gender relations, or patriarchy that require specific attention in Cameroonian governing institutions? Political concepts are, after all connected specific forms of social life. These questions can only be answered within the parameters of women's power at the family level. The next section discusses the obstacles and patterns of resistance to female participation in the male dominated public sphere, as contained in certain restrictions in the family code. This, I argue, is the most important aspect in denying Cameroonian women decision-making rights.

1.2.2- The general position of women in Cameroon's Family Law

An important factor in women's disadvantage in work and in political life are the restrictive clauses in Cameroon's family law. Fraternal contractual patriarchy, which structures Cameroonian democracy, bears on women not only in the family, but also in political life. This sets co-optation, submission and complicity as the price for acceptance in patriarchal power relations that are not easy to evade. It is true that the Cameroonian Government took certain judicial and legislative measures to address *de jure* discrimination against women. These included the adoption in the 1972 Constitution, of the principle of equality between the sexes. Others include the Labour Code, which recognised the right to work; the General Statute of the State Public Function, which gave all citizens, regardless of sex, the right to have access to public service functions; and the Code on Nationality, which granted women and men the same rights in relation to the award, change or retention of nationality. The problem is that although the laws are not discriminatory, certain legal measures, within the Family Code, discriminate against women. Article 7 of Cameroon's Trade Code allows the husband to interrupt his wife's working activity through the notification of his opposition to the Trade Tribunal. According to articles 1421 and 1428 of the Civil Code, women are not fully entitled to use, enjoy or sell their property. In this context, article 1421 grants the husband the right to administer communal property, thereby giving him the right to sell or mortgage the couple's property without the wife's consent. Articles 108 and 215 of the Civil Code grants the husband the sole right to determine the family domicile, and article 361 of the Penal Code defines the crime of adultery in terms more favourable to men than women. This situation is further compounded by the combination of the French legal system of

1804, referred to as the Napoleonic Code, the English system and Cameroonian Customary Law. Section 27 (1) of the Southern Cameroon's High Court Law (1955) states:

> The High Court shall observe and enforce the observance of every law and custom which is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience nor compatible with any law for the time being in force, and nothing in this law shall deprive any person of the benefit of any such native law or custom .

Nevertheless, the customary law, which is discriminatory against women, often takes precedence over other legislative enactments. Discriminatory inheritance law, for example, still dominates. Women do not inherit property and estate letters of administration are customarily issued to male relatives. The same Law of Succession, prevents female children from inheriting real estate from parents. Since, upon marriage, female children leave the family to join their husband's family, parents prefer to give property to sons who will remain in the family. Despite constitutional guarantees recognising women's rights, women and men do not enjoy equality in marriage. By custom and law, polygamy is the rule. Spousal abuse under custom does not constitute grounds for divorce. In the event of divorce, particularly in the prevalent traditional customary courts, custody of children over six years of age is determined by the husband's wishes, since both the wife and children belong to the man. Custody disputes are sometimes settled depending on whether or not the brideprice has been paid. Women do not have control over joint property when a husband dies. In such cases, the property may be taken by the husband's family and she may be obliged to continue conjugal relations with the husband's male kin. Section 361 of the Penal Code criminalizes adultery, but the provisions differ depending on whether the adulterer is the wife or husband. The law provides that (1) "any married woman having sexual intercourse with a man other than her husband shall be punished," while "(2) any married man having sexual intercourse in the matrimonial home, or habitually having sexual intercourse elsewhere, with a woman other than his wife or wives, shall be punished." While in the case of women all adultery is a criminal offence, for men it is a crime depending on the venue or if it is habitual. Cameroon's Nationality Law stipulates that only the husband and not the wife can confer citizenship on a foreign-born spouse. The Civil Status Registration (Ordinance No. 81-02of 29 June 1998) Article 74 (1) states that a married woman "may exercise a trade different from her husband." Article 74 (2), however adds that "the husband may object to the exercise of such a trade in

the interest of the marriage or their children." This provision gives the husband the power to define wife's work, and it effectively denies a woman the right to freely choose employment guaranteed under the Constitution and gives the husband the right to object. A considerable number of newspaper reports suggest that violence against women is widespread in Cameroon. Wife beating, for instance, is justified by custom. The husband has the right to chastise his wife and the degree of chastisement is unspecified. However, the wife cannot complain because it is assumed that she deserves the punishment. Although the law criminalizes rape, indecency to a minor, and assault, there is no domestic abuse law. The existing laws do not impose effective punishment against individuals who commit acts of violence against women and girls. Additionally, cultural attitudes make it extremely difficult for women and girls to file complaints against their husbands. Marital rape is recognised as an offence under statutory law but it is culturally accepted that the consent to marriage constitutes consent to each sexual intercourse. The government is complacent about the situation and has failed to take decisive action to combat the problem, such as passing legislation specifically prohibiting spousal abuse. The government has made no efforts to ensure that law enforcement officials and public officers responsible for investigating violence against women receive training to understand the complexities of issues surrounding domestic assault. Even in cases where legal redress is available, reports are rarely made to the police. An arrest and eventual prosecution is unlikely because the police usually encourage the woman or girl to reconcile with her partner. No domestic abuse advocacy programmes, either government sponsored or private, are in place. There are no crisis centres or other facilities and services to help women deal with the situations and lead them through to the legal process. Abortion is prohibited under Section 337 of the Cameroonian Penal Code, with the exception of grave danger to the mother's health or if the pregnancy has resulted from rape. Women face a year's imprisonment and a fine of 200.000 CFA francs (£200), if they obtain the abortion illegally. The high levels of maternal mortality, with one in 33 mothers dying in childbirth, may be associated with the unavailability of safe and legal abortion. This litany of restrictions on women within Cameroon's Family Code supports feminist arguments that the family is the site of gender struggles and the ideological ground on which gender difference and women's oppression are constructed.

Millett (1971), for example, has described the family as a patriarchal whole, mediating between the individual and the social structure. She argues that

patriarchy's chief institution is the family, adding that it is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society. For Millett, the family is a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole.

> Serving as an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads. Even patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state.... Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including the power of physical abuse.... Classically, as head of the family the father is both the begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property.
>
> (Millett, 1971:35)

My argument is that such a family system theorised by Millett above, and encoded into law in Cameroon as outlined above, creates men's and women's unequal social and political status in the Cameroonian society, and the codes referred to above, are gendered, with women held in lesser esteem than men. No doubt then that most feminist scholarship of political theory which has analysed the public- private divide found it to be at the centre of the formation of liberal political theory, and the general understanding of politics. Feminist scholarship has also demonstrated that the construction of the public and private spheres in Ancient Greek thought also defines the role of men and women in modern political philosophy. Pateman (1988, 1989), for example argues that the two spheres are founded on two very different contracts. The social contract in the public sphere is distinguished by Pateman from a 'sexual contract' in the private sphere. According to her, the social contract of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau of seventeenth and eighteenth century political philosophy, is explicitly a contract between men. Nevertheless, this contract is possible only because of the sexual contract between men giving them access to women and allowing them power to create the private sphere and the patriarchal authority within families, based on the natural right of the husband. The Cameroonian gender-biased family code emphasises the varying ways in which defined roles for men and women impact upon each other. This feminist theory is pivotal in understanding Cameroonian women's exclusion from full citizenship in both theory and practice. The information in the family law is crucial for understanding how the law intentionally discriminates, and affects

women differently from men. The legal rights of Cameroonian women under such a patrilineal system need to be understood since these affects women's participation in the public arena. I argue that the restrictions in the family code are responsible for women's inability to claim the rights available to them in the constitution and the law.

The operational definition of gender of this thesis is based on power; the thesis discusses the power paradigms which it assumes are responsible for gender based inequality as outlined in Cameroon's Family Law. Gender in this context therefore entails the dominance-submissive roles that men and women play, which are the basis of power relations all kinds. Gender is therefore the platform from which power is articulated and this thesis suggests that it is the 'power over' model which is given legitimacy in the institutional contexts which are the subject of my study. Moreover, in the gender power dynamics as in politics, the male domain is concerned primarily with the allocation and distribution of power. This, however, does not imply that men's interests are entirely coherent, though men tend to act more cohesively in defence of their gender interests. This happens especially in the structures and practices of public institutions where historically their needs and interests are strongly embedded – in one word, the 'bureaucracy'. The next section discusses the concept in relation to gender.

Bureaucracy

In developing countries like Cameroon, state bureaucracy is an essential and vitally important instrument in development. Bureaucracy is also the strongest institutional inheritance (as chapter3 will demonstrate) of the post-colonial state. Control was the theme of colonial bureaucracy. Invariably, control is prominent in post-colonial states like Cameroon. The term bureaucracy has many uses which can be identified in the available literature across disciplines. This term is further complicated when applied to the Third World where bureaucracy can mean a military regime, or a single-party entity characterised by neo-patrimonialism. What then is bureaucracy?

From a sociological perspective, bureaucracy entails a form of administration in which authority is diffused among numerous offices and there is adherence to inflexible rules of operation. From a political perspective, Scruton (1982) defines the term eloquently when he says that bureaucracy is rule by administrative offices. He adds that in a bureaucracy actual power is vested in those who are, from the legal point of view, administrative intermediaries between the sovereign and subject. They, the civil servants, although they

can be military and religious bureaucracies, can delay or advance the causes of both the sovereign and subject to an extent that gives them *de facto* control over major political transformations. He cites Weber (1921) as arguing that the conflict between capitalism and socialism must be extinguished by the triumph of bureaucracy, which would prove indispensable for the rational attainment of the goals of any organisation in the industrial society. The result predicted is the creation of an increasingly centralised, impersonal, and increasingly 'routinized' kind of authority.

The problem with this definition of bureaucracy for my study is the way in which Cameroon contrasts with the Western ideal whereby civil servants remain in their positions longer than the politicians thereby allowing their activities to impose a continuity on governance. The Cameroonian style of bureaucracy, as will be demonstrated, can be likened to that of the socialist or communist systems of Eastern Europe where it was impossible to distinguish government from administration, as appointments to high positions within the bureaucracy are often linked to party affiliation and determined by the ruling party. Such a system, as the Cameroonian example will illustrate in this thesis, prevents the existence of genuinely administrative as opposed to political, decisions. In effect, the system is an amalgamation of politics and administration.

Feminists' consideration of bureaucracy is equally central to work in this thesis. These approaches reveal the extent to which bureaucratic systems cause the differential impact of policies on citizens. According to Young (1990), one of many feminist analysts of the term, bureaucracies are distinguished from other forms of social organisation in operating according to impersonal rules that apply in the same way to all cases. She adds that ideally, people within bureaucracies have or lack status, privilege, power, or autonomy by virtue of their position in the division of labour, and not by virtue of any personal attributes of birth, or family connection. She suggests that according to the values of bureaucratic organisation, positions should be assigned according to merit. In Young (1990), this definition is the ideal of what bureaucracy should be. She focuses on the gendered outcomes in the existing bureaucratic structures and questions the system of justice which assumes a hierarchical division of labour in which some jobs and offices carry significant autonomy, decision-making power, authority, income, and access to resources, while others lack of these attributes. Young's position on division of labour can be clarified further by examining her understanding of the term, as follows

> Division of labour as an institutional structure involves the range of tasks performed in a given position, the definition of the nature, meaning, and value of those tasks, and the relations of cooperation, conflict, and authority among positions.... On the one hand, feminists have questioned the justice of a pattern of distribution of positions that finds a small proportion of women in the most prestigious jobs. On the other hand, they have also questioned the conscious or unconscious association of many occupations or jobs with masculine or feminine characteristics.
>
> (Young, 1990:23)

In defining bureaucracy as a system that defines and organises social projects as the object of technical control, Young (1990) also emphasises that bureaucracy was conceived as the way to eliminate domination. She argues that the formalisation embedded in bureaucracy, often has been designed to transform traditional systems of power in which one agent is arbitrarily able to force another to submit to the dictates of his or her will. Young also articulates the view that for each area of activity, bureaucracy develops formal, explicit rules, impersonal in the sense that they must be followed by whoever occupies the positions or engages in the activities they describe. Thus, bureaucracy introduces a universalization and standardisation of social activity.

What Young's (1990) arguments imply is that hierarchies should be eliminated in the belief that direct action and democratic participation is preferred to conventional political participation. Nevertheless, the arguments put forward by Young (1990) do not mean all feminists advocate only non-hierarchical forms of organisation. Based on the British example of Greenham Common peace camp of the 1970s, Bryson (1999) suggested that although many feminists remain highly suspicious of any kind of structured organisation and many more insist that existing structures need to be democratised, many have come to see the value of some formal structures. Phillips (1991) for example, says that when the ideals of democratic equality are set impossibly high, they can produce contradictory effects.

These arguments illustrate that there is plenty of scope for disagreement and agreement as to what bureaucracy is. In focussing on all the above ideas, I suggest that bureaucracy entails a form of administration in which authority is diffused among numerous offices and there is adherence to inflexible rules of operation. A bureaucrat in the context of this study is an official

who insists on adherence to rules and routine regardless of the needs of the situation. This type of bureaucracy is characterised by a clearly defined division of labour, a hierarchy of offices, dependence on formal rules and the availability of a career. When reference is made to party-state bureaucracy in this study therefore, it denotes the public sector and not the negative aspects of the term manifested in the slow workings, compilation of procedures, and frustrations the Cameroonian citizens always endure as a result of our centralised system.

Furthermore, the Weberian model of bureaucracy, depicts how bureaucracies should operate while this study's interest is the analysis of how bureaucracies actually work in the Cameroonian social context.

Thus, it is essential at this point to move away from the general notions of bureaucracy and dwell on the specific ways of organising which can be shown to rest upon particular gender foundations.

The modern bureaucracy as conceptualised by Weber depends upon particular configurations of gender relations. Considerations of how bureaucracies are gendered as perceived by leading feminist writers Kanter (1977) and Ferguson (1984) give an example of two different approaches. In her analysis of the subordination of women within corporate hierarchies, Kanter presents a feminist revision of the Weberian classic account of bureaucracy. Kanter argues that women in organisations do not have to access to the same opportunities for power and efficacy through activities and alliances with men. Women within corporate hierarchies, as exemplified by secretaries and female bureaucrats, are dispossessed of power in many ways, two of which are the boss-secretary relation and male homosociability. Male homosociability represents one of the main ways in which management becomes a closed gendered circle, enabling mangers to respond to uncertainty and the constant pressure to communicate that is one of the main characteristics of the managerial role. For Kanter then, it is not men as men that dominate women in organisations, it is men as incumbents of powerful official positions that have more power than women.

Ferguson (1984) on the other hand, presents a radical argument, identifying the power structures of bureaucratic capitalist society as a primary source of the oppression of women and men. Plainly put, bureaucratic structures are inherently patriarchal.

Both their definitions of such power structural relationships are analytically useful to keep in mind while exploring the role of female bureaucrats within the party-state bureaucratic structures in the Cameroonian social context.

1.2.3- The concept of 'femocracy'

The concept of bureaucracy explained above implies that everyone and anyone who works within a bureaucracy is a bureaucrat. The discussion in this section is intended to provide a theoretical basis from which to explain some of the intricacies of using the term female or 'feminist' bureaucrat to describe state officers charged with advancing the cause of women in Cameroon. For a practical investigation of the hypothesis, field research was undertaken in collaboration with MINCOF. The question is, why the MINCOF? What is the link to my topic? National Women's Machineries (NWMs) refer to structures or agencies that are established by statute, administrative directive or political resolution. Since the Australian feminists coined the term 'femocrat' to describe women's association and efforts to influence policy through positions in the state bureaucracy, it has been widely written about. (see amongst others, Sainsbury (1999); Sawar (1995, 1999); Stetson and Mazur (1995); Yeatman (1990); Watson (1989); and Savage and Witz (1992). Hester Eisenstein (1996: viii) suggests that femocracy is 'a significant part of the history of the second wave of feminism and of its attempts to place the concerns of women on the agenda of national and international politics.' Femocracy is therefore a distinctive form of feminist intervention within state bureaucracy. According to Eisenstein (1996), Australian femocrats were feminist women who became bureaucrats in a quest for social change. Along with their allies in grassroots organisations, trade unions, and political parties, they helped to change the gender landscape of their country. She adds that like all feminists internationally, Australian feminists were engaged in a variety of activist campaigns.

> They sought affordable child-care, education, and job training for women. They fought to end wife battering and child abuse. They campaigned against sexual violence and for women-centred health care. They lobbied for anti-discrimination, affirmative action, and equal pay measures. All aimed at giving women a broader range of options and at lessening women's dependence – physical, economic, and psychological – on men.
>
> (Eisenstein 1996: xii)

Eisenstein defines femocrats as a

> A highly visible group of women, openly committed to feminism, femocrats were senior public servants who owed their positions to pressure from the organised women's movement. The femocratic strategy rested on a gender analysis that government policy reflected the interests of men. To the extent that government policy, …reinforced traditional gender roles . The femocrats' job was to change this, by delivering policy changes that advanced women's interests. (Eisenstein 1996: xii)

She further suggests that in 1981 the term femocrat was surrounded by controversy but by 1990, had gained currency to be used matter-of-factly in the daily press. She points out that it has acquired international status and is current in Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, and Latin America. She suggests that the meaning has sometimes become distorted especially when used to describe any woman in a government position. She emphasises that

> The authentic meaning, for defenders and detractors alike, is more restricted : it refers to a woman, feminist by conviction, who works within the government bureaucracy at a senior level to advance the status of women in society.
>
> (Eisentein 1996: xii)

She adds that the rhetoric of government agencies reflected a widespread acceptance of feminist analysis. Prime ministers personally launched programmes for women in language that acknowledged the patriarchal structures preventing women's economic, political, and cultural equality. Support for women's issues became central to mainstream electoral politics.

Both the terms 'femocracy' and National Women's Machineries (NWMs) are Western concepts. My justification for employing these concepts in the context of Cameroon is that 'femocrats' and NWMs are the bureaucratic tools employed by the state for introducing concerns for gender equality of opportunity. The concept of femoracy in particular is used to highlight the inequality in Cameroonian women's access to and participation in policy making and the political process. It is also aimed at demonstrating the inadequate institutional empowerment to promote the status of Cameroonian women. In the process of policy-making in the West, a critical point of leverage on decision makers is the presence of an active, independent women's movement. The issues around which these movements have emerged include amongst others, civil rights, equal political, economic and social rights. According to Andermahr et al (1997), it is the term under which many women have mobilised in movements aimed at social transformation of sex and gender. These struggles require a break with custom. In its global form, the women's movement played an important role through the United Nations (UN) in establishing NWMs and by implication 'femocracy' in Cameroon. By contrast, women's organisations in Cameroon do not have the autonomy to consolidate themselves into expressing a similar gendered position on national decision-making processes. According to Tsanga (1998), the

independent National Council of Cameroon Women of which she was the last president, was replaced by a single organisation linked to the ruling party in 1989. Thus the independent development of women's organisation was repressed and although there are numerous women's associations, these are oriented towards voluntary self-help networks. Most also have close ties with the ruling CPDM party. The WCPDM for example, is manipulated to mobilise women in support of the ruling CPDM through these associations. Together with the MINCOF, the WCPDM agenda is controlled within the party-state administration.

In formulating a planning response to the 1995 Beijing requirements for action plans, the MINCOF produced the (draft) document National Action Plan for Women In Development (NAPWID). It employed the term 'WID' which I argue, infers the failure to integrate the concept of equality. The discourse still associates women with their mothering and house-wifely roles, as decreed by the party-state. The use of the contrasting term Gender And Development (GAD) would have implied a political project of gender analyses from a feminist perspective.

The main problem for adopting the term 'femocrat' for Cameroonian women charged with advancing the cause of women in society, lies with this concept of *feminism.* As discussed 1.2 above the term 'feminism' is generally a contested concept, even in the West, as it takes many different forms. It is therefore important to note here that just as feminism is a highly contested concept that has different meanings in different political, social, and national contexts, so too with the term 'femocrat'. To be a 'femocrat' is therefore variable and context dependent. None of the women interviewed for this thesis defined themselves either as feminists or non-feminists as they were not asked to do so. In Cameroon the whole concept of 'femocracy' is linked to the creation of women's units that are charged with advancing the status of women. In Cameroon, it is the *Ministère de la Condition Feminine* (MINCOF). Generally, 'feminism' in Cameroon carries negative associations of being anti-male, anti-family and anti-marriage. The term 'feminism' in this study is used as a means to an analytical end rather than an end in itself. The question however, is whether the women charged with running the MINCOF are 'femocrats' in the western sense. As discussed above, femocrats have an interest in promoting and defending feminist reforms. This contrasts with the mandate of officers charged with advancing the cause of women in Cameroon to 'ensure a balance between women's role as housewife and mother' (5 Year Plan, 1985:281). The discourse used by the state in the mandate

places emphasis on femininity, on good motherhood rather than on feminism. It is a mandate which emphasises family life alongside professional life. Such a mandate does not fit into the concept of feminism as defined by Jayawardena (1986:2) to mean 'embracing movements for equality within the current system and significant struggles that have attempted to change the system'. Jagger (1994:2) defines feminism as a 'social movement dedicated to ending the subordination of women.' The mandate does not provide for the advocacy of the rights of Cameroonian women but emphasises women's roles as conceptualised in the family as housekeeper, mother and wife. The goal of Cameroonian female bureaucrats charged with advancing the status of women is constrained by rules and the particular brand of Cameroon's 'ruling democracy' (see chapter 3). These women are simply the representatives of externally influenced feminist positions whose mandates (see chapter 8) lack sufficient autonomous power within the bureaucracy to allow them to have a determinant say. Such co-optation limits reforms. The mandates define women's interests as well as the content of those definitions to suit the Cameroonian national context. This definition clarifies the contextual basis of the Cameroonian women charged with advancing the cause of women and determines their goals. The Cameroonian state's intervention in the UN feminist agenda has shaped the discourse in the mandate in a particular way. The party-state dominates all public discussions of what women need, and generates definitions of women's issues that serve the interests of the party-state. This indicates a distrust of feminism in any form. The women charged with advancing the cause of women are incapable of taking into account the variety of needs of Cameroonian women. The general policy goals are not feminist When a minimal definition of feminism is applied to the Cameroonian case, it becomes clear that some of the defining principles of feminism are missing. Cott (1987:4-5) has argued that late 20th century feminism requires three core components: ' an opposition to sex hierarchy, the understanding of gender and sex as socially constructed and thus mutable, and the conscious perception by women that they constitute a social grouping.' Eisenstein (1983) has pointed out that when feminists talk about the recognition that women constitute a social group, they imply both a personal and political search for understanding oppression and sex hierarchy and, arising from that understanding, a recognition of the need to change the system and structures of oppression.

Cameroonian women's view of feminism differs from Western feminism because it has developed in a different cultural context. In contrast to Western feminism's emphasis on

individual female autonomy the Cameroonian women interviewed for this thesis talked about themselves in terms of public participation and influencing decision making as women. They signalled a desire as women to play a role in determining the direction of politics within their parties. They looked forward to women's new goals as well as backwards to roles women leaders have played in the past. Some of them voiced their opinions about failed election bids and affirmed their own identities within the Cameroonian notions of gender and familial roles. They were highly political in their response to the political developments and in their determination to create a place for themselves in national politics. Whereas Western feminism has focused on women's struggle for control over reproduction and sexuality and on theoretical questions like the female body and sexuality, the women I interviewed were distinctively heterosexual, supportive of motherhood and talked about issues of culture and power. They combined their roles as mothers, economic contributors and community participants. Their identities are based on the norms of the Cameroonian society which has shaped their roles. These norms situate gender relations within the context of separate groupings for men and women within which they accomplish their assigned tasks. Nevertheless, Cameroon's centralisation policy limits and controls the entire political process which is biased against women.

Arrato (1993) argues that femocracy appears to be a product of political systems with open competition among political parties for government control, relatively open system of recruitment into public state administration, certain established rights and liberties for citizens. She adds that these countries also have a multiplicity of autonomous associational groups, which aggregate and articulate a variety of political and social interests. Thus feminists in these post-industrial countries have numerous options for joining groups that seek to influence policy. Women's policy offices in these countries operate within environments in which feminism is an acceptable political ideology. They thrive where the state is relatively permeable to influence from within and without. It is not just that these are democratic states. It is that the democratic states are both energised and restrained in a process of becoming more democratised. She adds that a state needs to do more than just add the modifier *democratic* to the concept of the state feminism. For her, it is the existence of a civil society with ' new structures of public discussion and political influence that enables the voicing of alternative visions of gender relations and that enables state feminism to act to achieve feminist goals' (Arrato 1993:297).

Such a situation does not exist in the Cameroonian social context. I am therefore compelled to depart from the western pattern of calling those officers charged with advancing women's status feminist bureaucrats (femocrats). Rather, they are, in the context of this study termed 'female bureaucrats'. The meaning of female as used here is basically ideological, as shaped by Cameroon's political culture. It is also biological as defined by Humm (1995:91) as follows 'the term reserved in feminist theory for the purely biological aspect of sexual difference'

In my understanding, the fundamental objective of 'femocracy' is the overcoming of gender-based disadvantages for women. Cameroonian women , however, have not yet fully engaged themselves in an organised feminist movement. Furthermore, based on my personal experience, feminism is deemed an imported concept detached from tradition and disruptive of Cameroonian society. I have used the concept of 'femocracy' to do two things:

1) The concept is used within the global feminist discourse as a critical tool to magnify the secondary status of the MINCOF and its female bureaucrats. In my understanding, feminism works against all forms of male domination and the socio-political reality of Cameroonian governing institutions inhibits this definition of the term. These institutions contribute to the ideological differences in the interpretation of the term in Cameroon because it is affiliated with misogynistic undertones.
2) The application of the concept of 'femocracy' to the context of my research is on the understanding that women are united across cultural boundaries by the universality of female subordination, variously defined. Femocracy enables me to reflect on the diverse ways that women challenge, or are constrained in their challenge of, patriarchy and enables me to illuminate the fact that the injustices suffered by Cameroonian women in regard to rights, are at root political.

The next section discusses the characteristics of the WCPDM.

1.2.4- The Women Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (WCPDM)

Article 51 of the CPDM text spells out the responsibilities of the National President of the women's wing. The mandate expects her to:

> Mobilise the Cameroonian women so that they can fully participate in the pursuit and achievement of the objectives of the party and perform its social work. It shall be responsible for the civic education of its members through the organisation of economic, social, cultural and political meetings.
>
> (CPDM text: 31)

This mobilisation takes several forms. A good example is the 1990 women's rallies and protest marches throughout the national territory, opposing the introduction of multi-party politics. Essentially, such mobilsation suggests control. The women's wing simply provides a platform for spreading the party leader's message across the country. The particular message of the 1990 rallies, given supposedly as impromptu speeches at the end of each march, was the same all over, and highly political, as that of the Douala rally illustrates. In a rhetorical tradition, the speaker asked whether a multi-party system ever served as a panacea for the economic problems of any state; whether it will end the economic crisis; increase the prices of raw materials; ensure the future of our children. The speaker ended with a declaration of confidence in President Biya's policies. (personal experience). The political culture is such that the rest of the population are supposed to take their cue from the 'mothers of the nation' and come out in support of the 'father of the state'. These rallies were aimed at demonstrating the president's popularity with his people. WCPDM rallies also take place prior to legislative and presidential elections.This manipulation of the women's wing of the ruling party has occurred continuously since independence. Such mobilisation does not extend to dramatic contexts like increasing urban lawlessness, and the routine violations of the most elementary human rights of both men and women, but especially, of women and girls. The issue at stake concerns only the form of 'mobilistion'. First, it denotes that political involvement by women seems to be connected to the presence of women in the spheres of public life depending on the political event. In the 1990 women rallies, it was to increase the general politicisation of the population of the state's position on the sensitive issue of plural politics. Second, such mobilisation also indicates that the concept of power that operates within the Cameroonian system in this instance, depicts a relationship of control between the central party administration and those at the margins –the WCPDM- in that they influence, regulate,

direct and dominate the rallies with party political propaganda. The rhetorical pronouncements reveal that power resides in the CPDM party's ability to control the WCPDM agenda and that such control stems from the party's deliberate manipulation. As a group, the WCPDM lacks the autonomy to depart from the party-state's imposed identity both in the sexual division of labour in the state bureaucracy and in party politics, and having their power base in the periphery. The party leadership structure and the strong state input which facilitates women's access into politics has made Cameroonian women politically dependent on the party-state for support and legitimacy. All these leads me to argue that the reason for the existence of the WCPDM, paradoxically linked to the MINCOF, is to meet the need of the party-state for mass mobilisation among women. I further argue that the system has turned women as a group into an object of politicisation and a voting political constituency of the party-state of Cameroon.

The CPDM basic text stipulates that the party femocrat shall be enabled to carry out these duties by the National Council of the WCPDM who are the ruling political supervisors of the wing, answerable to the Central Committee of the CPDM. Party membership in the WCPDM entails strict adherence to the party discipline and organistion. Party members only engage in those political activities decided upon by the party. Members of the WCPDM, see themselves as those who vote for the party list and are identified by the fact that they pay their subscription more or less regularly.

The only explanation for such a process is the desire to have complete control of the women's constituency through the women's wing of the party without necessarily giving them the autonomy required to make decisions outside of party policy. It is in this compromising position that Cameroon's leading female bureaucrat finds herself. Her WCPDM mandate emphasising women's performance of the party's social work confirms Waylen 's (1996:1) argument that 'what underpins the separation of public and the private is the definition of the 'political as masculine', in a very profound sense.' This no doubt makes it hard to incorporate women on the same terms as men and excludes many of the activities that women are involved in as not political. Waylen reiterates that even when the state framework and theories are projected as being gender neutral, they actually work to exclude women. The CPDM party leaders perceive women's political roles as housekeeping on a grand scale. Cameroonian women are expected to transfer their roles in the domestic household to the larger home of the state. The WCPDM mandate testifies to this and also demonstrates that Cameroonian women's experience within organised politics

is expected to be different from that of men. As a result they are made to operate within a different political culture from that of men. This demonstrates that the Cameroonian party-state retains the powerful mechanisms for shaping gender relations, and for upholding gender inequality through the division of public and private spheres. In such a scenario, the outcomes of politics cannot be gender neutral regardless of intentions, as their actions shape the meaning of politics and the nature of political discourse in Cameroon. The Cameroonian party-state could therefore be said to promote gender-specific identities within a patriarchal party-state system. The impact of this is felt in the transformation of customary gender roles and relationships into the political arena. The basic definition of the women's wings of parties in the Cameroonian social context is best summed up in the following excerpt from Cameroon's response to an Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) questionnaire filled in, on behalf of the party by Zang Nguele, Member of Parliament (MP) at the time.

> Women's branches of parties are women's organisations placed under the control of the parties. They are generally regarded as subsidiary structures, meaning that their room for manoeuvre is limited by the restrictive oversight of the men, acknowledged as the only political leaders of the parties. Specific action to support candidates in elections, or those elected, or to promote women's participation in political life, does not depend on their wishes but on the political will of leaders. The activities of these women's branches were confined to household training, running the party's social events, and mobilising women at large. A great deal of reluctance is still to be noted about accepting the idea of parity and the partnership between men and women in politics. The basic texts of parties remain marked by the complex of male domination. Women were in fact gadgets in the hands of the male politicians.
>
> (IPU NO. 28,1997:21)

Zang Nguele had used the term 'parties' in this report because each of the 150 political parties registered in Cameroon since 1990 have a Women's Wing. However, like the WCPDM of the governing party, these organisations hardly ever enjoy real autonomy and as such, have no real influence within the party. Like the WCPDM, they are all co-opted and controlled and do not decide which issues got addressed and how. Women must defer to the larger party agenda rather than focus on political discussions and activities would be re-distributive in gender terms.

From a theoretical point of view, the above discussion demonstrates a number of things. It is clear that the activities of the MINCOF are determined by the logic of how the Cameroon party-state constitutes its relation to women. This relationship is assimilated to

the gender order of patriarchal domestic government in which women are expected to obey loyally the patriarch's decisions. Female bureaucrats are positioned in organisations which are structured by the gender-class dominance of men. Hence, the mandate and objectives of the MINCOF, a gender policy machinery of the Cameroonian government, and that of the WCPDM, in fact serve the interests of the male gender-class and maintain the patriarchal division of labour in a supposedly democratic party- state. The nature and meaning of Cameroon's model of democracy in terms of both its meaning and what it may or may not be able to accomplish for Cameroonian women, in structures, procedures, and rules will be discussed in chapter three.

1.3.1-The thesis

I propose that :

(1) The institutionalisation of gender within political parties and the state bureaucracy is bound into a more general patriarchal culture of power and authority, as manifest in the restraining stipulations in the Family Law.

(2) This interaction between women's family status and their engagement in the public realm seems to be an important mechanism in perpetuating women's subordination to men, in particular in regard to political participation and governance, in Cameroon.

This thesis is central to my investigation in this study.

Chapter two

Methodology

2.1-Introduction

I start this chapter from the premise that like most subjects, the question of gendered politics and the secondary status of female bureaucrats in Cameroonian governing institutions can be approached from various disciplinary perspectives. My approach is influenced by feminist political theory which argues that the socio-political foundations of bureaucracies are gender-biased and prevent women politicians and female bureaucrats' full participation in the public sphere, thereby limiting their role as political citizens. A useful starting point here is Harding's (1987) identification of three distinct aspects of methodology.

Harding (1987) defines method as the narrowest and most concrete level of investigation, referring to ways of acquiring information through listening to or interrogating informants, observing behaviour, examining historical traces and records. The argument that motivates my approach here is that put forward by Maynard (1994), stating that feminist sociologists privilege the qualitative methods, especially participant observation. Harding's (1987) second level is methodology, the theory and analysis of how research should proceed. Here, reflexivity has emerged as the central concept, referring to researcher's explicit recognition of their involvement as women in the social world they study. The third aspect to Harding's (1987) analysis is epistemology which is dealt with in chapter 4 of this thesis. My concern in this chapter is with the methodology of social science, the means of attaining knowledge of the social world of my investigation. It is noteworthy that there are many different theoretical schools even within a single discipline in the social sciences. The preferred method of approach for the investigation of my topic
is the qualitative method of investigation.

2.2.1-The qualitative approach

Available literature (see Silverman, 2000; Flick, 1998; Marshall and Rossman, 1995; and May, 1997), indicates that qualitative research is varied, and different qualitative methodologies have very different goals. The information I wished to collect for this research could best be obtained through personal interviews, participant observation at

political events, and the analysis of documentary evidence. It was thought unlikely that the information needed to understand the issues at hand could be gathered through a survey of women in political office and within the bureaucracy. Key aspects of qualitative methodology have been outlined by Patton as follows

> *Detailed descriptions* of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviours; *direct quotations* from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. ...The data are collected as open-ended narrative *without* attempting to fit programme activities or people's experiences into predetermined, standardised categories such as the response choices that comprise typical questionnaires or tests. (Patton 1980:22)

Qualitative measures describe the experience of people in depth. The data are open-ended in order to find out what people's lives, experiences, and interactions mean to them in their own terms and in their natural settings. Humm (1995:228) states that this is 'the method of social science most favoured by feminist theorists who use such qualitative techniques as oral history, experiential analysis, case history and participant observation.' The next section discusses arguments advanced by feminist theorists on how the use of qualitative techniques reflect the nature of women's experiences better.

2.2.2-Feminist approaches

The desire of feminist theorists is to address the problem of sexism in research methodology by considering an alternative approach. The whole idea is to reconstruct methodology within the social science qualitative approach in order to allow gender to infect the way that reality is conceptualised with the insights of feminist vision. An important similarity that emerges from the feminist proposals for alternative methodologies is that in order to understand the centrality of gender to social inquiry, it was critical to describe more accurately the significance of women's participation. To achieve this, they suggest that studies must be conducted that explore the direction and outcome as well as the rate of participation of women. According to Abbott and Wallace (1997), these include the researcher/researched relationship, emotion as an aspect of the research process which like any other aspect can be analytically interrogated, the realities or versions of held by researchers and researched and issues surrounding authority and power in research.
The aim of feminist research is to create theories grounded in the actual experiences an language of women by investigating women's lives and experience in their own terms. In

addition, feminist proposed alternatives court subjective involvement in their bid to gain new theoretical understanding. Integrating personal praxis and research is not however, unique to feminism but feminist theory adds that both the content and the process of feminist research must involve fresh thinking about gender. For example, Stanley and Wise (1983, 1993) suggest that research must make explicit the everyday knowledge of the researcher as well as the researched. Reinharz (1983) adds that the process of personal research must be included as much as any other data. For her, feminist research must adopt a non-hierarchical, non-authoritarian, non-manipulative relation to the 'subject'. Mies (1983) sets out a specific criteria for feminist research. It must be consciously partial, must research from below, create change by involvement in women's liberation, be consciousness-raising, use women's histories, and be part of collective discussion with women.

Experience as it is used in these debates entails women's private awareness and knowledge drawn from participation in social life. The rationale is that the experience of women is often denied as 'real' or important and that the difficulty of accepting the validity of our experience is part of our cultural heritage and perpetuated in schooling. Stanley and Wise (1983,1993) argue that the challenge is to convert women's private concerns into shared public concerns, while Reinharz (1983) suggests that the method can fashion a non-masculine reflexive model which represents growth and understanding both in the problem investigated and the person(s) doing the investigation. It is precisely the rich and varied experiences of contemporary feminism, therefore, which contribute to the variety of its theories.

Reinharz's (1983) proposed alternative is feminist methodology should use such qualitative techniques such as oral history, experiential analysis, case history, and participant observation. Reinharz (1979) suggests that the use of such techniques would better reflect the nature of women's experience. The rationale is that qualitative research involves an emotional closeness to the person studied. It allows women to look at more sensitive areas of sexuality and deals with such concepts as the way women inhabit the world. Abbott and Wallace (1997) also argue for the use of qualitative methods, so that women (and men) who are subjects of research can be 'heard', so that it becomes possible to see and understand the world from the position of the research subjects. They also caution that reflexivity is essential. The researcher must be constantly aware of how her values, attitudes and perceptions are influencing the research process from the formulation

of the research questions, through the data collection stage, to the ways in which the data are analysed and theoretically explained.

One distinctive feature of the feminist research alternatives is that they generate problems from the perspective of women's experiences. They also use these experiences as a significant indicator of the reality against which hypotheses are tested. These suggestions have informed my use of the qualitative approach which underpins my research design as explained below.

2.3.1 Research design

The legitimacy of the qualitative approach does not of course spring from numbers, either of case studies or of people interviewed. Rather, it is from the depth of insight made available. Qualitative research is able to approach questions that are not easily answered by quantitative research. It is better for seeing relationships, processes and contradictions. The qualitative approach is also preferred because of its inductive strategy. This means that rather than imposing on the research programme some predetermined hypothesis, the research unfolds in a way which takes into account the complexities of changes that occur. In order to strengthen the generalizing of findings from particular cases to the population, I used more than one source of data to corroborate, and elaborate the research question. Referred to as triangulation, this combination of appropriate research perspectives proved suitable for taking into account as many different aspects of the problem of gendered politics in Cameroon as possible. Denzin (1978) has identified four basic types of triangulation. Of these, the following three relate to my study: the use of a variety of data sources; the use of multiple perspectives to interpret; and, the use of multiple methods. Denzin explains that the logic of triangulation is based on the premise that

> No single method ever adequately solves the problem of causal factors. … Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observation must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation.
>
> (Denzin, 1978:28)

To this end, the techniques employed during my fieldwork, included direct observation, documentary investigation and in-depth/elite interviewing, supplemented by field notes.

a) Interviews

My research was designed to rely on interviews as a primary method of data collection. Interviews as a qualitative method of research have been widely written about by, for example, Peil (1982), Devereux and Hoddinott (1992), Flick (1998), Marshall and Rossman (1995), May (1997), Reinharz (1992). Whereas in-depth interviewing as a data collection method is described by Kahn and Cannell (1957:149) as 'a conversation with a purpose', Marshall and Rossman (1995) define elite interviewing as:

> specialised case of interviewing that focuses on …individuals considered to be influential, prominent and well-informed in an organisation or community and are selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas relevant to the research…Valuable information can be gained from these participants because of the positions they hold in a social, political, financial or administrative realms…Elites are also able to report on an organisation's policies, past histories and future plans.
>
> (Marshall and Rossman, 1995:83)

Marshall and Rossman (1995) have pointed out that interviews, combined with observation, allow the researcher to understand the meanings people hold for their everyday activities. They caution that interviewing has limitations and weaknesses as cooperation is essential. I combined in-depth interviewing with elite interviewing as a useful way of getting large amounts of data. Whom I chose for interview calls for explanation. My aims were several. First I wanted to be sure to include:

1) The key personnel involved with Cameroon's MINCOF, which is the equal opportunity policy unit (the Secretary General, Director (s), Sub-Director (s)). This necessarily pointed to some or all of top management and specialist equality staff. As it turned out, they were only a few, 4 to be exact as MINCOF had been reduced to a directorate as a result of the separation of Women's Affairs from Social Affairs in December 1997.
2) Beyond this, I had planned to extend the interviewing to men working within a state structure working for women's rights and status in a country steeped in patriarchal norms and traditions; namely the Secretary General, the Sub-Director, and one National Inspector. Nevertheless, the schedule worked out for the (see appendix 2) did not include these category of people and they won't receive me because of that. The schedule was worked out by the Director of Women's Affairs and authorised by the

Secretary General. Hence the complete absence of male experiences in MINCOF analysis.

I can only speculate on why they did not include any of the people I most wanted to interview and why therefore I could not have access to them. There were times when I felt that being a Cameroonian with an educational opportunity not available to many others presented a problem for me. Perhaps those in authority feared that the study will demonstrate the inefficiency of the system's gender policy. Perhaps the word 'politics' in my title meant that as civil servants who owed their livelihoods to the party-state, they did not want to take any risks in discussing what they considered a sensitive issue. I felt that the omission of senior officers from the schedule was their way of exerting control over what information I accessed. Although I returned with far more data than I can ever analyse, I still agonise over the missed interviews and the questions that went unasked. This undoubtedly had drawbacks for my findings and conclusions as data which reveals experiences with planning, policy-making, programme activities across other ministries from their point of view as senior civil servants involved in and knowledgeable about the MINCOF, was missing.

3) The third category involved female bureaucrats, both past and present, and female Members of Parliament (MPs) of the multiparty era, to find out their experiences within the formal political arena. The aim was to determine whether their experiences supported the assumptions of feminist theory on gendered politics and I had success with these group. Personal narratives were employed in the construction of Cameroonian women's experiences within governing institutions. The techniques through which they are constructed are explained in the next section.

b) Narrative interviews

Narrative interviews are said by Flick (1998) to be an alternative to approaching individual worlds of experience through the openness that can be achieved in semi-structured interviews. The aim is to use the narratives produced by interviewees as a form of data. She adds that narratives allow the researcher to approach the interviewee's experiential world in a more comprehensive way. Its basic principle of collecting data is described by Hermanns (1991:183) as follows: 'In the narratives, the informant is asked to present the history of an area of interest, in which the interviewee participated. The interviewer's task is to make the informant tell the story of the area of interest in question'.

The narrative interview is said by Flick (1998:102) to start from a 'generative narrative question' which refers to the topic of the study an intended to simulate the interviewee's narrative. The expectation as stated by Flick (1998:102) is that 'factual processes will become evident in it, 'how it really was' will be revealed.' Schütz (1976) further states that the narrator's control is minimised to such an extent that awkward topics and areas are also mentioned. According to Schütz (1976),

> The narrator of unprepared extempore of his or her own experiences is driven to talk also about events and action orientations which he or she prefers to keep silent about in normal conversations and conventional interviews owing to his or her awareness of guilt or shame or his or her entanglements of interests.
> (Schütz 1976:225, in Flick 1998:101)

Hermanns (1991) adds that this technique provides data that other forms of interviewing cannot provide for three reasons.

> First, the narrative takes on a certain independence during its recounting. Second, people "know" and are able to present a lot more of their lives than they integrated in their theories of themselves and of their lives. This knowledge is available to informants at the level of narrative presentation but not at the level of theories.
> (Hermanns 1991:185, in Flick 1998:101)

This approach is, however, not without problems. Critical discussions have been provoked by this method according to Denzin (1988), for example, who has clarified the limits of the narrative as a data source. These limits are said to be based on the issue of the interview in each case. This is not considered as a recurring routine as each interview yields a particular type of information. Another problem is that the art of narrating may be mastered to varying degrees by those interviewed. Flick (1998: 103) for example, points out that ' we must assume that not every interviewee is capable of giving narrative presentations of his or her life. We meet reticent, shy, uncommunicative or excessively reserved people not only in everyday social life but also in biographical interviews'. Another major problem is the sheer amount of textual material produced by narrative interviews.

For this research, transcription was a long process with a one hour tape, for example, taking 12 hours to transcribe fully. Tape-recording did, however, allow me to concentrate on the discussion. It increases the accuracy of the data collection process and permits me to

be attentive to the interviewee's cues. The interactive nature of the in-depth interviews would otherwise have affected my attempts to take verbatim notes during the interview. A second advantage of the methodology is the analysis of subjective views and activities and as Flick (1998) has acknowledged, it also allows the researcher to gain access to factual experiences and events.

The technique as data for sociology is said by Flick (1998) to be contested simply because it is viewed as part of a feminist move toward the acceptance of situated knowledge and the kind of analyses offered by the theory. Shostak (1989) and Mbilinyi (1989) for example, have argued that when life history is crafted by an editor based on a person's oral narrative, serious ethical questions arise concerning the production and control of the text, the distribution of the rewards of the publication and the claim of authorship. They suggest that power relations are involved in the translation of such narratives. They argue that in order to make a text accessible to prospective readers its production may involve translation from one (usually subordinate) culture to another (usually metropolitan) one. The example they give is when oral narratives are edited so as to conform to the cultural conventions of European/American autobiography , whether or not these are a feature of the local discourse.

While agreeing that their arguments may bring the truth claims of the personal narrative approach into question, I argue that the style is progressive in that it illuminates the cultural politics of Cameroon from the perspective of the narrator/s. The rational for adopting it here is its necessary construction of experience and as Felski (1989) has argued, it is a kind of autobiographical contract with the reader signalling the identity of the author and her effort to tell the truth. The particular narratives of select Cameroonian women politicians demonstrate the reality of patriarchy in the Cameroonian social context. The use of personal narratives is meant to convert women's private concerns into shared public concerns. Smith (1974) suggests that the experience of women is often denied as 'real' or important, and the difficulty of accepting the validity of women's lived experience is part of our cultural heritage and perpetuated in research. Some feminists, amongst them Rich (1976), Rienharz (1979), Duelli Klein (1983) , Stanley and Wise (1983) and Jones (1988), have argued that personal lived experience is intensely political and immensely important politically. They draw attention to the gap between women's experience of the world and the theoretical schemes available in which to think about experience. They suggest that women's private awareness and knowledge drawn from participation in social life is

relevant to gender analysis.

It is precisely the rich and varied experience of contemporary Cameroonian women politicians which contributes to the variety of my analysis. It is based on these arguments that I couch the evidence featured in chapter 7 of this work in personal narratives. In doing so, I also acknowledge that there is no typical 'women's life' as women lead different lives from each other. For me, it is a valuable starting point for generating feminist knowledge. In this I am influenced by Collins (1990) who argues that if we take the real situation of women as a starting point, we necessarily take a multifaceted approach which understands that different systems of oppression are not independent but support each other. Such a stance, she argues, is a way of understanding which insists that knowledge is rooted in concrete experience. Collins (1990) assesses knowledge claims through dialogue rather than the assertion of absolute abstract principles.

As we later see, the experience of marginality is reflected in the interview for this thesis of the women politicians. Personal narratives according to Stanley and Morgan (1993) are couched in terms of women's own categories and values and are privileged in feminist social research. This, according to them, is preferred in feminist theory and research. Collin's (1990) account is particularly interesting in this regard since the use of slave narratives, oral histories, interviews, diaries, autobiographies, and lyrics of blues, and other records of African American women's voices enables the reader to hear the thinking of these political activists and everyday women.

2.3.2 Difficulties and omitted interviews

The particular disadvantages I found with elite interviews and researching women politicians were as follows:

1) the problem of accessibility, as they were often difficult to reach. Cameroonian parliamentarians do not have offices (or research assistants) as British parliamentarians do, so it is very difficult to gain access to them in their homes. I also found that it was impossible to get a second chance to follow up on issues that had been missed out during the first meeting.
2) The interview location played a major role in the quality of the material elicited from the exercise. The interviews that were carried out in the home environment yielded 15 pages of single-spaced transcriptions as opposed to 3 for Fouda who had third parties in the room and 10 for Yaou Aissatou and 5 for Keutcha who was surrounded by 8

people in the room at the time of interview. Fouda's interview yielded less data for another reason. She stressed that she was still in the process of setting up the Ministry, had yet to have a separate budget, or to appoint staff. Yaou Aissatou was interviewed on the 12th of August, day 2 of the workshop on 'Developing Active Partnership between the MINCOF and Women's Associations', one of the areas I had originally planned to write about. Most of Yaou Aissatou's interview was therefore focused on the ministry's plans for working with women's associations. I have however featured some more material from the interview in chapter 8. All other interviews are omitted from the analysis because these had focused on women's associations and NGOs, as per my initial research question which I modified after the round table discussion and the reflection on Cameroon's Family Code. (see appendix 2 for interview schedule).

3)The additional interviews omitted were those with MINCOF staff who I also call 'female bureaucrats' because they have been appointed into MINCOF with the aim of using their positions to promote women's interests. The MINCOF staff interviewed were not the people in point 1 that I was unable to interview. In Cameroon, bureaucratic decision-making is very suspicious of 'outside' investigation. I can therefore only speculate that for the sake of Cameroonian political correctness, these staff simply gave me the official version of the expectations of their jobs.

These interviews yielded nothing new as they simply recited what was contained in the Presidential Decree. The rest were of NGO leaders at the events I had attended both at the Kumba Women's House and the three-day MINCOF partnership workshop. I also interviewed the Gender Officer at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) office because she collaborates with the MINCOF occasionally to run one-off NGO events. The *Organisation Canadienne pour la Solidarité et le Dévlopment's* (OCSD) chief of project was interviewed because OCSD collaborates with the MINCOF through the *Micro-Projets Productifs en faveur des Femmes au Cameroun* (MPPF-CAM). Both the UNDP and OCSD work with the MINCOF to strengthen capabilities in women's associations and NGOs.

4) One other female politician was interviewed yet omitted from the analysis for reasons I shall now explain. Lydia Belle Efimba is the only female leader of a political party. Interviewed in her home on the 26th August 1998, the transcribed interview yielded a 16 page single-spaced document which was analysed in the very first draft of this thesis.

However, one basic distinction rendered her inclusion irrelevant. She had not yet 'governed'. She had not yet taken part in any of the party-state institutions which help to construct and enforce the meaning of what it is to be a man or a woman in Cameroonian society- the Local Government and Parliamentary politics. Nor is she a female bureaucrat. These are the institutions which exercise governance through the formulation of policies that are then enacted into law. The Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA) party which she chairs, has, by her own admission, 'no bargaining power, ... with a percentage vote of .0005%' in the 1997 parliamentary elections. My findings indicated that the LDA, one of the 150 opposition parties in Cameroon, is not nationally consolidated, the connections to the ranks and file of Cameroon is uncertain as it fielded candidates for the 1997 parliamentary elections only in her home district (this candidate was Efimba herself), and what the party actually stands for is not easy to articulate. In my interview with Tsanga, one of the things she said was

> I want women to enter the parties. I said on television recently that women must fight from within the parties but not the party of this lady here, Efimba. They should enter credible parties, because if you are in a credible party that commands a following, you can make your voice heard.
>
> (Tsanga September 1998)

Nevertheless, I could not justify her inclusion on the basis of her lack of the kind of experience I was using to generate data. My analysis of gendered politics in Cameroonian governing institutions was based on the experiences of women who had taken part in governing. She had not been placed in a position to make and administer public policy nor exercise authority in a governing institution. Hence the irrelevance of her experience for this thesis.

Although not directly quoted in the thesis, the interviews were helpful to the research process by providing valuable background information and context. They deepened my understanding of the Cameroonian political scene.

The research drew upon 5 elite women's personal experiences to demonstrate Savage and Witz's (1993) suggestion that the state is nominally patriarchal (that is, staffed at the top level by men), and substantially patriarchal (it can act in the interests of men). The empirical aim of these interviews was to use their experiences to further illustrate that the Cameroonian party-state is a gendered hierarchy. The 5 women were chosen for the following reasons: 1) Keutcha, Tsanga and Zang Nguele had accessed parliament

through contested elections and not during the one-party era when MPs accessed parliament by appointment. Tsanga and Zang Nguele had also held ministerial positions. Their experiences on the gendered aspects of Cameroonian politics were vital for my analysis from this vantage point. Yaou Aissatou was the principal integrator of gender equity policies. Fouda was chosen because she heads a ministry which deals with the social welfare agenda of the state.

All the interviews were taped to assist the subsequent analytical processes. The open-ended questioning approach allowed interviewees the freedom to use their knowledge and interpretation. Negotiation with the numerous gatekeepers over access to these elites, who were difficult to reach because of demanding time constraints, was done through face-to-face discussions, letter writing and introductions, having built trust with the Administration during the first month of my field-work stay in Cameroon (July1998). All the interviews were carried out during the first phase of my fieldwork between July and October 1998. The second phase was aimed at interviewing more senior staff at the MINCOF, especially on the gender aspects of their work with other Ministries. The long awaited appointments after the separation of the two Ministries had finally taken place. Only the Secretary General had retained his position. All the Directors and Chiefs of Service were new and were still learning the ropes and gave that as an excuse for not giving interviews.

Adopting a qualitative approach helped me to organise my thinking processes along personal, professional, social, political and practical lines.

- The practical process entailed the assessing existing resources available for conducting research, especially from a financial perspective, as this project was self-funded. My grant did not include this item of expenditure. It also enabled me to determine the geographic boundaries of the area to investigate and the people to be interviewed.
- Boundary selection enabled me to determine selection criteria for the study of participants, concepts and events.
- Purposeful selection was aimed at bounding the study and to facilitate understanding, which is the underlying goal of my research. This also determined the development of inclusion and exclusion criteria for the involvement of participants.
- The selection strategy used to choose an individual to interview, event to observe and/or participate in was based on the specific topic of my research. In the event, I

moved from broad information gathering to more focused collection of information through watching and listening, asking questions and examining materials.

Furthermore, a first inquiry was conducted in two parts: first, bibliographic research which was a critical evaluation of existing literature; a thinking process that involved piecing together and integrating diverse bodies of literature and provided an understanding of the theory and knowledge that exists in my topic. This understanding was essential so that I could understand how my study fits into the construction of knowledge in the topic area. It was also a process whereby concepts were organised and sources logically presented to establish the specific foundation for my research and its specific content and, most important, to provide a rationale for my research design. I was also flexible with the aim of capturing issues from the perspective of the individuals or events studied, through the systematic collection and analysis of information.

In my initial research design, two main categories for investigation emerged as follows: First were female bureaucrats, who are an important source of power for the advancement of women status in Cameroon. I drew on the work of Stetson and Mazur (1995) who have suggested two important categories for studying state action: the capacity of the state through policy to have an impact on gender in society, and the impact of the state on gender and women's political participation. Adapting these two analytical angles to the study of Cameroonian female bureaucrats and female politicians produced two distinct areas of inquiry: a) to what extent did the Cameroonian MINCOF influence state policy to achieve gender equality of opportunity within social and political participation? b) to what extent do certain party-state organisational forms –the MINCOF- develop opportunities for society-based non-partisan women's groups and women's advocacy groups like Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to have access to the policy process?

Towards the end of the data collection, as I developed more concrete research questions, and the perspective increasingly narrowed on those processes which are most essential for the research question, the NGO and women's association perspective became irrelevant to the debate. In other words, the goals changed as the research proceeded and some of my original goals became less important, but not before I had collected a lot of data and interviewed 10 women leaders of women's associations and NGOs respectively, including the Minister of Women's Affairs at the time, on the issue.

The objective was to examine the consequences of access or non-access, with special

reference to socio-political participation and development. The work of Stetson and Mazur (1995) on state feminism in the West suggests that structures established by governments with the purpose of advancing women's status, are often set up in name only as most of such formal women's policy structures may not actually achieve feminist goals. The prospect of studying this category of bureaucrats in the Cameroonian social context was both challenging and interesting in the sense that whereas Western NWMs resulted from challenges posed by western feminists who used various strategies to protest against pervasive male dominance, the creation of the Cameroonian MINCOF, for example, was externally influenced. The officers tasked with implementing the Cameroonian state's equality policy mandate were female bureaucrats. My aim was to verify Yeatman's (1990) suggestion that NWMs were 'merely state agendas for symbolic pacification'. She argues that at the very least, adding women's policy machinery was a ploy aimed at showing the growing number of women voters that the state was responding with attention to some version of women's policy agenda. The aim of my study was to examine what outcomes are experienced in the non-western cultural context of Cameroon by its female bureaucrats. Hence the choice of that category of women for investigation.

The second category for investigation was the culture of Cameroon's public arena, which manifests itself in the differentiation and distribution of tasks within the labour market, in policy-making bodies, within parliamentary committees and political parties; and which is conceptualised in terms of gender segregation, thereby creating inequalities with men expected to have a higher bargaining power than women in accessing state resources and opportunities.

The investigation was designed to start with the examination of gender ideologies in terms of both expected and acceptable social, cultural and political actions which prevail in Cameroon. A careful investigation was to be done by asking political and social actors and the people around them about local stereotypes concerning the gender concept in politics. However, actual behaviour might be different from prevailing ideology for two reasons. First, cultural representations are not static, but change over time and space and former stereotypes might well prevail even though real relationships have started changing in practice. Second, ideologies may or may not be strongly enforced, so that some individuals might not conform to them. Therefore, the actual gendered concentration of political actors at decision-making level, their bargaining power, access to and control over state resources have to be investigated. In order to do so, data have to be collected

about elements of political state institutions and conduct as identified above. This warranted an investigation of the MINCOF as an institution aimed at fostering gender equality of opportunity and its implementation process; and of the consequences of this on gender politics.

In practice, this methodology can be divided into two steps:

1) An exploration of how political institutions are gendered. Kenny (1996) has suggested that the expression 'gendered' means, firstly that all people within the institutions have a gender. The term 'gendered institutions' as used here, is further informed by Acker's (1992) explanation which means that gender is present in the processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power in the various sectors of social life. This results from Nelson's (1989) argument that focusing on gender within and outside institutions leads feminist scientists to rethink the conventional political science paradigm. She adds that monitoring the number and position of women in institutions is crucial for understanding how institutions are gendered.

2) Examination of the consequences of these institutions on the modern division of labour in Cameroonian governing institutions. As Epstein (1993) has argued, the experience of participants within an institution will vary according to their gender. She adds that not only will women most likely have fewer opportunities than men, but the perceptions of their obstacles and the existence of circumscribed opportunities will also vary by gender, because political institutions produce, reproduce, and subvert gender.

In the words of Scott (1988),

> To say that an institution is gendered, then, is to recognise that constructions of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture of an institution rather than existing out in society or fixed within individuals which they then bring whole to the institution.
>
> (Scott 1988:456)

The processes employed in the field to achieve the objectives of the investigation as outlined in 1.1.1 above, and afterwards in the analysis of field results, are discussed in the sections that follow.

2.3.3-Fieldwork reflection

The events in the field meant that my initial research focus and therefore, question, changed as the research progressed. The Family Code element loomed larger as events unfolded. My initial research design included participant observation at staff meetings, in-depth interviews with MINCOF staff members, and goals for interviewing them. I discovered that these interviews yielded nothing new, and this aspect of the research had the consequence of discarding some parts of the original research question and changing my data collection plan. This necessarily called for an alteration of my hypothesis. As the research became more focused therefore, the initial research design and data collection strategy underwent some changes. This was due in part to the unforeseen round table discussion and the reflection on the family code.

The strength of the qualitative approach in regard to flexibility allowed me to reflect on my actions and observations in the field, irritations, feelings, impressions which formed p0art of the interpretation and became data in their own right. Analysis occurred as themes emerged and were identified, as the deeper structures of the social setting (the family code) became clear, and as modifications were made in the initial research design.

Fieldwork took place in two phases between the months of June-September 1998, and again in January to February of 1999. Whereas the first phase was self-funded, the second trip was part-funded by my sponsors who paid the airfare.

Gregory and Altman (1989:45) have stated that:

> It is not unusual for research plans to change after one begins fieldwork. It is important that as the fieldworker should have an open mind about what will be observed, similar flexibility should be maintained with regard to the overall research agenda.
>
> (in Devereux and Hoddinot 1992:34)

I had set out for the first phase of my fieldwork with the ambitious goals outlined above. At the practical level therefore, I had to adapt to the unforeseen lack of availability of many of the documents I had planned to access, lack of access to all categories of people I had planned to interview, lack of substantial information apart from that featuring in the MINCOF mandate, copies of which I had already acquired and studied, at staff interviews. I was therefore, compelled to rapidly modify my goals. Different levels were involved in the regulation of access as I was to discover. It was not enough that a research clearance had been granted to me at a Ministerial level. There was also the level of the persons to be

interviewed or observed, or who will be investing their time. As a result of this, the process of gaining access to the various departments I was assigned to, involved a continual process of negotiation in relation to potential participants. I had to explain the purpose of my research at every level. This included how the data would be collected and the results would be used, how I would maintain anonymity and confidentiality by using the materials and information obtained for research purposes only. I also found out what materials I could not use, for example, MINCOF's adaptation of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action plan, as it was still in draft form. It took a whole month for me to be fitted into their administrative routine in the form of a time-table assigning me to five sub-departments of the Directorate of Women's Affairs (see appendix 2). One of the first tasks I set myself was to establish credibility and to win over the trust of my 'collaborators' within the MINCOF, some of whom were later instrumental in helping me to gain access to Keutcha, Tsanga and Zang Nguele. Attempts to gain access to current female MPs living in Yaounde were not so successful as I could not locate them. The work of Wax (1971) proved invaluable here. She cautions that 'the most egregious error that a fieldworker can commit is assuming that tolerance by hosts also implies their high regard and inclusion' (Wax 1971: 47). One of the first lessons I learnt was infinite patience, followed by perseverance and polite persistence. Some of the interviews I succeeded in making took more than a month to arrange. The month of waiting was usefully spent in collecting data from the newspapers in the MINCOF library. Left on my own all day, I devised a system of not only reading all back copies of the Cameroon Tribune to scan for information, I also smuggled out sheets with information considered relevant to my research topic, paid for them to be photocopied at a kiosk, and returned them the following day.

a) Confidentiality and anonymity

The first problem I faced was to determine what was sensitive information and what was not, in the Cameroonian context. Being a Cameroonian, I was aware that I might face more obstruction than an outsider for daring to critique the politics and policies of my country. In this regard I was cautious about the questions I asked. 'Gender issues' are regarded as role change issues and are therefore a culturally sensitive topic which spills over into politics. I had assured each of the respondents at the start of each interview that none of the information divulged would be used in a manner contrary to their wishes or

interests and to my stated purpose. I sent all of them copies of the transcribed interviews. Only Zang Nguele and Efimba acknowledged receipt and expressed interest in the outcome of my work. On the issue of anonymity, I asked all the respondents whether they preferred to speak anonymously. They all wanted that their real names be used. They all indicated that it will be easy to identify them anyway from the positions they had held and the descriptions of what they had done in Cameroonian politics. This is particularly true of the Cameroonian political scenario because women leaders are only a handful and every Cameroonian knows them and of the few that have existed. When I showed surprise and fear at some of the things Tsanga said during our interview, she emphasised the point again by saying 'No, I am not afraid. I am not afraid. I am used to saying what I have in mind', and she handed me a copy of an open letter she had written to the President of the Republic, for more information adding that 'it is far better for me to die than to keep quiet. Use my own name You know that this is just giving you information' (Tsanga Sept., 1998). I did not, however, use this document.

This view is supported by what Devereux and Hoddinott (1992:340 say about researching in Africa. 'The people *want* their stories to be publicised'.

b) Barriers

I did not experience any cultural barriers and therefore would say that cultural barrier had no effect on the research. As a Cameroonian, I was operating within a culture, politics and historical experience of the people I was studying. I could have reported on some of the things that were going on, from my own experience, but I did not, for ethical reasons. Rather, it was the Cameroonian public sector leisurely work ethics that affected the process of research. and created barriers for me. There was a language barrier in that although I do speak and write French, the prospect of interviewing in French was a daunting one. This would have meant that any interviews conducted would have to be transcribed in French, and translated into English for analysis. The problem could have been solved either by engaging a bilingual research assistant or paying a professional to do so, had funds been available.

c) Direct observation

Using the MINCOF as my springboard, I systematically noted and recorded events and behaviour in the MINCOF/WCPDM activities that took place between July and October 1998, and then, again, in January 1999. I made no special effort to have a particular role in these events, being content to learn, through direct observation, about Cameroonian women's experience of subordination in political circumstances and how this structures their lives. Some of these activities and events are featured in Chapter 7. Other events and activities which turned out to be irrelevant for my work in this particular thesis, will be useful material for further research.

d) Document review

To supplement the two approaches described above, I turned to the gathering and analysing of documents produced during my field research and the content analysis of published material and international sources, including periodicals, newspaper articles, internal party documents, speeches, ministerial reports and official documents and statistics. These were useful in enabling me to develop an understanding of the political setting of my study and to determine where the greatest emphasis lies in formal policy statements.

The letter of authorisation allowing me to carry out research in the MINCOF was signed by the Minister herself. This made it less difficult to access some ministerial documents. Nevertheless, on occasions I had to resort to what Hornsby-Smith (1993) calls overt and covert methods to obtain some important documents and in three cases, literally to pay for them. This was because the Directorate of Women's Affairs and the Secretariat exercised caution after drawing up a programme covering my fieldwork period. They omitted their sections from the programme even though most of the important documents relevant to my research were housed in both of these important offices. This caution and initial distrust had an impact on the research process because negotiations over access to the male Secretary-General, to the Director of Women's Affairs, and the documents held there were not simply a matter of a few weeks, but required constant flexibility and adaptation on my part throughout the fieldwork period. These problems added significantly to time constraints. One frustration was the last minute cancellation of interviews, especially since the time thereby lost could have been used more productively with a more receptive interviewee.

2.4.1-Data analysis

The data analysis process was a continuous one during my fieldwork. I took notes during the events I attended and carried out preliminary analysis every evening in my self-catering rented room at the Protestant Faculty of Theology in Yaounde. This exercise was more intense after each interview as a form of critique. Moreover, each phase of my data analysis entailed what Marshall and Rossman (1995) have termed *data reduction,* which is the bringing of the collected data into manageable chunks, and *interpretation,* the bringing of meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants and events of the study. A thorough analysis of the interviews after these had been transcribed verbatim, and all the topic-related events attended, was done through a combination of reductive, content analysis and narrative analysis methods respectively. This combination enabled me to order and structure the contents of the transcribed interviews and other data collected from the field, into themes which later became chapters. The data analysis of the interviews did not proceed in a linear fashion. I had to search for topic-related meaning among the categories of data. The first step was to define the material, in order to select the data and interviews, and those parts of the interviews which were relevant for answering the research question. This determined the direction of what I wanted to understand from them. The second step involved elements of the material to be analysed, which data and which interview passages were to be analysed one after the other, and which passages were to be put together to form a coherent whole. As informed by Flick (1998), I skipped the less relevant passages in an effort to reduce the material to be analysed. This enabled me to look for formal content structures in the material. This approach seemed clearer and enabled me to analyse subjective viewpoints more easily. It also allowed me to analyse the narrative construction of participants' reality without disclosing some aspects of their personal stories that I deemed too sensitive. A more comprehensive analysis of the interview transcripts, data collected and field notes was done through both the induction and deduction of the themes within the data. Both of these processes enabled me to link theory and research which in turn allowed me to test the strength of the feminist theory which underpins my work. Narrative analysis, in particular, entails a specific form of sequentiality, as suggested by Schütz (1983). The first analytical step, termed 'formal text analysis', is to eliminate all non-narrative text and then segment the "purified" narrative text for its formal sections. This is followed by a structural description of the contents of the narrative and attachments of the central statements in the form of quotations followed

by explanations and comments.

2.4.2 Strengths and limitations

The limitations of using this particular approach of analysis was that flexibility of methodological rules had to be learned mainly through experience. Applying any scheme to the structuring of content analysis proved difficult as I had collected large amounts of data from different domains (30 kilograms in weight), for fear of not having enough material to work on, being so far away from Cameroon. Secondly, there are limitations to how much can be learned from interviews as my experience with the MINCOF staff taught me. This aspect was however countered by direct observation as a research approach. This gave me the opportunity to understand the work of MINCOF and Cameroon's gendered political culture to an extent not possible using only the insights of other people obtained through interviews. It also enabled me to observe what was not happening, leading me to think of what might have been if things had been happening, if the MINCOF staff had been meeting even the none-feminist goals spelt out in its objectives and mandates, for example.

The strength of document analysis is its provision of information about events that could not be observed because they took place before my fieldwork period, and in its reflection of aspects of the MINCOF objectives and mandates, statistics and information on political participation in elections, and the like , which I would have otherwise missed. Documents also provided stimulus for generating questions for some of my interviews. These documents gave me ideas about important questions to pursue through more direct observations and interviewing. I also respected the confidentiality of those records I was not allowed to quote from, for example, the MINCOF Beijing-related Plan of Action.

One advantage of using multiple qualitative methods is the potential to evoke unexpected data. In my case,

This happened from newspaper reports, speeches, interviews and statistics. I was prepared for this by the literature on theory to adapt to procedures if necessitated by changes in the field.

2.5.1-Structure of thesis

For ease of presentation, the thesis is structured in two parts. Part One (Chapters 1, 2,3 and 4) sets out the propositions, framework of interrelated concepts, methodology, socio-political context of the research which acts as a backdrop to the political analyses of the Cameroon case, and epistemological assumptions which govern the feminist field of

knowledge. Part One frames the research question which empirically investigated in the Cameroonian context in Part Two (Chapters 5,6,7, 8 and 9). The two parts are brought together in the concluding chapter.

The first four chapters of the thesis construct analytical categories and describe the methodology needed to interpret gendered politics and the secondary status of female bureaucrats in the context of Cameroonian governing institutions. It encompasses the setting out of the main and secondary research questions; the methodology used; a chapter on the political history and social context of Cameroon; and discourse and debates from a variety of feminist theoretical approaches that aim to create a deeper understanding of women's situation. Part One explores the potential relevance of alternative feminist epistemologies and elects to employ feminist standpoint epistemologies combined with feminist critiques of the Contractarian philosophy as relevant analytic tools with which to investigate gendered politics in Cameroonian governing institutions. Part Two focuses on the application of the feminist political theory discussed in Part One, and the examination of the particular ways in which the Cameroonian Party-State acts to construct gendered identities.

Having given this overview of the two parts of the thesis, I shall now describe in more detail the essence of each chapter.

Chapter 1 discusses the conceptual background of gendered politics in Cameroon by setting out the objectives of the investigation, defining the concepts on which the investigation is based, and situating the research problem. Chapter 2 builds up an analytical methodology for the study and outlines the chapters.

Chapter 3 focuses on the specific character of the Cameroonian democracy, as influenced by its colonial history, the nature and functioning of the one-party then single –party dominant state, customary law and the legal foundations. The aim of the chapter is to reveal the role of the state and the role and character of the citizen, combined with the partial and contradictory character of liberal democratic arrangements in Cameroon, in order to determine to what extent the manipulation of the democratic process by the ruling elite has an impact on women's access to power.

Chapter 4 draws on the ideologies of feminist philosophers across academic disciplines to discuss the diverse range of theoretical positions and the range of political and intellectual affiliations which exist among feminists, and the tensions between feminist theorists and the traditional theory of knowledge. It then details the positions of Postmodernist

Feminist Epistemology, closely linked to Relativism, feminist standpoint epistemologies and feminist critiques of the classical seventeenth and eighteenth century social contractarian philosophy. I identify the epistemic advantage of feminist standpoint position which I then combine with the relevance of feminist critiques of political institutions to create an appropriate tool for understanding and analysing the socio-political context of Cameroon. The formulation of the theoretical framework intertwines the relevance and meaning of gender as an analytic category. The dynamic aspect of gender is important for my investigation since gender as a concept is traditionally considered to be one of the main sources of inequality in Cameroonian political participation.

Chapter 5 provides an introduction to the more specific discussion of gendered political participation in subsequent chapters, through an analysis of statistics that reveal the gendered occupational profiles of Cameroonian society. The premise of my approach is that statistical indicators are a powerful tool in the struggle for human rights because they reveal who are the most privileged and deprived social groups. The aim of the chapter is to illustrate that inequitable economic, social and cultural practices have direct connections to civil and political rights.

Chapter 6 continues the illustration that patriarchal systems of control, which structure the differential political experiences between men and women in Cameroonian governing institutions. Unequal power relations are reflected in the particular issues in this chapter, notably in women's low representation in the parliamentary electoral lists, the small percentage of seats held by women in Cameroon's parliament, and the concentration of women MPs in parliamentary committees concerned with the kind of caring roles which parallel the expectations and restrictions imposed on women in the private sphere. This further confirms that women as a social group are poorly integrated into the socio-political system of Cameroon. Clearly, statistics alone cannot give conclusive answers. These are therefore linked in a deeper analysis of some of the actors involved.

Chapter 7 employs the personal narratives of three Cameroonian women politicians to reveal the way party-state policies and politics define, control and regulate women's participation in organised politics. Most of the issues in the women politicians' personal experiences are used to expose the many dimensions that serve to bar women's active participation in Cameroon's formal political life. These issues confirm the existence of a gendered structure that ultimately determines the distribution of rights and responsibilities featured in Chapters four and five.

Chapters 8 and 9 approach the subject of gendered politics from the perspective of the MINCOF, which is Cameroon's National Women's Machinery (NWM). With appointed female bureaucrats to direct its affairs, the MINCOF is the institution dealing with the promotion of the status of women. The chapters show how the mandate and objectives of the MINCOF, and the value put upon the WCPDM, combine with party manipulation and restrictions in the family code to construct a gendered pattern in Cameroonian political culture. This culture subordinates women, and the aim of the chapters is to show the method by which this is done. Chapter 8 focuses on the mandates and objectives of the MINCOF, which is inextricably linked with the WCPDM. The aim is to reveal that the political space within which the MINCOF and its female bureaucrats operate the gender agenda is itself gendered and, as a result, fails to provide the desired equality of opportunity intended. The statistics and analysis featured in Chapters 4 to 6 above provide the foundation for this analysis. Chapter 9 focuses on two specific events with far-reaching effects – the roundtable discussion on the future of the African woman in politics held on the 30th of July 1998, and the reflection on the family code on the 31st of July 1998. I point out the manipulations which occurred at these events and draw conclusions accordingly. The legal framework within which family responsibilities are spelled out is characterised by a patriarchal social structure, and this influences the gender division of labour not only within the family but in society at large. Patriarchal power relations are enshrined in the law itself, and affect decision-making at all matters relating to women. The events reveal that the Cameroonian party-state pretends to be democratic and constitutional because its written constitution carefully specifies the rights of all its citizens while neglecting to mention that these rights are limited by other laws – Customary and Family- within the party-state.

Conclusion

My study's main contribution to knowledge is the particular evidence from Cameroon relevant to current feminist debates on women politicians and their inadequate empowerment to fulfil their broad functions of bringing gender equity across national development agendas. It also contributes detailed insider accounts of the gendered politics of policy making. As briefly explained above, the investigation of gendered politics seems particularly needed in developing countries. In that respect, Cameroon is a striking example, because, as both a former French and a former British colony, it is the only

country in Africa which has inherited two sets of colonial cultures in language, education, economy, laws, politics and governing styles, which is one of the main reasons for its choice in this investigation. Other reasons, however, have also influenced the choice of Cameroon. From a practical point of view, I preferred to work in Cameroon to minimise the difficulties of fieldwork. Finally, as far as gender was concerned, the social and political arenas of Cameroon involve both men and women, but with an apparently strong sexual division of labour favouring male participation in the public sphere.

Since the denial of the rights of women is accompanied by justifications that are linked to cultural and traditional structures, and the legal system is infused with messages that relegate women to a subordinate status, (some more overtly than others), it is necessary to review Cameroon's historical, social and political development. This will enable me to demonstrate and explain the male bias in government which touches every aspect of Cameroonian women's lives- social, cultural, economic and political- since concerns are viewed predominantly through men's eyes, leaving much unseen because of blind spots for gender sensitivity. The chapter following focuses on this.

Chapter three

Cameroon's political and social development

3.1- Background

This chapter sets out to answer one question: what is it in the Cameroonian history and development and its present political institutions that has produced the specific gendered outcomes that the work in this thesis has set out to investigate?

Worldwide it is a near certainty that gender issues have become major concerns of state bureaucracies. Even though equality of opportunity was always assumed to be embedded in the gender-neural phraseology of state policy documents before the 1970s, the statistics as revealed by Boserup (1970) told a different story. She pointed out that women are in reality, unrecognised and poorly compensated contributors to economic, social and cultural development. Boserup's classic work challenged the modernisation theory. Using data based on Africa, Boserup came to her conclusion through comparative empirical analysis of women's economic role in the developing world. She suggested that new technology in farming actually lowered women's status by reducing their access to development through productive work. Furthermore, during the colonial period and afterwards, women were increasingly relegated to subsistence economy as cash crop production and wage labour were only made available to men. The implication here is that modernisation therefore, tended to remove women from productive labour and increase sexual stratification. This was in effect a separation of the sexes into public and private arenas with the public arena seen as the place where the individual was affiliated as a citizen into the political world. Domestic life and the private arena were assumed to be irrelevant to the social and political theory. Another assumption was that citizens of the public sphere were male heads of households within which women were subsumed. Jaquette (1990) states that "Boserup's thesis challenged the common assumption that women's rights and status automatically improve as modernisation proceeds. As Goetz (1992) has argued, bureaucracies tend to institutionalise the power asymmetries attached to gender difference, they also tend to be poor instruments for implementing gender policies. In 1979, the United Nations (UN) CEDAW was held. This was a major landmark, even though one UN conference had already been held in Mexico in 1975. The 1979 Convention secured a pledge from States to develop policies, the legal framework and other measures to abolish all forms of

discrimination against women in every aspect of their lives. Following this, UN conferences on women were held in Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995) and New York (2000). The overall concern has been to improve women's status, and find solutions to the problems of inequality and social justice to which women are subjected. Increasingly, from Mexico (1975) to New York (2000) emphasis has been on upgrading women's political participation at all levels of society. The 1995 Beijing conference Platform of Action emphasised that " without active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective in all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved". Therefore, not only did Beijing expand the focus of political participation from the narrow interest in official government bodies to civil, social and economic arenas, but it also made the overall development agenda contingent upon the full participation of women. This focus on increased participation for women culminated in the concept of governance. From a gender perspective, governance speaks directly to the problem of women's participation in the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. Democracy, to be discussed shortly, has emerged as the theoretical cornerstone of good governance and development. At the conference held in New York, in June 2000, (Beijing + 5), the assessment given by the Ngo Som of Cameroon's MINCOF, was not encouraging. She indicated that a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality has persisted and women continue to be under-represented at legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels as well as at the highest levels of the corporate sector and other social and economic institutions. Internationally, data on the proportion of parliamentarians who are female around the world reveal that, on average, increase since Beijing has been small – from 11.3 percent to 13.4 percent globally. However, there are important variations, with the Nordic countries registering 38.4 percent and the Arab States 3.4 percent. The average for Sub-Saharan Africa is 11.5 percent, and although this is not too different from Europe (excluding the Nordic countries- 13.5 percent) and the Americas (15.3percent), there is room for improvement. Table 3.1 reveals the differences between African nations. Representation at the executive ministerial and sub-ministerial level rose from 5.7 percent in 1995 to 11.7 percent in 1999 for the world.

Table 3. 1 Women in Parliament in Africa as of 8 March, 2001

Country and rank	Total women	Percentage of women
1.Mozambique	75	30.0
2. South Africa	119	29.8
3. Rwanda	18	25.7
4.Namibia	18	25.0
5.Seychelles	34	23.5
6. United Rep. of Tanzania	61	22.2
7.Uganda	50	17.86
8.Botswana	8	17.O2
9.Angola	34	15.5
10. Eritrea	22	14.7
11.Burundi	17	14.4
12. Mali	18	12.2
13.Senegal	17	12.2
14. Congo	9	12.0
15. Tunisia	21	11.5
16. Cape Verde	8	11.1
17 Zambia	16	10.1
18. Sudan	35	9.7
19. Malawi	18	9.3
20.Zimbabwe	21	9.3
21. Gabon	11	9.2
22. Soa Tome and Principe	5	9.1
23. Ghana	18	9.0
24. Guinea	10	8.8
25. Sierra Leone	7	8.8
26. Côte d'Ivoire	19	8.5
27. Burkina Faso	9	8.1

28. Madagascar	12	8.0
29. Guinea-Bissau	8	7.8
30.Liberia	5	7.8
31. Ethiopia	42	7.7
32. Central African Rep.	8	7.3
33. Benin	5	6.0
34. Mauritius	4	5.7
35. ***Cameroon***	10	5.6
36. Equatorial Guinea	4	5.0
37. Togo	4	4.9
38.Lesotho	3	3.8
39. Mauritania	3	3.8
40. Kenya	8	3.6
41. Algeria	13	3.4
42. Nigeria	12	3.4
43. Swaziland	2	3.1
44. Chad	3	2.4
45. Egypt	11	2.4
46. Gambia	1	2.0
47. Niger	1	1.2
48. Morocco	2	0.6
49. Djibouti	0	0.0
50. Libya	0	0.0
TOTAL	875	9.8

Source: Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) web-site http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm, Geneva: 2001

The specific reason for this comparison within Africa is so that I can place the Cameroonian situation within its regional context in exposing those factors which engender or obstruct the full participation of women in political and social deliberations. Cameroon is ranked 35 out of the 50 countries analysed in the table above. It falls within

the lower third of the Sub- Saharan African countries on this scale. Nevertheless, the variation in this figure over the last thirty years indicates the strength of the political decline Cameroonian women have suffered. Their political representation as compared to the 14.4 % (1988-1992), and 12.2% (1992-1997), has been cut by more than a half. The global dimension is to demonstrate that though Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, have a separate historical, social and cultural background that require particular attention, they share with the rest of the world numerous institutions and processes which are relevant to this thesis- patriarchal family structures and gendered political systems. Based on this, the discussion of the social and political development of Cameroonian governing institutions is organised around the relevance of its particular socio-political context for women's participation, and the reasons for resistance. To do this, it is necessary to analyse the impact that both the colonial institutions have had on the post colonial present. The theory is that elements of Cameroon's historical period still interact with the present. It is therefore important to highlight Cameroon's colonial and post-independence systems in order to determine the full effective participation of women on the basis of Cameroon's constitution which guarantees the equality of citizens in all spheres of society.

3.2- A brief history of the Cameroon State

3.2.1- Cameroon: a name born of mistaken identity

Mistaking the crayfish swarming in the Wouri River for prawns, the Portuguese explorers named it *Rios dos Cameroes,* or River of Prawns, which the British later Anglicized to Cameroons. With an estimated population of 13,9 million and a population growth of 2.7% (UNDP, 1999), Cameroon is an African country on the gulf of Guinea, bordered by Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea. Cameroon is therefore , the country where Central and West Africa meet, and is in many ways a microcosm of the continent. It is shaped in the south by the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Christian missionary presence, and in the north by the trans-Saharan slave trade, and Islam.Germany became the first of Cameroon's three colonial masters when the German Kamerun Protectorate was set up in July 1884. This lasted until 1916, when a combined Franco-Belgian- British military operation deposed the last German

governor of the protectorate.. After the First World War a League of Nations mandate granted four fifths of the territory to France and one fifth (two separate regions, one in the south west and the other further north running along the eastern border of Nigeria) to Britain. The French introduced a policy of direct rule from the centre, bringing with it a deep penetration of French culture, while Britain adopted a similar policy to that in Nigeria, based on indirect rule, associating the local rulers with the administration of the country. In the British sector, the south -western territory, known as the Southern Cameroons was joined in one administration with Nigeria, while the Northern Cameroons was linked with northern Nigeria in another. At the end of the Second World War, the League of Nations mandates were converted into UN Trust Territories, still under British and French administration. Under French constitutional reforms, French Cameroun became an "associated territory" in the French Union. Numerous political parties were formed in the territory, some based on ethnic divisions, some offshoots of French political parties and others more nationalistic in tendency. The strongest party to emerge was the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC), headed by Ruben Um Nyobé and based on the platform of the unification of the two Cameroons and the total independence from colonial powers. Its power centre was mainly concentrated in the western part of French Cameroun, with the north adhering more to its traditional Islamic leaders and the south east being strongly influenced by the penetration of Catholicism. Over the years, the UPC became increasingly militant and by 1955 it was organising powerful demonstrations against French rule. It was eventually banned by the French, and a bloody repression began, mainly affecting the Douala,Bamileke and Bassa ethnic groups. Several UPC leaders fled to the British Cameroons and others to foreign capitals. Many , however, took to the bush and started a guerrilla campaign, resulting in thousands of deaths. Um Nyobé was eventually killed by a government patrol in 1958, but the rebel activity was not really quelled until 1963.

Population

The current state of Cameroon was enumerated at 10, 493,655 at the census of April 1987, and was officially estimated to have risen to 14, 859,000 in mid 1999, giving an average density of 31.3 inhabitants per kilometre. Population growth has been rapid (an average rate of 3.2% per year in 1990-1998) and the composition and distribution are extremely diverse. In the Southern Forest regions Bantu peoples predominate , although there are also

pygmy groups in some of the more remote areas. North of the Bantu tribes live many semi-Bantu peoples including the ubiquitous Bamiléké. Further North the diversity is increases, with Sudanese Negroes, Hamitic Fulani or (Foulbe) and Arab Choa.

The distribution of population is uneven, with concentrations in the west, the south-central region and the Sudan savannah zone of the north. An important religious and social divide lies across the country. While the peoples of the south and west have been profoundly influenced by Christianity and by European introduction of an externally oriented colonial-type economy, the peoples of the north are either Muslim or animist and have largely retained their traditional modes of life. Consequently, the population of the south and west is much more developed, economically and socially, than that of the north, although the government has made efforts to reduce this regional disparity.

One aspect of the disparity is the southern location of the capital, Yaoundé (estimated population 1, 448, 300 in 1999), and the main port of Douala (1, 228, 300), as well as most of the other towns. Much of their growth results from rural-urban migration; many of the migrants come from overcrowded mountain areas in the west, and the Bamiléké constitute more than one-third of the inhabitants of Douala. Nevertheless, about two-thirds of all Cameroonians remain rural village dwellers.

One of the other major contrasts in the social geography of Cameroon is between anglophone north-west and south-west Cameroon, with less than one-tenth of the area and just over one-fifth of the population, and the much larger, more populous francophone area of former east Cameroon. The contrasting influence of British and French rule remain evident in education, commerce, law and elsewhere, although unification of the civil services since 1972, official bilingualism and the integration of transport networks and economies have helped to reduce the disparities between the two zones.

3.2.2---Colonial institutions in the Cameroons

The British and French colonial enterprise in Cameroons necessitated the creation of both commercial and political institutions in order to regulate their colonies. These institutions had legislative and political powers and enjoyed exclusive jurisdiction over the colonies. They supervised the implementation of laws, made appointments to posts in the colonial government, acted as the highest appeal court, and determined geographical boundaries. How did they arrive at this ideal system of governance? The process of establishing these powers of administrative powers took two routes. While the French governed by direct

rule, the British approach was referred to as indirect rule. However, although the defining principles of the two forms of rule differed considerably, in practice direct rule administration incorporated elements of indirect rule, especially during the later colonial era, and both produced the same results for gender discrimination, as the sections below demonstrate.

3.2.2.1-Direct rule

Under the direct rule, colonies were divided into districts administered by European appointees. In French West Africa, in general, and in Cameroon in particular, the chief district administrator, the *commandant de cercle,* was responsible for regional tax collection, labour and military recruitment, public works, education, local court cases, and the execution of dictates handed down from the colony's governor. Although Africans staffed the lower levels of the commandant's bureaucracy, most of the top officials were French. The commandant was expected to maintain public order and discourage offensive, or "backward", local customs. Thus, the direct rule was seen as a means of "civilising" as well as controlling African populations. In French Cameroon, the basic unit of administration was the *circonscription.* A *chef de region* commanded a particular circonscription. The circonscription was further divided into cantons which included traditional chiefdoms. Under the system of direct rule, the French colonial masters were in charge of order and security, the economy, the social development and the co-ordination of European activities in the field of health, education and agriculture. Traditional leaders performed only ceremonial tasks and were often retained on stipends by the French. Frequently, regional administrative borders cut through pre-existing African polities and ethnic communities. These borders marked a deliberate policy to divide and weaken militarily powerful groups who for years had resisted foreign occupation. Another part of this policy, at least in the years during and after the conquest, was a campaign to dethrone the "great chiefs" of these other African kingdoms and then replace them with appointees they could influence more easily. In Cameroon in 1931, the Sultan Njoya of Bamoum was deposed and exiled to Yaoundé. Generally, these traditional authorities were viewed not only as political threats but as obstacles to the "civilising mission". In Northern Cameroon, the French allowed indirect rule to prevail as traditional rulers retained much power. The policy of direct rule recognised and absorbed trained African personnel, the *citoyens,* to serve in administrative positions over the *sujets.* Such a system of

administrative control created a gulf between the educated, the French assimilated elite and the common man.

Direct rule encountered at least three problems from such a perspective. First, the European governments lacked the personnel required to administer their African colonies effectively. Although the schools of colonial administration were well established in Europe by the early twentieth century, debilitating diseases and the harsh climates discouraged officers from seeking posts in Africa. The European colonies often had fewer than one colonial officer for every 22,0000 Africans, as was the case in Kenya in 1921. The Belgian Congo had a mere 2384 officials for an African population of 9.4 million; French West Africa, with an African population of 15 million, employed only 3660 French personnel.

Second, the administrators were responsible not only for large subject populations, but for vast territories. Travel over long distances was slow and arduous, and communication difficult. As a result, colonial governors had little contact with remote areas, where district administrators often proved incapable of or uninterested in carrying out the dictates of their superiors.

Finally, the officials' limited knowledge of the local languages and customs, combined with their often total lack of legitimacy, undermined their ability to recruit labour, collect taxes, or carry out other administrative duties effectively. In the end, both the great chiefs and local village chiefs- both of which had greater legitimacy and more local contacts- proved indispensable to the project of colonial administration. For all these reasons, European powers started modifying their approach to colonial rule in the early twentieth century. This modification took different forms.

Referred to as Assimilation, in Cameroon, this major determinant of French colonial theory prevailed throughout the nineteenth century. Its philosophical origins are to be found in the Enlightenment, with its belief in the power of reason and the concept of the universal equality of all men. It aimed at making the colonial peoples assimilate French habits and beliefs and stressed oneness between France and its Empire. The educated elites were the main propagators of assimilation. Although the policy of assimilation was enshrined in article 109 of the 1848 constitution, a troubling divergence between policy and practice was easily detectable. By the early decades of the French rule this policy, which was applied in Cameroon despite the territory's unique character, was under severe problems. It was replaced by the policy of association although the influence of

assimilation continued to be a powerful factor. The association policy was aimed at cooperation and solidarity between the ruler and the ruled during the colonial period. Throughout the twentieth century, the French preached the doctrine of association as a means of enabling the Africans to develop within the context of their milieu. Rather than using educated elites, the French created chiefs to uphold the local populations and create stability. This participation of local leaders appeared to make French rule more secure, practical and economical. The French also used association as a belated policy of economic development in their colonies. These assumed goals of association did not, however, eliminate the traces of assimilation that continued to persist through French paternalism, education and cultural control. The association policy, like that of assimilation before it , was rooted in the Enlightenment. The common distinctions made between the policies of association and assimilation were not very significant in daily practice. The local population suffered social and economic disintegration of indigenous structures, unemployment rose and hardship was a bitter characteristic of the labour system. The idea of planned development was limited to the "Fertile crescent" region, leaving the greater part of the territory in substandard condition. This relative imbalance in terms of the economic growth and development characterised the territory's economy into the independence era. While a few ethnic groups like the Bamilékés gained materially from this system, others, like the Bassas suffered from it. The numerous French citizens in Cameroon at the time were its main beneficiaries.

3.2.2.2--Indirect rule

The alternative method, first adopted by the British, was to rule indirectly through "traditional" African authorities. The logic of indirect rule was first articulated by Lord E.J.D. Lugard, the high commissioner of the British protectorate of Northern Nigeria. Based on his observation of the Sokoto Caliphate and the kingdom of Buganda, Lugard recommended that colonial powers take advantage of existing African authority structures. He argued that Africans were better off ruled through their own "traditional systems" and in accordance with the "customary laws" of their own "tribe". Under indirect rule, "tribal" authorities rather than European personnel would be given responsibility for regional administration and justice. Assumed to represent the highest of African abilities, these kings and chiefs were expected to draw on customary laws to maintain obedience and public order, while encouraging their subjects to appreciate modern European values.

Lugard emphasised the moral qualities of indirect rule, but it also offered practical advantages, at least in theory. Foremost, it promised to be cheap: African chiefs could raise the money for their own salaries from their own subjects. Indirect rule also appeared safer and more effective: by co-opting the chiefs' inherited legitimacy, the colonial powers hoped both to improve their ability to carry out routine functions, such as tax collection and the labour recruitment, and so avoid large-scale revolts.

Above all, indirect rule assumed the sanctity of the tribe. Besides strengthening traditional authorities, colonial administrations endeavoured to break down each tribes' homeland and customs. Often, they called on missionaries and anthropologists for help. Indirect rule worked best in the regions where strong and highly organised states were already in place like northern Nigeria, and where recognised authorities, like the Sokoto caliph, welcomed European collaboration. On the whole, however, erroneous assumptions about the nature of "tribal" identity, authority, and customary law undermined the effectiveness and ultimately the sustainability of indirect rule.

Fundamental to the logic of indirect rule, for example, was the belief that Africa comprised hundreds of tribes of mutually exclusive, geographically distinct, and centrally ruled "tribes". In reality, African cultural identities were complex and dynamic. African polities also varies enormously in size and structure, from the hierarchical, multi-ethnic kingdoms to the loosely federated chieftaincies to the village based chiefdoms and councils of stateless peoples . Cameroon alone, for instance, has one of Africa's most complex patterns of ethnic and linguistic groupings, with more than 200 languages and cultural identities. European colonial officials handled the ambiguities by imposing their own categories and by inventing the tribal authority structures where none existed. In 1930 the British administrator of Tanganyika (present-day Tanzania) defined the tribes as "cultural units possessing a common language, a single social system, and an established customary law. Based on this, the British administration grouped disparate communities ander a centralised chief. Italy did the same in Libya with the Bedouins in 1929. In Rwanda-Burundi the Belgian government assigned Africans passes labelling them as either Hutu or Tutsi, thus creating a rigid distinction between previously contextual identities. Where there was no obvious tribal ruler, colonial administration summarily appointed one, typically, a co-operative village "big man". Many African rulers were granted unprecedented powers by colonial administrations, often at the expense of pre-existing judicial and advisory bodies. In pre-colonial Swaziland , for example, the king's power

was checked by the queen-mother and the council composed of royal family members, village headmen, and commoners. The two subordinate categories in colonial Cameroon were youth and women. Bayart (1993) states that these categories were social constructs as much as biological differentiations linked to gender and age. They originate from relationships of economic production, legal restrictions and, of course, cultural particularities. Amongst the Bamiléké, for example, certain women participated in the system of power and enjoyed its privileges, such as the granting of land, servants amd matrimonial rights. The highest status was that of *ma-fo* (mother-chiefs), originally from a sort of female aristocracy, who authorised the transfer of the title. The feminine society organised around her through the numerous neighbourhoods and the group hierarchies; but she is recognised as a man in order to give a foundation to her participation in the system of power and administration. Woman-chief, she is also woman-man so that social relations of 'male-sign' and 'female-sign' are expressed by her. Under British rule, women and commoners were excluded from the council, and the kings decisions were subject to approval by the British administration. The same applied to the Ghanaian kingdom and the Ibo communities of Nigeria, where the male roles of traditional government were institutionalised to the exclusion of the female parallel models. *Under British rule, women and commoners were excluded from the council.* In many parts of Africa, chiefs were expected to allocate land and adjudicate local disputes, both responsibilities that had previously often belonged to lineage heads or village councils. Backing up chiefs' new powers was the implicit threat of military force, provided by colonial armies and police. Some chiefs took advantage of their powers to collect additional taxes, recruit extra labour for their own plantations, and extract exorbitant tributes and services from their subjects. In the 1920s, the British and French attempted to prevent chiefs from taking excessive cuts from local revenue by giving them fixed salaries. In general, however, chiefs known to be corrupt who were otherwise co-operative were usually allowed to remain in office. Not all chiefs abused their powers, of course but most found their legitimacy tested by the duties of their office. Collecting taxes, requisitioning crops, recruiting youths for compulsory labour service and military service- only the most gifted leaders managed to carry out these tasks without provoking resentment , rebellion, or flight.

3.2.2.3--Colonialism and customary law

Colonial administrative efforts to impose indirect rule were confused by the ambiguities of so-called customary law, that have such prominence in the Cameroon's current family code. Lugard and other administrators assumed that each "tribe" possessed a set of stable, universally understood laws. In fact, many African societies' laws were contested and often changing, and the era defined by Europeans as " traditional Africa" – the nineteenth century- was a period of extraordinary upheaval. Whether or not "customary laws" were actually very old, most were not written down. As a result, colonial administrators consulted with chiefs, elders, missionaries and anthropologists, all of whom described customs according to their own views and interests. Chiefs had an interest in strengthening their own authority to tax and fine subjects, while elders typically benefited from laws that gave them control over youth and women. Missionaries often argued for the preservation of certain customs, as did anthropologists, but emphasised the injustices of those that interfered with their own evangelical practices, such as arranged marriages. Nevertheless, based on these accounts, European officials codified those customary laws that seemed more likely to assure their political, economic, and social objectives. Others they rejected entirely. In Rhodesia, for example, British commissioners were scandalised to learn that Ndebele women were allowed to marry whom they pleased. Assuming that the group's traditional laws must have been "forgotten or swept away," the colonial commissioner brought in a copy of the Natal Native Code of 1891, (first applied in the Natal colony of present-day South Africa) to teach them how to behave like traditional Ndebele.

Although the institution of customary law helped colonial officials win the co-operation of customary authorities, it did not prevent on-going challenges to those authorities, especially at the local level. As the expansion of transportation systems and the market economy provided new opportunities for individual mobility and employment, formally dependent members of rural communities- women and young men- often contested them, individually, not collectively, or simply disregarded the customary laws that dictated whom they owed labour or who they could marry. Village chiefs and elders found it difficult to exert control over their own kin members. Especially after World War 11, high rates of urban migration placed more and more Africans outside the jurisdiction of customary law and into social settings and work places where they started to participate in growing nationalist movements. The stability that customary law was supposed to provide was fleeting at best.

North (1990) defines institutions to be best understood as a set of formal and informal rules which are administered by organisations. As illustrated above, these rules are apparently created by participants and they set the social and physical parameters within which to operate. The problem arises when the rule of the institution are set only by one set of players, the men. The issues of gender relations in institutions generated by the customary laws instituted by colonial administration cited above, touch on several features of social institutions that deny certain human rights to women within the marriage institution. This is because long term experience with the colonial state shaped the nature of ideas bequeathed at independence. The question to ask here is: what colonial imprint was left on post-colonial political leaders, structures and actions to influence gender relations in Cameroonian governing institutions? A good number of scholars including Schmidt (1995); Guyer (1990, 1991); Potash (1995) and Staudt (1986) have written extensively on gender relations in institutions as regards the secular division of labour, agriculture and politics. The process as described above, confirms their claims that the control of women within marriage was conducted through the institution of customary law and native courts established by colonial administrators. As already related above, these customary laws were established in collaboration with African men. In the political sphere, the colonial administration was bent on maintaining law, order and respect for authority, both African and European. While European officials were expected to keep order at State level, African chiefs, headmen, village elders and male heads of households were expected to maintain tight control in villages and homes. Rather than destroying male authority in toto, the colonial States intended to harness it for its own end. The said tradition which is now used as a rationale for denying certain human rights to women, was formulated in the process, as described above. The making of customary law in Colonial Africa through this lengthy process led to a stating, defining, clarifying, and regularising of customary practices, both real and manufactured, in a way which was designed to turn fluid accounts of relationships at work, into rules. It must therefore be seen not as part of the process of discovering the rules of customary law but as a vital part of the rule-making process. Where the anxieties of the witnesses coincided with the moral bias and administrative purposes of the officials, a customary law might become established.

This description raises a number of issues among which is the deliberate process of turning into customary law issues of control that served 'administrative purposes'. The customary laws were of necessity required as a reinforcement of patriarchal authority

which exists in today's African States in general, and in the State of Cameroon, as 1.1.2 above demonstrates. This process also demonstrates that the source of tradition, which is now a convenient label for human rights abuses and the legitimacy to exercise power, lies with men. It is simply a confirmation that male activists are the focus of cultural values. If in constructing customary law the colonial masters used chiefs and headmen etc, to bolster old bases of power to establish new ones, this suggests that political structure of some sort were already in existence. The colonialists simply regularised them to suit their administrative purposes. Waylen (1996) for example, argues that while it is impossible to generalise about pre-colonial societies, it is possible to suggest that while gender relations were not generally characterised by equality and the absence of male dominance, women often had a degree of autonomy and control over their lives. O'Barr and Firmin-Sellers (1995) also suggest that in agricultural societies in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), for example, women derived their status from the key role they played in the production. This meant that whether the society was matrilineal or patrilineal, women usually had political control over some area of activity. They had political institutions which were not subjected to general control by men as much as they were autonomous in their own areas of responsibility. Women had their own structures of power which dealt with issues that concerned them and these structures were headed by a female official. Wipper (1995) and Waylen (1996) give the example of the Omu of the Igbos of Nigeria who had their own council of elders paralleling that of the male official, the Obi. They make reference to the 'Mikiri'[meeting] , where women could resolve issues arising from their particular roles as traders, but also as farmers, wives and mothers. Women could also resort to taking sanctions both on other women and on men to resolve individual or collective grievances. 'Making war' or 'sitting on a man' by surrounding his hut and protesting his behaviour was recognised by men as a legitimate and effective course of action for women to take. Hay and Stichter (1995) also give the example of the Queen Mother of the Ashantis of Ghana. According to them, with the official title of Asante Ohemaa, she ruled jointly with the male chiefs. She operated her own court and could rule in the chiefs absence. The equivalent in Nigeria's Yorubaland was the Iyodele who had jurisdiction over all Yoruba women and defended their concerns in the male King's council.

These brief accounts of African women's involvement in politics in the colonial era suggests that they had ideas and tactics derived from traditional experience which the colonial officers failed to build on, preferring instead to strengthen equivalent male

institutions. This is how the women's political structures reverted to an oppressed state such as the Cameroonian example of the WCPDM. Waylen (1996), Stamp (1996) and Wipper (1995) argue that the colonisers brought with them different cultural constructions of gender, those of nineteenth century Europe which to a greater or lesser degree, tried to impose on the societies they took over.

The general position of the Cameroonian women as outlined in 1.2.2 above, far from being a system of Cameroonian law which survived through the colonial period was in fact created by the political economy of colonial capitalism. Evidently, that style of manipulation manifests itself in today's politics to male advantage. This proves that it was men who derived greater benefit in the political sphere because the remedies they put forward to combat their losing control were incorporated into the colonial court system and emerged as applicable customary law. The institutionalisation of customary law by colonial officers and the male indigenous hierarchy, justified as traditional, was used by both as a way of increasing control over women for economic gains. The post-independence Cameroonian leaders simply worked on the same pattern and went a step further by co-opting women's groups and movements into political parties as a useful political resource. Ignoring women while building up men's political sphere led to the loss of institutional authority for women during the colonial period. That loss is still being felt today, as such a system has created constraints both for women who are discriminated against and for the Cameroonian State caught between contemporary human rights expectations-as outlined in the UN Declaration (1948) and that of CEDAW (1979)- and traditional cultural values.

3.2.2.4-Cameroon's gendered colonial legacy

We cannot understand the various constituting power relationships of the post-colonial Cameroonian state without reflecting on the legacy of its triple colonialism. This is because this legacy has been material, cultural and political. I argue that the colonial powers' bargaining with important political groups within Cameroonian colonial societies as well as the introduction of new socio-economic arrangements brought about different results for men and women. With increasing control over common land, the colonial authorities were able to refashion the relationship of men and women to natural resources. The commercialisation of agriculture as a means of extraction of economic surplus led to a

monopolistic right by men over land. Based on this, the colonial powers refashioned gender relations within Cameroon through the exercise of not only material but also discursive power. As European powers prepared for de-colonisation, Africans across much of the continent gained voting rights and increased representation in the colonial legislatures in the 1950s. Faced with a new generation of African politicians, many of them schooled in socialist thought, chiefs and kings struggled to ensure themselves a role in post-colonial power structure. In Cameroon, though the independent government leaders made concerted effort to limit the powers of chiefs and other customary authorities, the area of customary law regarding issues that discriminate against women as recounted in 1.2.2, above, remains intact. In other areas, the Cameroonian post-colonial state has inherited their predecessors ambivalence toward customary authorities. They look to village chiefs and other such authorities to support their development projects and their political campaigns. The fact that the post-colonial state is the most reliable channel of upward mobility in Cameroon, has contributed to undermining the status of women in the public sphere where power exists in the framework of male authority. Political marginalisation was also by the introduction of cash economies based on the control of indigenous labour. The motivation for men came in the new cash economy in various forms which included migration for waged labour in the Cameroonian tea, coffee, banana, rubber, and palm plantations; sale of cash crops, education and investing in business. Staudt (1989) confirms this in her argument that "education for girls tended to stress the development qualities which would make them good wives and mothers... while boys received the skills necessary for employment in European enterprises, for example as clerks" (in Waylen 1996: 62).The marginalisation of African women was therefore through the denial of many things, including education and access to urban employment. Through this medium colonial legislation assured that women would only play a secondary role in the emerging cash economy. It succeeded in changing the meaning of women's contribution to household management. This had the effect of setting back women's social status.

Customary law as enshrined in Cameroon's family code, remains a fierce debate among Cameroonian women who are aware of their constitutional rights, while the male folk have a blind spot in regard to the meaning of the gendered character of citizenship, especially the relationship between the public and private aspects of it. A few examples of how it operates in Cameroon are given below.

Customary Law in Cameroon

On the whole, there are general principles of customary law, despite the variety of specific rules in Cameroon's 200 plus ethnic groups. It has been established (see 2.2.2.3 above), that African customary law consists of a variety of different types of principles, norms and rules. Some of them state wide and general principles of morality and public policy to constitute an apparent framework for justice in upholding customary law in Cameroon. It is however, the skill of the judges in selecting from this variety of principles and rules, especially in regard to the control of women, that matters in giving judgement. This is because the responsibility for the entire judicial system in the Cameroon federation was allotted to federal authorities, with the sole exception that the West/British Cameroon Customary Law and Courts were to be preserved and regulated by the state rules, except for appeals from these courts.

According to the 1972 Constitution of Cameroon, the Customary Court settles litigation relating to matters of estate or succession, that is, everything that has to do with property or succession, in particular claims to recover sums of money or civil and commercial debts such as claims for material damage and bodily injury, and other contract-related claims [refund of bride-price]. The Constitution further states that a matter may be referred to a Customary Court by a simple written or oral application to the president of the said court, and the payment of a small amount of money (1, 500 frs. or 2000 frs. depending on the case [£ 1.50 or £2.00]) known as a deposit to the Registrar (the judge's secretary who records minutes of the proceedings and writes the judgement). Customary Courts are usually presided over by civil servants appointed by order of the Minister of Justice from those serving within the jurisdiction of the Court. In the absence of the President, he is automatically replaced by the divisional officer of the subdivision in which the courts is located, or by an assistant divisional officer designated by the former. The Customary Court examines all matters and procedures relating to civil status, marriage, divorce, succession and real estate rights involving land and immovable property such as houses. The Magistrate's Court of first instance and the Customary Court are stated in the Constitution as being traditional courts which apply the custom of the parties except where such custom are contrary to the law and good morals.

The cultural dimension of the Customary Law and Courts system is perceived as the preservation of values and beliefs of the Cameroonian society. Any examination of

customary law in Cameroon is inevitably tied with the Customary Court system. The examples given here give an idea of the general principles from which Cameroonian customary law might be deduced.

Customary law in practice

In her study of the survival strategies of the Bamenda women of Cameroon's NorthWest Province in Anglophone Cameroon, van den Berg states that:

> The Native (or since the fifties Customary) Courts were established in 1916. The first tribunals consisted partly of paramount chiefs and partly of chiefs-in-council, i.e. chiefs advised by a council of village heads and notables. They were controlled by the District Officer and assisted by one or more clerks and an interpreter if necessary. Often, these clerks were the only Africans in court who had received a short training and had some knowledge of the British legislation.
>
> (van den Berg 1992:71)

van den Berg cites the Customary Court Ordinance of 1948 restricting the Customary Court judgements to conflicts concerning marriage, inheritance and land. From 1974, however, the conflicts about land were removed from their jurisdiction. van den Berg's research focused on the women who appeared in the Mankon customary court in two periods (1961-65, 1975-79), and the nature of the conflict was. More importantly, she focused on the views of the judges with regard to women and their conflicts.

In both periods under study, van den Berg (1992) counted 240 recorded cases. She noted that in cases where women were parties, they were more often defendants than plaintiffs, as the table below illustrates.

Table 3.2 Nature of parties in land conflicts

Period	Number of cases	Gender of plaintiff		Gender of defendant	
		male	female	male	female
1961-1975	154	148	6	137	16
1975-1979	240	227	13	217	23

Source: van den Berg (1992: 74)

The interest of my study is not so much on the number of women prosecuted in court. It is the nature of their prosecution and the 'justice' they received in the name of customary law that is relevant to my point here. In this regard, van den Berg (1992) indicated that both married women and widows are mentioned relatively often in the court records. The

nature of the conflicts involving women was claims for title ownership of customarily tended family or communal land. In both periods, women are recorded as having been summoned as farmers and cultivators of the land instead of as real owners. She illustrates this point by quoting a dialogue between a woman and a plaintiff (case 47/75), as follows : "I am wife to defendant who is the right person to defend the land and not me, do you agree? – Yes, but you farmed the place' (van den Berg 1992:75).

She also gives examples of problems concerning inheritance or transactions with regard to the reaction of judges to claims by women. She emphasises that the views of the judges of the Customary court concerning women were unambiguous. Claims of ownership by women were declared non-suited on various grounds. I give some of her examples below.

> Defendant is a woman and has no right to title to any land. A male can successfully do it. (case 66/61)
> In this case Plaintiff is a woman and has no right to title over land. She never won the title over it *she is not entitled to claim for the title according to our customs. (*case 175/62)
> *She is a wife to defendant. She is regarded as a subordinate. Only men can dispute about land.*
> *We have to non-suit this case because the Plaintiff and Defendant are both housewives and they cannot claim title to land.* (case 72/64)
>
> (van den Berg 1992:75)

Her findings indicate that in no case was a land title granted to women. She states that they were also witnesses and other parties who pointed out to the court that a woman could not claim a title as per Cameroonian custom. She sites an example of the right women could claim and, in this instance, a woman did claim.

> My husband is the chief and the Plaintiff would have taken his action against him, for a woman has no title over land. I am not a harlot where people can begin to sue me to court. I have a husband.
>
> (van den Berg 1992:76)

In claiming her rights, she proudly does so by expressing her status and protection which she enjoyed as wife. These few examples prove that gender-biased customary law contributes to the further marginalisation of women.

In the same vein, I turn to pertinent examples in the work of Brain (1972) based on his study of the Bangwa people of Cameroon. Linguistically and culturally, the Bangwa are classed with their eastern neighbours, the Bamileke. His examples also reveal gender bias in customary law. Brain (1972) writes that certain matters – concerning witchcraft

accusations and calming an irate husband and punishing a guilty wife – are not allowed to be taken to the customary court. He points out that divorce, the legal dissolution of marriage, regulating the status of the husband and wife and their children, is a process carried by customary courts. Unions are dissolved by the return of bride price to the husband. Disputes over women also take up most of the procedures of the local customary courts and are concerned primarily with claims to children and non-payment of bride-wealth. He emphasises that in cases of divorce, until the bride-wealth is completely refunded and the separation rites are performed, all children born to the man's wife belong to him. A woman who is merely separated from her husband is still his wife. He will make a point of visiting her when she gives birth in the *de facto* husband's compound, to establish his right as *pater* by naming the child.

By Cameroonian customary law, the refund of bride-wealth is the concern of the woman's father. The process involves checking and counterchecking the amounts involved by impartial assessors in the customary court. The responsibility rests with the new husband to find the money and pay it to her father, who will transfer it to the former husband. Amounts which the father can extract from the new husband over and above the agreed sum are their 'profits'. 'Profits of this kind are accepted by customary law. Brain (1972) gives an example in 1955 when the following amounts were put aside as 'profits' for the father. The amounts ranged from £5, £6, £4 and £15 respectively. He adds that this 'profit' is traditional, a means by which the second husband compensated the woman's family for 'spoiling' their relationship with the first son-in-law.

These are just a few examples that illustrate the gendered nature of customary in Cameroon.

3.3.1- The one-party/single–party dominant Cameroon state

After the Deferre Law on France's African colonies was passed in 1956, French ruled territory was offered a form of semi-autonomy and elections were held in 1957. The head of the *Partie Démocratie* (PD) André-Marie M'bida, was appointed prime minister and a Muslim northerner , Amadou Ahidjo, vice premier. Within a year a government crisis discredited M'bida, and Ahidjo took over as prime minister. From his power base among the northern deputies, Ahidjo formed the *Union Camerounaise* (UC) but, in time, he managed also to gain the confidence of other regions through his platform of reunification

and independence. He set about negotiating with France and the UN to achieve independence as the Republic of Cameroon; the date was finally fixed for January 1, 1960. The constitution was approved by referendum in February 1960, and at legislative elections I April the UC won a majority of 51 out of the 100 seats in the *Assemblée Nationale* (parliament). In May Ahidjo, standing as the sole candidate, won 89 votes from the deputies and was elected president.

In the British Cameroons, the House of Assembly of Southern Cameroons met in October 1954, headed by Emmanuel Endeley, who was to form the Kamerun National Convention (KNC). In 1955 John Ngu Foncha formed the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP), which campaigned for secession and independence from Nigeria and unification with French Cameroun. At general elections in January 1959, the KNC lost to the KNDP and Foncha became prime minister. In 1961 the UN supervised plebiscites in both the Southern and Northern Cameroons. The former voted to join the Republic of Cameroon in a federation, while Northern Cameroon opted for integration with Nigeria's Northern region.

In October 1961 the Southern Cameroons became the Western state of the Cameroon Federal Republic, with Ahidjo as president and Foncha as vice president. Both components of the federation retained their local parliaments, but President Ahidjo pushed rapidly and determinedly for complete unification; the CFA franc became the common currency throughout the federation, and French taxation and customs regimes were extended to the formally British ruled sector. The UC gradually absorbed nearly all the other francophone political groupings and by 1964 it held all the seats in the local assembly. It then merged with the two anglophone political parties and in September 1968 was reconstituted as the *Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC)* (Cameroon National Union- CNU). Foncha , however , had aspirations of his own and President Ahidjo manoeuvred to have him replaced by Solomon Tandeng Muna, his strongest supporter among the anglophone politicians. At presidential elections in 1970, Ahidjo was re-elected with Muna as his vice president. President Ahidjo continued to campaign for full unification and, in a surprise move, called a referendum in May 1972, at which 99.7 percent of the voters approved the dissolution of the federation. The *République Unie du Cameroun* came into being on May 20, 1972, with two official languages, French and English.

From the outset, the president had absolute authority and appointed the government, while the National Assembly was constituted exclusively by members of the CNU.

Administratively, the country was divided into seven provinces, each with a governor appointed by the President. When legislative elections were held in May 1973, Muna took the post of president of the assembly and the vice presidency was abolished. At a CNU congress in early 1975, Ahidjo was re-nominated as the sole candidate for the presidency and he was duly re-elected. The congress also announced that the constitution was to be modified in order to introduce the post of prime minister. The former secretary general of the presidency, Paul Biya, was appointed to the new post in June. At the same time, a further constitutional amendment provided for the prime minister, and no longer the president of the assembly, to replace the president temporarily should the post fall suddenly vacant because of death or resignation. Although Biya had been quite clearly picked out as the eventual successor to President Ahidjo, he kept a very low profile as premier and was generally considered to wield little independent political influence. In the late 1970s there were ripples of unrest. A coup plot by some military officers was uncovered by the security forces in July 1979, and there was also unrest in the anglophone region, where a strong section of the population had always felt that the English speakers were under-represented both politically and in the economy.

At the 1980 congress, Ahidjo announced that he would run for a further five year term as president, and was promptly re-elected. However, in November 1982 he stunned his compatriots by announcing that he was resigning immediately and handing over the presidency to Biya. Though ill health was suspected, no official reason was given and Ahidjo maintained his role as president of the CNU. President Ahidjo ruled Cameroon for 22 years. He succeed by concentrating on building national unity as he feared the divisive potential of ethnic, regional, religious and linguistic identities. This he did in part through his broad appeal to the population as the "father" of the nation, and in part through his eventual authoritarian control over a single-party state. Ahidjo centralised most decision-making and incorporated previously independent associations representing women (the National Council of Cameron Women), and youth, and trade unions into the sole legal party, the Cameroon National Union (CNU). The police and military suppressed any vestiges of the political opposition, including the moribund UPC, and censored the media. Ahidjo further solidified his rule by carefully balancing the ethnic representation in the cabinet and National Assembly, and by dispensing patronage to supporters at all levels of the government bureaucracy, the military, and the business community. He was able to pursue such tactics through his control over the economy and his relations with France

which remained the primary destination for Cameroon' agricultural exports.

3.3.2-The Ahidjo-Biya Rift

Ahidjo, still head of the CNU after handing over power to Biya as his chosen successor, found him resistant to his efforts to run the country from behind the scenes. Within a few months, President Biya was proving to be far more his own man than had previously been supposed. He weeded out many of the most overt supporters of Ahidjo from the government. Rumours grew of a widening rift between the two men and in August 1983 the dissension came to a head with the discovery of a plot to overthrow the president, involving two close personal aides of his predecessor. In a move to diffuse political tension, the number of the country's provinces was increased from seven to ten. The then Northern Province was split into three (Adamaoua, North and Far North) and the Centre South was spilt into the Centre and Centre South. Ahidjo then tried to assert his influence by virtue of his position as president of the CNU. He lost the power struggle, passed the chairmanship of the CNU to Biya and left the country, dying in exile in 1989. A triumphant President Biya was elected CNU president at an extra-ordinary congress in September 1983. He went on to be re-elected president for a five year term in January 1984, and shortly afterwards announced the abolition of the post of prime minister and the adoption of the *République du Cameroun* as the country's name.

3.3.3-The attempted coup d'etat

In February 1984 the nation was again stunned when the perpetrators of the August 1983 plot were brought to trial. A third accused joined the original two but was tried in absentia and sentenced to death . He was none other than Ahidjo. Just two months later, opponents of President Biya led the elite Republican Guard (the presidential guard) in the most serious coup attempt in the history of independent Cameroon. Fighting broke out early in the morning of April 6 but within 48 hours loyal army forces had quelled the rebellion. An official death toll of 80 was given a few days later by the government, but it is widely acknowledged to have underestimated the true number, which is put at about 500 and 1,000. President Biya then embarked on a sweeping shake-up within the presidency (the

Republican Guard was disbanded), the civil service , the Central Committee of the CNU, the government and the public sector.

3.3.4-The final severance

A new party congress was held in Bamenda in MARCH 1985. President Biya announced that the party's name was to be changed to the *Rassemblement Démocrique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC)* Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), with the motto "Unity, Progress, Democracy". The Central Committee was enlarged and many veteran members lost their seats. In June 1987 the assembly approved a bill allowing for multiple candidates (but from the sole legal party, the CPDM) at Municipal elections to be held in October; they were also permitted at the legislative elections in April 1988. In the presidential election that year, in which President Biya was the sole candidate, his proportion of the vote was 98.75 percent.

3.4- A faction-ridden and weakening opposition

3.4.1-Ghost towns: a failed opposition strategy for democratisation

In early 1990 the wave of social agitation for multi-party politics which was sweeping through West and Central Africa hit Cameroon. Attempts to form political parties were, however, repressed. In May 1990 six pro-democracy demonstrators were killed by security forces in Bamenda. A new law providing for the formation of political parties was passed in December. In April 1991 President Biya called an extraordinary session of the assembly, re-established the post of prime minister and brought forward legislative elections from April 1993, initially to 1991. The new freedom of political activity brought the creation of a multiplicity of parties and an umbrella opposition grouping which called for the holding of a sovereign national conference along the lines of those already held in Congo and Mali. President Biya firmly rejected this idea, and there ensued a prolonged campaign of civil disobedience known as the *villes mortes* (ghost towns), which further restrained the already severely depressed level of economic activity. After a delay of several months, the legislative elections eventually took place in March 1992, by which time there were 48 officially recognised parties in existence. Most, however, had little widespread support. Only three parties put up a real show of strength at the elections: the

Union National pour la Démocratie et le Progres (UNDP) headed by a former prime minister, Bello Bouba Maigari; the *Union des Populations Camerounaises* (UPC), the country's oldest political party, which experienced scissions and changes of leadership in the run-up to the contest; and the small *Movement pour la Défense de la République* (MDR), led by a northerner, Daikola Daissole. The highly popular Social Democratic Front (SDF) called for a boycott of elections and its supporters adhered to the call. The outcome was a vote split almost equally between the opposition (68 seats for the UNDP, 18 for the UPC and six for the MDR) and the ruling CPDM with 88 seats. This forced President Biya into forming a coalition with the MDR, thus giving the government a narrow eight seat majority in the National Assembly.

3.4.2-Manipulating the elections and co-opting the opposition

In the following months the opposition showed serious signs of splitting into separate camps and President Biya took the opportunity to bring forward Presidential elections to October 1992. The opposition abandoned its original plan of fielding a single candidate, who would almost certainly have brought down the President, and no fewer than eight candidates stood for election as president. Biya claimed a narrow victory, which was confirmed by the Supreme Court. His closest challenger, John Fru Ndi of the SDF, alleged massive fraud, which was partly corroborated by some foreign observers. A legislative election in May 1997 was marred by numerous irregularities and intimidation, and was conducted with a highly defective voter registration list. The CPDM won 109 seats in the assembly, while the SDF acquired 43, having decided against another boycott. As a result of negotiations between the CPDM and elements of the opposition following this elections, the new government included members from four of Cameroon's 150 political parties; the CPDM retained 45 of the 50 Ministerial posts. Among the non-CPDM appointees included in the cabinet was Bello Bouba Maigari of the UNDP (unexpectedly appointed senior minister in charge of industrial and commercial development), one of several prominent figures to have boycotted the election in October. Two other members of the UNDP were also appointed to the new government. Henri Hogbe Nlend was appointed minister of scientific and technical research. The SDF declined to participate in a coalition government. The SDF and UDC announced their intention to form a common opposition. The President's current policy of co-option has proved a success, at least in the

short term, in terms of easing political tension in the country. The consensus –based administration has recreated the old , North-South alliance on which the political stability of the 1960s and the 1970s had been based, while a demoralised and divided opposition has been increasingly marginalised. The ruling CPDM benefits from state patronage and continues to dominate the political system. It is seen effectively as little more than a vehicle for the promotion of the individual ambitions of Cameroon's establishment politicians. Beset by internal problems, the SDF and the UNDP have engaged in an increasing bitter and public war of words. In February 1999, the SDF denounced the UNDP on state radio and television for supporting what it called a disguised one-party system and abandoning the opposition cause. The UNDP responded by accusing the SDF of "falsehood, injustice and demagogy", and has complained that a party which espouses free political will ought not to condemn others for making their own political choices and choosing their own allies. Such squabbling no doubt demoralises the opposition more.

3.4.3- A disorganised, quarrelsome and divided opposition

Opposition parties have lost the influence they possessed in the early 1990s.
They have failed to challenge the government either by constitutional means or extra-constitutional means, they lack resources and they have proved divided over personalities and policies. The UNDP, which has its power base in the north of the country, chose to join the government in 1997. The most radical opposition party is the SDF. It is headed by the charismatic, but uncompromising, John Fru Ndi, who has increasingly alienated many of the party's moderate francophone supporters by his opposition to working with the government. This has left the party marginalised in its anglophone heartland.
One of the main features emerging from the re-introduction of multi-party politics is the division of political loyalties along ethnic and regional lines, which President Ahidjo strove to eliminate by dissolving the federation in 1972. The UPC, associated more with radical tendencies than the ethnic or religious divisions, has shown itself to be outmoded in the 1990s and been weakened by the serious internal divisions. In mid-1992 it split into two main factions, one of hard-liners headed by the veteran politician and former exile, Ndeh Ntumanzah, and the second headed by Augustin Kodock, which contested legislative elections in March 1992 and emerged with 18 seats. In November 1992 Kodock accepted a ministerial post.

The UNDP has its power base in the north of the country and is closely associated with supporters of the late Ahidjo. It was founded by Samuel Eboua, secretary-general to the President Ahidjo. He was replaced as a leader at a party congress in January 1992 by Maigari, who served as a minister under President Ahidjo and as prime minister under President Biya but fled into exile in 1983 after being implicated in the coup attempt of that year, returning only in 1991. In 1994, there were violent incidents in the north of the country , mainly involving rival factions of the UNDP. The problem revolved around the inclusion of two leading UNDP members Hamadou Moustapha and Issa Tchiroma in the cabinet as deputy prime-minister responsible for town planning and housing, and minister of transport. Two days later, the UNDP's leader, Bello Bouba Maigari, announced that, by remaining in the government, the two men were dismissing themselves from the party. Simultaneously, Mr. Moustapha arrived to make an official tour of his northern hometown, Maroua, and fighting and stone throwing broke out among UNDP supporters, resulting in the arrest of some 30 of them. The two leaders, were finally expelled from the party by the central committee by 106-4 votes, for having accepted cabinet positions without the approval of the UNDP. Mr. Moustapha announced the formation of a new party, the UNDP-Authentic, characterising the split as a syndrome that is occurring in most of the opposition parties in Cameroon. The UNDP leader, Maigari, put too high a price on rejoining the government after the 1996 elections, with conditions that were unlikely to be met. These included the dismissal of Biya's old northern allies, Hamadou Moustapha and Issa Tchiroma, both of whom had been expelled from the UNDP. In January, 1999, the UNDP's first vice-president, Celestin Bedzigui, criticised the party leader, Maigari, for failing to promote debate and democracy within the party.

Generally assumed to be the most widely supported opposition party is the SDF, headed by the Bamenda-based John Fru Ndi. In mid- 1993 the SDF suffered a serious division within its leadership, when Bernard Muna, a supporter of a less confrontational stance against the government and the son of Solomon Tandeng Muna, was sacked from his post as campaign director. In July 1998, 10 of the 43 SDF parliamentary deputies resigned from the party in protest at the perceived tribalism and authoritarianism of its leadership. In October 1998, the SDF expelled its first national vice president, Soulaimane Mahamad, following the latter's criticism of Fru Ndi's authoritarian style of leadership. In March 1995, the SDF's co-ordinator for the centre and south province, Basile Kamdoum, announced the formation of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), after his expulsion from

the SDF for criticising its leadership. Kandoum alleged that Fru Ndi has endorsed calls for a return to a federal system of government, which was operative in Cameroon from 1961 to 1972, turning the SDF into an anglophone party which could no longer defend the interests of all Cameroonians. When Kandoum and a close aid were expelled from the SDF, other senior francophone members resigned, including the Treasurer, Jean Djokou. The party continued to self-destruct. In May, 1995, a new split emerged when seven members of the executive committee were reportedly refused entry to the SDF's annual conference marking its fifth anniversary in Maroua, announced that they were forming a new party, the Social Democratic Movement (SDM), under the leadership of the former secretary-general, Siga Asanga, who was expelled from the party in April. Charly Mbok, one of the defectors from the SDF, said that Fru Ndi has proved unable to manage the diversity, the members and the complexity of a party, which goes to prove he will be unable to mange the complexity of a country like Cameroon in the future. Senior SDF figures continue to argue that the decision to boycott legislative elections in 1992, which was largely the work of Fru Ndi, was at the root of the SDF'S problems. Having refused to fight the contest, the party had little basis upon which to criticise the elected government, they, argue, and had forfeited its popular legitimacy. In 1999, the SDF'S first vice-president Mahamat Souleimane, led the campaign to challenge Fru Ndi's increasingly authoritarian leadership. He alleged that the party leadership was marked by dictatorial tendencies and corruption, pointing to Fru Ndi's failure to call a party congress since 1996 and the absence of an audit of SDF's finances since its creation in 1991. Fru Ndi responded by ordering Mahamat's expulsion from the party. Fru Ndi's fortunes took a further tumble when he was convicted of criminal libel at the end of February 1999 and received a three year suspended sentence. The case was prompted by an interview with the SDF leader in the independent newspaper *Nouvelle Expression,* in November 1998, in which he accused Basile Kandoum, formerly a senior party official and close associate of Mr. Ndi, of embezzling party funds. While the sentence was relatively light, if it is not turned on appeal, Cameroon's electoral law stipulates that Fru Ndi will be barred from standing for public office for three years.The SDF leader is likely to face another challenge in the near future, when a case brought by one of the party's deputies in the National Assembly, Jean-Pierre Tchoua, returns to court. Tchoua complains that his expulsion from the party after publicly indicating his willingness to serve in the government is unlawful. He is supported by Lakaam, a powerful Bamiléké interest group which has funded the SDF

in the past but now finds itself at odds with the leadership.

Along with the SDF, the *Movement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie* (MSND) was one of the first parties to set itself up in opposition, sometime before the legalisation of multi-party politics. Its leader is a widely respected lawyer, Maître Yondo Black. The MSND, whose power base is in the commercial capital Douala, has adopted a very firm line with the CPDM, and has maintained a policy of boycotting all elections and refusing to negotiate with the government. It has some standing as a credible opposition group, but the exact extent of its popularity is hard to measure. The *Movement Progressiste* (MP), similarly based in Douala, is headed by a former CPDM " young lion", Jean-Jacques Ekindi. While Ekindi has some popularity as an individual, his party still lacks political heavyweights as members to give it some influence. The rest of the 150 opposition parties in existence today, have such a negligible following that not much is known about them beyond their names. All of Cameroon's major opposition political parties profess to support multiparty democracy and individual freedoms and liberties. They are however less clear and more divided on economic issues, though none is radical enough to challenge the existing economy. These numerous and fragmented parties do not put up a real show of strength at elections. In the May 17 1997 legislative elections, for example, this is how Cameroonians voted in the 49 single and multi-seats constituencies.

Table 3.3- National Assembly: May 17, 1997 Seats per party

Cameroon People's Democratic Movement/ ***Rassemblement Démocratic du Peuple Camerounais*** (conservative)	**RDPC/CPDM**	**109**
Social Democratic Front (social-democratic)	**SDF**	**43**
Union National pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (moderate islamist)	**UNDP**	**13**

Union Démocratique du Cameroun (oppositional)	**UDC**	**5**
Movement pour la Défense de la République	**MDR**	**1**
Union des Populations du Cameroun	**UPC**	**1**
Liberty Movement of Cameroon Youth	**MLJC**	**1**

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2000

[Note: This out come was vigorously contested by the opposition parties, who claimed irregularities and fraudulent practices which were backed by international observers' reports; ultimately, results in three constituencies (seven seats) were cancelled by the Supreme Court for these reasons. On 3 August 1997, further elections took place in this constituencies. All the seats were won by the ruling CPDM.]

3.5.1-The Cameroonian State

The Republic of Cameroon considers itself a democratic state according to the main provisions of its 1972 Constitution which has been amended four times, the most recent being in 1995. The Constitution declares that sovereignty shall be vested in the people who shall exercise it either through the President of the Republic and the members returned by it to the National Assembly, or by means of referendum. Elections are by Universal Suffrage, direct or indirect, by every citizen aged 21 or over in a secret ballot. Political parties or groups may take part in elections subject to the law and the principles of democracy and of national sovereignty and unity. State authority shall be exercised by the President of the Republic and National Assembly . Cameroon's constitutional guarantee of democracy, when compared to the reality as recounted above, raises a number of pertinent questions: First of all, what does this tell us about Cameroon's particular style of democracy in which power lies with the presidency and the leadership of the governing party, with no parliamentary control in a supposedly parliamentary system? Who actually represents the view of the people? Why did the opposition parties cry foul, and why did others boycott the elections? To be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to

briefly examine the way elections are organised in Cameroon's democratic state.

3.5.2-Organisation and administration of elections

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. Since independence, a single party, now called the CPDM, has remained in power and limited political choice. In October 1997, CPDM leader Paul Biya won re-election as President in an election boycotted by the three main opposition parties, marred by a wide range of procedural flaws, generally considered by observers not to be free and fair. The President names and dismisses cabinet members and judges, ratifies treaties, leads the armed forces and has considerable authority in other areas. Although a multiparty republic, Cameroon continues to be ruled in fact by President Biya.

A number of factors could be held responsible for this. The framework and implementation of the constitution, electoral laws, political party law, rules of procedure and legal judgement all affect the conduct of elections. The electoral law (Law No. 91-020 of December 16, 1991 as modified by Law No.97-13 of March 19, 1997) is the fundamental instrument governing the conduct of the May 17 1997 elections.

The problem is that since the institution of multiparty politics in 1991, Cameroon's election system has influenced the nations political process. It has determined the winners and losers of the 1992 presidential and legislative elections and so the structure of the state and of society. The nature, membership, powers and functioning of the electoral institutions used to implement the election system have had similar determining effects. These institutions are : 1) the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) which has the full responsibility for administering elections in Cameroon. 2) The opposition parties have consistently called for the establishment of a national independent electoral commission. Instead and as a replica to the type of institution , commissions with the participation of political parties have been created at the local and divisional levels. For these commissions to be effective, the active participation of the representatives of the political parties is necessary. The problem is that the appointment of the presidents of the commissions by the government does not promote the independence of these bodies. The opposition parties' inconsistencies in accepting to participate under the same rule at one election and asking for changes in the system for other elections, in the same year, confuses its constituents. The second problem is that this is an inherited style from the

French colonial times. Nevertheless, while the lack of an independent electoral commission in France is not seen by French political parties and citizens as impeding the conduct of a neutral electoral process, in Cameroon, MINAT does not enjoy the public's trust or confidence as a neutral electoral body. MINAT's responsibility, then, for conducting the elections is viewed by Cameroonian opposition parties as a major obstacle to the credibility of the process. A major bone of contention is the registration and eligibility of voters, as any meaningful election is a reliable and effective registration of voters. Political parties complain about discriminatory and multiple registration, and selective distribution of voters' cards. They also point to the low registration figures for the May elections as an indication of disenfranchisement of Cameroon's population of more than 14 million, based on the government's report that approximately 3.8 million are registered to vote in the legislative elections. Approximately 4.8 million were registered to vote in the 1996 municipal elections.

Two related issues could contribute to further problems for the opposition in the electoral process. The first is the prohibition of coalitions or party alliances and of independent candidates, restricting those who can compete in the elections (Section 5.3 of the March 1997 election law).Second, Section 5.4 mandates that political parties reflect the demographic composition of their constituencies. A further factor affecting the ability of parties to compete in the elections is the election timetable (as dictated in Sections 67 and 70 of the March 1997 code). The law calls for elections to be announced 45 days before the election day and mandates that candidate registration procedures must be completed 40 days before election day. This short timeline, allowing only five days for potential candidates to gather and file their registration documents, has been cited by opposition parties, in particular, as limiting electoral competition. How can such an electoral system promote and consolidate democracy? More importantly, of what relevance are these discussions to the work in this thesis? These issues have a lot to do with democratic participation as a means of governance because the idea of increased participation in decision-making goes beyond writing equality in the constitution. In Cameroon's political history, no president has ever left office in consequence of an election. The President retains the power to control legislation or to rule by decree. In the National Assembly, government bills take precedence over other bills, no bills other than government bills have been enacted since 1991, although legislation proposed by the Government sometimes has not been enacted by the Assembly. The President repeatedly has used his control of

legislature to change the Constitution. The 1996 Constitution lengthened the President's term of office to 7 years, while continuing to allow Biya to run for a fourth consecutive term in 1997 and making him eligible to run one more 7- year term in 2004. The Government has taken no formal action to implement other 1996 constitutional changes that provide for new legislative institutions, including a partially elected senate and elected regional councils, and a more independent judiciary, even though the president had announced in 1997 that most of these reforms would be implemented in 1998. Although the country's first multiparty local government elections were held in 1996, President Biya limited their scope by expanding the number of municipal governments headed by presidentially appointed "delegates" rather than permitting the election of mayors, especially in pro –opposition regions. The Government remained highly centralised. The judiciary is subject to political influence and suffers from corruption and inefficiency.
The Ministers and Vice-Ministers are appointed by the President to whom they are responsible, and they may hold no other appointment. The President is also head of the armed forces, he negotiates and ratifies treaties, may exercise clemency after consultations with the Higher Judicial Council, promulgates and is responsible for the enforcement of laws, is responsible for internal and external security, makes civil and military appointments, provides for necessary administrative directives.
The President, by reference to the Supreme Court, ensures that all laws passed have constitutional Provisions whereby he, the President, may declare a state of emergency, or state of siege. The critical question to ask here is this: Cameroon admits to being a multiparty democratic state in its constitution yet by all accounts, its political activities demonstrate a situation which is contrary to what obtains in Western Liberal democratic states like France and Britain, its former colonial masters. What then is democracy and how does it differ from Cameroon's model and why?

3.5.3- Cameroon's democratic arrangements

The most important concept in this chapter is the concept of democracy. Cameroon may claim to be a multiparty democracy. However, a brief look at the chronology of events presented above, reveals that it is far from it – main opposition parties boycotting elections, president's control of all the governing institutions, accusations of fraud and so forth. This raises the curiosity of any reader to want to know one thing from the perspective of my

thesis: to what extent does this manipulation of the democratic process by the ruling elite impact on women's access to power? I will demonstrate in this thesis that the paths to power in a system so dominated by patronage (described later in the thesis) are different from those of a truly competitive system. This is because I argue that although Cameroon claims to be democratic, it is truly not a democratic society, since it has denied some people , including women , decision-making rights. I further argue that while there is no legal exclusion in Cameroon's constitution, other barriers still impede the full participation of women especially. Democracy is believed to be a system of governance that guarantees freedom, equality and the rule of law. According to Dahl (1989), the welfare of citizenry is guaranteed by five procedures: 1)the inclusion of all affected persons, 2) equal distribution and effective opportunities to participate in the political process; 3) an equal right to vote on decisions;4) an equal right to choose topics and control agenda, and 5) a situation that allows participants to develop an understanding of the contested interests.

The focus of this study is the gender aspect of democracy which draws attention to a number of theoretical and practical issues that affect women's incorporation into democratic decision-making. The form of democracy that is making headway in Cameroon's constitution is liberal democracy. This concept is built on the ideas of free, rational individuals who enter into a social contract and consent to be governed. Pateman (1988, 1989) and Phillips (1993) , have argued that the abstract individual is theoretically male, who is able to interact in the public sphere outside the home, having secured the subordination of a wife in a sexual contract in which the latter is not only unfree, but is perceived as lacking rationality and other qualities that makes her fit for political life. Though Cameroon considers itself a democracy, it qualifies the term by adding that it is one which is truly adapted to needs of the people. This indicates that for the Cameroonian leadership, there is no universal standard of democracy which literally is government by the people as a whole rather than by any section, class or interest within it. Under President Ahidjo, the political system was commonly defined as "ruling democracy" aimed at avoiding ethnic tensions and conflicts of interests. It is what Scruton (1982) defines as "democratic centralism". According to him, such a system entails a strict hierarchical discipline. The belief is that the party will be able to fulfil its duty only if its organisation is as centralised as possible, if iron discipline prevails, and if the Party centre, upheld by the confidence of the Party membership, has strength and authority with the most comprehensive powers. Centralism in such a system therefore, means the concentration of

power in the central party organisation, which is made responsible for the organisation and development of every institution in which political influence may arise, from the family to the police force, and which is therefore intolerant of every autonomous body within its sphere of influence. This centralism is 'democratic' partly because it is held to operate in the interests of the people, for example, by enforcing common ownership of the means of production, and partly because of the supposed internal democracy of the party, whereby each level is filled by representatives voted from the one below. It is a pro-Communist party system. President Biya conceives of a strong democracy based on a national charter of freedom and operating on a temporary platform of a one-party system. Such a truly democratised party structure could allow for free and competitive election of officials. Multiparty politics introduced in 1990, have not changed this approach. Party politics and government are still highly centralised, with all power and responsibility residing in one person, the President. Ahidjo's "ruling democracy" still manifests itself through centralisation , coalition building and repression. The constitution is still being used to funnel authority to the government and the ruling party. This centralisation still culminates in the president's almost total power over nominations and appointments. The president is naturally still the chief allocator of resources. As a result, Cameroonians could have successful civil service careers only by displaying total loyalty and subservience to the head of state and his ruling CPDM party, which also serves as a major propaganda institution of the government. Democracy in practice is still only defined in the narrow interest of the party leadership. Indeed , membership in the higher organs of the CPDM party is still identical to membership in the national government, the National Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The system bears no resemblance to liberal democratic systems found in the West. It can therefore exert no real pressure on the president. Africa Confidential (AC) also suggests that in spite of Biya's rhetoric distancing himself from the politics, policies and the "ruling democratic" philosophy of Ahidjo,

> Like Ahidjo before him, Biya has used public service and other administrative structures as instruments of the politically dominant groups, which enjoy patronage and in return are employed to purchase the security of his office.
>
> (Africa Confidential, 1995:5)

Quarrelsome and disorganised opposition parties have failed to make an impact on Cameroon's political scene because most of the parties are united in tribal groups and the

leaders are divided by personal ambition. All these factors play into Biya's hands most of the time. The opposition, already splintered into 150 parties at the last count in 2000, remains unable to form a genuine united front. The Cameroonian state under the governing CPDM, remains far from democratic, still. President Biya, has reverted o his predecessor's authoritarian style, and come to rely upon Ahidjo's political machinery of patronage to maintain loyalty. In building his political machine, the CPDM, and advocating communal liberalism, he claimed that it would include freedom and democracy. This claim is yet to become a reality. He may call it "communal liberalism" but, in practice, it is still a "ruling democracy".

The question here is: How are Cameroonian women included in this arena?

The section following, gives a brief introduction to the reality of Cameroonian women's situation in its "ruling democracy", as the strategies that facilitate or hinder gender transformation in Cameroon are discussed in the chapters following, in detail.

Conclusion

Women's political participation and influence: more apparent than real.

I draw upon the history of Cameroon from Ahidjo's and Biya's eras, to illustrate that the political history of Cameroonian women is intertwined with the political ideology and careers of the two presidents and the governing parties over which they hold sway. In Cameroon generally, women are mobilised as political supporters of the system rather than being encouraged to become real activists. The WCNU/WCPDM did not/do not enjoy any semblance of autonomy, even though it is regarded as an integral component of the governing party. With women comprising more than half the membership of the party as President Biya acknowledges (see Chapter 7), the obvious assumption would be that they played a major role in the total party structure. However, this impression is not confirmed when one looks at the statistics of the government and the party officials (see Chapters 4 and 5) during both Ahidjo's time and Biya's current period. An analysis of the statistics and process (see Chapters 4 to 7) demonstrates very clearly that the ruling CNU/CPDM party and the state bureaucracy as run by both presidents, were gendered institutions which did not allow the entry of women on an equal basis with men. In addition, institutional party and state arrangements more or less determined the types of goals to be undertaken by Cameroonian women as a social group, as well as the process of achieving them. The

party and the state also dictated the specific ways in which these policies were then implemented at the grassroots level.

I argue that this ensured that the Cameroonian political process of appearing to integrate gender policy into state structures, was affected without ensuring that women's real opinions, interests, and wishes were being adequately met. Cameroonian women, it is true, were never completely excluded from top political posts within the party and the state bureaucracy. Nevertheless, women's presence at that level, as demonstrated in my work in this thesis, was largely cosmetic and the possibility of their influencing matters of policy, extremely restricted.

The search for a universal, original reason for the subordination of women can detract attention away from the specific manner in which gender relations are constructed in different societies, and also from various ways in which this search has lead to the production of the kind of feminist literature that has turned feminist theory into an enterprise all of its own. Nevertheless, feminist political theory, is quite important for the work in this thesis for the following reasons: it looks at women as citizens, or non-citizens or conditional citizens; it critiques the public private split in institutional set ups; it talks about how colonialism altered gender relations as well as structures of power at all levels in the colonised countries. It enables me to analyse the disjuncture between the good intentions and liberal rhetoric of the national constitution and the country's adherence to international conventions, and the actually embedded, gendered practices of politics and the labour market and legal framework in Cameroon. Of course , all the international conferences and conventions set up a universalist and normative framework against which I am measuring the lack of access by Cameroonian women to political and economic power. More of a discussion of this and the presumptions of how feminists approach this question, make up the discussions of the next chapter. The depth and richness of the work in this thesis comes from both the theoretical considerations and the wider contextual material in the later chapters.

Chapter four
Feminist theory

For the better and the stronger are to be kept apart from that which is inferior.

(Aristotle)

Aristotle's suggestion that a female was a female in virtue of a certain lack of qualities was by far the most influential example of the view that female was a defective male. Hartsock (1985) has commented on another Greek, Aristophanes, a comic poet and dramatist, who suggested through his plays that when women took power as a sex, a more qualitative, revolutionary change was threatened. The gist of what both Aristotle and Aristophanes suggest is that since women are created along the principles of reproduction, domesticity and care, their involvement in the public sphere naturally upset the smooth running of male political and civil life. Hartsock (1985) uses Aristophanes' play, *The Congresswomen,* a comedy that hinges on women and household organisation taking over the *polis,* to prove her point. Hartsock 91985:204) argues that for Aristophanes, 'to put women in charge of the city is to transform it. The plays make it clear that a public role for women would inevitably involve the destruction of the *polis* itself.'

The philosophy propounded by both Aristotle and Aristophanes is striking in the sense that it gives an account of what males think are the proper character and areas of activity for men and women. These accounts always seem to argue that women differ from men in being less in most areas that have to do with the public sphere. This chapter aims to explain the distortions and deficiencies tackled by feminist critiques of male-dominated political theory as influenced, by Aristotelian philosophy in particular; and to review some of their suggested alternatives in order to explore the relevance of feminist theory to my Cameroon case study. The main question to be answered in this chapter is whether Aristotle's theory on women's biological unfitness to engage in politics is reflected in the Cameroonian political culture. The aim is to establish that there is a link between Cameroon's good intentions and liberal rhetoric of the national constitution and its adherence to the international conventions, and the actual embedded, gendered practices and the labour market and legal framework in Cameroon. As already pointed out in the introductory chapter, the international conferences and conventions set up a universalist and normative framework against which I am measuring the lack of access by Cameroonian women to political and economic power. The presumptions of how feminists

approach this question would be useful for understanding how knowledge is constructed based upon women's experience, and in reflecting upon the power relations present in Cameroonian social and political culture.

4.1-Feminist epistemology

Epistemology is defined by Potter as

> theories of what knowledge is, what it is possible to have knowledge of, how it is possible to have knowledge at all etc. ...It is a long and established principal sub-division in philosophy which is given particular prominence in most philosophies of science where knowledge is referred to in such questions as: how can we really know that what we think we know actually is knowledge? What is the source of knowledge? What does it mean to say we know something? What criteria should be used to judge something as being knowledge?
>
> (Potter 2000: 234)

In simple terms, it is the theory of knowledge concerned with the study of the production of knowledge, especially the critical study of its validity, methods, and scope. Positivism is regarded as the dominant philosophical understanding of both natural science and social science. It has, however, come under increasing challenges as a theory of natural science and is no longer considered dominant in the social sciences. Positivism according to Blakie (1995) is the first of the classical positions, and the only one against which all other positions are reactions. It advocates that all sciences, whether natural or social, should use the same method. He adds that it is based on a position known as *Naturalism,* the belief that there can be a *natural* scientific study of people and society. Blakie points out that while the term was invented by Comte (1830), one of the founding fathers of sociology, he did not formulate the doctrine. According to Blakie (1995) and Potter (2000), the positivist tradition gets its character from an insistence on the epistemic primacy of direct observation. For Blakie (1995: 94), positivism entails

> 'only that which can be observed, i.e. experienced by the senses, can be regarded as real and therefore worthy of the attention of science. Human activity is understood as observable behaviour taking place in observable material circumstances. *Social reality* is viewed as and emerging patchwork of relations between variables. The causes of human behaviour are regarded as being external to the individual. In its *epistemology,* knowledge is seen to be derived from sensory experience by means of experimental or comparative analysis, concepts and generalisations are shorthand summaries of particular observations. A correspondence is posited between sensory experiences and the objects of those experiences, and between observation and theoretical statements.
>
> (Blakie 1995:94)

Key ideas which are associated with positivism include an emphasis on verification based on the fact that the truth or falsity of statements about the world can be settled in some way. Positivism, holds that experimental investigation and observation are the only sources of substantial knowledge, and according to Potter (2000: 243), 'it is an *empiricist* philosophy of science which sees the unity of the natural and social sciences.' She adds that this form of thinking rejects the philosophical study of the nature of reality or anything that is abstract and involves discussion.

Blakie (1995) points out that as a philosophy of science, positivism has been subjected to criticism disputing its claims, as started above, by among others Feminist epistemologists who argue for the substitution of women's experiences for men's experiences as the basis for knowledge. On this basis, feminists argue that women have a privileged position in their ability to understand the social world because of the experience of caring labour. Blakie adds that conventional dualisms, such as objective/subjective, reason/emotion, fact/value, expert/non-expert, and the separation of the knower and the known, are rejected as part of androcentric epistemology. The researcher must be located in the same plain as the subject matter.

Feminists who argue from these perspective include amongst others, Millman and Kanter (1975), Harding (1986,1987), Oakley (1974), Stanley and Wise (1983). Harding (1986:10) states that feminists do not wish to renounce the aims of science to 'describe, explain, and understand the regularities, underlying causal tendencies, and meanings of the view of the natural and social world.' She adds that the core feminist criticism is that all science is based on a masculine way of viewing the world. It is androcentric. It omits or distorts women's experiences. The main thrust of this argument is contained in the following quote.

> What counts as knowledge must be grounded on experience. Human experience differs according to the kind of activities and social relations in which humans engage. Women's experience systematically differs from the male experience upon which knowledge claims have been grounded. Thus the experience on which the prevailing claims to social and natural knowledge are founded is, firs of all, only partial human experience as understood by men. However, when this experience is presumed to be gender-free - when the male experience is taken to be the human experience - the resulting theories, concepts, methodologies, inquiry goals and knowledge claims distort human social life and human thought.
>
> (Harding and Hintikka 1983: x)

Millman and Kanter (1975) have identified specific areas of the social sciences in which problematic assumptions occur. These are summarised as follows

1) Important aspects of social enquiry have been overlooked. For example, by emphasising a Weberian means/ends model of motivation, the role of emotion in social life has largely been ignored.
2) Sociology focused on the visible, dramatic, public and official spheres of social life largely to the`exclusion of the invisible, less dramatic, private and informal spheres. This tends to make visible the ways in which women have gained informal power and has hidden the informal systems of sponsorship and patronage that facilitate career paths for men.
3) There is a tendency to assume a single society and to ignore the possibility that men and women may inhabit different social worlds, in spite of living in the same physical location. Women are likely to have different and broader views about what constitutes social interaction, and to regard much of what men count as nature as being part of culture.
4) In several areas of research, gender is not taken into account and analysed as a possible variable.
5) Social science frequently explains the status quo rather than exploring alternatives for a more just humane society.
6) The use of certain methods, particularly quantitative, can prevent the discovery of information that may be crucial for understanding the phenomenon under consideration. The preference of dealing with variables, as is the case with quantitative methods, rather than people as in qualitative methods, may be related to a masculine need to manipulate and control, and an inability to relate to all types of people in an emphatic way, particularly in relatively unstructured and unambiguous natural situations.

As a result of these notions of the roles, relations and forces within society, built upon assumptions about women and gender reproduced in traditional theories, feminists have resorted to constructing research approaches that would not be filled with sexist assumptions and practices. The various formulations of this possibility within feminism are discussed in this chapter. One main feature of feminist theory is its aim to create a deeper understanding of women's situation, beginning with their experience of oppression. Such theory argues that women's subordination extends from private circumstances to political

conditions. Unique to feminist theory is the aspect of political knowledge and practice; the use of feminist methods which draw upon the strength of women's own experience and how these experiences have been constructed.; the liberal views on public and the private distinctions and between notions of equality and difference; building upon the knowledge acquired in order to collectively bring about change on issues of social and political justice. Certain terms are used to sum up what appear to be the key experiences of women. Among these are 'work', 'family', 'patriarchy', 'sexuality', all focusing on women's specificity as grounded in the sexual division of labour and reproduction. Feminist theory provides the conceptual tools that enable me to investigate analytically the economic, political and social discrimination that occurs in the Cameroonian social context of my study.

4.2.1- Feminist epistemological alternatives

Harding (1987) points out that in some respects, not only do the epistemologies assumed in the new analyses of women and gender directly conflict with traditional ones. In certain respects, the feminist epistemologies are also directly in conflict with each other. The tension, according to Harding (1987, 181-182), is between feminist empiricist and feminist standpoint epistemologies; feminist empiricist and feminist standpoint and the traditional theory of knowledge from which it borrows; tension between both empiricist and standpoint epistemologies and postmodernist scepticism about attempts to tell "true stories", or at least false uses concerning ourselves and the world around us, on the other hand.

Black feminism

The definition of feminism given by Humm (1992: 406) incorporates both 'a doctrine of equal rights for women (the organised movement to attain women's rights) and an ideology of social transformation aiming to create a world for women beyond simple social equality.' Nevertheless definitions of feminisms also tend to be shaped by the training, ideology and race of those putting such definitions forward. Barbara Smith (1981) states that Black feminists argue much more for an integrated analysis which can unlock the multiple systems of oppression. As a group, women of colour claim to be victims of restrictive citizenship and the theory defines black women's struggles on the basis of imperialism. They have suggested that the multiple jeopardy characteristic of their lives raises questions about the validity of gender generalisations. King (1988) and Spelman

(1988) argue that an analytic framework that focuses on gender is seriously flawed and may serve only to mask the numerous privileges of the white, heterosexual middle-class feminists who have the luxury of experiencing only one mode of oppression. According to Hull et al (1982) the heart of Black criticism especially is the concept of simultaneity of oppression, which entails the interrelation of oppression of race, gender and class. In her much cited essay, *His Master's Tools,* Lorde (1984) argues that only non-patriarchal, non-racist criticism could empower Black Women, not the 'master's tools'. Lorde (1983:97) had earlier argued that 'the oppression of women knows no ethnic nor racial boundaries...but does not mean that it is identical within those differences. To deal with one without the order is to distort our commonality as well as our difference.'
Amos and Parma (1984:18) also argue that all feminist theory must understand imperialism and challenge it. This is 'in order that we address ourselves to the totality of our oppression. We cannot simply prioritise one aspect of our oppression to the exclusion of others. Only a synthesis of class, race, gender and sexuality can lead us forward'. hooks, (sic) (1981) points to the insensitivity of white feminists in assuming that white experience could speak for all women, without noticing the unconscious racism of their language and assumptions.

Black feminism in its various forms therefore undertakes a sustained critique of racism and ethnocentrism of white-dominated systems and practices including feminism. Valerie Smith suggests that its critique is multi-faceted:

> Black feminists seek not only to dismantle the assumptions of dominant cultures, and recover and reclaim the lives of black women, but also to develop methods of analysis for interpreting the ways in which race and gender are inscribed.
> (V, Smith 1990:27)

This practice of basing one's politics on a sense of personal identity as female, gay, Black is based on Barbara Smith's (1983) phrase that 'we have an identity and therefore a politics' (cited in Moraga 1983: 13). This suggests the need to claim an identity before articulating a personal politics and that the character of the latter will be determined by the former.
Such a position has been challenged by a number of critics. For example, in an explicit rejection of identity politics, Harding (1993) suggests that feminists adopt the starting point of women in circumstances very different from their own, in order to get outside their own experiential limitations.

The Cameroonian social context is devoid of the types of cultural differences experienced by Black women of Western origin and base. Black feminist theory in the context of a racist society examines, and rightly so, the boundaries of sisterhood with white feminists in order to deal fully with the contradictions such a theory entails. The focus of my study on the other hand, is gender, which term entails the social roles that are overlaid on to biological attributes of men and women in Cameroon.

In tackling this topic from the perspective I intend to, I am negotiating a difficult path. The dilemma posed by such arguments for this study is that in analysing gender in African societies, even African feminist scholars have depended on western feminist theoretical models. Rare are the scholars in feminist studies who have developed alternative gender theories birthed in African experiences. Okonjo (1976:48) for example, challenged the global applicability of a single sex social system in which patriarchy subordinates women. She argues that in the pre-colonial Igbo society of Nigeria, ' a dual political sex system existed with separate, parallel political roles for men and women accompanied by a gendered system of checks and balances.' What is problematic about Okonjo's theory for my study is that it is not universal to the whole of Africa. Rather, it is based within the particular experience of a few ethnic groups. The usefulness of Okonjo's (1976) analysis, however, lies in her Afracentric standpoint. By demonstrating that historically a unitary gender political system controlled by adult males did not exist in places like Southern Nigeria, Okonjo provoked feminists to evaluate their essentialist conclusions about the subordination of women. Essentialism as used here denotes the belief that differences between women and men are essences – that there are unique male and female natures - rather than the view that differences are socially or experientially constructed.

However, both Okonjo's (1976) and Amadiume's (1987) powerful protests and criticisms of the flaws of Westocentric theories of gender as analytic categories neglect class differences among African women. Class is a contested term according to Scott (1993) who points out that it highlights problematic images of womanhood and a clash of loyalties between gender and class. The African experience of this clash of loyalties is the accusation that elite women concentrate on gaining only their own rights in the market-place. An important aspect of my study involves the issue that while it is true for many African women that gender alone does not describe oppression, nor is gender equality enough to end oppression, it must be understood that women share some gender interests in common because of their status as women. It is these issues of common interest to women as a common category that are of vital importance to my investigation. Although

this will not automatically translate into a transformation, I cannot help but agree with Goetz (1991) who argues that feminism needs to remain critical, even at the risk of being accused of ethnocentrism. The power of such refusal is manifested by 'refusing to grant undue authority to cultural traditions that sustain sexist oppression, ...cannot abandon a critical scrutiny of the social factors shaping those perceptions and responses or of their gender relations and women's lives' (Goetz 1991:146). Evidence also suggests that bureaucracies tend to privilege certain kinds of information perceived as relevant to dominant development paradigms and attribute significance to information in proportion to the perceived social and political status of the informer. Thus, according to Goetz (1994), theories formulated by Western feminists have tended to get a better hearing than the perspectives of Southern women.

The conception of theory which therefore informs my approach to gender analysis is one that not only locates it in a dialectic relationship with social structures, but also conceives of it as embedded in social relations. This thread is of particular significance in the examination of gender-based inequities in Cameroon. An important element here is that while the conflicts about the use of gender have elements of ethnicity and regionalism, these conflicts obscure in some instances a focus on women and the policy implications of overcoming their underprivileged positions. The position of the Cameroonian women whose experience has shaped my work in this thesis is fuelled by the relationship between women's productive and reproductive labour. The area of emphasis is more of ideology in relation to gender than to race. The alternatives proposed by 'Western' feminists are therefore of importance to my research of gender, based on the above justifications.

The next sections specify distinct particularities of some of these feminist responses, and their relevance or not to my work in this thesis.

4.2.2-Relativist/postmodernist feminist epistemology

Harding suggests that

> If feminists were merely arguing that men's experiences provide only a partial grounding for knowledge claims, then relativism would be an appropriate epistemological stance. Instead, it is precisely because we cannot "add women" and gender to the existing bodies of social scientific belief that relativism is inappropriate.
>
> (Harding, 1987: 189)

Relativism can be defined as any of various philosophical attitudes holding that moral value, knowledge, or truth is not absolute but relative, for example, to an individual, or to historical circumstances or to shifting theoretical frameworks. This understanding of the relativist school of thought is described by Berstein as follows:

> For the relativist, there is no substantial overarching framework or single meta-language by which we can rationally adjudicate or univocally evaluate competing claims of alternative paradigms…the relativists claim that we can never escape from the predicament of speaking of "our" and "their" standards of rationality.
> (Berstein, 1983:8)

Feminist relativists are said by May (1993) and Evans (1995) to include those who are influenced by postmodernism. They would reject the idea of any type of science as this would be another way in which women's experiences are separated by those who claim to be experts, as Stanley and Wise declare here:

> The inconvenient fact that much human behaviour cannot be described, let alone understood, in unexplicated categorical terms is largely ignored, or rather'resolved' by treating people's experiences as faulty versions of the theoretician's categories.
> (Stanley and Wise, 1990:24)

Stanley and Wise (1990) suggest that to treat people's experiences as faulty is a dominant approach to theory. They would also reject the view that knowledge of truth about women's position in society is possible. Instead, there are many versions of social reality as they explain below:

> Women's lives, women's bodies, women's experiences, demonstrate that the social (and physical) world is complicated. 'Reality' is shown to be multidimensional and multi faceted. But 'reality' is constructed as one reality, simple and unseamed. And thus the necessity to suppress, distort, use, oppress, women's differences. Women's lives demonstrate that the 'circle' is a collection of gaps and broken links not iron-clad and inviolate at all.
> (Stanley and Wise, 1993:183)

Stanley and Wise's quote implies that to impose some theoretical idea on the social world conspires with this suppression of difference. Women's experiences in their view are not limited in this perspective but are valid in themselves. This emphasises their earlier argument that Feminism's alternative to conventional theorising must reject collecting experiences merely in order to generalise them out of all recognition. Instead, it should look into the 'subjective' in order to explicate, to examine in detail what experience is. Likewise, postmodernism claims that each perspective is privileged within its own domain. Marchand and Parpart (1995) intimate that postmodernism enables researchers to investigate the way conditions affecting women at one level have consequences at another. They contend that the postmodernist feminist approach sensitises researchers to the multiple realities of women's lives, thus avoiding an essentialist, modernist approach to women's problems. Research informed by postmodernist epistemologies is guided by four

principles, according to Flax (1989). A summarised form of these principles is given here as follows: it will seek to articulate feminist viewpoints within the social world in which we live, this is because postmodernism claims that each perspective is privileged within its own domain; it thinks about how we are affected by this world; it considers the ways in which we think about them that may be implicated in the existing power/knowledge relationships; and it imagines ways in which the world ought to/can be transformed.

What postmodernist feminist epistemology does theoretically and politically therefore, is to recognise the concerns of marginalised groups of women like Blacks and/or lesbians. The argument is that the inclusion of identities fits well with the postmodernist feminist focus on diversity and difference. According to Corrin,

> 'post-modern thinking has been important in considering the ways in which identities are constructed and deconstructed. Postmodernists reject any grand theories, such as those regarding the causes of women's subordination or male domination'. Recognising a variety of subject positions and the complexities of how we form our identities broadens our range of analyses. In viewing different histories, rather than a History, possibilities are opened for charting the various routes which women and groups negotiate in their lives. In arguing that the category 'woman' is unstable or fluid, some post-modern arguments remove the bases on which women collectively choose to act in resisting oppression and to voice their politics…
>
> (Corrin 1999:113)

The postmodernist epistemology is not, according to Flax (1989) concerned with whether women participate in elections as men do, or why women are perceived as less interested in politics than men. Flax (1989) implies that particular identities may come to the fore in different situations.

With this approach, the Cameroonian woman's identity results from how she interacts with, interprets and reconstructs her environment, and it may shift with changing circumstances. This approach frees the researcher to constantly relocate the site of resistance.

4.2.3- A critical review of feminist Relativist/Postmodernist epistemologies

The merits of the postmodernist theory are numerous. With their focus on issues of power, difference and gender, postmodernist feminists offer valuable contributions to theorising about development. Their focus on deconstruction, language and power of discourse

sensitises researchers to the power of narration and helps to expose the geo-political relationships of power. Postmodernist epistemology also seeks to:

> expose the gendered reality of social relations, particularly, the influence of patriarchy in women's lives. It seeks to deconstruct gendered assumptions of the dominant discourses, and strives to produce new generalisations about lives of women that are inclusive, guarantee equal access to power and recognise the diversity of women. It sees women as gendered, interacting in a social-cultural environment where class and sexual identity are social realities that affect women differently at different times. Finally, it seeks ways to empower marginalised peoples through political actions.
>
> (Jones and Jonasdottir, 1998:27)

Nevertheless, critics of postmodernism, argue that their epistemologies appear no more successful than their pluralism:

> It is too inclusive, it falls into relativism or triviality that undermines the feminist project and fails to provide a norm for just public policy. ..In general, the feminist foundation for knowledge or any one method by which knowledge is acquired. They believe that there is no truth, but many different truths for different people.
>
> (Shrader-Frechette, 1995:155,158)

Pateman (1983; 1989) argues that the postmodernist stance subscribes to the doctrine of individualism implicit in the social contract. Pateman subscribes to the view that all individuals are embodied and takes issue with the social contract philosophy which implies that only men can be abstract individuals.

According to Andermahr et.al (1197:108) ' individualism is the doctrine that the individual human being is the basic unit of human society and action. ... Possession of property in the person is fundamental to the doctrine of individualism'. They cite Locke (1952) as saying that 'Every Man has Property in his own Person. This no body has any Right to but himself.' They add that in Locke in 1689, provided the classic formulation of what has been termed 'possessive individualism', which was to become one of the founding principles of liberal theory. The point out that in the philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century contractarians, the contract assumed to have been freely entered into allows only the contractor to abrogate or nullify these rights. They give the example of the marriage contract, the only 'free' contract a woman might enter, was one in which these rights were, in large measure, transferred to the husband.

It is based on this argument that feminists make claims to rights over the person a central article in the struggle for emancipation. Hence the argument that

> the construction of sexual difference, is central to civil society. ... Men's patriarchal rights over women is presented as reflecting the proper order of nature. It is as female persons that women's rights must be pursued if the pitfalls of contractarianism are to be avoided.
>
> (Pateman 1988:17)

Consequently, critics of postmodernism, for instance Shrader-Frechette (1995), suggest that theoretical justification is impossible because if any method of gaining or justifying knowledge is as good as any other, then the major problem with feminist postmodernism is that it is attempting to include all points of view as equally legitimate. In being too inclusive, it itself loses the concept of legitimacy. Its inclusiveness degenerates not merely into pluralism but into relativism. Hence the sense in which postmodernism is feminist epistemology is trivial; it is both "feminist" and "epistemology" only in a nominal sense. Shrader-Frechette (1995:157-158) also argues that if post-modern feminist epistemologists aim at a conception of knowing that is all-inclusive, and if they reject narrow, essentialist conceptions of feminism, then it is not consistent for them to reject objectivity as "masculine". She adds that at worst, if they reject objectivity then they have no objective grounds for doing so. At best, if they accept objectivity as one of many "truths", one of many ways in which persons relate to the world, then they cannot criticise objectivity. She concludes by suggesting that feminist postmodernists attempt to enfranchise themselves, but they have neither a metaphysical nor an epistemological warrant for doing so. She points out that public policy to address sexism cannot succeed if it has no warrant.

4.2.4-Implications of Postmodernist/Relative Epistemologies for my Study

Despite its usefulness, in influencing the analysis of the differential impact of colonial administrative policies on African men and women, postmodernist/relativist epistemologies have contradictions that have implications for adopting them as an analytical tool.

First, their concern with contesting 'every claim to knowledge stemming from particular experiences' (Goetz, 1991:144) renders it problematic. Second, while politically strategic, postmodernism/relativism is dangerously close to the essentialist assumptions and strategies of liberal feminism/Women in Development (WID). The liberal feminist struggle to establish WID has at once succeeded and failed. It has succeeded in

establishing WID divisions within international and national development regimes, and fostering separate machineries for women. Cameroon's MINCOF is an example. Such divisions and machineries, however, have failed to produce the results originally hoped for. For instance in regard to the Cameroonian Ministry already mentioned, its epistemological foundations and existence within these National Women's Machineries (NWMs), have limited it from moving beyond assumptions of modernisation, of whose impact it was critical.Third, as Nzomo and Udayagiri (1995) argue, with their highly academic use of language, postmodernists [re]create hierarchies among academic women. They also think that representations of concrete political struggles need to be able to appeal to universals, especially in the face of repressive government practices. These universals lend additional legitimacy to a particular political struggle and can also be the foundation for strengthening their struggle, by linking it with similar groups abroad. Furthermore, both Marchand and Parpart argue that at this point, postmodernist feminist epistemology is more successful at raising issues and criticising existing development theories, and practices, than it is at formulating a transformative agenda with clear-cut answers and solutions to women's developmental problems in the South and North. They suggest that:

> First, it needs to resolve the questions of how to engage in political practice/action. Second, it needs to consider ways to provide a basis on which to make "moral judgement". Third, it needs to make sure that it will not become too elitist or academic.
>
> (Marchand and Parpart 1995: 130)

Nzomo (1995:130) further suggests that 'postmodernism…must adapt itself to feminism, for the former to acquire significant and practical relevance to the woman question, especially in the African context.' In my thinking, while postmodernism reminds us of the need to guard against easy and fluent but superficial and insincere assumptions about global feminist solidarity, the focus on difference can exacerbate differences among women and undermine possibilities for collective action by women. The rejection of universals can undermine women's struggles for democratic rights and greater participation in development and the state. Postmodernism, taken in its extreme, can obstruct collective action among women, both within nations and on a wider scale. The five yearly UN International Conferences for Women, will become fragmented. The emphasis on difference and indeed on the often deep divisions between women in the South, minority women in the North and more privileged women in the North and South, has some merits, for these are factors which need to be taken into account. However, by itself, it is inadequate for discerning the true nature of most situations.

What arguments of postmodernists add up to is that feminist theory depicts gender narratives as fatalising fictions that create a false unity out of heterogeneous elements. It is for reasons such as this that they call into question the binary opposition that fixes men and women in permanent relations of domination and subordination, variously defined. An important aspect of their challenge involves the sex-gender distinction, the public-private divide in politics as barriers to gender equality. Their argument is that theoretical dichotomies contribute to the construction of either a gender-neutral or gender-differentiated model of citizenship.

4.3.1-Feminist empiricism: the facts speak for themselves

Empiricism is a method of research which has not referred explicitly to the theory guiding its data collection procedures. Potter (2000: 232), states that ' it is a theory of knowledge that locates the source of all knowledge in experience. It is a broad category of the philosophy of science which has been enormously influential', within positivism.

> Empiricism refers to a conception of social research involving the production of accurate data – meticulous, precise, generalisable- in which the data themselves constitute an end for research. It is summed up by the catch-phrase "the fact speak for themselves".
>
> (Bulmer, 1982:31)

> Feminist empiricism has argued that the deficiences in the existing dominant forms of science - masculine bias in problem formulation, concepts, theories, methods of enquiry and interpretation of results – can be overcome by a rigorous adherence to the rules of scientific method; it is 'bad science' which is responsible for these biases in research.
>
> (Blakie 1995:81)

May (1993) distinguishes between the terms 'empirical' which entails the collection of data to test the propositions of social science; and the empiricist school of thought as defined by Bulmer (1993).

Feminist empiricist, Shrader-Frechette (1995:161), for instance, argues that an empiricist feminist epistemology is inclusive. According to her, the most defensible feminist epistemology is feminist empiricism, which believes that sexist and androcentric epistemic biases are correctable by stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms and scientific enquiry. Tuana (1989) also points out that there are important practical reasons for espousing feminist empiricism. It fits within standard accounts of science and does not reject the notion of scientific objectivity. The reasoning is that because feminist empiricists use the same standards of evidence as other members of the scientific

community, they stand a better chance of convincing non-feminists of the problems associated with sexist and androcentric bias in science and in knowing generally.
In her defence of feminist empiricism against its critics, Shrader-Frechette (1995) explains that according to epistemic or scientific proceduralism, the rationality and objectivity appropriate to epistemology and science is Popperian [or falsifiable] as they rely on testing or evaluating knowledge claims from a multiplicity of epistemic standpoints. She adds that the account of rationality and objectivity is likewise Wittgensteinian [or has a multiplicity of standpoints], and Khunian [or theory-laden] in so far as it appeals to implicit, often practice-based criteria and proceduralism in the following three propositions

> (i) following Hempel, there is at least one general, universal criterion for theory choice in both epistemology and science, viz, explanatory power as tested by prediction,
> (ii) most of the remaining criteria for epistemic choice are both situation specific and determined largely by practice, i.e. naturalistic
> (iii) epistemic objectivity is best judged by two procedures: evaluating the predictive and explanatory power of our claims and subjecting them to intelligent debate by the relevant epistemic or scientific community and by persons to be affected by the claims.
>
> (Shrader-Frechette, 1995: 162)

Shrader-Frechette adds that feminist empiricists account for objectivity through three epistemic questions: are there general principles that help account for the objectivity of specific epistemic claims? Does a particular epistemic claim, in fact, always illustrate either the general principles or the specific procedures? Are there particular procedures that help account for the objectivity of specific epistemic claims? She argues that feminist empiricists may be able to determine that sexist judgements are not objective and therefore are examples of bad science or bad epistemology. She argues that

> If attaining epistemic objectivity is similar to attaining ethical objectivity... then epistemic proceduralism has several consequences for public policy. For one thing, justifying public policy requires neither algorithms nor empirical confirmation. It must rely, instead, on rational criticism and testing on the relevant insights of the entire knowledge community. In other words, public policy must be demonstrated if it is to be objective and reliable.
>
> (Shrader-Frechette, 1995:166)

She further suggest that

> Epistemic proceduralism can provide objective, prima facie knowledge. It can provide knowledge able to withstand criticism; able to change on the basis of new data; and able to explain or predict phenomena. ... Likewise it is neither thin or relativist because it presupposes a notion of objectivity dependent on

> measures that are in part empirical, e.g. explanatory power, and in part procedural and democratic.
>
> (Shrader-Frechette, 1995:168)

Feminist empiricists acknowledge that empiricism is not feminist in any exclusive sense and that its account of feminist epistemology is neither more nor less than good epistemology and good science. Good epistemology in their estimation, requires enfranchising all relevant members of the knowing community. Feminist empiricists therefore maintain that sexism and androcentrism are identifiable biases of individual knowers that can be eliminated by stricter application of existing methodological norms. They maintain that the appropriate method for truth about the world involves a process of systematic observation in which the subjectivity is controlled by rigid adherence to neutral procedures designed to produce identical measurements of the real properties of objects.

4.3.2- Critiques of feminist empiricist epistemology

The most powerful criticism of feminist empiricism comes from Longino (1987:56) who argues that 'science displaying masculine bias cannot be identified as bad science because such bias is built into the cultures of which it is a part'. Longino adds that 'there is no a priori way to eliminate such assumptions from evidential reasoning generally, and hence, no way to rule out value-laden assumptions…as bad science' (1987:55). Hakeman's (1990) criticism, like that of Harding's (1987, 1993,1998) is that feminist empiricism embraces a concept of objectivity and subscribes to a masculine conception of science and knowledge. Harding (1987) adds that feminist empiricism is often the least threatening of the feminist epistemologies. This is because it appears to leave intact much of science's understanding of the principles of adequate scientific research. Harding (1987) further states that not only do the hypotheses feminist empiricism fail to challenge the androcentric beliefs but they do not direct researchers to locate themselves on the same critical plane as the subject matters. As a result, when non-feminists test hypotheses, scientific method is impotent to locate and eradicate the androcentrism that shapes the research process. Harding (1987) notes that the norms themselves have been constructed primarily to produce answers to the kinds of questions men ask about nature and social life, and to prevent scrutiny of the way beliefs are nearly, or completely cultural, determine the results of the research. The use of these norms to determine what is or is not scientific cannot eliminate these biased cultural assumptions from having an undue influence on the outcomes. (Harding 1987:181-184)

Harding further remarks that feminist empiricism has directly addressed issues important mainly to liberal feminism thus

> These empiricist philosophies of science have retained important elements of their origins within the conceptual framework of the 18th century educated classes' concern with the primacy of reason, the importance of the individual observation ("experience"), the formation and authority of distinctively qualified professional communities, separation between public and private, or unofficial worlds of science institutions, and the importance of arriving at the one true story of nature's order.
>
> (Harding, 1998: 74)

Harding indicates that

> Feminist empiricism still holds to the ideal of desirable and perhaps even possible, systems of knowledge that represent no particular set of social interest and desires, and thus exist outside of societies' power relations. Their goal is to remove sexist and androcentric "fingerprints" on the result of scientific and technological research. They are after "pure science", not any other kind of purportedly better science.
>
> (Harding, 1998:75-76)

The main criticism of feminist empiricism therefore is that it replicates male norms of scientific inquiry which feminist epistemologies are challenging and changing. The implication of Harding's (1998) claim, for example, is that feminist empiricism perpetuates the subordination of women. It does this through the provision of a scientific approach which disguises unequal status and thereby justifies inequality between men and women. Harding (1998) also suggests that feminist empiricism is the brand of theory that underpins liberal feminist practices. According to Andermahr et al (1997:123), liberal feminism 'is grounded in the claims of the classical liberal philosophy developed by Locke, Rousseau, Bentham and Mill for Equal Rights, Individualism, Liberty and Justice'. Humm (1995) also suggests that contemporary liberal feminism shares Wollstonecrafts (1789) optimism that the roots of women's oppression lie simply in the lack of equal civil rights and educational opportunities. As a result of this belief, liberal feminism accepts the public /private dichotomy which radical feminists attack. It limits itself to reformism, seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting either the system's operation or its legitimacy. They support women's rights in terms of welfare needs, universal education and health services. Liberal feminists, amongst them Deem (1978) and Spender (1982), link the sex inequalities of education directly to the general

subordination of women. Elshtain (1982) suggests that they simply point to unfair employment practices rather than attacking the institutions as a whole. For Elshtain, liberal feminism reduces human motivation to a utilitarian calculus of self-interest. Firestone (1970) has characterised liberal feminism as concentrating only on the more superficial symptoms of sexism.

Shradder-Frechette (1995) insists, nevertheless, that such criticisms err for a number of reasons summarised as follows

1) such criticism presupposes that there is no legitimate account of objectivity. In response to Hakeman's (1987) critique, for instance, Shrader-Frechette contends that it is built on a fallacy of false cause. It presupposes that allegedly masculine accounts of science have created the concept of objectivity. Not only is this implicit appeal to causality unsubstantiated, but also it also gives too much credit to men because women also can be objective, quantitative, and scientific.

2) Hakeman's (1989) criticism is likewise inconsistent in presupposing the very essentialism that it aims to criticise.

3) Harding (1987,1993,1990) errs when she claims that feminist empiricism is not particularly welcoming to the issues of race, class, or cultural differences in women as subjects of knowledge.

4.3.3-The inadequacy of feminist empiricist epistemology as an analytic devise

In spite of such a vigorous defence, feminist empiricist epistemology has implications as a research tool for investigating gendered politics in the Cameroonian social context from its standpoint. It cannot adequately enable me to explain the role of gendered institutions exemplified in Cameroonian governing institutions which make the subject of my work in this thesis. The difficulties involve (a) how to use it to explain the construction of gendered identities using a theory which is strongly rooted in the very male-dominated theory that underpins the liberal democracy the perpetuates the public/private distinction which is fundamental to contemporary feminist theory's conceptualisation of the subordination and oppression of women. It is the theory whose concepts are effective in ordering social life and as Harding (1987) summarises it , it thrives on the adding on of women leaving the existing presumptions unchallenged and seeks instead to rectify "bad

social science"; which is responsible for bias. The difficulties involved in the use of feminist empiricist epistemology as an investigating device include how to distinguish what the relationship is between social structures, political agency and power. The conception of power incorporated into the feminist definition of patriarchy examines the nature of the solidarity between knowledge and power. This is because patriarchy has power from men's greater access to and mediation of resources and rewards of authority structures inside and outside the home. The approach does not enable me to identify the social structural form of power from a feminist perspective. (b) includes how to explore the processes which constrain the lives of female bureaucrats with particular functions through institutional and social practices which serve to legitimate male dominance. The implication for investigating gendered politics from a feminist empiricist epistemological approach is two-fold: theories of liberal feminist thought underpin the work of both female bureaucrats and MPs in Cameroon. Both groups of women politicians concentrate on what Firestone (1970) has termed 'the more superficial symptoms'. Secondly, feminist empiricist epistemology cannot adequately enable me to explain the role of gendered institutions, as exemplified in Cameroonian governing institutions, which are central to my analysis., because of its links with liberal democratic theory grounded on the claims of liberal democratic philosophy developed by Locke, Rousseau, Bentham and Mills. This philosophy, which under writes the Cameroonian constitution is responsible for the construction of gendered social identities manifested in the public/private spheres.

This section has provided the first pieces towards a theoretical framework for the investigation of gendered politics, and the secondary status of female bureaucrats in Cameroonian governing institutions. Drawing on the ideologies of feminist philosophers across disciplines, I used the notion of feminist epistemologies to discuss claims and counter-claims of feminist empiricist and postmodernist epistemologists on rationality and objectivity. The debates reveal the diversity of theoretical positions and the range of intellectual and political affiliations which exist among feminists. Although a preoccupation with women and gender seems to inform all feminist theory, these theories offer competing and contradictory analyses, leading to different versions of feminist epistemology. The aim of this section is to find an epistemologically adequate approach, with a relevant ethical justification, which can help me to understand and explain adequately Cameroon's gendered politics. Feminist epistemologies, as the debates above demonstrate, are concerned with the nature of knowledge, epistemic agency, justification

and objectivity. Their arguments, also informed by feminism, are concerned with the politics of knowledge and the impact of the social status, as well as the gender, of the knowledge producer. Feminist epistemology as a research tool has multiple dimensions. As Potter (1993:165) suggests, 'epistemic decisions instead provide one important site for the intersection of gender politics with the production of knowledge.' She further argues that the politics of gender and other axes of oppression enter the production of knowledge at many points.

In my thinking, the only way to identify the epistemology which is both rationally acceptable and adequate to investigate the social context of my work is to examine competing feminist epistemologies of comparable empirical adequacy. Having considered the strengths and pitfalls of both empiricist and postmodernist epistemological approaches, I am drawn towards the standpoint epistemological arguments discussed in the next section. I do this cautiously in the belief that there is no one position from which value-free knowledge can be developed, but assuming that some positions are better than others for certain social contexts. I further take into account the principle that:

> the epistemological community is the primary agent for the production of knowledge, and that any adequate epistemology must account for knowledge in social terms. This in turn will allow us to see what cannot be seen by individualistic epistemologies: the communal nature of knowledge production and the ways in which the politics of gender, class, and other axes of oppression are negotiated in the production of knowledge.
>
> (Potter, 1993:165)

The standpoint epistemological claim that it increases and strengthens our ability to achieve objectivity, will be an important aspect of the subject of the next section. This claim will also be tested by its effects on the practical gendered political struggles occurring in the Cameroonian social context analysed in the subsequent chapters.

Equally central to a feminist epistemological analysis in the next section, is the issue of the discussion of the social/sexual contract theory which explains the notion of gender embeddedness in social institutions, as underpinned by unequal relations of power. The aim of this chapter is to assess the potential of both feminist standpoint epistemologies and feminist critiques of the classical seventeenth and eighteenth century social contract philosophy.

My exploration blends two different political theories, both those associated with writers like Harding (1986,1987,1993,1998), Harstock(1983,1987) and D. Smith(1988), on the one hand, and those associated with Millett (1971), Pateman (1988, 1989, 1997),Walby

(1990), and Elshtain(1981), on the other. In combining elements from both these trends in feminist political theory, I hope to offer an accurate empirical analysis of gendered politics and the secondary status of the MINCOF. Harding (1986, 1993, 1998) validates feminist standpoint philosophy in terms of the actual principles delivered in order to provide philosophical underpinnings for experiential analysis. She, for example, (1998) points out that the concept of a standpoint arose from women's political struggles to see their concerns represented in public policy, and in disciplines that shaped such policy. Feminist standpoint epistemologies are, therefore, critiques of the dominant power-knowledge relations; but they also claim many other things besides. They show us how to think from many different locations. They locate the epistemic advantage on a robust reflexivity, conducted from a standpoint of the less powerful, whose experience they champion. Feminist standpoint epistemologies, as a result, centre on distinctive, dialogically achieved discourses which generate knowledge. I will review four of the contexts in which such concerns have arisen.

The claim closest to the surface of the debate pertains to the use of standpoint feminism's ability to reveal more of the deficiences of male-dominated theory and philosophy. In addition, the approach is founded on a theory that legitimates cognitive authority through the evaluation of knowledge produced, taking account of the important ways in which they address equality and difference between men and women, and the commonalities and differences between women. Feminist standpoint epistemologies is that they will increase the researcher's ability to achieve objectivity in conformity with the social desires, interests and values that shape the context of discovery. Finally, these epistemologies claim to provide more objective ways of explaining the limitations of standard accounts of nature and social relations.

To the extent that standpoint feminism fulfils normative adequacy in identifying the problems of the marginalised, conditioned by the social experience of oppression, coupled with the thought that the approach goes beyond considerations of the gender of the knower, I conclude this section by reflecting on the implications of translating its philosophical roots to my own sociopolitical standpoint. I then locate my emphasis on the importance of feminist standpoint epistemological model with respect to its various philosophical approaches, and explanations, on which my analysis will rely.

4.4.1 Feminist standpoint epistemologies: seeing both ways

Feminist standpoint theory is said to offer

> a different view of how politicised research can produce preferable research results. It builds a distinctive feminist science on the social experiences of women and gives women, or feminists, a privileged position in their ability to understand the social world. It also claims to overcome the dualisms characteristic of Western thought. The feminist standpoint is based, particularly, on Hegel, Marx and Freud, and focuses on the experiences of women in the division of labour, including production and reproduction, and the differential experiences of boys and girls and their relationships to their mothers in the sexual division of labour in child rearing.
>
> (Blakie 1995:82)

Bryson (1999:22) has suggested that a 'Marxist perspective, however, does not simply identify problems, but gives them a historical context.' She adds that according to some writers, a Marxist approach can help to them to see the way in which feminist ideas may themselves be rooted in women's daily lives. Like Marx, many feminists have argued that good theory cannot be deduced from abstract speculation or outside observation, but can only result from concrete experience and political practice, which it both reflects and informs.

In this regard, Hartsock (19983:295) has argued that 'women and men … grow up with personalities affected by different boundary experiences, differently constructed and experienced inner and outer worlds, and preoccupations with different relational issues.' Harding (1986:26) has also argues that 'men's dominant position in social life results in partial and perverse understandings, whereas women's subjugated position provides the possibility of more complete and less perverse understandings.' She adds that in the same way that Marx argued that the proletariat potentially has a superior capacity to know the world, derived from their particular subjugated experiences, there is a feminine standpoint on the world which is 'a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for our interpretations and explanations of nature and social life' (26).

According to Andermahr et al

> The term 'standpoint' groups together a number of feminist epistemologies which privilege women's 'ways of knowing' Standpoint theorists look two ways, offering on the one hand a critique of dominant conventional epistemologies in the social and natural sciences, and defending the coherence of feminist knowledge against postmodern uncertainty on the other.
>
> (Andermahr et al ,1997:211)

They add that because it was initially seen to be based on women's unique position in the sexual division of labour or distinctive styles of moral reasoning, standpoint essentialist

assumption of a universal women's perspective and its tendency to conflate women's experience and women's political insight led by the late 1980s to a more critical approach to women's experience as the foundation of feminist knowledge. As Squires (1999;100) puts it, 'the 'feminist standpoint' methodology was developed by Hartsock and drew explicitly from a Marxist methodological framework. It shares with the relativist forms of interpretation the perception that knowledge originates in practice. She however adds that Hartsock (1997:153) introduces the notion that "in systems of domination the vision available to the rulers will be both impartial and perverse" , while the vision available to the oppressed group on the other hand, "exposes the real relations among human beings… and carries a historically liberating role". Squires (1999) summarises the essence of these points when she suggests that the standpoint of the oppressed is a contextual knowledge, but it is not just one among others, as it comprehends both the 'surface appearance' generated by the standpoint of the dominant group and the deeper reality perceived by the oppressed group. She concludes that it is not just different, rather, it is less partial. Squires (1999) also quotes Jagger (1997) as suggesting that the 'emotional acumen' gained by women through their work in emotional nurturance "can now be recognised as a skill in political analysis and validated as giving women a special advantage both in understanding the mechanisms of domination and in envisioning freer ways to live" (Jagger 1997 :193, in Squires 1999:101)

Bryson (1999) comments that as standpoint theory has developed, writers such as Harding (1991) have attempted to move beyond such criticisms by recognising the diversity of women's situations, at the same time as arguing for that their shared experience of subordination and marginality can provide the basis for 'oppositional consciousness' and for forms of knowledge that are both different from and superior to the narrow and unreflective standpoints of the dominant male elite.

It is necessary to point out here that there are similarities between feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernist / relativist epistemology. Squires (1999) has aptly analysed them as stated below

> Both insist that knowledge is contextual and that different practices generate different forms of knowledge. Both also insist the women's experiences (particularly, but not exclusively, mothering) shape a distinctive female knowledge which is relational rather than abstract, concrete rather than abstract, emphatic and imaginative rather than abstract and instrumental. Both call for this form of knowledge to be recognised and its potential contribution valued.
>
> (Squires 1999:101)

She suggests however, that there is one central difference between relativist/ postmodernist approach and the standpoint versions of interpretation. This, she adds, lies in the differing responses to the fact that not all women think in the same way or share the same standpoint. She quotes MacKinnon (1987) as pointing out that the relativist form embraces any version of women's experiences that a biological female claims as her own whereas the standpoint version regards some women's views as 'false consciousness' Squires (1999) concludes that both approaches have come be seen as problematic.

Harding (1998) suggests that standpoint epistemology seeks to explain the role of gendered institutions, practices, and cultures. Such an approach, she argues, wants to show how institutions depend upon the maintenance of masculine cultures in militaries, governments, and multinational corporations, as well as among their allies in national and local communities. Harding (1998) points out that

> Feminist standpoint theory mapped the different scientific and epistemic resources that hierarchical gender relations create for starting off research or thought from women's lives as the latter have been understood in various feminist discourses. It showed how positions of political disadvantage can also be turned into sites of analytic advantage. ...It can be structured parallel to the "different cultures" arguments.
>
> (Harding, 1998: 91-92)

Harding (1998) is arguing for basing the legitimacy of knowledge claims in the experiences of those studied, preventing them from becoming objects of inquiry. She emphasises that a standpoint is not the same as a viewpoint or perspective, for it requires both science and political struggle to achieve what Hartsock (1983) refers to as seeing beneath the surfaces of social life to the realities that structure it.

Feminist standpoint theorists take the principle of contextualisation of knowledge and attempt to validate feminist knowledge within the social sciences based on women's specific standpoint, their social location and political engagement.
Smith (1988) suggests that because men's standpoint has been represented as universal, women have had to discover how to take their own standpoint. Like Harding and Hintikka (1983), Smith (1988) stresses that women's experiences are the grounds of feminist knowledge and that knowledge should change the dominant conceptual framework of sociology. Smith (1988) points out that if we start thinking from women's lives, it possible to see that women are assigned the work that men do not want to do for themselves,

especially the care of everyone's bodies. And they are assigned the responsibilities for the local places where these bodies exist. Smith (1988) adds that men in marginalised groups often perform certain kinds of such work. She shows that this kind of work frees men in the ruling groups to immerse themselves in the world of abstract concepts. Smith emphasises that the more successful women are at this concrete work, the more invisible it becomes to men as distinctively social labour. Smith (1988) argues that if we start from women's lives, we can generate questions about why primarily women are assigned such activities. We can also expose what the consequences are for the economy, the state, the family, the educational system and other social work to one group.

In Smith's (1988) thinking, the standpoint of women enables us to understand women's lives, the social institutions from the design of which women are excluded, and the relations between the two.

Hence, Harding (1998) argues that these espistemologies propose that there are important resources for the production of knowledge to be found in starting off research projects from issues arising from women's lives rather than only from the dominant androcentric conceptual frameworks of disciplines and the larger social order. Harding (1998) identifies two kinds of difference which provide independent arguments for abandoning the internalised epistemology of the modern West as follows:

> (a) one appeals to politically assigned locations in social hierarchies, such as those created by class, racism, imperialism or sexism.
> (b) the other appeals to culturally created locations.
>
> (Harding, 1998:149)

Harding (1998) attributes these differences to the fact that though analytically distinguishable in daily life the pervasiveness of political relations within and between cultures insures that different cultural resources almost never have equal political status. Explaining the intellectual history of standpoint theory, Harding (1998) links it to Hegel's reflections on what can be known about the master/slave relationship from the standpoint of the slave's life. She contrasts this to the far more distorted understanding of it available from the perspective of the master's life. She adds that Marx, Engels, and Lukacs subsequently developed this insight into the standpoint of the proletariat, from which were produced theories of how class society operates. It is as a result of this link that Jameson

(1988) has argued that the feminist standpoint theorists are the only contemporary thinkers currently working with the Marxian epistemological legacy.

However, Bar On (1993) provides a useful analysis of the contrast between feminist claims about epistemic privilege and Marx's claim that the standpoint of the proletariat is epistemically superior to that of the bourgeoisie. Bar On (1993) argues that feminist standpoint theory has differed from Marx in two crucial ways. First, Marx's argument for epistemic privilege was based on the idea that workers are both marginal and central in bourgeois society. She explains that it was marginal in relation to political and cultural power but central to the process of production. In Bar On's (1993) view, the marginality of workers means that they have less vested interest in maintaining bourgeois ideology, whereas their centrality gives them a privileged view of the real nature of capitalist production. She suggests that it is these two elements in combination that confer on the working class an epistemic superiority. She points out that feminist arguments, on the other hand, have argued from and established only the marginality of women.

The second difference that Bar On (1993) provides lies in the level of complexity by which oppression is understood. Where Marx basically theorised a single axis of oppression that revolved around class, Bar On suggests that feminists have theorised multiple axes. She argues that the result of this more complicated social grid is that the notion of a single centre becomes displaced. This then problematises the use of a margin/centre ontology and raises new questions about the relationships between the multiple oppressed groupings. Nevertheless, Harding (1998) and Hartsock (1983) identify two major themes of standpoint approaches. Harding (1998) states that

> the starting point of standpoint theory, and its claim that is most often misread, is that in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such policies shaping the very structure and meanings of social relations, the *activities* or lives ("labour" in the Marxian account) of those at the top both organise and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them.
>
> (Harding, 1998:150)

This refers to the abstract mental work of management and administration.

Standpoint epistemology according to Harding (1998), focuses on the kind of criticisms prevailing institutions, their cultures, and the practices that appear when formally silenced peoples begin gain public voice. She suggests that on the one hand, these voices argue for applying existing methods, rules, and procedures more fairly in order to eliminate what they think of as the biases in the prevailing views. However, they also frequently argue

that the existing conceptual frameworks, methods, rules and procedures for inquiry are themselves constituted only from the perspective of the ruling-group interests.
The second theme, as picked out by Hartsock (1983) states that

> there are some perspectives on society from which, however well-intentioned one may be, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible.
>
> (Hartsock, 1983: 159)

Their argument is that, by adopting a feminist standpoint approach, the activities of those who are exploited by such social hierarchies can provide starting points for thought from otherwise obscured relations that people have with each other and with the natural world, can become visible. Harding (1998) in particular, points out that standpoint theory is only pointing to how people tend to perceive their own best interests in predictable ways, though they can always find reason to pursue other interests that make exceptions to such predictions.
Feminist standpoint epistemologies thus begin from the assumption that power and knowledge are inevitably linked, but that not all power or knowledge belongs to the powerful.
As Harding (1998) has pointed out, feminist standpoint set the relationship between knowledge and politics as the centre of its account in the sense that it tries to explain the effects that different kinds of political arrangements have on the production of knowledge. She explains that it does this in three ways:

(i) [feminist standpoint theory] claims that all knowledge attempts are socially situated, and that some of these objective social locations are better than others as starting points for knowledge projects;
(ii) standpoint [theory] challenges some of the most fundamental assumptions of the scientific world view and the Western thought that takes science as their model of how to produce knowledge;
(iii) standpoint [theory] sets out guidelines for a "logic of discovery" intended to maximise the objectivity of the results of research; and thereby to produce knowledge that can be for marginalised people and for those who would know what they can know, rather than for the use only of dominant groups in their projects of administering and managing marginalised lives.

(Harding, 1998:152-53)

Harding (1998) adds that feminist standpoint approaches have called for identifying and using unique resources of women's particular social locations in order to identify and provide maximally objective understandings of sexist and androcentric presuppositions shaping dominant institutions, their conceptual frameworks, cultures, and practices. However, the standpoint approach has not been accepted by all feminist schools of thought. This is in spite of arguments that standpoint's political insights led to a more critical approach to women's experience as the foundation of feminist knowledge. Cain (1990) argues that standpoint theory is recognised to be extremely diverse, consciously choosing political and social vantage points available to men as well as women. The question of women's standpoints therefore appears to be inextricably stuck in a mire of contested assumptions which lead to resistance to the idea of distinctive women's standpoints of nature as Harding (1998) has suggested and as discussed below.

4.4.2 - A critique of feminist standpoint epistemologies

Blakie (1995:83) suggests that 'while standpoint feminism may avoid the problems of feminist empiricism, it has its own difficulties. It leaves uncontested the dualisms which structure sexual differences and current scientific practices'.

Bryson (199923) argues that although Harding now says that standpoint knowledge may in principle be accessible to men, standpoint theory remains prone to essentialising generalisations . Bryson adds that to the extent that it avoids this by recognising a multiplicity of standpoints, it becomes increasingly indistinguishable from some of the ideas of postmodernism. Squires (1999) also points out that there is disagreement as to whether the conception of power put forward by standpoint theory as capacity can legitimately be claimed as female. She cites Deutchman (1996), one of the critics of standpoint as suggesting that there is no historical evidence that the 'power to' conception of power is exclusively or uniformly feminist.

Shrader-Frechette (1995) criticises feminist standpoint epistemologies, in part because she thinks that their exclusiveness leads to inconsistency and, as a consequence, to disenfranchising other members of the community who have legitimate claims. She starts by recapping feminist standpoint claims to produce more objective ethics, law, science, and public policy and argues that they are wrong to affirm a uniquely privileged position for women knowers. She contends that their exclusive version of feminist epistemology may lead to unjust policy. She points out that feminist standpoint theorists err because they claim too much for feminist epistemology. Shrader-Frechette (1995) acknowledges standpoint's link to Hegel's master-slave metaphor as reworked by Marx and neo-

Marxists. Encompassing the arguments of feminist epistemologies such as Longino (1992) and Tuana (1989), she points out that there are at least three serious problems with feminist standpoint theories:

> (1) the difficulty of choosing a single feminist standpoint among the many possible ones resulting from women's biology or experience. Different women have different standpoints and different reactions to oppression.
> (2) their exclusiveness, their giving inadequate emphasis to the fact that knowledge takes place within a varied community of knowers having a multiplicity of different standpoints...the varied community of scientists/knowers and their social contexts provide many categories, assumptions, and theories that enable us to interpret and understand phenomena...Hence, to the degree that feminist standpoint theorists argue for such privilege, they argue contrary to current, post-positivist accounts of epistemology and science.
> (3) they seem to be oxymoronic. To the degree that feminist standpoint theorists answer this charge by embracing a plurality of beliefs, histories, and locations, they undercut the status of their epistemology as feminist in any non-trivial sense.
>
> (Shrader-Frechete, 1995:157-58)

Bar On (1993) also argues that feminist claims for women's epistemic privilege are based on a neo-Romantic conception of the subject that is emotional and non-dualistic between mind and body or reason and passion. Further, she points out that feminist claims have emerged as a counterpoint to the Enlightenment strategies for claiming authority. She adds that as such, the feminist arguments have been framed within the Enlightenment's terms of discourse and replicate its repressive mechanisms for claiming the authority and privilege to silence others. Bar On (1993) adds that besides, such arguments only succeed in actuality within the oppressed group itself, because of claiming authority when one lacks the social power on which to base it. Based on this thought, Bar On1993) asserts that

> [feminist standpoint theory] cannot yield the same results as the self-authorising claims of a dominant group and are, therefore, merely normative, compelling only for those who are theoretically persuaded by them, usually members of the socially marginalised group who find them empowering.
>
> (Bar On, 1993: 96)

Bar On's (1993) argument, concerning standpoint epistemologies, on their claim to epistemic privilege as a tool of the oppressed, suggests is that there are no tools that are a function of the oppressed.

On different grounds, Longino (1993) takes issue with standpoint accounts. She argues that they have very strong descriptive elements but are insufficiently normative. She suggests that this is particularly worrisome because, although recognising that mainstream accounts of natural processes have been developed from particular locations and reflect

particular effective orientations, these feminist epistemologies argue only that certain locations and orientations are superior to others without providing norms by which we can decide among their conflicting claims about natural processes. Longino's (1993) argument is that this is because they do not provide norms for deciding which standpoint or orientation is epistemically superior.

Croissant (1998:152) takes issue with feminist standpoint's criterion that theory be based on "experience". In her thinking, not only is this stance nearly redundant, but, 'all theories are based on "experience" – it is a matter of whose experience, and the levels of abstraction and generalization drawn from such experiences.'

About Harding's (1991) suggestion that addressing experience in feminist theory is also associated with the criterion of thinking from women's lives, Croissant (1998) has this to say:

> This is a tight rope on one side of which lies a problem of appropriation and on the other, a radical hyphenization of identity and the presumption of incommensurable experiences. The length of the fall to either side might be measured by the methodological limitations of starting with women only and continuing to assume the stability of "men".
>
> (Croissant, 1998:152)

When all these criticisms are taken together, they throw into doubt considerations of standpoint epistemology and experience and of its total certainty to truth in research. Nevertheless, feminist standpoint theorists suggest that the production of new knowledge is a practical and necessary goal. It is seen by its proponents as a knowledge project which assumes that correctly produced knowledge will lead to the adoption of the best political strategies as demonstrated by arguments in the section below.

4.4.3-Standing up for feminist standpoint

Rose (1986) has acknowledged that the issue of dualisms continues to be a problem in standpoint theory but has suggested that the tensions within these dualisms can provide a creative framework for struggle.

Hartsock (1996) responds to the criticism of the relationship between power and gendered identity as propounded by feminist standpoint by stressing that she is claiming not a feminine conception of power but a feminist one. She argues that it is not women's nature that gives rise to a specific way of viewing power, but their particular social role and status (usually caring and private). She further argues that the systematic and significant differences in life activity experienced by men and women lead to differing world views

and distinctive theoretical commitments. She justifies her stand by stressing that the conception of power as capacity is part of a 'feminist standpoint', based in historically and materially specific circumstances and realised through a consciousness-raising process. Standpoint theory therefore emphasises the extent to which knowledge is grounded in material experiences. Collins (1990) has also suggested that experience as a criterion is a fundamental epistemological tenet of both African American and feminist thought. She argues that one's experiences determine not only what one thinks but, but also how one thinks. Collins emphasises that women as a group are more likely to use concrete knowledge and dialogue than are men. Her opinion is that they are less likely to adopt the abstract form of reasoning advocated by Kant and less convinced by the attempt to reduce ethical thinking to an abstract and universal form of reason.

In defence of standpoint theory, Harding (1993) for instance, establishes that it is not in contradiction with the goal of achieving objective knowledge. Her arguments consist of two parts.

First, she argues that even if researchers were to follow the most rigorous rules of traditional methods of research, they would not be able to achieve strong objectivity. This is because these methods leave unexplained the context of discovery, which is considered non-rational and therefore exempt from analysis and because these methods neglect to identify the social desires, interests, and values that have shaped the sciences. Science presents itself as subjectless, the disembodied report of value-free, context-independent facts. Harding (1993) argues that science does have a subject, which in our community is a group of dominant males, and that this subject has a standpoint, that is, a perspective involving assumptions and values based on the kinds of activities this group engages in. Positivism leaves this standpoint unexamined and thus impoverishes the objectivity that science could achieve.

Harding (1993) further argues that the standpoint of this dominant group is epistemically limited with respect to the standpoint of various marginalised groups. As a remedy, Harding (1993) advocates a methodology that involves starting thought from the lives of the marginalised peoples. She argues that this will reveal more of the unexamined assumptions influencing science and will generate more critical questions, thus producing less partial and distorted accounts. Harding (1993) urges that research done this way can be, and needs to be, undertaken by everyone, not just by the marginalised themselves. Harding (1998) responds to common misunderstandings of standpoint theory by reiterating that it is not only about how to get a more accurate understanding of marginal lives. The

point is to produce systematic causal accounts of how the natural and social orders are organised. She argues that for a researcher to start from marginalised lives is not necessarily to take one's research problems in terms in which marginalised people perceive or articulate their problems. Harding (1998) further suggests that misunderstandings come about because objectivism insists that the only alternative to its "view from nowhere" is special interest biases and ethnoknowledges that can be understood only within relativist epistemology. She points out that in contrast, standpoint epistemologies propose that institutionalised power imbalances give the act of starting off from marginalised lives a critical edge for formulating new questions about institutionalised power and its effects. Harding (1998) argues that standpoint is not suggesting that there is some kind of essential, universally adequate model of the marginalised life from which research should start. Rather, the point of standpoint theory is to help more people toward standpoints that enable them to analyse their situations, whether one is in a marginalised or dominant social location. Furthermore, standpoint is not arguing that only members of marginalised groups can generate knowledge that is useful to such groups. Nor is it an "identity politics" project for knowledge production, unless "identity" is taken as one's commitment to who one wants to be rather than only to where one has come from. Harding (1998) stresses that her definition of standpoint theory rejects universalism and points out that gender, class, and race shape any individual understanding of the world into different standpoints. Hence, Harding (1998) identifies the categories and concepts to be used to understand cultures and worlds within which they exist from a fresh perspective thus:

> multicultural feminisms focus on the culturally distinctive histories and practices shaping women's conditions, interests, and desires in different local, national, and transnational cultures, and the necessity for thinking from these distinctive histories in designing social change…brings different resources and different struggles to the feminisms they develop.
>
> (Harding, 1998:76)

Harding (1998) acknowledges that to some feminist thinkers in the social studies of science, the question of standpoint essentialises women. She argues that these are misreadings of standpoint arguments, adding that research is to start from such locations in order to explain the relationship between those lives and the rest of social relations, including human interactions with nature.

Harding (1998) is reassuring in indicating that the concept of standpoint is concerned with how women see their political struggles represented in public policy and in the natural and social science disciplines that have shaped such policy. Moreover, standpoint theory focuses on the kinds of criticisms prevailing in institutions, their cultures, and practices. For those who still hold that standpoint theory is asserting epistemological/scientific privilege for one group at the expense of the equally valuable and/or distorted perceptions of other groups, Harding (1998) states that

> this interpretation of difference as mere diversity is a serious misunderstanding of social relations, as well as of political standpoint claims about the effect of power on knowledge claims.
>
> (Harding, 1998:157)

Harding argues that adopting a standpoint epistemology or method of research may often be the only way to detect the broad, cultural, civilisational conceptual frameworks limiting certain kinds of knowledge-seeking projects. Harding (1998) also adds that however, they may not always be the best way to articulate why a particular knowledge seeking strategy is preferable.

Having outlined the criteria and considerations which inform the development of feminist theories of knowledge, and having discussed the complex interrelations of knowledge, experience and theory which frame critiques in feminist social theories, I attempt in the next section to explain the reasonableness of standpoint epistemology for my particular knowledge seeking project.

4.4.4-Feminist standpoint epistemologies' practicality as a research tool

Reflexivity, the process of accounting for the production of research material, including the interpretive processes followed by the researcher, is considered by Potter (1988) and Wilkinson (1988) as perhaps a key theme of the qualitative research. In particular, the specificity of the position it implies destabilises practices of objective omniscient narration. Although different modes conceive of reflexivity in varying ways, Denzin (1994) argues that it is the logical and ethical counterpart to interpretation. However, Gouldner (1997) expresses caution about how to translate reflexivity into practice for the following reasons:

> First, knowledge production should be linked to the investigator's position in the world. Second, because the knowledge produced should seek to transform, as well as know that that world and third, the body of knowledge produced

> should pass through the researcher as a total person. These translate into an issue which concerns not: ' how to *work,* but how to *live'.*
>
> *(*Gouldner, 1971:489. Emphasis are Gouldner's)

What Gouldner's quote implies is the need for a deepening of self-awareness towards how the researcher's praxis, roles and social position relate to the product and process of knowledge production. Gouldner further suggests that what is needed is a new praxis that transforms the person. He adds that it is not about the object of the study, as such, but about the mode of the study in terms of the 'relationship it establishes between being a socialist and being a person' (495).

For me, feminist standpoint epistemologies is the 'new praxis' which will enable me to adequately investigate practical gendered politics and the secondary status of femocrats in the Cameroonian social context. As D. Smith (1992) has argued, standpoint feminism takes the absence of women's experience in social scientific accounts as symptomatic of the relations of ruling which occur through the processes of social construction. The creation of a sphere in which women can make links between experiences and images and referential reflexivity, is thereby limited. Smith adds that the point is to create this sphere of reflection by employing the ontological exclusion of women in the service of epistemological correction. Harding (1991:20) emphasises that women's exclusion is used productively in standpoint feminism because it focuses upon the differences in men's and women's situations. According to her, it gives 'a scientific advantage to those who can make use of the differences'. She adds that 'a strong objectivity' then emerges whereby thinking from women's lives can uncover those processes and structures which, from a male point of view, appear as natural but, from a feminist standpoint position, require explanation. She argues that the focus upon macro tendencies 'permits a more robust notion of reflexivity than is currently available in the sociology of knowledge or the philosophy of science' (Harding, 1991: 149). Moreover, standpoint feminism advocates research 'from below' that relays the experience of the research subjects, often in their own words. This is a core tenet of the feminist standpoint research process, and is based on the argument that only a shared perspective with the subject gives the researcher adequate insight and knowledge.

First, standpoint feminism has progressively advanced experience not only of the research subjects but of the researcher, in terms of 'who' you are, as a starting point for understanding the ways in which we know and perceive the social world observed.

Personal experience is thus placed in the wider context of social practice. Second, standpoint feminism positions experience in a theoretical framework that recognises the inequality of the social relationships. When addressing the difficult questions that go beyond what research is, it goes on to ask who it is for, why it is being done, and how. For standpoint feminism, this means the understanding of one's experiences as a female researcher is included in the method; in the context of Cameroonian patriarchal relationships, for example. Feminist standpoint theory proposes that its line of inquiry, based on the privileging of women's experiences both as subject and as researcher, can provide understandings of social life that are not possible from the starting point of men's distinctive activities and experiences. The presumed focus of standpointism on the 'female experience' creates misconceptions that all women have a viewpoint that differs from that of all men. On this point of gender differences, Harding (1986) is reassuringly clear in her argument that it is the examination of these differences that is the unifying principle between different women. Furthermore, this difference 'represents the need to recognise and investigate , rather than deny , the relation between subject and object' (Harding, 1991:152) Young (1990:212) has also argued that structural inequality, patterned by group privilege and oppression, remains. However, there must be group representation in the policy-making, (for instance in the context of my study here, this would refer to women MPs and female bureaucrats in the Cameroonian social context). Difference, as J. Evans (1995) acknowledges, has its heterogeneities and separate dilemmas too. Not all those considered 'different' are similarly unequal, a problem that prevails in the Cameroonian social context of my study, where exclusion, homogenisation and hierarchy exist. Standpoint feminism's approach to the challenge that the experience of the female subject or the female researcher cannot speak for all women, is plain. As Flax (1983) states, standpoint feminism goes beyond the limited arena of the elite women as 'knowers' who ask the 'right' questions, and recognises that there is no one feminist standpoint epistemology but, rather, a series of standpoints depending on the subject(s) and researcher(s). By recognising a multiplicity of standpoints therefore, a researcher is able to avoid the trap of essentialism that can arise with the desire to locate research within a standpointism that reflects the researcher's own subjectivity.

In relation to the arena of public life, feminism as a movement has been concerned to expose the gendered nature of political activity, and this is a main focus of my research. Standpointism , in particular, advances a political commitment to understanding the world through the experiences of women. It believes that women, as a socially disadvantaged

group, can be empowered by the research process. Standpointism thus enables and encourages research 'for' women as urged by Harding (1991) and D. Smith (1992). Standpoint feminism's challenge to mainstream epistemology is underpinned as well by the assumption that women bring the advantage of the 'outsider' status with them to their research. Even though they are privileged women researching women, they are usually 'outsiders' in the world of male-dominated research. Harding (1991:31) therefore considers 'women, especially women researchers, as outsiders within'. Harding's (1991) view here enables me to reflect on my position as the researcher, as someone who is gendered, researching on the basis of a solid epistemological framework stemming from feminist research approaches. Such an approach can only be a politically progressive process. MacKinnon (1982) has argued that feminism has pioneered the personal in its political goal for change from patriarchal oppression to female empowerment. Based on these arguments, I conclude this section by acknowledging that feminist standpoint epistemologies offer an appropriate tool for interpreting gender, and for enabling me in making sense of the gendered world of the Cameroonian social context. Feminist standpoint theory as a practical tool for investigating enables me to achieve the following: (1) It allows me to embrace an explicit commitment to feminist principles in the purpose of the research by enabling me to focus on female politicians and femocrats in Cameroon. (2) It commits me to work with the researched as collaborators in the research process, thus enabling me to research 'for' women and not just 'on' women. It also enables me to seek to influence policy over the distribution of resources, as the research results contribute to our understanding of women's oppression, and documents resistance or lack of it, to patriarchal power. (3) It further enables me to avoid the illusion of detached objectivity, and instead strive to represent the experiences of the research collaborators and partners with a commitment to intellectual honesty, and to value personal experience. (4) Above all, it enables me to be reflexive through placing women's personal histories, values, and beliefs at the forefront of my research as argued by Scott (1985), Harding(1987), Kelly (1988), Stanley and Wise (1993), and Maynard and Purvis (1994). Harding, for example has written that

> One distinct feature of feminist research is that it generates its problematic from the perspective of women's experiences. It also uses these experiences as a significant indicator of the reality against which hypotheses are tested.
>
> (Harding, 1987:7)

These experiences, as Mies (1991) notes, are located within a wider economic and social order where priorities and agendas for action, and the generation of knowledge, have been slow to reflect women's interests. In Mies' opinion, experience means taking real life as the starting point, its subjective concreteness as well as its societal entanglements. She adds that we should not forget that the challenge to begin with women's own experiences arose out of frustrations at the realisation that women's lives, history, struggles, and ideas constitute no part of dominant science. These, then, are the principles that informed my practice as a researcher, and this study situates itself within the tradition of the methods and ideals established by feminist standpoint epistemologies.

The next section turns to the exploration of citizenship and the role of men and women in the public and private life.

4.5.1-Gender and citizenship

These debates on what Lister (1974:4) terms 'Janus-faced citizenship [which] operates simultaneously as a mechanism of both inclusion and exclusion,' will also be considered. Lister uses Marshall's (1950) classic exposition of modern citizenship which incorporated the idea of 'an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievements can be measured and towards which aspirations can be directed' (Marshall, 1950: 29, cited in Lister 1997:4). Recent feminist works have described the notion of citizenship as 'a key aspect of Western political thinking since the formation of classical Greek political culture' (Turner, 1993:vii), and 'one of the central organising features of Western political discourse' (Hindness, 1993:19).

It is appropriate to point out here that the same political culture, translated and transplanted by the British and French colonial powers, underpins the Cameroonian political-constitutional discourse. This colonial experience itself has impacted upon the particular construction of citizenship and gender in Cameroon as discussed in **3.2.2.4,** above. Gough (1992:9) suggests that 'since citizenship is a prerequisite for the fulfilment of citizenship duties, social rights of citizenship follow from an unambiguous concept of human need.' He adds that one element of basic human need is that of 'autonomy of agency – the capacity to make informed choices about what should be done and how to go about doing it.'

Furthermore, he argues that critical to personal autonomy is the opportunity to participate in the social roles of production, reproduction, cultural transmission and political authority. Beyond this, he suggests, lies 'critical autonomy, the ability to situate, criticise and, if

necessary, challenge the rules and practices of one's society' (Gough, 1992:10). Doyal and Gough (1991) identify civil and political rights, together with effective political participation and democracy, as essential to critical autonomy and optimisation of needs satisfaction.

Citizenship is therefore pivotal to the definition and interpretation of needs and to the struggle for their realisation and conversion into rights. Behind this point lies a particular conception of power from a feminist perspective in relation to the contested nature of the line between public and private.

The power relations between men and women have been a key focus of feminist analysis, as indicated by Millett's (1971) seminal work, *Sexual Politics*. The conception of power incorporated in the feminist definition of patriarchy is one in which 'men possess power which they hold over women (subordinate men and children) in a relatively stable sex/gender system' (Holland and Ramazanoglou, 1993:239). Numerous feminist scholars have exposed the extent to which conventional definitions of 'the political' have been steeped in male experience. Saxonhouse (1985), for instance, suggests that Aristotle argued that women's activities and attributes made them incompetent to engage in political activities. Aristotle argued that though both male and female are necessary for generation, it is necessary that they be kept separate, "for the better and the stronger are to be kept apart from that which is inferior" (in Saxonhouse: 34). Aristotle suggests that the male is better in this context because he gives to that which is generated both the final cause, the **telos**, the reason for existence, and the form, the shape that being will take when it has revealed its completed state. The female provides only the matter. Aristotle offers an elaborate comparative analysis of semen and menstrual fluids to support his observations. His reasoning is that the female's body is incapable of concocting the necessary heat, the **pneuma**, which transfers to the generated being both reason and form. It is this analysis that leads to Aristotle's conclusion that according to nature, the male is superior to the female. Throughout his work, Aristotle compares the female to a minor. Although Saxonhouse (1985) points out that Aristotle does not state that all males are better than all females, only that this is natural, yet, this is the basis on which politics is definitely regarded as a male enterprise. Aristotle's argument implies that those who are superior are meant by nature to rule those who are inferior. The distinction made by Aristotle between public and private is said by Jones (1988) to be the distinction on which major concepts of contemporary political thought are built. She adds that the concept that the public is fundamentally distinct from the private and the personal, informs the discipline and shapes

the traditional tools of research. Jones further suggests that its history and its influence on the definition of political norms can be traced from the Greeks to twentieth century political texts. With the Greeks, according to Jones, the conceptual distinction between public and private reflected the classical understanding of the private realms of the household (known as **oikos** or the sphere of reproduction) and the economy as realms of necessity. Relations of human super-ordination and subordination prevailed 'naturally' in these arenas of human activity, according to Jones (1988).

The seventeenth and eighteenth century European Enlightenment is regarded by feminist philosophers Pateman (1988), Jones (1988), Irigaray (1974) and Nye (1988), for instance, as heralding a philosophy which rested on the idea of progress rooted in scientific rationality and an ordered, law-governed world characteristic of 'malestream' thought and masculine universalism. On the one hand, feminist philosophers of political engagement (Nye, 1988; Pateman, 1988; Smart, 1984, 1989) have developed reservations about the central part played by the discourse and institutions of Law in Patriarchy. It is on this basis that they argue that the discourses of equality, individualism, and the social contract are built upon a false notion of universal Human Rights, and insist that the human subject of liberal theory is actually male and uniquely, male.

The problem for women, as Saxonhouse (1985) has suggested, lies in the ascription of power based on sex. Power gives each individual the capacity to choose actions and to be able to express in words the justification of such choices. The activity of the 'polis,' as suggested by Aristotle, entails debates on courses of action ,as participants justify to each other one policy or another. In the female, the deliberative power is '**akuron**' that is, without authority and, by implication, inferior. Aristotle is thus suggesting that the female lacks authority with the males around her, who would refuse to listen to the advice of a woman. This theory is reflected in the general position of women in Cameroonian Customary Law discussed in **1.2.2,** above. Such arguments are a necessary component of the debate about bias in political theory, because they show that the presumed attributes of men and women are fundamental to political research theory. Furthermore, these arguments to illustrate that the tradition of Western political thought rests on a conception of the political that is constructed through the exclusion of women and all that is represented by femininity. Hence Pateman and Shanley's contention that

> sexual difference and sexuality are usually treated as marginal to, or outside the subject matter of, political theory but, the different attributes, capacities and

> characteristics ascribed to men and women by political theorists are central to the way in which each has defined the political.
>
> (Pateman and Shanley, 1991:3)

This, when combined with the Homeric approach, sets up a framework of analysis which works to exclude women. In the Homeric tradition, suggest Hartsock (1985) and Saxonhouse (1980), the model of citizen-soldier excluded women from public life. In the philosophical tradition, the model of rational discourse defined the practice of citizenship. The consequences of this conceptual bias acted, along with other material forces, to structure political life and citizenship in ways that categorically segregated women, and the needs with which they were associated, from public life. Manhood and politics, Pateman and Shanley (1991) argue, go hand in hand, and everything that stands in contrast or opposed to political life and the political virtues, has been represented by women, including their capacities and the tasks seen as natural to their sex, especially motherhood. Women therefore have been designated as upholders of the private foundation of the political world of men. Such a state of affairs has led Saxonhouse (1985) to conclude that the classical definition of politics of this period precluded women's participation in public life. This view is echoed by Jones (1988), who suggests that politics became by definition, a world in which only men acted and spoke. These considerations, when transferred to the Cameroonian social context, provide practical guidance for my inquiry. These themes clarify why the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women has not been met, in spite of the political-constitutional Clause of Equal Human Rights. Family Law is male-biased and linked to a highly gendered view of roles and obligations. Young (1990 : 212) has also argued that structural inequality, patterned by group privilege and oppression, remains. However, there must be group representation in policy-making, (for instance in the context of my study here, this would refer to women MPs and femocrats in the Cameroonian social context) and 'an elimination of the hierarchy of rewards that forces everyone to compete for scarce positions at the top.' The next section turns to the exploration of citizenship and the role of men and women in public and private life.

4.5.2- Feminist debates of marginalised political citizenship

In this section, I attempt to explore feminism's understanding of citizenship in order to discover how the tension between power and femininity is articulated differently by men and women. Feminist philosophers Elshtain (1981), Pateman (1988, 1989, 1997), Walby (1986, 1990), to name but a few, have developed a sceptical analysis to argue that the

terms of entry into civil society via the social contract/patriarchy bond and the associated concept of citizenship, are founded on an ostensibly abstract, human, propertied subject. They argue that women were outside its terms, and the terms are such that the strategy of Equal Rights feminism to extend full membership to women is deeply undermined. Their concept of civil society depicts an intermediate sphere between the public world of the state, and the private world of families and individuals. It includes a range of institutions, such as educational, economic, political, social, and cultural which mediate the private and the public worlds. Feminist theorists emphasise that the public-private divide is pivotal to women's long-standing exclusion from full citizenship in both theory and practice. Pateman (1989), for instance, has based her argument for broadening the base of democratic participation on the conventional separation of the private from the public and the political by emphasising the interrelationship between the two. She therefore rejects the idea of a political sphere as 'reified abstraction separated from the rest of social life; instead it exists wherever citizens gather to make political decisions' (1989:110).
D. Held, (1987) endorses Pateman's (1989) analysis of politics as unrelated to any specific set of institutions:

> In my view, politics is about power....a phenomenon found in and between groups, institutions...and societies, cutting across public and private life. It is expressed in all the activities of co-operation, negotiation and struggle over the use and distribution of resources. It is involved in all the relations, institutions and structures which are implicated in the activities of production and reproduction in the life of societies.
>
> (Held, D, 1987: 275,277)

Held's definition does, though, exclude from politics what he describes as 'the sphere of the intimate' citizenship which includes relationships of gender, lesbians and gay.
This long-standing exclusion of women from the theory and practice of citizenship is said by Fraser and Gordon (1994B: 88) to be more than a simple matter of exclusion. Like Pateman (1988), they argue that it helped 'to define civil citizenship, for it was by protecting, subsuming and even owning others that white male property owners became citizens.' Benhabib (1992) also argues that women's exclusion manifests a much deeper 'epistemological deficit', whereby the seemingly gender-neutral concept of citizenship was and is profoundly gendered in a way that malestream theorists have failed to grasp. Lister (1997) suggests that it is not only women's exclusion but also the nature of their contemporary inclusion which is imbued with the stain of gendered assumptions. She suggests that:

> The arguments used to justify women's exclusion…have in common an essentialist categorisation of men and women's qualities and capacities. The weave of the epistemological cloak which has both hidden the man lurking behind the gender-neutral citizen and rendered invisible woman's absence, is so tight that it is difficult to disentangle the threads out of which it is fabricated.
> (Lister, 1997:69)

Lister (1997) identifies two intertwined constructs, the abstract, disembodied individual on whose shoulders the cloak of citizenship sits, and the public-private divide. Running through both these constructs is a set of dichotomies, which Lister (1997) points out, is saturated with gendered implications and associations, which permeate the very fabric of citizenship as follows:

Public, male, citizen	**Private, female, non-citizen**
Abstract, disembodied, mind	Particular, embodied, rooted in nature
Rational, able to apply dispassionate reason and standards of justice	Emotional, irrational, subject to desire and passion; unable to apply standards of justice
Impartial, concerned with public interest	Partial, preoccupied with private, domestic concerns
Independent, active, heroic and strong	Dependent, passive, weak
Upholding the realm of freedom, of the human	Maintaining the realm of necessity, of the natural and repetitious

(Lister, 1997: 69).

Lister argues that the qualities of impartiality, rationality, independence and political agency, which the citizen is expected to demonstrate, turn out to be male qualities in the binary thinking that informs traditional citizenship theory. V.Held (1993:5) argues that in a classic double-bind, women, who are deemed incapable of developing such qualities, are represented 'as reproducers and carers in the domestic sphere…then devalued as "the merely natural and repetitious" in contrast to the "human", identified with the public male.'

These arguments help to illuminate the different relationships that men and women have to public and private spheres and the implications for women's citizenship, both as a status and a practice. Pateman (1989:183), for instance, has argued that the 'patriarchal separation between the two disappears out of focus of what constitutes political theory'. Feminist analyses of citizenship therefore see the campaign for formal equality as problematic because of the very fact that liberalism and patriarchy usually reinforce each other,liberalism being closely associated with free market capitalism in economics, for instance.

Millett (1971) is said by Humm (1995), Waters (1994), and Andermahr (1997) amongst others, to be responsible for the introduction of the term 'patriarchy' into modern feminist and social scientific discourse. She describes it as a masculine system of political domination thus:

> Society, like all other historical civilisations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office and finance – in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police ,is entirely in male hands… the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male…
>
> (Millett, 1971:25)

She explains that 'the term "politics" refers to power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another' (Millett, 1971:23). She suggests that sex is a status category with political implications. Millett points out that the concept of patriarchy portrayed in the work of Maine and Weber is that of a relationship of dominance and subordinance. It takes two forms: control through social authority and control through economic force. Millett therefore made 'patriarchy' a sensitising 'struggle' concept to be used within feminism, much in the way that the term capitalism is used within socialist ideology.

Millett's (1971) other key sociological contribution is the distinction between gender and sex-roles. Adopting the distinction formulated by the psychologist Stoller (1968), she argued that sex-role stereotyping ensures the social control of women.

Stoller (1968) formulated the distinction between sex and gender to differentiate the socio-cultural meanings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' from the base of biological sex differences, 'male' and 'female' on which they were erected.

It is these ideas of core identity that underpinned Millett's argument that women are given expressive traits and men instrumental traits.

Walby (1986) also analyses patriarchy in the same vein 'as a system of interrelated social structures through which men exploit women' (p 51). She also incorporates Marxist themes by arguing that the contemporary patterns of gender relations are constituted by an articulation between the capitalist model of production and the patriarchal version of it. Walby's (1986) patriarchal model relies on exclusionary closure in the sphere of capitalist production where women are either restricted from entering certain occupations or interrupted in career advancement by compulsory expulsion on marriage or childbirth. These practices ensure that women are forced back into domestic dependence and subordination. Likewise, the state excludes women from processes of political representation which would otherwise enable them to reform and redress their situation in the domestic and paid employment sectors.

Walby (1990) theorises two phases in gender relations, private patriarchy and public patriarchy. In private patriarchy there is direct exploitation of women by virtue of their relationships to men as husbands or fathers. Here women are excluded from the public sphere. In public patriarchy, Walby (1990) suggests that women are not excluded from the public arena but are subordinated within it. This leads her to suggest that the expropriation of women's labour is accomplished on a collective basis in both the domestic and public arenas.

The similarity in Walby's (1986, 1990) analysis of patriarchy and that of Millett (1971) does not stop Walby (1986) from arguing that Millett's work 'does not constitute a theory of gender inequality because of its lack of analysis of systematic interrelationships between these structures' (Walby, 1986:23). Nevertheless, since Millett (1971), the politics of sexuality and its social structuring remains a live issue in contemporary feminist thought. The concept of the sexual contract, for instance, was used by Elshtain (1981) to argue that the public-private spheres were basic guides to our orientation of the world even though some theorists often took this distinction for granted and marginalised citizenship debate. She recognises that key to the valuing of women's political agency as citizens and also as women, has been the gendered relationship between the two spheres.

The problem which Elshtain (1981) posed was the extent to which women's difference from men could be related to mainstream concepts of citizenship within liberal democracy. Elshtain (1981, 1982) has thoroughly documented the misogyny of masculine philosophy yet claims that the dichotomy of public and private is an abstraction which ignores the complexities of human life. In opposition to the feminist slogan 'the personal is political', she argues for the separation of the public and the private and defends the autonomy of the

private realm of the family and the intimate relationships within it, against the encroachment of the political. Drawing on an idealised vision of the family, which largely denies the evidence of the ways in which it acts as a key site of male oppression, she calls for the reaffirmation of the private familial sphere and the values associated with it.

The same author (1993) has focused on difference between proponents of liberal feminism who, she feels, have a dilemma. She argues that they want both what they believe the public has to offer and a somewhat separate private sphere, a belief in whose virtues they espouse. She argues that they cannot have all this:

> it is impossible to indefinitely have things both ways: to condemn woman's second-class status and the damaging effects of her privatization and, simultaneously, to extol or celebrate the qualities that have emerged within the sphere women are to be 'freed' from.
>
> (Elshtain, 1993:240)

She argues that the fact-value distinction of this type of method, and thought, means that feminists cannot prove their case. Indeed, this mixture of equality and difference has created a major dilemma in feminism, which some have solved by embracing difference while others have renounced the public world as a male arena.

Pateman's (1988) concept of the social contract addressed part of the problem posed by Elshtain, adding a degree of scepticism about the flexibility of modern democratic thought to respond to women's needs as citizens. Classical political theory, she argued, with its interest in the social contract – the means by which individuals are governed by the state – had seriously neglected the *sexual contract* and, thus, social expectations about the nature of proper exchanges between men and women in private life. Pateman argued that modern civil society was, in actuality, a patriarchal order. Counterposed to the story of 'freedom' associated with the social contract was the 'story of subjection' represented by the sexual contract. Accordingly, civil freedom is not universal as classic democratic theory would have us believe, but a masculine attribute premised upon the right of what she called a *fraternal patriarchy* to subordinate women to the needs of men. Pateman (1988) argues that women were subordinated not just to individual men through the marriage contract, but to all men through political and economic dominance. Therefore, in constructing a civic brotherhood in the political realm, men legitimated their automatic right to power in public life and, at the same time, the sex-right/patriarchal right over women. According to Pateman,

> The brothers make a sexual contract. They establish a law which confirms masculine sex-right and ensures that there is an orderly access by each man to a

> woman. Patriarchal sex-right ceases to be the right of one man, the father, and becomes 'universal' right. The law of the male sex-right extends to all men, to all members of the fraternity.
>
> (Pateman, 1988:109-110)

Further to this, Pateman (1988) argues that modern patriarchy is foremost about women's subjection in the family. Arnot and Dillabough (1999) have used Pateman's analysis to argue that the failure by those concerned with citizenship to recognise the sexual contract leads to the isolation of women and to the view that, as wives and as mothers, women are not political subjects. Pateman (1988) has also pointed out that the marriage contract is deemed to be politically irrelevant and motherhood is denied a political status. Pateman adds that 'the possibility that women's standing in marriage may reflect much deeper problems about women and the social contract or that the structure of the marriage contract is similar to the other contract is dismissed' (Pateman, 1988:7). Pateman's analysis plays a major role in feminism's recognition of the separation and opposition of the categories *natural* and *civil*. Her argument that by positioning the family, and by implication women, within the natural world, exposes the fact that the private and the female are both represented as outside civil society. Classifications of public/private, natural/civil, and male/female, therefore, become the means by which men acquire legitimate power over women. Pateman's analysis also suggests that ascribed natural differences between men and women, for example their distinctive capacities and attributes, allow women to be incorporated into citizenship *as women*, but not on the same terms as men.It will be interesting to note how these classifications and distinctions can be applied to the Cameroonian social context. Pateman's theory will help to reveal aspects of Cameroonian society, which is also a liberal democracy, that are operative there although most Cameroonians are not fully aware of them.

In reflection on the nature of the sexual contract today, Pateman (1997) has argued that the heyday of modern patriarchal institutions was between the 1840s and the 1970s. In her estimation, this is a period in which the marriage contract played an important role in shaping male-female relations and female citizenship. She acknowledges that since then, although institutional cultures have left their legacies, there have been major changes in the social and sexual contracts. She suggests that one of the most significant of these has been the changing relations between men and women in the [Western] family. The extent to which the gendered political discourses identified by Pateman (1988) have shaped modern life, are still, however, evident in the Cameroonian social context despite Pateman's (1997) findings above.

The primary context for female citizenship in Cameroon is predominantly the family where Pateman's (1988) sexual contract theory remains a key theme that underpins gender relations with regard to the role of men and women in public and private life.
Pateman (1992) further observed that women were incorporated into the political order on the basis of motherhood and were thereby subordinated to men. She adds that lip service might be paid to the importance of mothering but political power would remain in the hands of true political citizens. These arguments illuminate the ways in which citizenship for men and women is differently shaped by the interaction of public and private, inevitably creating gendered power relations, in the Cameroonian social context.
Law has played such an important role in this institutionalising of patriarchy and regulating the family and motherhood as illustrated in **1.2.2,** in the introductory chapter. The said section indicates the relevance of the sexual/social contract theory to my research. The factors discussed in the introductory chapter relate to the issues raised by feminist critiques of the Classical Social Contract Philosophy. Political participation is one of the core features of democratic politics. In policy terms, different strains of feminist thinking have never shared a united vision either of what should be the basis for women's social rights and citizenship status, or the role of the state in shaping gender relations.
Nevertheless, the feminists critiques of the classical Social Contract Philosophy seem to explain adequately, the rationale for the civic attitudes which influence the gendered political situation prevalent in the Cameroonian social context. This is illustrated by the excerpts from the Cameroonian constitution, on the family, property and employment laws, (see1.2.2) to demonstrate that gender differences in political participation vary with the form of participation considered.
The problem seems to lie in the ambiguity created by the freedom for all citizens clause enshrined in the constitution, and the limitations contained in the family, property and employment laws Such a representation is central to the gender differential participation in the public sphere. Gender came into the differentiation and distribution of tasks allocated on the basis of sex, denoting a gendered power structure within Cameroonian governing institutions. The implication is that the law offers constitutional rights only to legitimate family functioning. The law seems therefore to operate on the basis of the social model of gender identity. It is this thought that leads me to argue that the reinterpretation and renegotiation of all these laws is fundamental to the expansion of women's demands for social citizenship. The laws emphasise the role of the state in reproducing patriarchy and

in reinforcing pre-existing gender roles and gender inequality as Sassoon (1987) and Pateman (1989) have suggested.

To the extent that the theoretical accounts considered in 4.5.1, above, critiques of the classical social contractarian model of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries provide a completely satisfactory explanation for gendered political participation in the Cameroonian social context. It seems therefore reasonable to integrate this line of approach into my understanding and analysis of gender inequalities in political activity in Cameroon.

Conclusion

The chapter examines first, feminist criticisms of the positivist approach which is alleged to be male biased and which systematically excludes women and marginalises their perspectives and concerns. It then examines the various formulations of feminist knowledge aimed at constructing a better, more objective science that would not be imbued with sexist assumptions and practices. All these feminist approaches question the assumption of the androcentric features of science and leads to the search for an appropriate epistemology aimed at overcoming the deficiences of positivism. Their ideas cover a range of positions categorised as feminist empiricist, feminist relativist cum postmodernist and feminist standpoint epistemologies.

The arguments then focus on the particular conception of feminist standpoint theory which privileges the experience and socio-politically repressed position of women in society with respect to producing more objective knowledge of society. The very meaning of objectivity is transformed in this epistemology. Objectivity in this context does not mean value-free. Rather the new meaning of objectivity would transcend previous understandings of the conceptual opposition between objectivity and subjectivity. Standpoint feminism takes account of the equality/difference debate which runs through the theoretical and political dilemmas that have confronted , and often divided, feminist debates for full citizenship as both a status and a practice. The debate centres around the demands for women's inclusion into citizenship based on either their equality with men or their difference from them. Standpoint feminism argues that equality and difference are not incompatible; that they only become so if equality is understood to mean sameness. They suggest that equality and difference are, therefore, better understood as simultaneously incommensurate and complementary rather than antagonistic. They add that the very notion of equality implies differences to be discounted or taken into account so that, despite them, people are treated

as equals for specific purposes. In standpoint feminism's view, the opposite of equality is inequality and not difference. They rather posit equality and sameness on the one hand and on the other hand, difference and inequality. They argue that difference disguises the relations of subordination, hierarchy and consequent disadvantage, which underlie the dichotomy and serve to distort the political choices open to women.

Feminist standpoint epistemologies acknowledge that the equality-difference divide also serves to suppress the differences within categories of woman and man. The standpoint feminist approach illuminates the ways in which each side of this dichotomy depends on the other and leads to the public-private dichotomy, the bedrock on which the masculine construction of citizenship lies. Logically, therefore, if equality is affirmed but difference is denied, then there is nothing specific to woman at all, as she brings nothing of her own to the political sphere; her contribution is no different from that of man. Therefore, if women are kept out of formal politics, or are included only on the basis of their domestic roles, then nothing is lost. Hence, the affirmation of equality and the denial of difference easily leads to a reaffirmation of the traditional public/private divide, with women dominating the private sphere and the men the public sphere. Hence, the result is not different from the traditional patriarchal models in which difference is affirmed and equality denied, for this too results in women being relegated to the private sphere while men alone operate in the public domain. Standpoint feminism seeks to overcome the public/private dichotomy, with its disadvantageous effect on women, by affirming both equality of men and women and the difference between them. The differences are real, but must be understood in a way that does not result in inequality of outcome

The second factor on which the arguments in this chapter have focused is the illumination of ways in which citizenship for women and men are differently shaped by the interaction of public and private in the Cameroonian social context. This has inevitably created gendered power relations as public citizenship omitted those referred to by feminist critiques as 'associated with body and feeling' (Young, 1990:104), thereby failing to integrate 'the positivity of group differences, passion, and play' (Young, 1990:97). Feminist critiques have shown that this allegedly impartial and 'universal' civic public excludes as active, women and, on occasion, the non-propertied. In their reckoning, the 'universal' itself stood for and still does stand for exclusion, largely society's bodily and affective aspects. The public/private binary created a forced homogeneity of the citizens of the public realm, which remains, as the Cameroonian social context illustrates.

Feminist critiques further argue that the dichotomy strengthened the opposition of desire and reason. The dualism supported and maintained the manner in which types of people were associated, usually men with reason, women with feeling. They suggest that they can see the association historically, in the writings of the philosophers, and the practices of the public. They argue that for fear of the desire women can inspire in men, and their ensuing wildness and disorder of the latter sex, breaking the calm conventions of contract, women have been confined. These links and practices still obtain in the Cameroonian social context.

Since Cameroonian women share a citizenship status which is, at best, marginal, it is appropriate to deploy the political and theoretical tool of gender to investigate gendered politics in Cameroon.

Chapter five
The gender culture of Cameroon's public sphere

5.1-Chapter issues

Cameroon claims to attach particular importance to gender equality of opportunity in all areas of policy at local, and national, levels. Considered in a regional perspective, the progress made towards achieving gender equality of opportunity in some sectors is comparatively impressive. In most areas, however, in spite of Cameroon's ratification of the relevant UN Conventions and Charters on Human Rights and on Equality, there are many spheres where women do not yet have the right to make decisions affecting their own lives or influencing the direction of society at large.

Although the focus of my thesis is the question of gendered political participation in Cameroon, I also seek to capture the essential character of the socio-economic context within which gender inequality in politics thrives. The aim of this chapter therefore is to provide a fitting introduction to the more specific discussion of gendered political participation in the subsequent chapters. The chapter features statistics on women's experience in politics, education, employment and the bureaucracy. It also focuses on the gendered occupational profiles of women, in order to identify the relationship between participation in the marketplace and gender division of labour. This will form the basis for assessing how this division of labour impacts on women's formal participation in politics.

I will argue that the way women are integrated into the socio-economic public space of the party-state of Cameroon is underpinned by the ethic that subordinates women's public role to their private domestic one. Political participation especially seems to be related to the emphasis on family life and femininity. This reflects the notion of dependent political participation for women which Pateman (1988) identified in her critique of liberal democratic theory. The liberal philosophy which underwrites Cameroon's political constitution, and promises equality, is contradicted by the patriarchal constraints contained in family law (see 1.2.2 above). This has implications for women's participation outside the home. It reinforces patriarchal structures and undermines official efforts to promote gender equality of opportunity, as I will demonstrate in this chapter. The contradiction between the theory of equality as enshrined in Cameroon's constitution on the one hand, and the effective persistence of patriarchy in the marketplace on the other, will be brought

out, with the help of statistics. So too will contradictions between different aspects of the interventions and ideology of the party- state. At the same time, I shall not one-sidedly present only the disadvantages which women have experienced, but also point out some of the gains which have nevertheless also come to them.

5.2.1-Gender equality

Scholarly works on equality, amongst them Cockburn (1991), Cornell (1992), Phillips (1987), and Pateman (1988) suggest that equality between the sexes does not mean that men and women have to be similar. It means that dissimilarity between men and women must not lead to inequality in terms of status or treatment in society. As statistics in this chapter reveal, Cameroon's philosophy of equality of opportunity in accessing public services and institutions is not enough. Gendered processes operate everywhere, within households and in apparently gender-neutral policy. The part played by women in political life, as will be discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, and in particular their limited role therein, are only one aspect of a wider picture. The same imbalance and limited participation occur in other organisations in the national system as well. Although all the important factors cannot be covered in a single investigation, particular elements which have a direct bearing on gendered politics in Cameroon must be included.

Among the sociological factors which may determine women's political place, the status assigned to them by an essentially masculine society certainly plays a big part. This chapter aims to demonstrate among other things that, although constitutionally and legally women are on an equal footing with men, they are not yet so in practice. The reasons for this cannot be considered apart from the whole problem of the shortcomings of the efforts so far made to integrate women in the innermost sphere of political leadership, the government.

The term 'political leadership' is not used in a legal sense here, denoting the authorities of parliament and government as established by the constitution and organic laws, but rather in Duverger's (1959) sociological one. It refers to the number of women who are members of the municipal councils, higher civil servants, the judiciary, and the government in the broad sense of the term. In these national organs, the political role of women is extremely small, and it grows still smaller as we approach the centre of political leadership. It is a pyramidal structure, as available data shows. This progressive decline in Cameroonian women's influence as the higher echelons of leadership are reached is not only noticeable

in the structure of the state and its political organs, but is also to be found in the government service in middle management. Quantitatively small in representation, the kind of women who reach political leadership also has a qualitative bias. This chapter aims to explore the ways in which the state influences the construction of such gendered identities. Gender, as already discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, provides an extremely fruitful lens through which to interpret the actions of the state. In Cameroon, the nation, for example, is represented as a motherland and the state as fatherland. Thus, women of the auxiliary wing of the ruling CPDM party are represented as the mothers of the nation, the housekeepers of the great party. The President of the Republic cum Chairman of the CPDM ruling party is the father of the state. Most Cameroonians take their cue from such an analogy, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 7.

In such a situation, it is impossible to understand gender identities without exploring the ways in which the state and parties contribute to identity construction. Gender identity is therefore a critical variable in determining occupational achievements and has come to be regarded as an avenue for men to validate their masculinity. For women, according to Oakley (1974), fulfilling the role of homemaker has been shown to be inextricably bound to perceptions and definitions of femininity. Though gender identity varies from individual to individual, it has come to be viewed as a culturally learned attribute of men and women.

5.2.2- Gender segregation in working life

One of the basic conditions of equality between men and women is the right to gainful employment and thus to economic independence. In spite of such a right in the Cameroonian constitution, economic powers, decision-making powers and by implication incomes, are not equally distributed. There are great differences between men and women. Statistics collected by the MINCOF for the 1995 Beijing Conference indicate that most women are still economically dependent on their husbands as in 1997 only 35% of Cameroonian women of working age have jobs outside the home. The MINCOF documents show that the percentage stood at 27% in 1976. The following gender specific statistics, for the year 1987, illustrate the situation further.

Table 5.1

Gender –Specific Statistics of Working Patterns

EMPLOYMENT GROUP	% of women	% of men
Administrative personnel and associated workers	31.5	68.5
Commercial and personnel vendors	40.5	59.5
Specialised personnel in hotels and services	29.2	70.8
Members of the legal corps and superior cadres in the public administration	9.8	90.2
Personnel of scientific, technical, liberal and associated professions	23.7	76.3

Source: 1987 Census records. (No census since 1987).

The assumption most Cameroonians have is that increased educational attainment is the key to an easy entry into the labour market. It could therefore be easy to interpret the figures in Table 5.1 as indicating that education may be responsible for huge gender gaps in job positioning. However, statistics featured in tables 5.7; 5.8; 5.9; and 5.10 in a later sector in this chapter show that the attainment of education is fuelling aspirations in almost equal measure between the sexes. The above statistics, therefore demonstrate that increased educational accomplishment by women has not been matched by a similar access into the marketplace.

This gender imbalance is compounded by the very low capacity of the Cameroonian economy due to the economic crisis. This crisis seems to have a worse effect on women's than on men's employment as illustrated by the merging of the Ministries of Social Affairs with that of Women's Affairs in 1988, at the height of the crisis, and a reduction in the number of women ministers from five to only one between 1988 and 1997.

Zang Nguele states in her interview(see7.3) that the economic crisis were cited as the reason for scaling down the number of ministries by the Cameroonian Government.

This naturally leads to the question of whether female labour-force participation remains low in spite of the rising educational levels for reasons other than the capacity of the Cameroonian economy to create additional employment. The family rule discussed in Chapter 1 reveals that both the male headed family model, and the role of the female as household and child carer are strongly entrenched in Cameroon. For men and the state, being a provider in the patriarchal household was more important, hence the higher levels of male employees. In spite of the political-constitutional discourse of equality of opportunity, it is apparent that the male bread-winner model is still in full operation in Cameroon because of the cultural roles of male heads of households.

A MINCOF evaluation document (1994) acknowledges as much when it observes that 'the sharing of powers and responsibilities is still extensively in favour of men, particularly as far as the executive [positions] are concerned (85% male in 1988 and 95.5% male in 1992). (April, 1994:1).

The disadvantaged position of Cameroonian women was never an issue nor was it a priority on any agenda until the U.N. Decade for Women (1976 - 1985) influenced the state to take particular interest in their needs. Nevertheless, the increase in proportion and number of women workers indicates that women only come near to equality with men in the lowest status jobs, as the table below shows.

Table 5.2
Relative Distribution Per Gender of Each Category of Civil Servants in Normal Activity as at June 30, 1991 (given in percentages)

Categories	A2	A1	B2	B1	C	D	Total
Male	83.43	82.43	87.60	77.22	65.73	55.18	72.11
Female	16.57	17.21	12.40	22.78	34.27	44.82	27.89

Source: MINCOF, Evaluation Document (1994)

Table 5.2 is an illustration of the civil service classification with the A2 and A1 ranks having the highest salary scale. These top elites are also senior cadres in the ruling CPDM party and the government. The basic level staff who deal with the mundane routines in the offices make up categories C and D where the percentage of women civil servants, though not higher than the men, is considerable, relatively speaking. Evidently, men constitute a majority at all levels of the civil service bureaucracy, but particularly at the higher ranks

where policy is conceptualised. In the Cameroonian bureaucratic discourse, there is a category of workers and employers termed the "liberal professions". The public service document I consulted emphasised the distinction between the categories of liberal professions and operators in the formal and informal sectors. Although women figure highly among these 'independent' workers, their presence is still marginal, as table 5.3 illustrates. These are all employed within the bureaucracy. It is important to state here that Cameroon not only inherited two different colonial cultures and languages, but tow legal systems as well- the French Civil/Napoleonic Code of 1804 and the English Common Law. According to Fonkah (1998), the French-speaking part of Cameroon practices the inquisitorial system of law (whereby the accused is considered guilty until he can prove himself innocent), whilst the English-speaking part of Cameroon practices the accusatorial system (whereby the accused is considered not guilty until it can be proved otherwise). He explains that when the interpretation of any law is unclear, the authentic version is taken to be the French one. The machinery of justice therefore needs to be explained here for a clearer understanding of the terms used. Magistrates preside over cases in the different courts, from the Courts of First Instance (Magistrate's Court), through to the Supreme Court. The profession of the magistrates is governed by Decree Number 95/048 of March 1995. State Counsels or attorneys (public prosecutors) prosecute and defend in court. Lawyers are governed by Law Number 90/59 of 19 December 1990. Bailiffs help in the execution of decisions of the court and are governed by Decree Number 85/238 of 22 February 1985.Public Notaries authenticate documents made by lawyers for their clients, and are guide in their practice by Decree Number 95/034 of 24 February 1995.The Court Registrars sit in court , and record proceedings in French-speaking courts, serve processes in English-speaking courts, and keep all evidence tendered. They are Commissioners of Oaths in the English-speaking courts. Their profession is organised by Decree Number 75/771 of 18 December 1975. The police and the gendarmes assist in the enforcement of the decisions of the courts, and also help to keep the public peace. Divisional Officers (SDO/DO/PREFETS) represent the interests of the President. Apart from the lawyers whose profession is organised by a law voted in parliament, all other professions within the judicial system are governed by Presidential Decrees. Consequently, these professionals are open to manipulation by the Executive. The Provincial Governors and Divisional officers are employees of the Ministry of Territorial Administration (Home

Affairs) which presides over elections. They wield enormous power, and they influence the decisions of magistrates as directed by the ministry.

Table 5.3
The Number of Women in the Liberal Professions

Profession	Period	No. of Women	No. of Men	% of Women
Notaries	1985	3	19	14
	1993	18	53	25
Lawyers	1980	12	47	20
	1985	26	122	18
	1990	58	208	22
Bailiffs*	1993	6	100	6

Source: Ministry of Justice, 1996 figures.
*** no available data to compare with other years.**

A similar imbalance is found in other parts of the legal profession as Table 5.4 below indicates.

Table 5.4

Distribution of Legal Staff per Gender

COURT	Position	Total	No. of Men	No. of Women
SUPREME COURT	Judges	1	1	0
	Chief Justice	1	1	0
	Counsellors	12	11	1
	Lawyers (all Legal)	1	1	0
CHANCERY	Director	4	4	0
	Magistrates	569	474	95
COURT OF APPEAL	Judges	22	21	1
	Chief Justice	10	9	1
	Assistant Public Prosecutor	52	42	10
HIGH COURT	Judges	55	53	2
COURT OF FIRST INSTANCE	State Prosecutors	50	47	3
RELATED AREAS	Bailiffs	118	111	7
	Notaries	50	31	19
	Lawyers	498	403	95

Source: Ministry of Justice, 1996 Figures

The distribution of responsibilities in Table 5.4 shows that there is vertical segregation with women concentrated in non-managerial jobs whereas men are in the majority within

the higher levels of the judiciary. This systematic division into function and hierarchical place further implies systemic differences in gender. This situation repeats itself in the gender imbalance of company heads by sectors, as indicated below.

Table 5.5: Company Heads per Sector by Gender

SECTOR	Total number	Men		Women	
Commerce	466	451	97%	15	3%
Industry	322	316	99%	6	1%
Building and Construction	332	324	98%	8	2%
Services	430	408	95%	22	5%
Mines and Power	42	42	100%	0	0%
Timber	105	104	99.1%	1	0.9%
Agriculture and Livestock	107	104	98%	3	2%

Source: Directory of Industrial and Commercial Enterprises (1991/2: Chamber of Commerce.)

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC-same name as the UN parent body), is the body in Cameroon charged by the State to oversee the social and cultural management of affairs. This advisory body is supposed to make recommendations on various related matters. On paper, it is supposed to have representatives from all sectors of Cameroon's economic activity, especially as Cameroon's subsistence farming is, according to statistics in the Ministry of Agriculture, '80% in the hands of women'. Yet the gender imbalance in representation prevails even in this area as follows.

Table 5.6: Membership Distribution by Gender in ECOSOC

Period	Total No. of Members	No. of Women	% of Women	No. of Men	% of Men
1986	86	7	8	79	92
1992	85	7	8	78	92

Source: National Yearbook (1986-1992)

Since its inception ECOSOC has undergone two changes in membership appointment neither of which affected an increase in women's representation. It may be doubtful whether the presence of more women in ECOSOC would significantly tilt decisions in favour of women's access to macro-economic enterprises, but, until that is done, there can be no proof either way.

5.2.3- Gendered aspects of Cameroon's education system

Most Cameroonian women activists believe that the central problem of women is their low level of education. Globally, one of the tasks that feminists have set themselves as recently as the Beijing 1995 UN Conference, is to convince policy makers that education should be a means of achieving women's rights and changing patriarchal society. Feminists also demand education as an economic right, a means to improving women's lives materially. Whether or not equal access alone is enough to challenge aspects of the system which perpetuate the subordination and marginality of women makes the subject of discussion in this next section.

As a social policy issue, education is rarely an end in itself. It has importance only in relation to some other goal, employment being the major one. Cameroon's education policy aims include making the system as helpful to girls in preparing for careers as it is for boys. Such an approach inevitably links education and women's rights in the search for equality and integration. Legally, therefore, Cameroon adheres to the United Nations Charter on the Declaration on Education for All by the year 2000.

Nationally, the constitution sets apart education as a right to all citizens without any discrimination and envisages obligatory schooling up to the age of 16. The fundamental law no.63/COR/5/3 (July 1963) and the text on the West Cameroon Education Policy (1963) confirms:

> the right of all citizens to learning and education without any discrimination, the free, secular, neutral and obligatory nature of primary education, the development of education activities in favour of disadvantaged groups as well as literacy programmes for adults (ACAFEJ 1996:16)

In 1993, the policy declaration on population adopted at the National Assembly retained the advancement and improvement of basic education for all, especially for women, as a priority. In spite of such a declaration, Cameroonian society has in the past invested less in the education of women than in the education of men. According to statistics featured in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report for 2000, the 1998 literacy rate for females in Cameroon was 67.1% while that for males was 80.3%; combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio was 41% female and 52% male; the 1998 Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita in US$ was 902 females and 2,052 for males. The significance of this on Cameroonian women is enormous. First of all the figures imply that the unemployment rate for women will be higher than that for men. This lack of investment in women's education is bound to yield lower economic returns for both the private individual and the Cameroonian society . 68% women over the age of 25 are illiterate compared to 43 % of men. For women under the age of 25 the illiteracy rate stands at 29%, and for men it is 15%. Additionally, the number of girls decreases with higher levels of education. At this rate, Cameroonian women will find it difficult to break the cycle of poverty and dependence.These percentages demonstrate the gender disparity between women and men in a key measurement of gender empowerment. This no doubt impacts on Cameroonian women's gender inequality in basic capabilities and reflects the deprivation that still exists in women's educational opportunities.Although the education of girls has improved since 1960, the percentage of girls being educated still lags behind the percentage of boys.

Table 5.7: Schooling Rate by Gender

YEAR	MEN	WOMEN
1960	30.7	14.4
1980	52.4	40.2
1985	57.7	45.2
1990	62.2	49.7

Source: UNESCO, Projections of School Enrolment by Degree of Education and by Age, May 1990.

The same UNESCO report indicates that at primary level, the rate of girls who repeat stands at 32% as against 35.5% in boys. Despite this relative schooling success, the drop out rate of girls (6.4%) is higher than that for boys (5.6%). At secondary level, the rate of

girls repeating increases as well as that of drop-outs. The rates are 21.5% and 14.2% for girls as against 20.1% and 10% for boys respectively.

The cost of education in both school fees and opportunity costs in Cameroon is high and economic factors play an important role. Families which are unable to sustain the cost of education choose to invest in boys to the detriment of girls. This weakens the resolve towards the education of girls. Girls also constitute a young labour force in family enterprises, as they are employed in survival strategies initiated by the mother, and are used for household chores: cooking, fetching water and firewood, child care, micro trade (opportunity costs). Some parents' attitude towards the education of girls is negative: their access to schooling is deliberately curtailed since they are considered more as a profitable investment which will bear fruit in marriage. The development of the capacities of girls and women is one of the most important measures for obtaining a just and balanced society. Educated women, are more likely to stand up for themselves in politics and other community matters, they will have a larger earning capacity, and will understand that they do have choices and can make decisions. But in Cameroon's educational process significant differences appear between men and women.

Table 5.8
Level of Education by Gender(%).

Level of Education	Men	Women
No Education	38.8	58.4
Primary Level	37.0	28.1
Secondary (1st Cycle)	15.7	10.4
Secondary (2nd Cycle)	6.5	2.6
Higher	2.0	0.5

Source: 1987 Population Census.

The table shows that the gap between men and women in terms of the level of education is wide at all levels, but grows wider still at higher levels.

The promotion of gender equality as an educational goal is incorporated into school legislation, but fails to manifest itself in the gender division in educational and career choices as the table below indicates.

Table 5.9

Graduate Success Numbers by Discipline and Gender

DISCIPLINE AND LEVEL	1990		1991	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
FIRST DEGREE				
Modern Letters	846	362	1,000	517
Law & Economics	1,429	379	1,188	336
Sciences	693	141	632	139
Technical	140	19	111	17
MASTERS				
Letters & Human Sciences	81	16	114	24
Law & Economics	142	24	108	18
Sciences	90	10	93	10
Technical	80	7	71	6

Source: Ministry of Higher Education, 1990, 1991

The significance of the figures in Table 5.9 lies in the number of women and men who access and successfully complete both graduate and postgraduate studies. Women can only enter the labour market in unprecedented numbers,to offset the gender imbalance at the top,if a good number of them obtain the necessary qualifications to do so. These figures will undoubtedly reflect a higher rate of participation in the labour force for men than for women. The table also shows very clearly that the gender gap widens further when it comes to technology, hard sciences and, surprisingly, law, perhaps because it is tied to economics. These are increasingly male-dominated subjects, while more and more girls choose modern letters (literature and languages.)

Cameroon boasts of a good number of professional schools at the higher level. Some of these are university-based and aimed at providing vocational training in multi-disciplinary units. Cameroon has adopted this from the French parallel system of higher education known as the *grandes ecoles*. These specialised schools train people who ultimately go on to dominate leadership positions in politics and society. These schools (Table 5.11), established to train an administrative and diplomatic elite, were equally open to both sexes. In theory, they abolished sex barriers. However, when the nature of the functions or the conditions of their exercise justify it, certain disciplines may have exclusive recruitment of men, or women, or distinct conditions of access for men and women. This loophole still permits unequal access in the higher levels of diplomacy and the judiciary by a recruitment system which is predominantly and heavily biased towards men. Since the customary law,

which as explained in the introductory chapter is discriminatory against women and often takes precedence over other legislative enactments, women are not legally empowered to challenge such discrimination based on their constitutional rights alone.

Table 5.10

Distribution of Professional School Students by Institution and by Gender in %
[The acronyms are French, with English translation in brackets].

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOLS AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTIONS	1986/87		1990/91	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
Higher Teachers Training Colleges	78.4	21.6	76.7	23.3
Polytechnic	97.0	3.0	97.9	2.1
CUSS (Medical School)	80.9	19.1	85.0	15.0
IRIC (Institute of International Relations)	80.6	19.4	82.1	17.9
ENAM (National School of Administration & Magistracy)	86.7	13.3	93.2	6.8
School of Public Works	98.9	1.1	98.9	1.1
School of Posts & Telecom.	92.4	7.6	77.6	22.4
INADER (National Rural Development Institute)	93.5	6.5	88.7	11.3
ENSIACC (School of Advanced Food Technology)	96.3	3.7	97.3	2.7
ENSET (Higher Technical Teacher Training College)	75.3	24.7	73.5	26.5
ESSEC (Advanced Business School)	89.1	10.9	91.4	8.6
ASTI (Advanced School of Translators and Interpreters)	75.5	24.5	87.9	12.1
Schools of Agriculture	74.2	25.8	86.3	13.7
Nursing Schools	67.5	32.5	69.5	30.5
INIS (National School of Youth and Sports)	89.3	10.7	85.1	14.9

Source: Culled from Various MINCOF Statistics for the 1995 Beijing Conference.

Figures like those in 5.10 are unlikely to challenge gender inequality which is already deeply embedded in the occupational structure of Cameroon. The table reads like a register of gendered differences in access to degree courses, to promotion and remuneration. It ensures the ongoing concentration of women in low status areas. What

the table also implies is that the whole logic of the education reforms was to help women prepare to assume what was regarded as their proper social role in the family, and through that role to sustain the family in the service of state goals. This system established a narrow track for girls to follow from school to family and certain suitable, but limited, occupations, such as nursing and teaching. In the teaching profession, women have made strides. However, this was much more due to the initiative of the churches than of the government. The single sex teacher training colleges and secondary schools, which were the churches' monopoly on women's education, produced a demand for female teachers, which in turn required the state to open higher education to women.

Since Cameroon's independence in 1960, all subsequent reforms reduced the separation of the sexes, but have failed to eliminate the habits prevalent at independence. Traditional attitudes among parents, teachers and girls themselves kept women's experiences narrow and their choices few. Girls seem to be following overwhelmingly a female track, despite equal curricula and admission conditions. The subordinate position of women, their economic, cultural and political inequality, is due not to biology but to socialisation. Education in its present form in Cameroon reinforces the patriarchal system by transmitting sex role stereotypes to each new generation, and has failed to give girls and women the means to achieve much beyond their traditional roles. It also exposes the fact that gender and sexism run much deeper than the means adopted to overcome them. It is not sufficient to address the issue at the level of the state prescribed currila and texts in Cameroon. Action at a more general level is also necessary.

In such circumstances, equality of opportunity cannot be promoted without the commitment of political decision-makers and authorities. Parliamentary politics, which chapter 6 focuses on, might be only one of the instruments employed by the state to influence gendered politics in institutions. The others include municipal councils and the cabinet, which form the core of the discussion in the next section.

5.3-Gender in Cameroon's party political recruitment and structure

5.3.1- Patronage politics in Cameroon

Each country has its own pattern of political recruitment and pathways to political power. Every single political system also has a legacy of social and political problems that it must manage and resolve, even when these involve important cross-cutting issues such as gender inequality. Politics is one of the many types of activity – political, social, economic,

cultural and religious - that characterise a society, and the political process is always intertwined with other social activities and structures. It is affected by these activities and in turn affects them. This is true of the Cameroonian social context. Cameroon's political recruitment is influenced by a number of factors. Most scholars of Cameroon's politics (see Le Vine, 1964, 1971; Delancy, 1989; Lewis, 1990; Mbaku, 1997; Takougang, 1997; Kriegar 1998 and Bayart 1989, 1993), single out patronage as a prime mechanism which serves as a medium of interchange among party activists and kin, being put to use by political leaders as an incentive and as a reward. In this respect, their analysis is parallel to Parson's (1967:364) concept of influence when it is used 'to appeal to a subjective sense of obligation'. A decade earlier, Merton (1957:74) had emphasised that, through patronage, 'politics is transformed into personal ties…the precinct captain is forever a friend in need.'

Patronage exists at all levels in Cameroon's political and administrative institutions. The patron-client network which dominates Cameroon politics establishes a body of followers who organise political support for their own political champion and benefactor in exchange for material advantages. In exchange for political assistance, clients receive practical rewards such as government contracts, jobs, educational opportunities or even food and clothing. Patrons at one level have clients who are patrons at a lower level of clients and so on. These networks form a pyramid of patron-client relations that link the political elite with the grassroots, although often at the expense of inefficient allocation of government resources.

For many educated or even uneducated Cameroonians, and also in the eyes of scholars of Cameroon politics, (see Bayart,1989,1993;Delancy,1989;Le Vine,1964,1971; Lewis,1990;Mbaku,1997;), such patron-client relations and family ties smack of corruption and nepotism. I do agree with them. Nevertheless, these practices are not alien to traditional Cameroonian customs and norms, which stress the importance of caring for one's family and fellow clans people, of exchanging gifts for services, and of doing favours to show deference for elders and traditional leaders. As the most important avenue for social and economic upward mobility in Cameroon, politics attracts many individuals who are seen to be more interested in enriching themselves, and their kin, than they are in building Cameroon.

Not surprisingly, therefore, patronage is not interpreted to be simply the distribution of governmental and political largesse. To most Cameroonians, especially to the

beneficiaries of such patronage, it is seen as the leader's ability to help subordinates in their career advancement. Such an ability is crucial for the leaders' rise to power and success in maintaining his position. Hence, most top-level employment in Cameroon is centred around bureaucracy rather than around a profession or line of work. Employment pattern in Cameroon therefore de-emphasises job specialisation and emphasises the rank concept. Examples include the appointment of Fouda, a medical doctor of long standing, to head Social Affairs instead of Health; similarly, Ngo Som, who holds a PhD in Food Science and Technology and was involved with the research institute for many years, is given the Women's Affairs portfolio and not Higher Education. Her appointment is considered a loss of much needed expertise in Cameroon's educational system.

This particular aspect of Cameroon's leadership is a good example of the political clientship characteristic of politics in many Sub-Saharan African societies, (see Bayart 1993), where political power functions through the existence of intricate networks linking the members of the power elites - patrons – at the various levels with their followers. Another aspect of Cameroonian leadership representing clientship is the ability of the leader to surround himself with a protective wall of trusted and competent followers who are prepared to link their political fortunes to those of the leaders at each level. Cameroon's cultural norms dictate that, in return for such benevolence, those in subordinate positions will reciprocate with demonstrations of loyalty and respect for their superiors.

Secondly, not only does political leadership recruitment favour the elite who are better educated and wealthier, but they are most frequently male. Females do participate, but in disproportionately low numbers, because they are not "one of the boys". Therefore the gap between male and female representation implies that some issues are going to be neglected. Patronage jobs in government units are important for maintaining relations among the rank and file of party activists. Its effective use enables beneficiaries to extend the claims of relations in the party network, to reward in the name of the party, and to sustain the local organisation and enhance their local leadership status. Patronage, then, as it operates in Cameroon, not only has the means for linking actors and maintaining relations, but also, like power, has the potential to limit and challenge membership in the party network.

5.3.2 - Party political framework in Cameroon

The structure of the Cameroonian party system is typically hierarchical and pyramidal. At the base are the lowest level of party organisation known as the cells and branches. These are located in villages, township neighbourhoods and cities. At each level, there is a Youth

and Women's Organ. It is at this level that the basic functions of the party are carried out. These include membership recruitment and the maintenance of close ties with militants. The other layers of party organs are the sub-sections, sections, provincial, and national conferences. Each of these has a Women's and Youth Organ. These active party members are referred to as 'militants' in Cameroonian political discourse.

One of the fascinating analyses of Duverger's (1959) work is the examination of the meaning attached to being a member of the party. His analyses describe adequately the interpretation of this term in the Cameroonian context. Members may be simply those who voted or will vote for the party ticket, but who do more than that. Party membership can be and usually is more than that as the member may be identified by the fact that he pays his subscription more or less regularly. In reference to one-party regimes, [a political system Cameroon practised until 1990] the party discipline and organisation meant that the party took over all of the lives of its militants. Militants' militancy is what the party defines, not what he defines...the laws and rites are secret and the initiated keep them closely hidden from the sight of the uninitiated. It is only the old guard of the party that knows much about the ins and outs of its organisation and the subtle intrigues that take place.

Theoretically, the apex of the CPDM and the numerous opposition parties in Cameroon is the Ordinary Party Congress which meets at 5 yearly intervals according to the basic party text. Increasingly, the CPDM ruling Party Congress has become an institution in which the central political bureaucracy is represented. Of greater importance in policy making is the Central Committee, an organisation which, the party rules state, should meet at least once a year. Consisting of leading party representatives, the Central Committee of the ruling CPDM is a kind of Who's Who in Cameroonian politics. The same cannot be said for Central Committee members of the opposition parties. According to the party rules, the Central Committee manages the affairs of the party between the sessions of the Party Congress. In practice, of course, this is impossible because of its large size, and the infrequency of its meetings. The day-to-day management of party affairs, therefore, is handled by the Politburo and the Secretariat in the name of the Central Committee.

The size of the Politburo elected at the 1996 CPDM Party Congress totalled 21. By far the most common avenue to membership in the Politburo is through the Sectional and Provincial Party organisation, to the Central Committee and Politburo. Most of the 1996 Politburo members hold important government positions and have spent a large part of

their professional careers within the party apparatus. These are the National Party Organs that provide direction and supervision.

A major task of the CPDM Party Congress is to select a new Central Committee, to accept and review political reports from section leaders. The CPDM Ordinary Congress of 1996 elected 84 Central Committee members. Of the 84, the following quote from the national paper, *Cameroon Tribune*, indicates how the composition was processed.

> There are seventeen (17) elected substantive members of the government and five (5) designated by the National President. There are two (2) elected alternate members. Nine (9) former alternate members of the Central Committee have now become substantive members.
>
> *(Cameroon Tribune*, No 6257, 27 Dec.1996)

It is the Politburo that selects top personnel to direct the affairs of the Party and the Government.

The CPDM's organisation has served as the basic model used by other parties. The organisational matrix of the parties entails the formation of basic units that serve as bridges and links between the party and the masses. These units serve not only as institutions for political education but also as transmission belts for party policy. The most active of these organisations are the Youth Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (YCPDM) and the Women's Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (WCPDM).

The subordinate role of the WCPDM becomes particularly evident when examined in the light of Duverger's (1959) analysis. In itself, the term 'branch' designates a basic element which is less decentralised than the caucus: a branch is only part of the whole, and its separate existence is inconceivable. Parties founded on branches are more centralised than those founded on caucuses. But the profound originality of the branch lies in its organisation, and not in its connection with the other branches. The branch is extensive and tries to enrol members, to multiply their number, and to increase its total strength. It does not despise quality, but quantity is the most important of considerations. The branch is wide open and appeals to the masses. The branch processes a more perfected internal organisation. The hierarchy of the branch is more definite and the division of duties more precise. An organised committee is necessary to direct the mass members, and it must comprise at the very least a secretary and a treasurer. The branch is a socialist invention. This adoption of Duverger's (1959) 'socialist invention' in the Cameroonian party-political structure is responsible for the existence of the all-women party organisation, the

WCPDM. The WCPDM, which has no political autonomy, fits Duverger's analysis to the letter.

Of course the adoption is "unconscious", in the sense that those who invented Cameroon's political system had never heard of Duverger's analysis although they were undoubtedly influenced by socialism.This places the branch in an ambiguous position. However, in Sub- Saharan Africa (SSA), Cameroon is not unique in adopting this system. Widner (1997) refers to the creation of new organisations that were tied to the clientele networks found in the state. Tripp (2000) has written about the leading women's organisations as affiliates of the single ruling party created by the party itself. Her examples include the 31st December Women's Movement in Ghana which is tied to the National Democratic Congress; Umoja wa Wanawake we Tanzania, which is affiliated with the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, and the Women's League of the United National Independence Party in Zambia. Steady (1976) has written of the National Congress of Sierra Leone Women that was tied to the All People's Congress, charged with building the party membership and serving party needs. Steady comments that studies showed that women members received little more than promises of benefits in return. McNeil (1979) has argued that through such controlling mechanisms, the women's wings were unable to cater to women with other political allegiances. She adds that they were unable to fight forcefully for women's interests that might be at odds with the priorities and goals of the ruling party. She gives an example of events in the early post-independence period in Mali, when the National Union of Malian Women could not take up any women's issues that diverged from the interests of the ruling party. Ferguson et al (1995) point out that these women's wings were so crippled by party control that in Zambia one woman parliamentarian remarked that the women's wings should be abolished, since "they are the biggest single obstacle to women's political participation." (p.22). Writing on the Kenyan situation, Nzomo (1996) suggests that the organisational structures of the women's wings parallels those of the party, and mimicked their rigid undemocratic structures and leadership. In reference to Kenya, she explained that the structures in the organisations are sometimes no different from government structures because they are authoritarian.

This final example from Nigeria illustrates that the lure of patronage was ever present, especially for the elite women who made up the leadership of these organisations. Vereecke (1993) writes that the Better Life Programme (BLP), founded by Nigerian

President Babangida in 1988, was a case in point. She points out that large sums of money were pumped into the organisation so that by 1991 the BLP had established over 7,000 co-operatives, 1,000 cottage industries, 200 farms and gardens, 500 shops, 200 welfare schemes, and 500 women's centres that held classes for handicrafts, cooking, literacy, and gardening. She adds that in practice, however, only national and local elite women benefited from the BLP. She gives her reasons for arriving at such a conclusion, the BLP being primarily an urban-based organisation that paid little attention to rural women.
The consequences of such party-state strategies are enormous for women's autonomy in marginalised groups. The control immobilises them.
Feminist scholar Alvarez's (1990) work has been useful in throwing light on the consequences of state strategies in political institutions.
Alvarez (1990) writes that in Africa, as elsewhere, women have been able to make limited gains at times through ruling party-sponsored women's organisations. She argues that the co-option of women's organisations has overwhelmingly had the net effect of keeping women's mobilisation apolitical, and of narrowing the agenda to issues that do little to change gender imbalances fundamentally. She further adds that, more importantly, women in state-sponsored institutions have frequently been incapacitated when it comes to mounting a significant challenge to the state on key policies affecting women.
The Cameroonian WCPDM and MINCOF embody each of the issues raised by Alvarez (1990); Vereecke (1993); Nzomo (1996); Ferguson et al (1995); McNeil (1979); Steady (1976); Widner (1997); Tripp (2000) and Duverger (1959). The patronage politics practised in Cameroon have rarely benefited the WCPDM as a group. This exclusion is evident in the statistics featured above showing small numbers of women in the categories focused on. Their near absence from the formal political arena is also a reflection of their absence from the socio-economic set ups, as the data in the following section demonstrates.

5.4.1 Gender and decision-making in municipal administration

The work carried out at municipal level is important in Cameroonian citizens' daily lives. As municipalities are the biggest state agents that interact with the grassroots population, their efforts to promote gender equality of opportunity could become a model in eliminating sex discrimination. Many feminists, like Stetson (1987:46), believe that 'in most countries, women have been more successful in local politics than national'.

It is true that Cameroonian women have begun to improve their representation at this local level, while major barriers remain in access to national elected office, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 5. Competitive council elections have been held only twice since independence in 1960. Prior to that, people became councillors by appointment. Results from the 1987 and 1996 municipal elections culled from *Cameroon Tribune* No.6655 of 5 August 1998 indicate that 9.19% of candidates were women nominated to run as candidates in 1987, as against 13.69% in 1996. In 1987, 8.34% of women were elected as against 10.68% in 1996, an increase of 2.34%, a very small percentage indeed. There are 336 municipal councils of varying levels in Cameroon, each with a leader. Some of these council leaders are called mayors while others are called government delegates or simply municipal administrators. However, the Tribune article refers to all of them as "mayors", stating that of the 336 municipal council leaders in the 1996 election, only two of them are females.

The list of candidates for the 1996 elections published in *Cameroon Tribune* No 6014 of 11 January 1996 indicates that 5,346 positions, elected through the list system, were at stake. There is as yet no quota system for women, leaving aspirants to depend on the constitutional provision of equality for men and women in all domains. Nevertheless, this equality clause is often ignored as women usually depend on the male-dominated local party machinery. Of the women who succeeded in accessing the position of councillor, 30 were appointed assistants to municipal administrators in the 170 rural councils in 1987, while 5 were appointed deputies to mayors in Urban Councils. In 1996, there were 72 female assistant mayors in 330 sub-divisional Councils. The first female mayor in Cameroon was elected during a by-election in 1992. Nevertheless, the female share of mayoralties remains pathetically low with two women out of 336 holding that position in the 1996 elections. The scarcity of women in executive posts in local councils is quite plain. The situation can be further gauged from the table below.

Table 5.11
Statistics on municipal representation by gender

POSITION	1982			1987		
	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN	TOTAL	WOMEN	MEN
Municipal Councillors	5,107	336	4,771	5,345	446	4,899
Assistant Admins.	493	16	477	-	-	
Municipal Administrators	-	-	-	170	30	140
Mayors	-	-	-	28	5	23
Assistant Mayors	-	-	-	597	30	567
City Councillors	-	-	-	48	5	43
Government Delegates*	-	-	-	4	0	4

Source: MINCOF Evaluation Document:1994
[Note: Government delegates are appointed by Presidential Decree. All other municipal council positions are through elections].

Most Cameroonian women activists believe that the central problem of women is their low level of education. Globally, one of the tasks that feminists have set themselves as recently as the Beijing 1995 UN Conference, is to convince policy makers that education should be a means of achieving women's rights and changing patriarchal society. Feminists also demand education as an economic right, a means to improving women's lives materially. Whether or not equal access alone is enough to challenge aspects of the system which perpetuate the subordination and marginality of women is the subject of discussion in the next section.

The statistics reveal that gender-gap exist between theoretical constitutional rights and often long-standing patriarchal practices. Even though all the parties are in favour of increasing women's active participation in politics, there are no rules concerning the proportion of women to be included in the lists as Echu reveals in her interview with Cameroonian journalist, Nkendem Forbinake in the *Cameroon Tribune (CT)* of 5th August 1998, excerpts of which I repeat here. Asked why women are lagging behind in politics, Echu responded thus:

> Everybody knows the cause of that. Difficulties always. Take my case…I was elected Mayor with five men lined up against me. To build up our list, there was space for only 4 women out of the 25 Councillors. In the face of such adversities, a woman has to be extraordinarily courageous to break through.
> (Echu, C.T., 5 August 1998)

Asked why, as list leader, she couldn't get more women on her list, she said

> We have observed that very often women do not even show concern for their future [in politics]. They prefer staying at home, in the background. Sometimes we accuse cultural barriers. In Eyumojock, there are many things that men would not like their wives to do. They say women should be seen not heard. Many women are conscious of their predicament but fear sticking their heads out because they want to keep their marriage, family and children. Another difficulty is poverty. Many women stay behind because they consider politics as an expensive game. Those are some of the reasons why it is difficult to attract women to participate in politics.
>
> (Echu,C.T.,5 August 1998)

Questioned on whether she had the impression that some institutional inhibitions exist, she replied in the affirmative and added that

> The administration is sometimes in our way. The "old boys" game is always there. We are tagged with very many cliches…The men immediately give you names. …The womenfolk is [sic] sufficiently educated but we are often surprised that at election time, the men get together. Women gang up with their husbands. This is specially evident in the rural areas.
>
> (Echu,C.T.,5 August 1998)

When Forbinake inquired whether the woman is the woman's first enemy, Echu said:

> That is true …The women can fight within themselves and get a truce. When male politicians want to fight women, they use women. This is very true in the rural areas where rural women are generally seen to articulate the views of men. Women who develop the stature of leaders are usually destroyed by men. Male politicians would not want to see a female politician who is strong. Take a look at our political structure or the school system, in short. The women keep dropping out [become fewer] as they go up the hierarchical ladder.
>
> (Echu,C.T.5 August 1998)

Probed about her 'specific experiences as a female Mayor', Echu said:

> *It has not been easy for me,*, especially at the beginning – building of a list, going through the election and getting selected as Mayor. The struggle has not even ended. Even after the election, there is a lot of political infighting…A few male contractors drag their feet in some attempts to discredit me.
>
> (Echu,C.T.5 August 1998-emphasis are Echu's)

(Interviewed by Nkendem Forbinake, *Cameroon Tribune* no. 6655, Wednesday 5 August 1998:4)

From Echu's narrative, it can be inferred that marriage is an institution which traditionally provides women with a social identity. Feminist theory addresses several aspects of

marriage: as a site where categories of gender are reproduced, as the site of the sexual division of labour and women's subordination; and as the model for other social institutions in Cameroon. (see1.2.2) Echu's narrative supports the argument that the marriage ideology is embedded in the operation of other institutions, such as municipal elections, and that women are still economically dependent on men. The fact that the women in Echu's constituency only articulated their husbands' political views demonstrates male control and the fact that women's sexuality has tied them to their husbands. The male solidarity Echu refers to, especially at election periods, simply confirms Walby's (1990) and Pateman's (1988) arguments about fraternal patriarchy discussed in Chapter 4 above. Such a situation, as described by Echu, where women join forces with their husbands against a woman, simply confirms that women have managed to convince themselves that they are incapable of administering. Echu's personal experience and the statistics featured in Table 5.12 combine to illustrate that the composition of Councils and their leadership in urban councils and rural municipal administration, have not been substantially altered even after the 1996 elections, permitting men to continue to exert markedly more influence even at the local level.

The next section takes stock of the space occupied by women in the government

5.4.2 Women cabinet ministers and gender-specific job characteristics

Bureaucratic structures, Rubin (1990) points out, are based on hierarchy accepted as an institutional framework for social arrangements. Cameroon's bureaucracy, like many others, includes a wide range of activities in which women participate, and through which they are expected to have an effect on political institutions and practices. Women's apparently growing participation in government has to be understood in the context of socio-cultural gender-divisions subsumed under patriarchy in the family. This is reflected in the political identity of women cabinet ministers, who occupy the least influential ministerial positions. The presence of women in these stereotypical ministries implies the gendered nature of Cameroon's bureaucracy in such a way that it leaves women in a weaker position generally. It has already been established in the introductory chapter and chapter 3 that women lost significant political ground during the colonial era and after independence. This resulted in a number of problems in regard to gender relations in the public sector. This system confined women to the private domestic sphere making them

economically dependent on a male breadwinner. Agriculture development projects focused on the men, ignoring indigenous gender relations in land use, crop ownership and women's knowledges. Men took advantage of the European system combined with new cultural practices. Colonialism therefore instituted discriminatory practices against women. On the political front, indirect rule not only overlooked women's political voice with the development of the Native Authority Systems, but allowed local rulers , family heads and other male elders to explain 'tradition' and define customary law. Their versions generally distorted customs in the interest of the powerful, further marginalising women. Although Cameroonian women got the vote in 1948 and were allowed to hold office after independence, resistance to women in politics and decision-making remains strong in the post-colonial era. The appointment of Cameroonian women to social welfare ministries, reveals how skilful use of such appointments can control women's political aspirations, while the state pretends to be gender sensitive politically. This a further example of the deft use of the of the Western "public/private" framework which has been developed to explain the organistion of social life. In this organistion, the private sphere was perceived as non-political, domestic, and the domain of women. It was under the control of men. As feminist critiques Pateman (1988) for example have pointed out, this artificial divide emphasises women's domestic roles and subservience to men. In manipulating the public/private framework, the Cameroonian party-state intends that this conservative image of women be would spread to all sectors of society.

For the majority of Cameroonian women, the constraints gender construction places on them are such that their political identity seems to be closely linked to their mothering roles. The implications of taking their motherhood into the public arena are enormous. The first implication is that women are more represented in ministerial bodies which deal with social issues and are absent from those dealing with 'hard' core state affairs like finance, the economy and foreign affairs, for example. In these circumstances, the posts given to women are meant for propaganda purposes. In the realm of government policies, therefore, the appointment of women to ministries other than those meant for caring activities would almost certainly meet with subtle male opposition. This assertion is supported by Duverger (1955) who points out that essentially competitive reasons for the elimination of women are indeed masked by a very effective justification mechanism. Duverger suggests that the argument is that politics, is by nature , a field essentially suited

to men, to which women should be admitted only in exceptional circumstances and then only within strictly defined limits. The old theory of women's incapacity, *imbecillitas sexus* is being very successfully replaced by a new form of justification which might be called the functional theory. In this, no attempt is made to maintain inequality between men and women and the superiority of the former, but the object is to establish a kind of division of labour, based on a difference of aptitude. Most advanced exponents of the functional theory recognise the right of women to work outside the home and to take part in civic and social life and in political affairs, but only on condition that they confine their activities to problems of motherhood, education, and the family. In this way they make the best of a bad job, whilst at the same time limiting the damages. Employing women in the system to certain administrative and technical posts without allowing them to take part in political leadership proper, allowing them to take part in the direction of the social welfare side of business but not in its economic direction.

The distinction Duverger (1955) makes between the public and private realms, is central to liberal philosophy. It represents the Hegelian distinction between the state and civil society. This resurfaces more than twenty years later in Pateman's (1988) critique, and underpins feminist standpoint epistemology. It is also relevant to the Cameroonian social context. Women cabinet ministers in Cameroon seem to be often set apart from the serious side of politics, in ministries that deal with appropriate female concerns like welfare. This gives credence to the thought, in Cameroon, that laws establishing the civic equality of men and women are well in advance of the customs and practices of that society.

Unequal power relations, based on this public/private divide at the level of both theory and praxis, and the gendered meaning this distinction carries, are illuminated in the table 5.12.

Table 5.12

Women in Government

Period	Ministerial Position	Vice-Ministerial Position	Total	Number of Ministers	Percentage of Women
1970	NONE	Public Health	1	Not available	-
1975	Social Affairs	NONE	1	Not available	-
1984	Social Affairs; Women's Affairs;	Education; Public Health; Planning	5	43	11.6
1985	Social Affairs; Women's Affairs; Planning	Education; Public Health	5	Not available	-
1988	Soc./Women 's Affairs; Planning	NONE	2	35	5.7
1990	Social and Women's Affairs	NONE	1	44	0.02
2000	Women's Affairs; Social Affairs; Audit	Education	4	50	8

Source: MINCOF (Members of Government and those ranking as such.), and Cameroon Tribune, March 21, 2000.

No Cameroonian woman has ever been given the opportunity to hold enough power to influence the general policy of ministries covering areas in which they have acknowledged competence – Agriculture, Labour and Social Insurance. No woman has ever headed a ministry that oversees the sovereignty of the state for instance that of Defence, or Economy and Finance, or External Relations, or Territorial Administration. Although one woman, Elizabeth Tankeu, was entrusted with a key ministry that was responsible for managing the economic crisis, she was never involved in the negotiations with multilateral

institutions, her role relegated to the ceremonial signing of agreements publicised on national television. That ministry no longer exists.

This supports the argument that, while the Government's rhetoric on women was impressive, the substance behind the measures proves less so in a political system in which patronage and influence-peddling are deeply embedded. It further supports the assertion I started off with, that the institutional vision of women's power in Cameroon's cabinet is partial on the side of ministries under the social sector – Education, Public Health, Social Affairs, and Women's Affairs; and insufficient on the 'hard' areas.

What the data further represent is the fact that political space occupied by women in government in relation to that of men falls well behind in quantity, as well. Based on this fact, I argue that the Cameroonian bureaucracy is a male bastion and most appointments of women appear to be for publicity, with little substance or effect on the state policies. Evidence in support of this judgement includes first, the fact that all three women ministers interviewed – Tsanga, Zang Nguele and Fouda – who have each held the position of Ministry of Social Affairs, make mention of a budgetary allocation of less than 1 per cent of Cameroon's national budget, second, their being given staff, who, according to Fouda, the current minister, lack the technical know-how of social work to the extent that she needs to educate them on this before carrying out any effective work. Remembering her time as Minister of Social Affairs (1984-88), Zang Nguele said:

> My Ministry of Social Affairs was a very big ministry. Big, because of the problems this minister is charged with, but [a] very little ministry because of the budget. …You have to deal with problems of couples, of young people, or school dropouts, handicapped people, disabled people, the family. …You see, you have to solve the problems of people in society…the problem of the budget is very difficult in our administration. The Ministry of Social Affairs has no budget in general. What you call a budget is some piece of paper on which you have one million francs and so on but the budget is not concrete. It is not the same in reality. I received help from the international organisations, for example, UNICEF, UNESCO, because it deals with problems of culture and so on, while UNICEF is interested in children and so on. FUANAP [UN Population Fund] also helped and service clubs like the Lions Club, the Rotary Club….for disabled people.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

Fouda had only been in the office for 9 months when I interviewed her. She was still preoccupied with the mechanism of separating her Ministry of Social Affairs from the

1988 merger with that of Women's Affairs. She had as yet to have a specific budget as the one at the time was a part inheritance from the split. Like Zang Nguele, she also listed her duties which included :

> The handicapped, the family, the children, mad people, those who had psychological problems, street children....I am new in the house [Ministry]..the job is very large, and I think that people don't know exactly the importance of social affairs, so my work is, first, to educate my social workers, because I don't know if they really know what their job is.
>
> (Fouda, September 1998)

Tsanga, the first female to be appointed Deputy Minister of Public Health, in 1970, was given the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1975 to 1984. Featured in Chapter 6, Tsanga's thoughts on who or what was responsible for barring women from occupying any of the sovereign ministries is revealing. Tsanga points out that:

> I think it is the system because the system has a very low, a very narrow view.[Family Code and Customary Law] We also have to say that fear,[the fear men have of being governed by a woman] because of a lot of things with men[male ego of losing his position as the traditional breadwinner] I think that when a woman has a position they think that all men suffer. They [put up a fight] that the woman has taken their place. You know that politics is a job.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

The experiences of Tsanga, Zang Nguele and Fouda as female political leaders illustrate, albeit partially at this juncture, that membership in government is by no means a guarantee to influencing governmental action itself. It also partially illustrates that at governmental level women play a smaller part not only in the number of ministerial posts they occupy, but also that the ministerial offices held by women were of lesser political importance. This feature is very important , for it reveals a quite evident connection in Cameroon between the extent of women's inclusion among the persons associated with governance and the nature of this inclusion. As Table 5.12 illustrates, the few women included in government are concentrated on specialised matters such as public health, education, social affairs and women's affairs – that is, on all the problems which in the general opinion are considered to be of special interest to women-in the private sphere. At first sight, it might be thought that this specialisation is chiefly characteristic of the first phase in women's participation in political life, and that it will tend to diminish progressively as women

are moved to sovereign ministries. This optimistic expectation is belied by the facts. Nothing demonstrates this trend more clearly than Tsanga's promotion from Deputy Minister of Public Healthh to that of Social Affairs, a position she held for 14 years; Dorothy Njeuma's move from Deputy Minister of Education for 10 years to become the first woman vice-chancellor of the University of Buea, Cameroon, is another example. Yaou Aissatou's record as the longest serving Minister, 15 years, shuttled between Women's and Social Affairs until March 2000, when she was relieved of her post. These shifts were sideways along the same level in the hierarchy, rather than promotions upwards within it. Although not having contemporary Cameroon in mind, the scope of this two-tier structure of government, and what it represents, was long ago foreseen and summed up by Duverger (1955) as follows:

> on the whole, women's suffrage has done little to wrest from men their monopoly of political leadership; there is so small a proportion of women among the persons associated with Government that quantitatively and qualitatively their influence may be almost disregarded.
>
> (Duverger, 1955: 145)

Political parties in Cameroon, as elsewhere, regulate the course of parliamentary and government life. Parties are thus key players in the political arena.

As demonstrated by all the statistics above, assigned tasks and acquired career skills tend to institutionalise a hierarchical and gendered labour force. O'Connor (1996:78) has pointed out that 'equality in access to employment is fundamental to women's achievement to full citizenship.' Other feminist critics of gender inequality in the market place, Orloff (1993) and Gornick (1999), for example, have argued that labour force participation is crucial to the range and quality of social rights and to social stratification in contemporary states. They suggest that the extent to which social rights eliminate dependence on the labour market applies poorly to women's social circumstances and needs. They emphasise that a crucial first step related to pay and employment equity is access to the labour market. The type of access they advocate affords the existence of a full range of social rights that afford economic independence, gender identities and are responsible for altering the capacities for political action.

Their suggestion ties with Pateman's (1988:238) point that independence has been theoretically and historically the central criterion for citizenship. She adds, however, that

'what constitutes independence has changed over time, in the "democratic" welfare state,... employment rather than military service is the key to citizenship.'
The reason given for their line of argument by O'Connor (1999) is that employment affords the possibility of independence directly through monetary compensation. She adds that it may also condition access to, and exercise of formerly gender-neutral citizenship rights.

Conclusion

Gender relations both shape and are shaped by political structures in society. The distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' cabinet assignments on the one hand, and mainstream party and the women's branch on the other hand, helps to reinforce gender stereotypes.

Politics is viewed as part of the male arena, consequently it is not seen as the place for women unless their participation reflects social issues only. In the Cameroonian political arena, therefore, there is still a strong association between woman, mother and social reproduction. It also shows how women are set apart from the serious side of politics in women's branches and ministries that only deal with appropriate feminine concerns of welfare. In addition, the WCPDM hardly ever enjoys real autonomy and as such has no real influence within the party. The separate organisations for women and young people exist because of the need to publicise the party's propaganda and make it effective, with the object of winning as many supporters as possible from particular social groups.
The two conflicting requirements no doubt account for the intermediate position of women's branches of parties. In practice, the WCPDM is an appendage of the CPDM and is directed by it, following its political ideology. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that women's participation in the political running of the state through the party system is more symbolic than real.
Despite formal legal emancipation, the percentage of women in public office, as statistics above reveal, reflects the fact that politics remain a predominantly male pursuit in Cameroon. The number of women cabinet ministers has never exceeded 5 out of 50, 8%. Women are also sharply under-represented in the National Parliament, as illustrated in Chapter 6.
The scarcity of women in elected and appointed positions in Cameroon is due to the infrequency with which women are nominated to such offices by the major parties and the

state. The basic unit in the Cameroonian society has always been the family. As discussed in Chapter 1, the traditional family is a social institution which influenced every aspect of family life, and common rules were based on custom and tradition. What Cameroonian custom expected of husband and wife was ratified and confirmed by the subsequent adoption of France's 1804 Napoleonic Code. The assumptions behind the French Civil Code of 1804 and English Common Law dovetailed with Customary Law, customs and attitudes found in Cameroon, each therefore reinforcing the other to the disadvantage of women.I argue that it was not only the Napoleonic Code but also the traditional Cameroonian customs that caused the gender imbalance and male supremacy in politics. In a sense, the foregoing statistics have confirmed Lister's (1997) theory that citizenship is deeply gendered. The statistics, accounts and analysis further endorse Lister's (1997) comment that:

> The ostensible gender-neutrality of the term 'citizenship' disguises the gender divisions constructed in its name, both historically and today....Women were denied the formal rights of citizens.
>
> (Lister, 1997:66)

From this point of view, the party-state employment practices have tended to significantly, and paradoxically undermine the Cameroonian party-state's gender equality of opportunity claim based on the constitution.

Nevertheless, although gender stratification in the context of the Cameroonian marketplace is apparently a consequence of its social and cultural relationships, this issue alone cannot be used to determine heightened stratification in politics, especially stratification according to gender. It is necessary to examine in depth the interaction of political factors with cultural elements. A start on this will be made in the next chapter, with MPs as the particular focus. This is one of the political arenas where the question of gendered politics can be examined in a systematic and quantitative fashion.

Chapter six

The politics of women's political citizenship in parliamentary representation

'Where there's power, there are no women.
And where there are women, there's no power.'
(Russian Adage: anon)

'The less desirable and important the office,
the more likely that women will hold it.'
(Welch and Karning, 1979: 479.)

6.1- Chapter issues

As the quotations at the head of this chapter show, it is concerned with illustrating that patriarchal systems of control influence the allocation of decision-making positions in most public institutions. Cameroon claims to be a democratic state because it carries out the formal elements of democracy such as the multiparty system, the right to vote, the right to stand for office, and periodic elections. I argue that these practices have yet to lead to democratic political culture that indicates a participatory form of democracy favourable to women. Furthermore, Cameroon's particular system of democracy (see chapter 3) has yet to yield greater female representation in its governing institutions. Nevertheless, Phillips (1991) observes that neither political suffrage nor higher socio-economic status necessarily solve the problem of under-representation. She uses the Western examples of Norway, Sweden, and Finland to illustrate that by 1984, when the percentage of women's parliamentary representation was high, (26%, 28% and 31% respectively) their educational attainment, employment patterns, domestic responsibilities and voting rights were essentially the same as women in other European societies. Yet in the rest of Europe, representation was low. Phillips (1991) addresses the idea of *deliberative* democracy, as a way of overcoming the continued failure of liberal democracy to engender participation. The rationale is that systems of representation can be built based on the interest of social justice. Phillips (1991) also indicates that the State in these countries decided to intervene in the name of social democracy and justice.

Phillips' (1991) examples imply that unless attention is paid to the problem of gender difference, equal representation will be difficult to accomplish.

Data on Cameroon however, indicates that the electoral system of proportional representation practised in Cameroon ensures that electorate votes for a party and not the individual. Under this system, parties choose those to fill the seats. Furthermore, party-state patronage and patriarchal practices are used by those in power as political currency both to buy support and to retain power. Women do not feature in this process.
Studies carried out by Lovenduski and Norris (1993) based on Western examples indicate that women do better under proportional representation, than under single member formulas. The Cameroonian example demonstrates that there are no absolute guarantees concerning PR systems. Statistics featured in this chapter indicate that the power hierarchy of parliament is even less favourable to women than that of the labour market hierarchy of Cameroon, discussed in chapter 5 above. The distribution of power between men and women in Cameroon's parliamentary committee assignments, for example, is strikingly male-biased, with decision-making concentrated in men's hands. The figures indicate not only that women's representation in the power structure of committees is much lower than women's share in the labour market, but that women are significantly concentrated in committees concerned with social issues. What the above quotations denote is that power relations remain central to analysing the nature of institutional assignments embedded in gender.
The gender implications of such politics of constituting citizenship based on the division between public and private space, I argue, are significant in that men and women experience differential treatment in the public space. The major question of this chapter therefore concerns the differential access into the formal political arena of parliament and the functional significance of the tasks performed by women MPs in this governing institution. In order to put the Cameroonian case into perspective, it is necessary to highlight some examples of how electoral systems and party systems affect women's representation in the West. This will be done in the next section.

6.2.1- Democracy and representation

Phillips (1995:1) has argued that 'problems of political exclusion are perceived either in terms of the electoral system (which can over-represent certain views and under-represent others), or in terms of people's access to political participation, which is particularly skewed according to social class.' Party politics is therefore seen by Phillips (1995) to

convey what is involved in current notions of representation, because political loyalties are expected to develop around policies rather than people. She contrasts this condition with that of party programmes where politics has been reduced to a stitching together of group-based support, or to where voters are 'bought' by material favours. She thinks this is abuse of kinship networks and the ethnic solidarities by political elites in post-colonial Africa, many of whom evacuated the terrain of contested politics and ideas to cultivate power bases around the exclusionary identities. She acknowledges that when colonial powers retreated from Africa, they left behind societies in which the state had become the main avenue for economic and social advancement, and where it was inevitable that an alternative politics of patronage would flourish. She suggests that many of the current arguments over democracy revolve around what might be called demands for political presence; for equal representation of women with men; for political inclusion in groups that have come to see themselves as marginalized, silenced or excluded. She challenges the politics of ideas with an alternative politics of presence. This approach is based on the argument that the procedures of electoral competition do not merely chasten and circumscribe the powers of government. In her thinking, democracies have stumbled along for many decades without addressing the gender composition of elected assemblies, or making sex a serious matter of political contestation.

Phillips (1993:67) expanded the debate of partiality and limitations of the gender-neutral model of equality by arguing that ' in challenging a narrow version from one side, feminists risk simply situating themselves on an opposite of a false divide... in sharpening up what is distinctive in the new position, it is easy to reproduce an over-simple dichotomy'. She points out that 'I argue against a polar opposition between what is abstract, impartial, gender-neutral, and what is specific, relational, engendered; and I suggest that the best in contemporary feminism is already steering a more middle route' Phillips (1993: 58). The 'middle route' she suggests takes many forms but this is the manner in which she believes the dichotomy will be resolved, as she explains in the following quote.

> If feminists take up the high ground of empathy and emotion *versus* abstract and impartial reason, they are I believe wrong. If they situate themselves more firmly in the middle ground- as increasingly it seems that they do - they may be right but not so strikingly original.
>
> (Phillips 1993: 67)

Phillips' (1993) suggestion is that there is a need to synthesize the two perspectives of dichotomies. She also expands the feminist debate on representation based on the distinction between civil, social and political citizenship. The civil debate focuses on issues of legal status and rights; the social on care work versus paid employment; and the political on questions of democratic practices and constitutional guarantees. These divisions have led Phillips (1993 :79) to argue that feminist considerations of citizenship have tended to concentrate on the sphere of social citizenship almost to the exclusion of considering 'the kind of politics that citizenship implies'. She (1991:77) notes that , in contrast to that vision of citizenship that stresses social responsibilities, [like the Cameroonian example illustrates], citizenship is most useful and meaningful when it is considered as a primary political term. Her rationale for this conclusion is explained when she talks about a marked distinct shift within the terms of debate about gender and citizenship. She notes that in previous decades, debates tended to use the claim that 'the personal is political' to side-step the political and 'instead concentrate on transforming and democratising the economic and social spheres' (Phillips 1993: 85).

Philips also expands the feminist debate on the limitation of the modern conception of citizenship. On this issue, Phillips (1993; 105) has stated that 'the preoccupation with liberal democracy as a totalising system that we must be either "for" or "against" proves relatively unhelpful, for it attributes to liberal democracy a greater theoretical fixity than is confirmed by its subsequent history'. She argues that

> It is important to recognise that liberal democratic citizenship has already evolved, under pressure of labour and social democratic parties and also of feminism, in ways that have altered the boundary of the public and changed the character of citizenship. Given this, it is unhelpful to assume that it is not capable of further modification in order to deal with the differential treatment of women.
>
> (Phillips 1993: 109)

When Phillips's argument is applied to the social context of Cameroon, it gives me the opportunity to argue not necessarily for the rejection or total change of Cameroon's brand of liberal democratic citizenship as enshrined in the 1972 Constitution, but rather to call for further democratisation of those aspects that deter women from active participation in the public sphere. As Phillips (1993:114) herself has suggested, 'a richer and more equal democracy may still be possible within the broad framework of the liberal'.

Phillips (1995) proposes distinct arguments for women's equal participation in formal politics: women's interests; role models; and the revitalisation of democracy. The first of

these is based on the belief that the existence of women representatives will encourage others to gain the confidence that they too can aspire to this role. The second implies that numerically equal representation of men and women in legislatures is itself a sign of parity, regardless of the beliefs of those present or the politics enacted. The third holds that women need to enter formal politics to work for women's interests. This implies that it is not the presence alone, but the decisions made and policies formulated that matter. The fourth proposes that women should enter into positions of power because they will engage in politics differently, thereby improving the nature of the public sphere.

The role models and justice arguments are useful for understanding the position of women in politics in Cameroon, in that they appeal to concerns about the just distribution of social resources. In Cameroon, for example, positions of political influence lead to particular social resources, which I argue, ought to be fairly distributed so that men and women should have equal access. The unequal distribution of positions of political power in Cameroonian governing institutions indicates that there are structured barriers of entry operating to deny particular social groups access to these scarce resources. Phillips's suggestion empowers me to examine the under-representation of women in Cameroon from the perspective of fair representation on the existing conception of politics. This stance will enable Cameroonians women currently excluded as a result of their segregation in women's wings of parties, to engage in political debate and decision-making. This modification of the mechanisms of representative democracy will hopefully secure greater parity of presence for Cameroonian women.

6.2.2- How party systems affect women's representation

Lovenduski and Norris (1993) led an eleven country study of the effect of gender on party politics and on the impact of party politics on the pattern of women's representation. The interplay between gender and party politics was examined in Australia, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Republic of Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America (USA) where women's representation in Parliament ranged from 5.7% in France to 38% in Sweden. On the basis of this comparative research, Lovenduski and Norris argue that liberal democracies offer women the means to claim equality of representation by utilising the political opportunities offered by the party system. They concede that party systems have responded to women's demands, but to varying degrees.

The Lovenduski and Norris (1993) led study attributed the disparities in women's representation to both general and particular explanations. They cited changes in party politics to accommodate women's demands for political participation combined with a reflection of different social, cultural and historical circumstances. They identified common patterns as well. They argued that while women's demands for political representation inevitably affected party politics, party politics also affected the strategies that women employ to press their claims. Their findings indicate that there is some evidence to show that the most significant factor influencing women's success in entering national politics is the electoral system itself, specifically the operation of proportional representation, multimember constituencies and party lists. On the basis of their comparative empirical research, therefore, Norris (1993) suggests that multimember constituencies and a party lists system allow greater recognition of the difference within the political structure. What is most significant about their findings is that they have shown that the nature of the electoral process adopted makes an important difference in the actual composition of legislatures. Proportional representation allows for a greater inclusiveness of candidates for election by making under-representation in the nomination process both more visible and more accountable. Countries with proportional representation and large numbers of representatives in districts are the leaders among democracies in the proportions of women in parliament. Their study showed that more women are elected in countries with proportional lists electoral systems.

In their analysis of gender and party politics in Britain, for example, Lovenduski and Norris (1993) found out that most British political parties professed official support for women for an increase political role for women. However, their findings in regard to the two major parties, (the Conservative party and the Labour party), indicated that the imperatives of internal party politics are a major factor in the success women have had in securing party and parliamentary positions. They noted significant differences in the way that women have organised in the two parties and in the degrees of success that they have had. Labour women organised to increase women's representation in the 1980s, and their repeated calls for positive action became official party policy. Conservative women on the other hand, raise the issue on an individual basis, and their organisations have not made demands for positive action for women candidates. Their differential approaches have meant that Labour women succeeded in persuading their party to take up issues of women's representation, and fielded more women candidates and elected more women

Members of Parliament (MPs). Lovenduski and Norris suggest that women are regarded as the backbone of the Conservative party and play a major role as voters, members and local leaders. This aspect of Conservative party politics (that women are regarded as the backbone of the party and play a major role as voters and members) has similarities with the situation prevalent in the governing CPDM Party of Cameroon. They add that although there were fewer Conservative women candidates and MPs, they suggest the reason as being that fewer women apply, as those who did were relatively more successful. Their strategy to encourage women informally is deemed appropriate to the circumstances of the party and women are thought to have no need to press for more radical methods.

6.2.3- The electoral system

Norris (1993) has suggested that one of the most widely accepted factors which explains cross-cultural differences in the representation of women is the electoral system. Admitting that electoral systems vary substantially in different countries, she lists the main alternatives. These include simple plurality (first past the post, FPTP); alternative vote (AV); single transferable vote (STV); additional member (AMS); and party list. Based on the results from comparative studies as explained above, she analyses the difference these systems make for women. Three factors in electoral systems are suggested as affecting women's representation. In order of priority, they include the ballot structure (whether party list or single candidate); district magnitude (the number of seats per district); and the degree of proportionality (the allocation of votes to seats). Norris (1993) suggests that all other things being equal, women tend to do best under multimember constituencies with a high number of seats per district. She identifies the national party list system as tending to be the electoral system to be most favourable for women. The system of single transferable vote falls somewhere in the middle depending on the number of representatives per district. In contrast, plurality and majoritarian - first past the post, second ballot and alternative vote- are identified as the least favourable to the representation of women. Norris presents a lot of evidence in the form of country examples, to support this conclusion. I highlight a few here.

Australia, for example, is said to use the alternative majoritarian vote single-member electoral divisions for the House of Representatives, and multimember state-level districts using proportional quotas for the senate. In the 1990 general election, women MPs were 7 per cent of the House but 25 per cent of the senate. Norris uses the classic case of Germany

to further confirm her argument. In federal elections in the Bundestag half the seats are allocated by majoritarian single-member districts and the rest by proportional land (regional) party lists. In 1990, 80 per cent of women who were elected to the Bundestag entered through the Land list route. She concludes that women do far better under the party list system.

Norris (1993) also discusses countries which changed their electoral system over time, such as France. Between 1945 and 1956, and again in 1986, the French used proportional representation with *département* party lists without preference voting in the National Assembly. Although proportional, the system used in France in 1986 employed few seats per *département.* In contrast, in the national elections from 1958 to 1981, and again in 1988, the system was changed so that candidates were elected by a single-member first ballot majority system, with the second runoff plurality ballot. As a result more women were elected each term to the National Assembly using majoritarian system, with the exception of elections in 1981 and 1988.

The situation that obtains in Cameroonian party politics is that membership of a Party automatically makes women members of the women's wing of that party. Participation in party and electoral politics is generally on men's terms and determines the outcome in regard to representation by gender. Clearly, then, although the voting system is important, Lovenduski and Norris (1993) found that the electoral system as a whole is important, particularly in the encouragement of women candidates.

The above discussions based on examples of how party systems and electoral systems affect women's representation in the West, illustrate several important dimensions regarding the attitude of both men and women on the issue of representation. These discussions raise one question in relation to my work in this section of the thesis: What is it in the electoral system and party system of Cameroon that prevents women from reaching similar levels of representation as those found in the Scandinavian countries, for example? There are several reasons for this, the first being that the Western examples featured have less restrictive political structures in comparison to the ruling democratic political system of Cameroon. In the Cameroonian political party system, the ruling CPDM is far more rigid and hierarchically structured than the Western party systems. The political discourse of the Cameroonian parties ties women to maternal roles even in the formal political arena. Their politicisation is active only when the party deems it necessary. The operation of the Cameroonian party system and electoral system by central directive hampers

women's political progress. The point is that factors operating within the Cameroonian party system and electoral system define the limits of participation and advancement for women in formal politics. These factors, I argue, are not common to women's experiences as described in the Lovenduski and Norris (1993) study. The absence therefore of political participation in the Western sense of the term sets boundaries to what political action Cameroonian women can take within their parties.

Lovenduski and Norris (1993) indicate that the level of lobbying and pressure from the women's movements exerts an influence for improving women's political representation especially in the British Labour Party. This suggests that there is no automatic process by which women's representation rises. Factors other than the quota system are at work. The women in the West are portrayed as viewing universal suffrage and democracy as primary to their struggle. Western women are actively challenging the formal leadership situation because of their particular form of feminist activism, women's movements. Such an independent movement is conspicuously absent from Cameroon, where social relations of domination are a part of the culture. Feminists of all persuasions view power relations as something in which all women are implicated, in varying degrees. When applied to the Cameroonian social context such a theory reveals that the source of legitimacy in the exercise of power in the public arena is constrained within the cultural values embodied in the general position of women in the family code (see 1.2.2 above.)

6.3.1- Women Parliamentarians : tokens of Cameroon's commitment to gender equality of opportunity

A declaration on equality between men and women in political and public life is made explicit in Cameroon's Constitution, implying democratic citizenship. Evidence, however, reveals the gap between women's formal status and their actual power in formal politics. The Human Development Report's 1995 conclusion captures the Cameroonian situation as well when it suggests that: 'political space belongs to all citizens, but men monopolise it' (UNDP, 1995: 41). A detailed analysis of the global situation indicates that the problem is not exceptional to Cameroon.

According to the IPU figures for 2000 (IPU web-site) , women hold only 13.4% of parliamentary seats globally. The report singles out the Nordic countries where progress has been greatest with the percentage being 38.9. The average for Europe is 13.5%, for the Americas 15.3% and for Sub-Saharan Africa 11.5%. The Arab States have reached 3.4%.

Historically, in Cameroon, the role of women has been seen as providing the necessary support so that males could go out and achieve. Moreover, women's activities outside the home have generally been in the areas termed by feminists as 'helping' fields – nursing, teaching, social work, secretarial duties, so it is only to be expected that 'their votes' would be counted on to help men win at the polls, as Cameroonian political journalist Fomenky admits in the following article.

There are no female MPs from the North West [province]. Neither the SDF nor the CPDM thought it necessary to field in the womenfolk as substantive candidates. In fact, only one woman, Nyoh Margaret Mugen of Momo [Division] figures on the whole CPDM list of candidates from the North West [Province]. But sources within both parties reveal that this is more as a result of political expediency than any real will to silence the ladies, *whose votes they had to count on much more than on those of the men to win. The stakes appeared to have been too high and the fight too strong to involve women as candidates. There is no doubt that the North West woman, just as the rest of the women folk throughout the country, understood this very well. This national tendency to want the votes and not the voices of women could, in the near future, encourage the women to create a feminine party. For now, the men can argue that the women do not show very much interest in political leadership. In any case, this does not pose any special problem in a province where very few women*, vibrant as they are known to be, have ever shown any real political ambition.

(Cameroon Tribune, 10 June 1997. My emphasis)

Since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in Cameroon in 1990, elections have not produced many women parliamentarians, as statistics show below. The quote above proves that even where women are the majority of voters, men feature more on the list of nominated candidates than women, so the probability of more men being elected is higher. This, in spite of the Presidential Declaration of 1995 which promised that

> *Le dernier volet de cette campagne pourrait se materialiser par la nomination d'un plus grand nombre de femmes à des postes de decision du parti et de l'Etat (bureau politique, comité central, gouvernement, préfectorale...) .*
> *Quantitativement, elles sont les nombreuses au sein du parti. Pendant longtemps elles ont jouá les second roles.*
> *...Le President Paul Biya qui sait que le RDPC est un parti de la réussite grace aux femmes, soutient leur combat. Conscient du role que les femmes ont toujours joué dans les combats que mène le RDPC, le President Paul Biya qui veut que son parti reste le parti leader demande d'entendre la campagne de recrutement et d'ouverture envers les femmes.*

(Cameroon Tribune, 10 October, 1995)

> [The ultimate aim of this campaign will be the material nomination of even larger numbers of women to decision-making positions in the party and the state (Political Bureau, Central Committee, Government and in the Prefecture..)..*Quantitatively, women make up the majority of the party militants. For a long time, however, their role has been secondary. President Paul Biya who knows that the CPDM is a successful party only because of the contribution made by women and he supports their struggle.* Conscious of the role that the women have always played in the CPDM campaigns, the President Paul Biya assures them that his remains the only party leading the campaign to recruit and create opportunities for women.]
>
> (My emphasis)

In percentage terms, the party membership is 51%female to 49% male.

In spite of this declaration, acknowledging women's loyalty to their party and general political base, women were invisible in the nomination lists. Such an omission demonstrates that women were deliberately passed over in favour of men because the parties needed a masculine political base to consolidate and stabilise their power. Women's invisibility in the parliamentary electoral lists could also be linked to Lorber's (1994) suggestion that women's interests are often sacrificed in order to ensure the cooperation of formerly oppressed men. In the Cameroonian context, these would be men who had supported the party faithfully but had been passed over for appointments to high level positions or for nominations in electoral lists. She adds that not only is women's continued support taken for granted, but women's traditional role as supporter was revived in an attempt to restore the social order. In Cameroon, membership in the ruling CPDM party, for instance, is a resource for upward mobility into decision-making positions, hence its use in the President's speech as bait, for continued support in the hope of accessing these positions. However, the social processes that get candidates into political leadership in Cameroon, as used by the CPDM for example, seem to ensure that those coming up will be as similar as possible to themselves. Such processes constitute significant barriers to women's political entry into conventional politics. I attribute this to Pateman's (1988) critique of the social contract and her theory of fraternal patriarchy as discussed in 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 above. The Cameroonian example also confirms McIntosh's (1978) argument that:

> The men who make policies promote the gendered division of labour that exploits women…The advantageous outcome for men's continual political domination suggests a conspiracy against women, but it is through seemingly gender-neutral policies that rarely serve women's interests that the state "plays a part in the oppression of women".
>
> (McIntosh, 1978:255)

Feminist scholars Eisenstein (1984), Fraser (1989) and Connell (1990) have made similar arguments.Many of the explanations put forward by these feminist political scientists point to social stratification as being responsible for gendered norms which rank men above women, demonstrated, for example, in the Cameroonian case. I attribute the small size of the total female representation in Cameroon's parliament to this factor. Although the proportion has improved since Keutcha's first entry in 1960, the proportion of women in parliament grew slowly but steadily from 1% to 14.4% of all MPs. This was followed, however, by a drastic fall to 5.5% in the 1997 election. (see table 6.1 below). Yaou Aissatou, then Minister of Women's Affairs, blamed the fall on the competitive atmosphere of multi-party politics which disadvantages women. She suggested that in such an atmosphere, the parties' desire for winning took precedence over the nomination of women candidates for purposes of gender-balancing. (personal interview, August 1998). Fomenky's (1997) analysis of the situation of the women of the North West province, which he used as a yardstick to explain the national situation, seems to confirm Yaou Aissatou's suggestion. This illustrates that Cameroonian women are considered good voting clients of the political parties and the state. What both Fomenky's (1997) article and President Paul Biya's 1995 declaration above suggest is that women's invisibility in parliamentary electoral nomination lists indicates that women still do not have a say in the policies that affect their political participation in the party-state. President Paul Biya's 1995 promise to lead women's struggle for a positive outcome in decision-making positions came to nothing, emphasising that they are still the second-class citizens he acknowledged them to have been for a long time. Fraser writes of a similar experience from an academic viewpoint.

> The citizen role…is a masculine role. It links the state and the public sphere…But it also links these to the official economy and the family. And in every case the links are forged in the medium of masculine gender identity rather than….in the medium of a gender-neutral power. Or, if the medium of exchange here is power, then the power in question is masculine power.
>
> (Fraser, 1989: 127.)

It is clear from Fraser's quote that traditional politics excludes women. Arneil (1999) attributes such exclusion to the underlying duality between mind and body, culture and nature. Gatens (1988:60) argues that 'It is not so much that women are biologically unsuited to political participation. Political participation has been structured and defined in

such a way that it excludes women's bodies.' Pateman's (1988) specific example of such exclusion blames the liberal democratic terms of a social contract which, she argues, has continued to underpin the rights and obligations of liberal political theory. Fraser (1989) also makes reference to the family and the economy, concerns which Pateman (1988) raises about the freedom of women from economic dependency being a pre-requisite for full citizenship status. Statistics in Chapter 5 above already demonstrated that public policies in terms of access to education and high level appointments seem in Cameroon to support gender inequality in the labour market. This undoubtedly brings about gender differences in average labour-market earnings between women and men.

The limitations placed in the employment and property rights, and customary and family laws respectively, are very significantly biased towards male careers and favour the family over women as individuals in the market-place. This affects negatively women's abilities to make decisions since these laws intentionally discriminate and therefore, intentionally affect women differently from men. (See 1.2.2 above.)

Table 6.1 below testifies to this.

Table 6.1
Percentage of Seats Held by Women in Cameroon's Parliament, 1962-1997

Year	Total Number of Seats	Number of Males	Number of Females	% of Females
04/1962	50	49	1	2.0
04/1964	50	49	1	2.0
06/1970	50	48	2	4.0
05/1973	120	113	7	5.8
05/1978	120	108	12	10.0
05/1983	120	103	17	14.2
05/1988	180	154	26	14.4
03/1993	180	158	23	12.2
05/1997	180	170	10	5.5

Source: IPU Report, No.28, 1997; Cameroon Tribune No.2933, July 21, 1998.

Vallance (1995:5) quotes Edith Summerskill's analysis of women's representation in the British Parliament. An MP herself at the time, Summerskill stated that 'after all this time, Parliament with its conventions and protocol seems a little like a boys' school which has decided to take in a few girls.' Edith Summerskill made this observation in 1967, in reference to her own context yet, judging from the table above, she could very well have

been referring to the Cameroonian example of today. There is no single unambiguous answer as to why the figures are getting lower but the next section will attempt to find out some of the underlying reasons for the drastic drop in numbers between 1988 and 1997.

6. 3.2- Women's representation, political culture and party systems

The discussions above revealed that though western women have gained legal recognition, the achievement of equal representation is still a continuous struggle. The Cameroonian situation indicates that there are limits to the ability of Constitutional discourse to bring about *de facto* equality. The Cameroonian process goes only so far as the leadership of the party-state allows. As discussed in chapter 3, the Cameroonian party-state is all-powerful, with the concentration of power in paternalistic hierarchies. Statistics in chapter 5 already indicated that women find themselves at the bottom of the status scale.

The difference between the examples featured in Lovenduski and Norris (1993) and the Cameroonian case is that whereas women in their case studies have legally and politically received equal rights, Cameroonian women have *de jure* and not *de facto* rights. Moreover, the party-state concept of Cameroonian women continues to be tied to the Customary Law and Family Law.

I begin this section therefore, by arguing that the Cameroonian electoral system structures and negatively influences women's parliamentary representation. The concept of representation is a dominant theme in contemporary feminist political theory and the debates have been conceptualised in different ways. Norris (1987) and McAllister and Studlar (1992), for instance, have investigated several plausible factors to explain variations in women's representation across countries. These include the strength of the Women's Movement, women's representation among professions from which candidates are drawn, political culture, party systems and electoral systems.

Norris (1987) and Rule (1981, 1987, 1994) both single out one factor, the electoral system, as being consistently influential in determining the number of women representatives. Research on which their findings are based focuses however almost exclusively on advanced industrialised democracies, notably the USA and Western European countries. Some or all of the factors identified in their findings may account for the see-saw motion depicted in the statistics (6.1) featuring women MPs in Cameroon. This is particularly so because issues raised in the personal narratives in Chapter 7 do not support Fomenky's

(1997) suggestion that Cameroonian women "do not show very much interest in political leadership".

What came out from Tsanga's (1998) and Zang Nguele's (1998) narratives of their personal experiences, for instance, suggests that the hierarchical relations of party politics, combined with the gender status of women, affects the social construction of political responsibility. Their joint experience, and the example given by Fomenky (1997) of Nyoh Margaret Mugen as being the only female candidate out of 20 provincial constituencies in the North West Province, conveys the message that for Cameroonian women, getting the party nomination for a winnable seat is a major problem they face in organised politics. Data culled from various editions of the state-owned *Cameroon Tribune,* EIU (1993) AC (1992), show that in 1992, for example, the CPDM nominated 25 women as substantive candidates out of a list of 180 (13.8%). The UNDP nominated 9 women out of the 133 (6.7%) seats for which they fielded candidates. The Union of the People of Cameroon (UPC) selected 4 out of 122 (3.2%) and the Movement for the Defence of the Republic (MDR) nominated only 1 woman out of a total of 80 (1.25%) candidates fielded to compete in the elections.

Though data is not available for all the 125 parties said by the *Cameroon Tribune* to have competed in the 1997 parliamentary elections, figures showed no improvements either. Available data in the *Cameroon Tribune* covers only two thirds of the constituencies. At the moment, there are actually 150 registered political opposition parties in Cameroon. This is an extreme case of super-fragmentation of the opposition by the dominant CPDM. According to the *Cameroon Tribune* No. 2633 of 7 May 1997, there were 2,290 substantive and alternate candidates nominated by various political parties. Of this number, there were 101 women substantive (permanent) candidates and 163 alternates (substitutes), about 10.5%. The governing CPDM party nominated 13 female substantive candidates. The UNDP, 14, the UPC, 7; the MDR 2, and the remaining parties, none. This seems to be a characteristic of the main opposition parties.

These figures illustrate how deeply gender in Cameroon organises not just the labour market (as statistics in chapter 5 illustrate), but political participation as well. Much as relations between Cameroonian male politicians are competitive, Pateman's (1988) theory of "fraternal patriarchy", suggests that apparently men do not allow the competition amongst them to create room for women. This attitude lends support to Lorber's

(1994:292) argument that 'gender…is built inextricably into stratification and inequality, producing a subordinate group "women"…whose status with men is inherently unequal.' By way of explanation, Diamond (1977) has pointed out that party leaders are generally more likely to be receptive to the nomination of women when their party's chance of victory is remote. She gives the example of India Edwards who for many years was the Vice Chairman of the Democratic National Committee of the USA. Diamond quotes her as saying that: "If the party backs a woman, you can be pretty sure they do it because they think it is a lost cause but they know they have to have some candidate"(Diamond, 1977: 78). Although written so long ago and so far away, Edward's experience seems relevant to today's Cameroonian situation. The case of Margaret Mugen Nyoh, cited in Fomenky's (1997) article, exemplifies Edwards' American experience in the Cameroonian context. Fomenky's analysis of the election results in the NWP indicates that of the 20 seats allocated to the Province, 19 went to the SDF, and only one to the ruling CPDM party. In an effort to counter the SDF's dominance, the CPDM had fielded candidates referred to by Fomenky (1997) as "Big Wigs", a selection of which included the former Prime minister, the first Vice President of the ruling CPDM party, three serving ministers and the rector of the University of Yaounde. (Cameroon Tribune, 10 June 1997)

When Margaret Mugen Nyoh's nomination is examined within the political context of the North West Province, it is as if the men in Momo Division shrugged their shoulders and said, 'Since we are sure to lose, what's the difference of fielding a woman?' Margaret Nyoh was that sacrificial lamb as she lost by a large margin to the opposition SDF candidate. Her situation represents similar positions of 101 women substantive and alternate nominees across party lines, nationally. Instead of blaming women's poor showing in the 1997 elections on such a factor, Fomenky (1997) portrays Cameroonian women as being less concerned with politics than men, and less able to be political as well. Women are less likely to be elected than men because the percentage of elected women is usually far below the percentage of women candidates. It is never even about the same as the percentage of candidates. A key contention of this research is therefore that increasing numbers of ambitious men have not been countered by increasing numbers of high powered Cameroonian women; hence the 10 women MPs out of the 180 elected in 1997, a mere 5.5% of the total.

6.3.3 Some general remarks on women in political committees

Carrol and Taylor (1989) contend that women generally serve on committees that handle legislation dealing with women, children and family issues. They also theorise that women are more likely to pursue these issues as legislative priorities. I focus on these areas not only because there are demonstrated differences in the treatment of male and female MPs, but also because it is assumed that these differences exist because women are more concerned about such issues. Termed 'women's issues committees' by Whip (1991), these are committees whose primary charge is legislation where women and children are the beneficiaries. Whereas Gertzog (1984) and Carrol and Taylor (1989) argue that women focused on these matters because they were 'ghettoised' into traditionally female areas, Thomas and Welch (1991) suggest that these areas are the expressed preferences of female legislators. The next logical step for me to take in this section is to test these assumptions in a different context, that of Cameroon, and investigate whether or not Cameroonian women MPs have more high-profile committee assignments and legislative priorities than do female MPs in Western liberal democracies.

6.3.4 The gendered nature of assignments in Cameroon's parliamentary politics

It is essential to start this section by explaining that Cameroonian MPs do not self-select committee assignments but are nominated or appointed to them by the parliamentary hierarchy. In a June 16, 1996, *Cameroon Tribune* No.2158 article, it was revealed that the President of the National Assembly, Honourable Cavaye Yeguie Djibril, had installed the elected members of the six committees of the National Assembly, on the previous day. The lists of those selected were said to have been forwarded by the leaders of the Party's Parliamentary Groups. This was for a parliamentary session whose members were elected in March 1992. It had taken close to four years to form the committees. Cameroon's National Assembly has 6 officially listed committees as follows:

- Constitutional Laws Committee
- Finance Committee
- Foreign Affairs Committee
- Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs
- Productions Committee
- The Resolutions and Petitions Committee

Bearing in mind the lack of self-selection, the gendered nature of committee assignments and leadership, as findings will show, supports my expectation based on statistics featuring labour market participation. Concerning the existence of significant gender inequality in this exercise, my finding here is therefore that Cameroonian women MPs have been more likely to serve on committees overseeing legislation on women, children and family issues. There are, however, further committees or bureaux associated with the parliament or the party, including the Women's Affairs Committee in the CPDM, and the Bureau of the National Assembly and the Central Committee of the CPDM. Table 6.2 illustrates the nature of responsibilities assigned to women MPs as well as the frequency with which each type of responsibility has been distributed.

Table 6.2 Female MPs and Committee Assignments

Name of MP and Terms Served	Assigned Committee and Period of Service	Type of Position
Gwendoline Burnley 1970-73 1973-78 1978-83 1983-88	**Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs (1978-83)** **Permanent Bureau of the House of Assembly** **Women's Affairs Committee in the CPDM Central Committee (1985-90)**	**Vice President** **Secretary** **Secretary**
Prudence Helen Chilla 1970-73 1983-88	**Finance (1970-73)**	**Secretary**
Isabelle Ebanda 1973-83 1983-88	**n/a**	**Secretary of the House**
Marie-Madeleine Fouda 1988-92	**Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs**	**Vice President**
Brigitte Gobe 1973-78 1978-83	**Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs (1973-78)**	**Secretary**
Julienne Keutcha 1960-65 1962-72	**Bureau of East Cameroon Legislative Assembly (n.d.)** **Bureau of Federal National Assembly**	**Secretary** **Secretary**
Rosalie Motaze 1973-78; 1978-83	**Constitutional Laws (1978-83)** **Assembly Bureau**	**Secretary** **Vice President**

Josepha Mua 1978-88; 1988-92	**Bureau of National Assembly (1978-92)**	**Secretary**
Emilienne Apouma 1992-97	**Production, Town Planning, Construction and Internal Trade (1992-97)**	**Secretary**
Cecilia Bomba-Nkolo 1992-97	**Constitutional Laws (1992-97)**	**Secretary**
Madeleine Mbono-Samba 1983-88 1988-92 1992-97	**Bureau of the National Assembly (1983-93)** **Questor (Whip) of the Bureau of the National Assembly (1993-97)**	**Secretary** **Questor**
Louise Mbouh Mengue 1992-97	**Bureau of the National Assembly (1992-97)**	**Secretary**
Rose Zang Nguele 1992-97	**Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs (1992-97)**	**Secretary**
Antoinette Oubough Fegue 1992-97	**Constitutional Laws, Human Rights and Freedoms, Justice Legislation and Standing Orders, Administration and Armed Forces (1992-97)**	**Member**
Delphine Tsanga 1965-70	**Legislative Assembly of East Cameroon (1968-70)**	**Secretary**

Source: National Bureau of the WCPDM, Yaounde.

[At the time of fieldwork in 1998, the membership of the 1997 session had yet to be made public].

Records at the WCPDM national bureau indicate that from the acquisition of voting rights in October 1946, through Mrs Keutcha's entry into parliament, in 1960 up to 1997, 99 seats have been filled by women. Since some women were elected more than once, those 99 seats were shared between 67 women featured in the list below.

Table 6.3

Women Members of Parliament in Cameroon, 1960-97

Name of Female Member of Parliament	Constituency and party	Province
Abdoulaye Fadimatou	Mokolo-CNU	Extreme North
Yaoube Kande	Mokolo-CNU	Extreme North
Salli Fadimatou Tikela	Kaele-CNU	Extreme North
Abunaw Rose	Mamfe-UNDP	South West
Burnley Gwendoline	Limbe-CNU	South West
Eben Francisca	Kumba-CNU	South West
Eyong Susanah	Manyu-CNU	South West
Mokeba Namondo Elizabeth	Limbe-UNDP	South West
Sack Francisca	Mbonge-CNU	South West
Tamasang Victoria	Wum-CNU	North West
Chin Celine	Kumbo-CNU	North West
Difo Gladys	Kumbo-CNU	North West
Lawong Bongfen Helen	Kumbo-CNU	North West
Lemlon Bridget Nsawir	Kumbo-CNU	North West
Uma Jospepha	Wum-CNU	North West
Bikoul Therese	Bertoua-CNU	East
Kankany Marie-Claire	Batouri-CNU	East
Marigoh Emilienne	Bertoua-CNU	East
Assiga Abanda Marie-Therese	Yaounde-CNU	Central
Bomba Nkolo Cecile	Yaounde-CPDM	Central
Fouda Anaba Genevieve	Yaounde-CNU	Central
Ndongo Juliette	Yaounde-CPDM	Central
Gobe Bridget	Yaounde-CPDM	Central
Elouna Agnes	Lekie-CPDM	Central
Eyeffa Salome	Obala-CPDM	Central
Fouda Tabi Isabelle	Mbalmayo-CPDM	Southern
Gandji Lydie	Ngambe Town-CNU	Southern
Lekoa Bibi Jeanne	Lekie-CPDM	Southern
Nwanack Sarah	Makak-CNU	Southern
Obouh Fegue Antoinette	Akomo-CPDM	Southern
Otabela Rufine	Monatele-CNU	Southern
Songo Esther	Bot-Makak-CNU	Southern
Tchoungi Mannette	Ngomedzap-CNU	Southern
Asta Yvonne	Figuil-CPDM	North
Sali Aissatou Ladi Sis	Guider-CNU	North
Ndigui Marie-Christine	Garoua-CNU	North
Bibowo Monica	Mbouda-CNU	Western
Keutcha Julienne	Dschang-CNU	Western
Koutchou Emilie	Nde-CNU	Western
Maffo Mondji Cecile	Mifi-CNU	Western
Momo Marie	Dschang-CNU	Western
Ngassa Lydie	Bafoussam-CNU	Western
Nguetti Foketchang T.J.	Nde-CNU	Western
Pahane Julienne	Bangangte-CNU	Western
Tchuinte Madeleine	Bafoussam-CNU	Western

Tontong Madeleine	**Bana-CNU**	**Western**
Tonnang Juliette	**Dschang-CNU**	**Western**
Tsafack Collette	**Bana-CNU**	**Western**
Vacolopoulous Nji	**Foumban-CPDM**	**Western**
Mba'Ale Emilienne	**Ebolowa-CPDM**	**Southern**
Mbono Samba Madeleine	**Sangmelima-CPDM**	**Southern**
Mbou Mengue Louise	**Kribi-CPDM**	**Southern**
Medjo Delphine	**Ebolowa-CPDM**	**Southern**
Motaze Rosalie	**Sangmelima-CPDM**	**Southern**
Ebanda Isabelle	**Douala-CNU**	**Littoral**
Mbang Berthe	**Yabassi-CNU**	**Littoral**
Moukoko Marcelline	**Edea-CNU**	**Littoral**
Oyie Ndzie Marie Therese	**Yaounde-CPDM**	**Central**
Bassa Botiba Florence	**Edea-CPDM**	**Sanaga-Maritme**
Kenmogue Yvette Claudine	**Baffousam-CPDM**	**Western**
Foning Francoise	**Douala-CPDM**	**Littoral**
Biwango Marie-Louise	**Yaounde-CPDM**	**Central**
Ntsogo Salome	**Sangmelima-CPDM**	**Southern**
Silikam Isabelle	**Nkongsamba-CPDM**	**Littoral**
Ndando Tomedi Victorine	**Limbe-SDF**	**South-West**
Tjoues Genevieve	**Bangangte-CPDM**	**Western**
Bekolo Marie Paule	**Ebolowa-CPDM**	**Southern**

Source: Cameroon Tribune, 21 July 1998. (The last ten are the 1997 MPs).

As Table 6.3 illustrates, starting with Keutcha who held the position of Secretary for 13 years, most women MPs who have held committee positions have been assigned that job over the years. The highest position assigned to a woman is that of Vice President of the National Assembly Bureau, occupied from 1970 to 1973 by Mrs Rosalie Motaze. In 1993, Mrs Madeleine Mbono Samba was made the party Whip. The highest position occupied by women within parliamentary committees has been that of Vice President held by Gwendoline Burnely and Madeleine Fouda respectively, the Committee being that of Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs. In the 1992-97 session of Parliament, five women were elected to the following positions: one questor (party whip), one Assembly Bureau Secretary, one parliamentary group Vice President, and two committee secretaries. This period also saw the inclusion of women among the delegates to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Union of African Parliaments (UAP) meetings. (*Cameroon Tribune,* July 1998).

The phraseology of the WCPDM National President's report from which I extracted the above information refers to all these trips as "achievements". Although the female

leadership of, and number of female members of these Cameroonian missions are regarded as an achievement, I hold a different opinion. They indicate rather that women parliamentarians are being increasingly sidelined into areas of concern which are thought to be specifically or uniquely female. Rather than seeing women as concerned with all aspects of political life, this reinforces the stereotype according to which women are concerned only with typically female interests or with what feminists have termed "women's issues".

It is on account of facts and statistics like the ones above that some social scientists are increasingly concerned with the ways in which social and political institutions, such as parliaments, shape the patterns of individual interactions that produce gendered outcomes. Maurice Duverger (1955), for instance, observed that however much women in government received the support and respect of male colleagues, equality deteriorated when keen competition for legislative leadership developed between them. Duverger (1955) added that he saw no signs to suggest that change is taking place in these conditions. Although he wrote in 1955 in reference to Western contexts, what Duverger said could also be said of Cameroon today.

As Table 6.2 illustrates, Duverger could easily have been describing the predicament of women in the Cameroonian Parliament who have been unable to access the highest ranks of parliamentary committees. It seems almost unnecessary to state that no woman has ever been "elected" to the position of Speaker of Cameroon's Parliament. Moreover, no female MP has presided over a parliamentary committee, and few have served on, let alone headed, any of the most coveted committees – Foreign Affairs, Resolutions and Petitions, and the Productions Committee. If I have to describe or analyse the "progress" Cameroonian women MPs have made in securing leadership positions in Parliament, my focus must of necessity be on secondary positions, those to which limited or token responsibilities are assigned.

Lorber (1991) offers some explanation for the discriminatory aspects that occur in situations such as that of the Cameroonian Parliamentary assignments. Lorber points out that when the occupation is symbolically masculine, such as politics, men are reluctant to allow substantial numbers of women into elite inner circles or to support the ambitions of more than a select few for leadership positions. She reckons that competition is one reason. She adds that 'It could be that men feel their profession will "tip" and become feminised if too many women were in high-paid, high-prestige, and high-power positions.'

(Lorber, 1991, in Lorber 1994:243.) Blum and Smith (1988) and Reskin (1988) have also suggested that just as one group seems to fear the neighbourhood will go downhill when too many of a devalued group move in, men professionals may be afraid that if too many women become leaders, their profession will become women's work, and the men in it will lose prestige, income, and their control over resources.

Carter and Carter (1981) have also commented that people from subordinate social groups do not become half of the work group unless the occupation, profession, or job specialty loses its prestige and power. This is because the leaders tend to choose successors to the top positions who are like themselves, not like the new people. Lorber (1994) believes that they don't want the new people to outnumber them and disturb the status quo. Needless to say, most of the secondary leadership positions portrayed in Table 6.2 are of middling importance.

In order to understand the more sharply etched division of labour by gender within the committee structure, with women assigned positions in committees that indicate women's lower status and lesser power in politics, attention must be paid to the women's wings of parties, and the dynamic which they produce. The role of the WCPDM/WCNU is significant as an access route into parliament. Collated data indicates that most women MPs have been politically conditioned in the Women's Wing of the party, CPDM. The table below (6.4) helps to indicate the relative importance of the women's wings as an influence on the entry of women into Parliament. It gives a cross-section of women MPs who were also members of the leadership hierarchy of the Women's Wing of their local party prior to entering Parliament. This confirms my hypothesis that affiliation with the Women's Wing is the dominant influence on women accessing the parliamentary political arena. Nevertheless, despite what Table 6.4 attests, once in Parliament, women politicians do not represent the WCPDM, for example. Women MPs represent, first, their political parties, and only secondarily the Women's Wing of their parties. Yet gender differences remain significant in the allocation of committee assignments.

Table 6.4 Women's party route to parliament

Name of female MP	Parliamentary terms served	Pre-parliamentary leadership position
Abdoulaye, Fadimatou	1973-78; 1978-83; 1983-88; 1988-92	WCNU Section President of Mayosava WCNU National Executive Member (1975-) Advisor of the National Bureau of the WCPDM
Asta, Yvonne	1988-92	WCPDM Section President of Mayo Louti (1986-96)
Bikoul, Therese	1983-88	WCPDM Sub-Section President, Doume
Eben, Francisca	1978-83 1983-88	WCPDM Section President, Wum
Eyeffa, Salome	1978-88	WCPDM Section President, Western Lekie
Foning, Francoise	1988-92 1997-?	WCPDM Sub-Section President for Douala III WCPDM Section President for Wouri 1
Fouda, Marie-Madeleine	1988-92	WCNU Sub-Section President in Yaounde, 1 WCPDM Sub-Section President, Yaoune V
Gandji, Lydie	1988-92	WCPDM Sub-Section President, Ngame-Tikar
Lemlon, Bridget Nsawir	1978-83 1983-88	WCNU Sub-Section President, Kumbo
Maffo, Mondji Cecile	1978-83 1983-88	WCNU Section President for the Mungo
Marigoh, Emilienne	1988-92	WCPDM Sub-Section President, Bertoua
Mbang, Berthe	1988-92	WCPDM Section President, Mbam
Mba-Ale, Emilienne	1983-88 1988-92	WCNU Branch President Angole, Ebolowa. Youth Secretary at the WCPDM National Bureau
Motaze, Rosalie	1973-78; 1978-83	WCPDM Section President for Dja-and-Lobo
Mua, Josepha	1978-83; 1983-88; 1988-92	WCNU Section President for Menchum
Moukoko, Marceline	1988-92	WCPDM Section President for Sanaga-Maritime
Ngassa, Lydie	1978-83 1983-88	WCPDM Section President for Mifi

Nwanack, Sarah	1970-73; 1978-83; 1983-88	WCNU Section President for Nyong and Kelle
Pahane, Julienne	1983-88	WCNU Section Secretary for Nde
Ndigui, Marie-Christine	1988-92	Branch President of the WCPDM Ndjoundja
Tongtong, Madeleine	1978-83 1983-88 1988-92	WCNU and later WCPDM Section President of Haut-Nkam
Tsanga, Delphine	1965-70	WCNU Sect. President Mfoundi President, National Executive of the WCNU
Apouma, Emilienne	1992-97	WCNU and later WCPDM Section President, Kadey
Abumaw, Rose	1992-97	National Secretary, WUNDP
Bomba Nkolo, Cecile	1992-97	WCPDM Vice-President, Mfoundi Section
Elouma, Agnes	1992-97	WCPDM Sub-Section President, Evodoula
Fouda Tabi, Isabelle	1992-97	WCPDM Section President, Nyong and So'o
Lawong, Bongfen Helen	1992-97	WCPDM Sub-Section President, Kumbo
Koutchou, Emilie	1992-97 (Alternate who replaced the MP)	WCPDM Section President, Nde (on promotion to the Cabinet)
Mbono Samba, Madeleine	1983-88 1998-92 1992-97	WCPDM President, Dja and Lobo
Mbouh Mengue, Louise	1992-97	WCPDM Section President, Ocean Division
Medjo, Delphine	1992-97	WCNU Section President, Ntem, WCPDM Section President, Muila
Nguetti, Josephine	1992-97	WUNDP Vice President of the National Bureau
Obouh Fegue, Antoinette	1992-97	WCPDM Section President, Akomo
Salli, Fadimatou Tikela	1988-92 1992-97	WCPDM Section Vice-President, Mayo-Kani
Sali, Ladi Sissinvou	1992-97	WUNDP Section President, Mayo-Louti
Tamasang, Veronica	1992-97	WCPDM Section President, Menchum
Tchuinte, Madeleine	1988-92 1992-97	WCPDM Section President, Mifi

Vacalopoulos, Nji Jeanette	1992-97	WCNU later WCPDM Section President, Noun
Zang Nguele, Rose	1992-97	WCNU Section Secretary WCNU Section President, Mfoundi
Gobe, Brigitte	1973-78 1978-83	WCPDM Secretary of the National Executive

Source: WCPDM National Bureau, Yaounde.

Of the 67 women MPs who have shared 99 seats between them, 42 gained their parliamentary position from the Women's Wings of their parties, totalling 62.2%. Of the 16 assignments, 14 had regularly served as secretary to committees (88.8%), making that role a female preserve. While these secondary positions ensured the representation of women in some committees at least, they nevertheless prevented them from obtaining more important positions within them.

Implications for obstructing women's full participation in governing institutions

Duverger's (1955) observation that equality deteriorates when men and women compete with one another for appointments to committees is confirmed in the Cameroonian context by the fact that women MPs have so far never been able to become members of those committees which deal with the most important and powerful issues, such as fiscal policy. What does seem clear is that party leaders set aside one committee, that of Education, Information, Culture and Social Affairs, for the concentration of female membership. They also singled out only 16 women since 1960 in whom to invest considerable confidence, and they loaded disproportionately large burdens on their shoulders while all but ignoring the other women MPs listed in Table 6.4. The chosen few (see table 6.3) tended to be women who, like Burnley, Mua, Mbono-Samba, Motaze and Ebanda, were, in the single party era, electorally secure. They were in most cases women who were prepared to compromise for the goal of the party, possessing ideological views that were transmitted to them within the Women's Wing mainstream.

While investigations would be necessary to reach definitive conclusions, my findings, even with their limitations, are still a useful and important indicator of the controlled, restricted and extremely limited role currently open to women in the higher levels of

Cameroonian politics. Assignments are consistent with circumstantial and attitudinal patterns, and they suggest that women MPs must survive not only the same trials which their male colleagues face when seeking a major leadership post in the House, but also, further limitations and disadvantages to which they are subjected by virtue of their being female.

The smaller number of women MPs can be seen as an important obstacle as well. If there were a larger number of women MPs this might force the party leaders to choose more women, for middle level positions at least, if for no other reason than that they would have more women to choose from. Earlier studies in the West also show that female politicians are more likely to feel representative of women in general when their numbers are high, that is to say, when they find a supportive climate. Under such circumstances, argues Kanter ,

> Women feel stronger and stand up for their rights, regardless of their political philosophy. This debate relates to several studies of minority behaviour, according to which a group representing 15 per cent or less of the total is perceived as a minority, as mere tokens, and this status may alter their behaviour.
>
> (Kanter, 1977:965)

Thomas (1991:970) also argues that 'women can only act as a legislative block to fight for women's rights and issues if they account for more than 10 per cent.' Table 6.2 shows that while this was achieved in Cameroon from 1978 up to 1997, it never reached 15% and in May 1997 it dipped once again to 5.5%. Perhaps Kanter's 15% is more realistic as a minimum starting point for women to make a real impact, and become something more than mere tokens, than Thomas's 10%.

In addition, Reingold (1992), Randall (1982), and Norris (1987) have developed an argument that the 15 per cent stands for minimum representation that women need to fight in solidarity with each other, regardless of their political affiliation, and 30 per cent stands for achieving their goals. They therefore suggest that if women make up more than 30 per cent in political institutions they seem to forget gender differences and work in the same way as males. The question such a theory provokes for the Cameroonian situation is: What clout have Cameroonian MPs got, with only 5.5 per cent representation at present, to enable them to influence committee assignments in a political culture in which party loyalty is such a strong factor? The answer is none.

Duverger (1955) expressed doubts about women's leadership opportunities in European governments, he also noted that these same women were usually limited to subsidiary policy matters. He pointed out that women in the German Bundestag, for example, occupied as many as one half of the positions on committees dealing with public health, welfare and juveniles. Few women sat on committees dealing with the Nation's budget and taxes, however, and none was a member of an economic policy committee. Brookes (1967) cites a similar situation in the United Kingdom as follows:

> It was unusual for female MPs to speak out on economic issues during debate in the House of Commons; and even in the years following World War II, they were inclined to limit their attention to legislative measures touching on health, education, matrimony, pensions, widows and orphans. When asked if he would like to see some women in politics, the then Conservative Party leader Edward Heath replied, *"Yes,...so long as they are providing what women can do and not just duplicating what men can do which would lead to them not making a woman's contribution.."'*
>
> (Brookes, 1967: 267. My emphasis)

Apparently, the parliamentary experience of women serving in Cameroon's parliament since the time of Keutcha is not fundamentally different from that of their European counterparts as described by Duverger (1955) and Brookes (1967). The segregation of women into "women's issues" committees therefore is a troubling one. Unless women are mainstreamed, they may be prevented from engaging properly with the full range of issues which are of interest to their constituents whom they are supposed to represent. They are also losing the opportunity to fill policy-making positions. The following factors may help to explain further this pattern. According to Gertzog,

> Questions of taxation, government spending, national security, the administration of justice, and business and commerce are the most consequential national agenda and apportion substantive responsibilities among law makers, they [law makers] are in a position to relegate female colleagues to policy areas of secondary importance.
>
> (Gertzog, 1984: 127-8)

Duverger (1955) puts forward a similar explanation. He suggests that the findings of his study are not so much a product of men and women possessing essentially different

interests and competencies, but rather a clear indication of male unwillingness to permit women to serve on legislative instruments that shape their countries' fundamental policies. The analysis and findings above suggest that traditional images of women's proper activity are still so strong in Cameroon that when women do enter Parliament, they are almost invariably considered to be extending their domestic roles to the arena of public affairs. All the above factors confirm my hypothesis that the 'ruling democracy', which shapes Cameroon's political culture, also determines and limits the opportunities which women have to become effective political representatives. Another effect of the party systems prevalent in Cameroon is that proportionately less women will achieve positions of authority within Parliament.

Based on the above discussion, it is probably fair to conclude here that Cameroonian women MPs faced a dilemma. They have to choose between a male-defined understanding of equality in Parliament which renders them invisible or, alternatively, a male-defined difference between male and female which renders them secondary. In general, they have gone for the latter option. Legal equality has merely allowed women into the political arena as an extension of their traditional role in the family, without disturbing or having any notable effect on the male-dominated political system. Women encounter the widespread cultural attitude that, regardless of voting rights, organised politics is and should be a man's world. The parallel with the United Kingdom in the 1960s is clear. Women will be let in occasionally, as suggested by Summerskill (1967), but only to concern themselves, as declared by Edward Heath, with the traditional women's issues. As the statistics and analysis have illustrated in this chapter, Cameroonian male MPs have effectively contained female MPs, preserving virtually all of the most important elected and parliamentary offices for themselves.

Lister (1997) has argued that this traditional marginalisation of women in politics

> embody a broad notion of 'the political', which incorporates a range of activities in the public sphere. The members of these groups face definitional hurdles to entry into the ranks of citizenry which effectively rule many of them out.
>
> (Lister, 1997:28)

Lister points to a distinction between her broad conception of citizenship politics, which is nevertheless still located in the 'public' sphere, and the personal politics which can also take place in the 'private' sphere. She uses this distinction to clarify what is meant by 'political citizenship'. She locates political citizenship in its active sense, in the public

sphere, that is interlocked with the private. At the core of Lister's conceptualisation of citizenship, is the idea of human agency. From this perspective, Lister (1997 : 36) conceptualises 'citizenship as participation [which] represents an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents.' Human agency is therefore of particular significance to my analysis of Cameroonian women politicians which is conceived as embedded in gendered social relations that deny women the freedom of choice in democracy. My interpretation of human agency is informed by Gould (1984), who argues that:

> if each human being is regarded as an agent with capacity for free choice and self-development, there can be no grounds for one gender to have a greater right to exercise this capacity than another and domination of one group by another constitutes a denial of the conditions of equal agency. Women's full freedom therefore lies in their ability to participate in the control of the economic and social conditions of their lives, as well as freedom from discrimination and domination.
>
> (Gould, 1984: 5-6)

For Gould (1988) the idea of human agency is typically used to characterise individuals as autonomous, purposive actors, capable of choice. She adds that the actions and choices of these actors constitute a process of self-development, of concretely becoming the person one chooses to be through carrying out those actions that express one's purposes and needs. Gould (1988) implies that in developing her self, the individual is also acting upon, and thereby potentially changing, the world, a world that she suggests structures the choices available.

In concluding this discussion, I return to Lister (1997), who makes it clear that the politics of women's political citizenship is not just about the advance of a minority of women into the political elites dominated by men, but about the genuine empowerment of a much wider group of female citizens. She points to the interrelationship between public and private which she suggests also underpins the strategies needed to free women to develop their potential as active political citizens. Lister also emphasises the importance of the representation of women in their diversity as equals in the institutional political arenas in which decisions are made, with implications for the routes into and the organisation and conduct of those arenas. Lister stresses the importance of distinguishing between women's political representation and women's political activity. She affirms the centrality

of informal as well as formal politics, and claims that the former is a central feature of women's political citizenship.

Having emphasised the importance of recognising the work of women's informal political action, Lister (1997:154) goes on to point out that 'it can only be part of the full citizenship equation for, on its own, a different politics runs the risk of being marginalised as an unequal politics'. She acknowledges that political empowerment through informal politics is not synonymous with gaining power in the wider society, and that both are needed. The final outcome of Lister's (1997) argument is that

> Any citizenship which promotes women's equality, as well as their difference, will need to engage with the formal as well as the informal political system. A more inclusive formal politics will require changes in the formal political system itself so as to make it more open both to individual women and the kinds of informal modes of politics in which many women will probably still prefer to participate.
>
> (Lister,1997:155)

A similar viewpoint has been articulated by Dahlerup when she suggests that:

> In the political sphere, the future development of women's citizenship depends on women, in their diversity, being actively involved, both through the formal and informal political systems. In the development of public policies, feminists have to learn to live with the state.
>
> (Dahlerup, 1994:117)

The arguments put forward by these feminist scholars on the political form of citizenship highlight concerns regarding the criteria of women's participation as citizens in conventional politics in the Cameroonian context, as well. Their suggestions support the findings of my research on the particular understanding of citizenship that constructs boundaries in Cameroon's organised politics. Access to power is the political goal of most Cameroonians who militate within the various political parties. The Cameroonian state and the ruling CPDM party are the source of that power, from which, as statistics show, most women have been excluded. Although the formal parliamentary system does not exclude women, yet through the process and practice they have been marginalised and the assumption is that women are less interested in politics than men. There is a clear gender-gap illustrating unequal participation. Statements from President Biya (1995) and Fomenky (1997) cited above, illustrate that the Cameroonian women electorate is more involved than the male in the party politics in terms of levels of voting and membership. There is however, no data to bear this out. This leads me to argue that it is therefore mainstream party ideology and agendas that marginalise women's political participation in

conventional politics. My finding is strengthened by Lovenduski and Norris (1995). They suggest that there is some evidence to show that the most significant factor influencing women's success in entering national politics is the electoral system itself, specifically the operation of proportional representation, multi-member constituencies and party lists. Cameroon operates the party list model presided over by a nominations committee. The reason for the absence of women from lists, or their inclusion on lists of unwinnable seats is aptly explained by Wilkinson and Diplock (1996:10), who suggest that 'since the agenda of politics is defined and articulated primarily by men, many women are bound to be disconnected from traditional politics.' Part of the solution to this inequality lies in Held's (1991:23) suggestion that 'citizenship requires some institutional and political protection, separate from and beyond the simple extension of democracy.' Nevertheless, all this does not mean that the Cameroonian Constitution and impact of women in politics since Keutcha in 1960 has been completely without effect. The problem lies in Cameroon's strategy of inclusion which, in practice, fails to bring about equality of opportunity between the sexes as a result of restrictions in the family code.

Conclusion

The data and discussions in this chapter demonstrate the fundamental relationship between women's representation and the particular party system and electoral system in Cameroon. The aim of the chapter was to illustrate that the failure of Cameroonian women to gain high levels of representation is a consequence of the operation of the party system and the electoral system. The analysis focussed on a number of related issues regarding the key political issue of women's representation. The argument concerning the revitalisation of democracy is one that Phillips (1991, 1993, 1995) proposes as a way of dealing with some of the inadequacies of women's representation. She argues for fair representation of women for a more participatory democracy. Lovenduski and Norris (1993) amass evidence to show the various strategies that have been adopted for increasing the number of women in the legislatures of western democracies. Party reforms, including new systems of candidate selection, new means of policy-making, the establishment of new structures have all been adopted. Party ideology is significant in determining which, if any, of these strategies are adopted. On the basis of comparative empirical research, Lovenduski and Norris (1993) show that the nature of the electoral process adopted makes a big difference to the actual composition of legislatures. Their amassed evidence shows

that the most significant factor influencing women's success in entering electoral politics is the electoral system itself, specifically the operation of the proportional representation, multimember constituencies and party-lists. The western case studies illustrate that factors which set the broad context of political recruitment in any country include the electoral system, political culture, legislative competition and party system. These factors also set the context within any political party in regard to ideology and organisation, and are regarded as being the most important factors influencing women's representation. Lovenduski and Norris (1993) demonstrate that the ballot structure, district magnitude and the degree of proportionality in electoral systems affect women's representation. They also discovered that opportunities for candidates to run are further influenced by the structure of party competition which occurs in the particular legislature. They conclude that it is party competition in the legislature which determines opportunities to become a candidate. Any analysis of women's representation therefore needs to take account of all three levels, and their complex interaction.

All three factors are found in the Cameroonian case. The difference between the Western examples referred to above and the Cameroonian case is that whereas women in the West have legally and politically received equal rights, Cameroonian women only have *de jure* rights. Moreover, the concept of women continues to be tied to Family Law. The cultural stereotyping in the system of customary law has also been used to treat Cameroonian women as minors in the law, with few women able to access political offices and positions. Average female representation in parliament since 1962 is 6.1%, and many of the women are nominated only as alternative candidates. Despite the presence of some women in parliament and in ministerial positions, their particular ministerial portfolios and their low numbers hamper their effectiveness in initiating change for women.

Furthermore, in the Western examples, women are not guided to change. They fight for change themselves. The Western party systems and electoral systems are democratic enough to give women the opportunity to fight to change their status. Cameroonian women's ability to engage in political struggles in a similar way is bounded by the way they are integrated into the party system- in the women's wings of parties- on the margins of political decision-making. I argue that this built-in bias in the party structure, inhibits women's political skills except where they are necessary for social duties. A second task of the chapter was to explain why women's parliamentary committee representation in Cameroon is still so low. I used available data to identify committee assignments of

women MPs, and ascertained that they were assigned mostly to "women's issues" committees. To account for the variations in the number of committees and committee assignments, I analysed the number and type of committees on which women MPs sat, and the nature of the committee assignments they held. In a political sense, the under-representation of women in Cameroon's Parliament may be the most significant road-block to the progress of women in organised politics in Cameroon. The electoral system influences the relative representation of women by inhibiting their advance through the reluctance of the party selection committees to nominate them for winnable seats. When women do receive nominations, they may be disproportionately selected for unwinnable seats or as alternatives to first choice male candidates so that they can win only token nominations. Records show that only two women so far have succeeded in accessing Parliament from the secondary position of alternate nominees. The first was Marie-Jeanne Lekoa Bibi who was elected as alternate member in the 1992 parliamentary elections, and took her seat in November 1996 when the substantive male MP was promoted to the position of Cabinet Minister. The second example is Emilie Koutchou who became an MP in April 1992, for the same reason. The causes of persistent inequality of political opportunity are located in male power, and institutions like parliament and the party are structured to further male interests. Women are viewed largely as powerless when faced with structures which appear in crucial ways to embody male power. Vallance highlights this view when she explains that:

> In many other areas of professional life, the pioneer women doctors, barristers and academics seemed to achieve rather more in the way of solid gains and real acceptance of women in their professions. Women in Parliament, on the other hand, always appear rather to be there on sufferance. The odd talented individual is given recognition, but this does not necessarily appear to accrue to the breed as a whole.
>
> (Vallance 1979:5)

Vallance (1979) draws attention to the fact that women having to prove themselves is not limited to politics, although to do so in politics is more difficult than in other professions, as she agrees that politics is different from other professions. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that Cameroonian women MPs are directed toward committees concerned with issues generally believed to be peculiarly within the competence of their gender. Although gender stratification in the context of the Cameroonian marketplace is apparently a consequence of its social and cultural relationships, this issue alone cannot be used to determine heightened stratification in politics, especially

stratification according to gender. It is necessary to examine in depth the interaction of political factors with cultural elements starting in the next chapter with personal narratives embodying the experiences of three Cameroonian women politicians. This will exemplify the opportunities and barriers that women face in conventional politics in Cameroon.

Chapter seven

An analysis of the personal narratives of three

Cameroonian women politicians

6.1- Chapter issues

Cameroon is one of the first countries in Sub- Saharan Africa (SSA) to set up a governmental machinery for women's concerns, denoting a progressive attitude towards the advancement of women and equality of opportunity in all spheres, including politics. Other countries which like Cameroon had full Ministries of Women's Affairs by 1985, include the Ivory Coast , Gabon , the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly known as Zaire), Zimbabwe and Mauritius. By 1990 most SSA countries had some mechanism to monitor the impact of development policy on women. In spite of this, however, the political process in Cameroon has been complex, contradictory, and frequently both perplexing and uncertain in regard to women's political identity and participation.
This chapter sets out to do two things: first, it uses the personal narratives of three women politicians to understand the way state policies define, control and regulate women's participation in organised politics, and second it explores the devices which they use individually to gain access to power and shows how these devices are indicative of the way in which women are controlled and regulated. The personal narratives of these women will lead to the study of the principles that sustain gendered social relations in Cameroonian governing institutions. The aim is to explore the state bureaucratic and party political culture which has coercive power and therefore subordinates women in the political process. More importantly, the case histories are aimed at illustrating the arguments of chapters 5 and 6. Women's political identity in Cameroon seems to be hinged on the identity created by the party, an identity, I argue, based on sexual division of labour. A good example is epitomised in the responsibility given to the WCPDM by the National Party President, Paul Biya, based on their domestic and mothering roles, during the 1997 parliamentary election campaign:

> We have to mobilise. I mean unprecedented mobilisation. I am thinking of women – these militants whose number, vitality, dynamism, determination and fervent commitment impress us. *As keepers of the CPDM house*, women have to work within the party in order to build a Cameroonian society of [the] third millennium in which they would like their children to live..
>
> (Cameroon Tribune, Dec. 19, 1996. My emphasis)

There is much more to being a woman than just being a mother. However, although women have been given the right to vote in Cameroon since 1946, in practice they still fail to achieve any significant share in formal political power. Biya's statement, quoted above, suggests that the reason for this continuing, practical discrimination against women, in the sphere of political power, lies in the tendency to accord them a purely maternal role in society and define them only in the function of motherhood. In his rallying call for mobilisation, therefore, Biya confirms the existence of a structure that ultimately determines the distribution of rights and responsibilities in the larger society. This structure keeps women in a subordinate, domestic, 'mothering' and therefore private, rather than public, position. Gender, therefore, has been the classification most potent for restricting the formal entry of women into the political arena in Cameroon. The ideology of women as 'housekeepers of the CPDM' undercuts and overrides any and all representations of women's selfhood, and interests, derived from female identities other than those based on the domestic stereotypes. In addition, such a division of labour indicates that women are wanted in the male sphere only on the basis of their cultural connectedness to their biology. This supports the feminist view (see Ramazanoglu, 1989; and Cockburn, 1991) that the social practices that construct gender relations neither directly express, nor are they without reference to, natural biological differences.
Biya's allocation of political campaign tasks on the basis of gender further indicates that it is men who dictate the occasions on which women's biological difference is relevant for the public sphere and on what terms. Although worked out in reference to a different context, Cockburn's (1991:163) remark to the effect that 'Women's domestically defined, sexually-defined, differently-perceived labour power was an important source of capital accumulation,' can aptly be applied to the political campaign of the CPDM. Women' s usefulness within that campaign, and ultimately within the public sphere itself, was defined in domestic and sexual terms and perceived in a way which restricted their political involvement to certain very limited activities. Biya's rallying campaign speech revealed a two-layered system of politics in which women received formal political credit only for the value of their mothering role. Such a gendered division of labour serves as a criterion to evaluate the aims and outcomes of equality of opportunity in relation to male hierarchy within politics. As President both of the Republic and of the ruling CPDM party, Biya's campaign instructions were delivered with the power and authority invested in him.

The same authority could be used to change those organisational structures and operating rules within the CPDM party, which build gendered political constituencies. The fact, however, that Biya does not recognise the need to go beyond support for women's party activism, based on their mothering roles, is an important factor to bear in mind in any study of gendered political participation in Cameroonian governing institutions.

Focus on the personal narratives of three Cameroonian women politicians emphasises the way in which individuals are constructed and normalised by the power relations within the Cameroonian social system. The use of personal narratives is attractive for two reasons:

(1) personal narratives distinguish the way the particular context of Cameroonian politics influences, limits or determines the forms and subjectivity men and women take;

(2) women's experience is the foundation of my theoretical framework and this approach recognises women as active producers of knowledge. Personal narratives are used as a springboard for experiential analysis in order to convert women's private concerns into shared public knowledge. They also serve to corroborate statistics featured in Chapters 5 and 6 above, and to examine the complex nature, significance and interrelationships of gender in Cameroonian politics.

I use these women's personal narratives in the full realisation that there is no 'typical woman's life'. Cameroonian women lead different lives and have different ways of interpreting issues. Nevertheless, all Cameroonian women's lives are influenced by the same social, cultural and historical context, and these women politicians' experiences are a valuable source of information for Cameroonian political culture regarding women as a group. The women whose personal narratives are featured here – Julienne Keutcha, Delphine Tsanga, and Rose Zang Nguele – are considered to be influential, prominent and well informed in Cameroonian political circles. They were selected for in-depth interviews on the basis of their expertise in having experienced active politics. Their experiences provide an overall view of women's political participation in Cameroon, and their insider's knowledge of hierarchical positioning based on gender can be a rich source of information.

In Cameroonian political culture, cabinet ministers are selected from outside parliament. Both Tsanga and Zang Nguele have held cabinet positions and represented the CNU/CPDM in parliament, but not concurrently.

It should be pointed out that Tsanga, Zang Nguele and Keutcha are French-speaking Cameroonians who agreed to be interviewed in English at my request. The same goes for Yaou Aissatou and Madeleine Fouda, featured in Chapter 7. This explains the imperfection of their grammar in English. By using English they went to great lengths to facilitate my work.

7.2.1 Mrs Julienne Keutcha

Career Outline
Family Health Assistant
Political Positions
First Cameroonian Woman in the National Assembly
1960-65: East Cameroon House of Assembly
1962-72: Federal National Assembly
Secretary: Bureau of the East Cameroon Legislative Assembly and to the Federal National Assembly
Member of the Cameroon National Union Party (CNU) Central Committee
(Interviewed: 14 August 1998 at the CPDM party headquarters, Congress Hall, Yaounde)

A family health assistant by profession, Keutcha, according to parliamentary records, was born in 1924 in Dschang, Menoua Division of what she refers to as a "troubled region". The said "troubled region" is the Western Province, which was well-known in Cameroon as the bedrock of terrorist agitation at the time Keutcha entered the world of organised politics. Among the problems French and Cameroonian authorities faced as they organised the transfer of sovereignty was armed resistance by the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), led by its founder Ruben Um Nyobe, who was eventually murdered in 1958. Cameroonist historians (see especially Delancy 1989; also Le Vine 1964, 1971; and Mbaku 1997) indicate that the armed struggle was waged from 1945 to 1970 between UPC and, first, France, then the regime of Amadou Ahidjo, Cameroon's first President. Ahidjo remained in power until the 1982, when he peacefully and unexpectedly left office. Le Vine's (1964) account of the struggle indicates that the UPC's resistance did not attain the level and ferocity of the struggles for independence in other French colonies, for instance Vietnam, which culminated in France's humiliating defeat at the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, or in Algeria with its National Liberation Front. Le Vine's account nevertheless emphasises that it was among Africa's fiercest, and a cause for concern to the French authorities and later to the post-independent Ahidjo government as well.

Keutcha's difficult political circumstances were further compounded by the introduction of a dual electoral system. Takougang and Krieger (1998) state that the electoral laws allowed for the creation of single-list electoral constituencies in northern electoral constituencies, Ahidjo's region of origin. Consequently, any party that won the majority votes in any particular electoral constituency in the North got all the seats in that district. By contrast, in the Southern regions (including Keutcha's Western Province), where Ahidjo's Union Camerounaise (UC) had little chance of winning, the election was conducted on a single-member basis. Under this system, victory was based on the performance of each candidate.

My first reaction was that such a system made Keutcha's task a daunting one. However, on second thought, I surmised that this worked to her advantage as the patriarchal attitude demonstrated during her campaign implied that she would never have been given the opportunity to appear on a male-dominated list. Keutcha was told that:

> A woman's place was in the kitchen, [by] my political opponents [who] harassed me everywhere, using all available means…
>
> (Keutcha, August 1998)

The system of voting in the South not only allowed candidates from the same party to run against each other in the same district, but was also intended to diminish the chances of any Southern-based parties from winning the majority of seats in the legislature. (Takougang and Krieger, 1998). In other words, a party that won most of the votes in a particular district did not necessarily win all the seats in the district. Whereas the multi-member system was accepted in the North, Ahidjo imposed single member constituencies in the South, particularly in the "rebellious Western Region." In such circumstances, Keutcha indicates that she pursued a well-calculated strategy that involved creating broad based support not just among the women folk, but also among 'many men of goodwill who helped me'. This, no doubt, broadened the legitimacy and support needed to carry out her political agenda. At the end of the election campaign, her strategy had succeeded:

> Out of the one hundred democratically elected MPs, I was the only woman – my relations with my male colleagues were cordial and in the meetings there was equality and mutual respect for members and their opinions.
>
> (Keutcha, August 1998)

Questioned on whether she had a clear idea of what she had to do with regard to the'many women who campaigned for me in their numbers with courage and determination', Keutcha replied thus:

> My aim was to defend the dignity of women, their role and place in society,...I fought for the rights of widows, the free choice of spouses, the possibility for girls to enter secondary schools at 14 years in order to enable them to catch up with the boys. You remember that young girls were often held back at home to help their mothers in child-minding, cooking, farming and fetching water in calabashes from the stream.
>
> (Keutcha, August 1998)

She stood up for the concerns of women during her time. Keutcha's greatest achievement was more long-term, however, and cannot be underestimated. She put it aptly in her own words when she claims that : 'I paved the way to the National Assembly for Women'(Keutcha, August 1998). Keutcha concludes her narrative by reflecting on the current situation of politics in Cameroon thus:

> In Cameroon, as elsewhere in the world, the problem of equality between men and women is not easy to solve. I wish more and more women would be represented in the public and private sectors, in the government and parliament and local council.
>
> (Keutcha, August 1998)

My meeting with Julienne Keutcha was accidental, and very brief. She had come to Yaounde as one of the celebrants at the Day of the African Woman in her advisory role in the WCPDM Executive, and as a pioneer politician. My chance encounter was an added bonus to my research endeavour and made up for the difficulties encountered with the numerous 'gate-keepers' I had to negotiate with in order to make my way through and get to her.

On a symbolic level, Keutcha is a model of what determination can achieve. Her narrative endorsed the assertion that women face discrimination based on sex in Cameroonian mainstream politics. This suggests that gender surpasses all other criteria as a political constraint for women. The fact that there was only one female MP, out of one hundred, implies that, for Ahidjo, the struggle for national unity was deemed more important at the time than the struggle for gender equality of opportunity. Women were mobilised to support the party agenda put forward by a male-dominated party hierarchy.

Keutcha's successful bid was important , as it provided the first significant framework for discussion and analysis of issues that were of great concern to women. Although these gender inequalities persist in the civil and customary laws on marriage, and continue to have a profound impact on the status of Cameroonian women in the public arena, starting with Keutcha efforts to overcome these barriers have been constant and ongoing.

7.2.2 Mrs Delphine Tsanga

Career Outline
State Registered Nurse
Political Positions
1964-68:President of the National Council of Cameroonian Women
1966-1969: Women Cameroon National Union (WCNU) President for Moundi
1969-85: P resident of the National Executive of the WCNU
1965-70: Second Woman in the Legislative Assembly of French-speaking Cameroon
1970-75: First Female Deputy Minister (of Public Health)
1975-84: First female Cabinet Minister (of Social Affairs)
International Activities
1966-1976:Member of the Executive of the International Council of Women
1970-1976: Vice-President of the International Council of Women
1976-1979: President of the International Council of Women in Africa
1979-1985: President of the Regional Committee for the Integration of Women in Development
1979-1984: President of the Board of Directors of the United Nations Institute for Research and Training of Women (INSTRAW)
1984-1986: Member of the jury of the UNESCO International Committee for Literacy.
(Interviewed in her home on 1st September 1998. She interweaves her experience as MP with that of her ministerial career, in some responses.)

> The matter is not if you are a woman or not. It is a matter of politics. You have to know that in Africa in general, Social Affairs is a very small part of politics…You know, I put ten years in the Ministry of Social Affairs before they allowed me to put the word "handicapped people" in the programme, the governmental programme, because they did not want it. They always told me, "Madam Tsanga, we have a lot of problems. You are now bringing handicapped people. They are not very important." Cameroonian state authorities said, "don't we have enough on our plates already? Madam Tsanga creates problems."
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Tsanga's case is particularly interesting because she dominated women's politics in Cameroon for two decades. The first female Deputy Minister elevated to a full Cabinet

position in 1975, she personified the institutionalisation of women's domestic roles, reflected in the positions she held.

The main way in which Tsanga talked about Keutcha was in terms of the gender significance of her achievement at becoming the first Cameroonian woman MP. At a time when customs were an even bigger obstacle to women's active participation in the public sphere, Tsanga admits that her courage to access this male-dominated arena was 'spurred on by the example set by Mrs Keutcha Julienne [because] women were not accepted in the political arena'(Tsanga, September 1998).Tsanga also admits to receiving a little help from Germain Ahidjo, the First Lady of Cameroon at the time, and her very close friend.

> Fortunately for me, I was a big friend of the First Lady….She was the one who put my name forward [to her husband, the President]; ….the first time to be in the House [of Parliament] and the second time to be in the Ministry. When she wanted to, she simply told her husband that she wanted a woman in the Government. "Do you have a particular woman in mind?" "Yes, I have Madam Tsanga". He said, "Every time, Madam Tsanga, every time, Madam Tsanga. What do you have with Madam Tsanga?"
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Pillow talk seemed to have played a big part in shaping Tsanga's political career. To my amazement, she voluntarily introduced the issue of the much rumoured liaison between her and the President which led people to assume that Tsanga, more than any other woman in Cameroonian politics, owed her political success to the bedroom of the President, Ahidjo. She introduced the issue to demonstrate how her public role impacted on her private life:

> Because your husband is sometimes jealous,..and because people especially, thought that [for a woman] to be appointed a Minister, you have to be the girlfriend of some man who has a very high position. It was not, it is not true. At that time, it was difficult to make people agree that it was not true.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Nevertheless, there were times when Tsanga used this rumour to great advantage on behalf of women, as she explains here.

> Once, I remember, I had a lady who was appointed vice Director of Plan, [within the Ministry of Planning which was responsible for putting together Cameroon's Five- Yearly Plans] Madam Tankeu [she later became Minister of Planning]. Each time the male Director was appointed to a higher position, another male Director was appointed in his place, jumping Madam Tankeu over. This happened a number of times. So I called the woman and asked her what was happening. "Why is it that every time they appoint your Director [to a higher position] you only remain an assistant?" She said, "I don't know". I

walked up to the Minister. I told the Minister, "Next time, if this woman is not appointed, you will see!" And it was in this way I was working.

(Tsanga, September 1998)

It is necessary to explain more explicitly how this story is related to the rumour about Tsanga being the President's mistress. The Minister got scared because he believed the rumours about the liaison, and thought that Tsanga had more influence than she actually had. Tsanga knew this, and used it to advantage.

This part of Tsanga's narrative exposes four strands of women's struggle in the public arena. First, as has been discussed in chapter 4 above, and as the feminist scholar Pateman (1988; 1989) has demonstrated, this is a good example of the fraternal pact of brotherhood in the workplace. Second, Tsanga's attempts to have Tankeu's abilities recognised confirms Cockburn's (1991) analysis that while men in powerful positions may well see good reason to introduce fairer practices in recruitment and promotion, it is seldom men who raise the issue of sexual politics. Third, Tsanga's longevity in politics prompted her to become more conscious of discrimination and to organise spontaneously, for positive measures for women at work. Fourth, in confronting the Minister, Tsanga challenged the assumptions of life in governing institutions where men do not relinquish their privileged position voluntarily. In Cockburn's (1991:17) words, 'men are not about to let down the drawbridge on their castles....Men have a higher status at work and, through their work, in social life....They have the power to keep women down,... their status amplified by having women working beneath them.' Tankeu's example in Tsanga's narrative also demonstrates that institutional and cultural means are used to impede women. Such bureaucratic hierarchical organisation, then, is, according to Cockburn (1991:47) 'one face of the social contract'. So who is Delphine Tsanga?

On the Cameroonian political stage Tsanga was, at the height of her political career, the most senior woman politician and was often the sole Cameroonian woman at national and international conferences. Tsanga was given her own portfolio as a Minister of Social Affairs when the Ministry of which she was deputy, Health and Social Affairs, was divided into two ministries in 1975.

Since Tsanga combined her ministerial role with that of the President of the Women's Wing of the single national party at the time, the WCNU, the Ministry she headed became popularly known as the 'Women's Ministry'. In 1984, Tsanga fell out of favour with the new regime of President Paul Biya and was relieved of her ministerial position and, at the 1985 Party Congress, was replaced as National WCNU (now WCPDM) leader. To appreciate Tsanga's sudden fall, it is necessary to consider it in relation to the particular socio-political context of the events of 1984 in Cameroon.

As already explained in the chapter 3, before President Paul Biya's consolidation of power, his administration faced in April 1984 the most serious political crisis to threaten Cameroon since the UPC activities. On the morning of 6th April, according to Takougang (1997), a faction of the military, consisting mostly of members of the elite Presidential Guard, also known as the Republican Guard, and a few disloyal elements, attempted to overthrow the Government. Takougang's (1997) analysis is that, perhaps because the party and its executive bodies had failed to express their support for the President during the critical period of the coup, Biya was quick to make personnel changes, first, within the Party, and then in the state apparatus. In May 1984, he replaced seven members of the CNU political bureau with seven new members considered his loyalists. Similar changes were made in the Cabinet and the upper echelons of the administration on 7th July 1984. The July 1984 reshuffle was the sixth reshuffle in Biya's presidency which had not yet lasted two years, at the time. Tsanga's close links to former President Ahidjo placed her under high suspicion, along with other close collaborators, of conniving with the coup plotters. In her own words,

> I was sacked from all the positions; from the Ministry, from the politics, everywhere. This was a matter of what happened in Cameroon at that moment. It was shaking, and you have to know that African people are not *ils ne sont pas mur, pour la transition*. We are not strong. No, not strong. We are not old enough, mature enough .We are not mature enough for the transition.You know when you look at the English-speaking countries when they are in transition, they are more gentle, but in the French-speaking ones, we the Francophones, we are not mature in this way. Africans are not mature. You know when they changed the old man,[former President Ahidjo] they put all his loyal supporters outside [of the political system]. You understand. That is the problem. When I lost my position [in Cameroon], I still had two [international] positions. I was a member of the Literacy Commission of UNESCO, I was chairperson of an important centre, INSTRAW. I was the first chairperson of INSTRAW. I chaired the Board of INSTRAW for two mandates. You know that in the United Nations it is not easy to have two mandates. During the second

> mandate, because I was no longer a member of the government, the Cameroon Government would not allow me to go for meetings by refusing to hand over my ticket. I could not write to them- INSTRAW and UNESCO- to say that they, [the Cameroon Government] will not allow me to go, that I am in 'prison', I cannot come because if Ido so, who knows what might happen? So I kept quiet. That is why I lost everything.
>
> (Tsanga,September 1998).

When I asked her whether it was as glamorous as we saw it portrayed in the media she said,

> My candidature was a bombshell. Nobody had expected to find me in the higher realms of politics. Suddenly, I was faced with astonishing reactions. Certain influential men started to put pressure on me to step down. Others spent their time setting their wives against me and threatening my husband at his place of work. It was felt that he had no power over me since he could not convince me to to withdraw.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

When the First Lady 'summoned' Tsanga, one week to the closing date for receiving lists in 1965, and asked her to put in her candidature, Tsanga's immediate reaction was to'ask for time to consult with my husband,...but my husband's consent was not enough' Here, Tsanga explained that giving her [or any woman] political responsibility very much depended on her matrimonial status.

> An unmarried woman or divorcee was automatically excluded from holding any posts of responsibility. If she was married, she had few chances of being appointed or nominated for an important political post. In any case, society did not quite view this well to the extent that even husbands were an impediment to the political progress of their wives.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Mitchel (1974) and Rich (1980) both feminist analysts of the marriage institution, have pointed out that not only is marriage a model for other social institutions of a sexual norm, but also that the ideology of marriage is embedded in the operation of other institutions, including politics. Tsanga's case bears this out. Tsanga's experience implies that women were not accepted in the political arena because of the Catch 22 situation on the issue of women's marital status. From Tsanga's explanation, the situation is paradoxical as seeming alternatives actually cancel each other out, leaving no means of escape from the dilemma. If a woman was married, she had few chances of nomination, as husbands don't feel comfortable with women as superiors. The explanatory variable is the Cameroonian cultural assumption that regards man as the principal breadwinner and labour market

participator. Yet, if she is unmarried or divorced, the woman is likewise automatically excluded from holding any posts of responsibility.

A number of feminists have developed theories to explain the type of situation cited by Tsanga above. Lister (1997:67) for instance, explains that 'A married woman did not exist as an independent individual, …which means that she lived under the 'cover' of her husband who, as head of the household, enjoyed the status of civil citizenship'. Having had her husband's consent to accept the nomination, Tsanga realised that

> my husband's consent was not enough. I had to compile an application file and I had very little time left within which to do this. Besides, I had not yet mastered the Party machinery. So I had taken my application to the President for the Yaounde City Sub-Section whereas such applications were being forwarded to the Mefou Section bureau…when the campaigns were opened, I joined a group which had to train me. The electoral campaign train was rough and exhausting.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Tsanga's predicament here raises a question mark over women's knowledge of the public bureaucratic system in Cameroon. Her complete ignorance of the procedure involved in formalising her nomination demonstrates the masculine oriented nature of public bureaucracy in Cameroon. It also confirms Cockburn's (1991: 47) argument that 'Bureaucratic hierarchical organisation, then, is one face of the social contract', and Jones' (1988) contention that politics is designed to fit men. It proves that though Tsanga had been a politically active woman prior to her nomination, she was more familiar with the more informal sector of politics and was not grounded at all in the formal political processes.On returning to politics in 1997, Tsanga joined the opposition *Union Nationale pour la Democracie et Progrès* (UNDP) of Cameroon; but this time, refused to be relegated to its Women's Branch for the reasons she gives here.

> I told them that when I entered the Party [UNDP], I never entered the Women's Wing. I entered the Party so I have a right to fight [for a position] in the Party, not in the Women's Wing. Men in their mentality found that the wing of women is under that of men. You see, if you are only in the Women's Wing of the Party, whatever you say there is looked upon as women's only discussion.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Tsanga's preference to militate only as a member of the main/male organ of the UNDP posed a threat to men. As explained in chapter 5 above, Cameroonian men and women militate in politically differentiated spaces. Yet Tsanga is not ready to allow her sexual difference from men to deter her. Pateman's (1988) argument that the bases of modern society are the social and sexual contracts, has been discussed in chapter 4. Tsanga's challenge can be likened to what Cockburn (1991) terms 'autonomous rewriting of the Contracts', adding that normally,

> it is only men, as men, who can take steps to square the circle, make possible the impossible. This is a necessary conclusion from recognizing the social contract for what it was - …When a woman …attempts to claim as hers a citizen's place in the public sphere, aspires to be a party to the social contract, she finds her entry ticket is unrecognized. When put to the test, the social contract reveals itself as an understanding between men from which women are excluded….a compact underpinned by male sex-right.
>
> (Cockburn, 1991:97)

Tsanga insists, nonetheless, that

> For women to break through the numerous barriers and successfully compete with men, they have to be 'plus combative' [more forceful].
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998).

She explains how she came to be in the opposition UNDP rather than her former CPDM.

> I tried my old Party [the CPDM] …I wanted to take part in the municipal elections. At that time they said that they do not need me. Then when they started to reorganise the Party, I wanted to take part. They said, "Oh, I am not very useful for the Party." so I said, "Okay, since I am not very useful for the CPDM, I will try to find where I can be useful, so I jumped and went to the UNDP Party. I am back. I have started doing politics again.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Prior to this, as Tsanga explained, although she was officially not under house arrest, it seemed so in everything but name. She was ostracised by all and sundry for close to 12 years. During that period of total isolation, when even her relatives, in fear for their lives and livelihoods as civil servants of the CPDM regime, cut off links with her,

> No-one invited me nowhere, nowhere! Even calling my name was taboo and they say I did nothing for women.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

A note on the origins of Tsanga's political career

Tsanga explains how she became President of the National Council of Cameroonian Women in 1964.

> I came back from France in 1956, I joined a group of women…and we started training women..on how to prepare food for the small children, because I'm a nurse. It was not easy at all. Sometimes I would spend a whole day, nobody would come…A lot of people from the North did not want me to go and talk to their women…Then in 1964, I was appointed Chairperson of this group, Evolution de Femmes Camerounaises (EFECAM) [church-related]. Six months later, there were a lot of fights in our National Council of Women Association [secular]. So they came to me and said they wanted me to be their President, to challenge the former President. I was not ready. I said, "Oh, I'm not ready. I'm young and I am pregnant. I have small children. I have no time", but they insisted and I was elected. It is from that time I started my work on the national level.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

I then asked her whether this EFECAM was a state-run or a Church-related organisation. She responded that it was a non-governmental organisation (NGO) then went on to explain how she became a National President of the WCNU.

> I [extended] this training across the nation and women started to become conscious that they had to do something about home management. At the political level, when they saw that women [had become] very strong, they decided at a political meeting in 1965 that they cannot leave these women [out of the party] organisation because we were very strong, and we had a lot of courage…They told me that I had to give all the women to the party…During the next Congress in 1969, they organised a national bureau of women, and I was appointed [its] President.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

I then asked the following question. 'There seem to be overlaps. In 1964 you were already in charge of EFECAM, but you have also said that you were already President of the National Council of Cameroonian Women. Was that the same thing?

> No. I was National President of Women in 1964, September 1964, I was elected. At that time I had been already Chairperson of EFECAM…the same year.
>
> (Tsanga September 1998)

I then stated that Tsanga's history can rightly be likened to the history of the Cameroonian women's political struggle because she was a pioneer in that field. She

responded by claiming that the National Council was unique in its emphasis on the practical problems faced by grassroots women. It was active in local organisations formed to address community based issues that affected women's daily lives. However, the activities she enumerated were fairly traditional, such as training in home economics, arts and crafts, health and personal hygiene, literacy and income generating activities.
My argument is that the National Council of Women was significant in Cameroon because, as the first major women's group to operate independently of party-political or church structure, it provided a forum where gender issues were not subordinated to other priorities. With the co-optation of the National Council into the political party as an appendage, gender issues then had to compete for attention in a crowded national agenda. This situation has its parallels to other African countries, as I shall now explain in a brief excursus in order to put the Cameroonian experience in its wider context.

Excursus on the 'Women's Movements' in other African countries

The integration of the National Council of Women into the party political machinery as explained by Tsanga, seemed to have been the pattern at the time in SSA.
Staudt (1986:208) gives the example of the Ghanaian situation under Kwame Nkrumah, explaining that:

> Women's associations, like other social groups, have faced a whole range of state strategies to control and limit their autonomy. In the most extreme situations, as in Uganda under Idi Amin, independent women's organisations were simply banned and replaced by government sponsored organisations. Even Kwame Krumah disbanded the Federation of Ghana Women and launched the National Council of Ghana Women under the control of his Convention People's Party.
>
> (Staudt, 1986:208)

Tripp (2000) indicates that in other instances, independent organisations were simply co-opted or heavily influenced by the ruling party, as in the case of Maendelo ya Wanawake in Kenya (MYW) [the Progress of Women]. She explains that although MYW, which was founded in 1956, had received government assistance since independence, the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), increasingly tightened its grip on the organisation and eventually took it over, making it a virtual wing of the party. She suggests that in 1981 the hand of KANU was seen in MYW's withdrawal from the

women's umbrella organisation, the National Council of Women of Kenya. She adds that after the pullout, President Moi effectively elevated MYW to be the sole representation of all Kenyan women. MYW was deliberately kept apolitical and any attempts to assert itself politically were swiftly squelched. This, however, did not last for long as, gradually, nods of approval and presidential assurances turned into directives and harsh reprimands. When the organisation found itself in financial difficulties, the government stepped in and took charge. By 1989, the government/KANU was managing the MYW's national elections. KANU continued to control the organisation as Kenya became a multi-party state, even after MYW formally separated from KANU in 1992 through a constitutional change. KANU instructed the MYW to postpone its national elections at least four times after 1992 to suit KANU interests. When the elections were eventually held in 1996, the party's heavy hand was evident from the way in which the elections were run and it was not a coincidence that the outcome was weighted towards pro-KANU candidates. It stresses that none of the new leadership belonged to any of the opposition groups. It adds that the MYW's new leader, Zipporah Kittony, was a KANU stalwart and a member of the same Kalenjin ethnic group as the President. (A. C. May 1996 in Tripp 2000: 9-10).
Tripp (2000) has argued that patronage infused women's organisations tied to the ruling party, and kept the leadership of the organisations in many cases focused on personal advantage rather on a commitment to the broader goals of a women's movement. She further argues that:

> in other instances, women's wings and organisations tied to the state catered to one group of women at the expense of other groups generally focusing on urban women at the expense of rural women, married women rather than single women, older women rather than younger women, and sometimes less educated women as opposed to better educated women.
>
> (Tripp, 2000: 14)

The experience outlined by Tripp here could also be true for Cameroon. However, to the extent that my investigation was focused on exploring 'gendered' politics, these are areas that need further examination. Some of the issues Tripp raises are however unavoidable in the context of patronage politics prevalent in Africa. To the extent that patronage has tied the WCPDM to the ruling party and government in Cameroon, it has also constrained the agendas and tied the objectives of the WCPDM to those of the party-state. The system encouraged Tsanga, and Yaou Aissatou after her and probably, whoever will eventually

take up Yaou Aissatou's mantle, to build up the voter base and "cheering section" of those in power. This mechanism, however, does not allow them to demand power for themselves or to make demands of their own, on behalf of the women they lead. As a political theory, it is similar to the brand of Socialism with the party-state as administrator, imposing a centrally controlled discipline on the population.

Nzomo (1996), Hirschmann (1991), and Geisler (1987) have all argued that women's organisations were kept apolitical, focused on narrowly defined 'development' activities such as family planning, nutrition, health, women's morality, childcare and home- making skills. Geisler (1987) suggests that this served to marginalise their leadership and channelled women into mobilising around a narrow set of issues, which in a country like Zambia, under UNIP, this resulted in a focus on women's morality.

Hirschman, (1991) gives a further example of the late President Banda, of Malawi who required women from the League of Malawi Women that they be present at all official functions, dressed in party uniforms, singing and dancing in his praise. Nzomo (1996) writes of the Kenyan example in the same terms. Women's wings were often reduced to serving at celebrity functions, i.e. dancing, singing, and cooking at state functions.

The Cameroonian WCPDM shares many characteristics with these examples and in many respects has been constrained by the party-state in terms of the breadth of its agenda and capacity to effect major changes in the status of women as the statistics in Chapter 4 and 5 illustrate.

Further issues raised in Tsanga's personal narrative

One pertinent issue raised in Tsanga's narrative is the fact that the women were denied the freedom to elect their own leader. Tsanga was simply appointed to lead the National WCNU bureau. The women were therefore denied genuine autonomy, and deemed incapable of selecting their own leader. It is through such party-state manipulation that male party/government officials in Cameroon exercise indirect control over the women's organisations. Here too, the Catch 22 situation explained by Tsanga resulting from women's marital status also operates in other parts of SSA.Tripp (2000) refers to it by pointing out that women find themselves caught between a rock and a hard place.

> Some are penalised for being single women, others for being married women and neglecting their household duties. Some are told not to run in their parents' district, but then told not to run in their husband's district, etc.
>
> (Tripp, 2000:18-19)

Though Tsanga did not experience the dilemma of whether or not to run in the constituency of her birth or by marriage, Zang Nguele, featured in the next section, did. Finally, Tsanga's narrative and experience confirms that the activities carried out in the WCNU/WCPDM reinforced gender subordination as the party/state run group mirrored the state's conservative image of women as wives, mothers and secondary income earners. This left no room for women's self-determination and autonomy. The situation notwithstanding, Tsanga stands out in Cameroonian politics as a woman whose active contribution demonstrated to the male elite that women too can be of service to the state, albeit in a secondary role.

Above all, Tsanga's narrative highlights some of the contradictions of women's exclusion from the power hierarchy of national politics as well as some of the inner conflicts that plague them when they accept public positions. Tsanga was guiltily aware that she had sacrificed some of her responsibilities as a mother and family carer to her professional interests. This was aggravated by her husband's resentment not only in the change in marital sex-role economic relations but also on the amount of time spent outside the house. Tsanga did not wish to subordinate her public role to her private domestic responsibilities but at the same time she did not wish to alienate her husband, neglect her children, or jeopardise her marriage.

As she recounts below, she resolved this dilemma by pushing herself harder in trying to balance the two:

> I tried to look after my children as well as I could, but it was not easy because, sometimes, I had to leave them for months. Sometimes I went on a mission, sometimes I will have meetings but it is very tiring for a woman. You have to try more than a man because when you go back to your house, you look after your husband, you look after the children….my husband [was] sometimes jealous, he might want you to look after the house more than the time devoted to your work.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Here too there are parallels on other parts of Africa. Ogot (1980) writes about a similar situation in Kenya, as follows:

> Suddenly, it seemed the tables were turned [on the husband]. She overheard a friend warning him to be tough with a woman minister, who might soon be drunk with power, and might forget that she was still a wife. She was the one who was given the free house, the free car, and a handsome allowance. Besides, all the doors that were closed to Teri [the husband] were yawning to receive her-with security escort and all .
>
> (Ogot, 1980:10)

Tsanga quite rightly pointed out that male politicians do not have such inner conflicts based on their sex-roles. In addition, Cockburn (1991) has argued that when women put their families before their careers, they are responding to a generalised cultural mandate that is mediated through direct pressures from their husbands at home and other women's husbands in the workplace. It is a way of punishing them as professionals. Lorber (1994) has also suggested that, should any woman not make the appropriate "choice", to put her family before her career, both she and her husband often face subtle and not-so-subtle harassment from their male colleagues. Tsanga considered the women of Cameroon as her constituency even though they did not elect her. By her own admission, she worked to demand further representation for women and to fight for the placement of issues that were of particular concern to women, at the time, on the national agenda. She met resistance when the issues touched on sex-role changes.

> I had difficulties with MPs from the South. They always disagreed with me on many issues and each time we were deliberating on the status of women they never adopted my proposed amendments. Those from the North often gave me their support, except when my proposed amendments challenged the Koran…I succeeded to have the marriage age changed in order to fight against the early marriage of girls since this was an impediment to school attendance. I had also had instruments [i.e. I was also instrumental] in freeing women from refund of bride price.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Tsanga's narrative and the resistance she encountered epitomises how gender relations are articulated in politics. The way they are lived and reproduced are reminiscent of Cockburn's (1991) argument that:

> Due to its systemic nature, patriarchy is not something in which membership is optional. A woman cannot escape, even by climbing to elite status by marriage or career promotion, since she will modify her own subordination only at the expense of that of other women. Women as women can only be liberated from patriarchy through a struggle to change the system as the system.
>
> (Cockburn, 1991: 8)

Cameroon is, however, rooted in a traditionally male culture with women's concerns not viewed as a prime policy area.

Tsanga's narrative also indicates the scope of the agendas and the level of activities carried out by Cameroon's National Council of Women which was co-opted as a women's wing of the ruling party. The activities were more extensive. I deduce from this that it was as a result of the Council's greater autonomy from the party-state. The women's wing of the ruling party, the WCNU/WCPDM on the other hand, is constrained with party manipulation and control. The Council's greater autonomy to select their own leadership and organise themselves in ways of their own choosing was based on their collective needs, and on the leader's merit. That, in Tsanga's own words, is how she was chosen. Autonomy also allowed the Council to work along multi-dimensional lines, multi-party lines, for instance. Tsanga's experience in the opposition UNDP has taught her that this is not so with the women's wing/MINCOF of the party-state, as she recounts here, when asked about her opinion of the round table discussion (see Chapter 7) broadcast on TV from which she was absent.

> I went to see the Minister of Women's Affairs because, I think that if there's a Minister of Women's Affairs, she must work with women of all parties and she must work even with women who are not in parties. What we see most of the time when we talk of the Ministry of Women's Affairs [is that] they are actually talking about the women of CPDM. I attended a meeting; we attended a meeting....where most of the women were from the CPDM. The whole programme....was according to their own [CPDM] programme; according to their desire. I did not feel fine. One of them started talking about the Opposition and...laughing...as if she was talking about foolish people. ...So I told the Minister that if you are the Minister for Women, you must try to work with all women, because from my point of view, you are only working for the CPDM...Now, when they have a meeting,...they [don't] call the women from the Opposition...or they just inform you at the last minute. So only women from the CPDM attend these meetings.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

All this is due to the political party manipulations which do not encourage a more inclusive political culture in a competitive multi-party atmosphere. Through such control, the party-state reinforces the marginalisation of women by women by keeping them peripheral to political engagement even within an apolitical women's agency like the MINCOF. This is a consequence of the CPDM control of the MINCOF resulting in the

conflict among women (as exemplified by Tsanga's experience) over its real role. It all boils down to autonomy.

7.2.3 Rose Zang Nguele

Career Outline
B.A. (Modern Letters)
Post-graduate Diploma in Comparative Literature
1972-1982: Secondary School Teacher (French and Spanish)
Political Career
1976-1981: WCNU Secretary, Mfoundi Division
1986-1990: WCNU President, Mfoundi Division (2 terms)
1985-1990: 1st Vice President, WCNU National Bureau
1990 - Member, CPDM Central Committee and Member of the CPDM Disciplinary Council
7th July 1984-5th May 1988: Minister of Social Affairs
1992-1997: Member of Parliament

(Interviewed on 27th August 1998 at her home in Yaounde).

> As a woman, they [male politicians] say I do not have to be straightforward. Yes, they say that that is the problem. They say that a woman politician does not have to be like I am. I've [got] a bad temper. It is what they say.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

It is evident that Zang Nguele thought that the combination of being a woman and being forceful in politics was used as a category to exclude her from the public arena. Zang Nguele's reaction has resulted from her bitter disappointment on her elimination at the primaries of the 1997 parliamentary elections by the CPDM local nominations committee. Zang Nguele believes that her non-selection has nothing to do with her competence as a politician.

Nevertheless, it is important for me to acknowledge here that this is only her side of the story. There are other interpretations of it, which might also have validity or shed further insight. On the basis of her personal narrative and experience then, I argue that Zang Nguele's aggressive and forceful manner of approach is normally considered as masculine and therefore unsuitable for a 'woman politician'.

> Woman is used to destroy another woman, because they accepted to be manipulated by men, you see. When a woman is too active, too hard, too strong, they look for another woman to fight against her.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

Zang Nguele's narrative here implies that male politicians think she is not cut out for political responsibility any more because she is bad-tempered. I say, 'any more', because she has been charged with a ministry and accessed parliament, both on the CPDM ticket. She has been given the opportunity on more than one occasion and the CPDM's refusal to endorse her candidature could be based on their negative feelings about her. Those who refused her in this way, may have done so on the account of their not having good relations with her. They felt that she was a difficult character, and that her supposed "difficulties" in relating to other people would be projected on to the public sphere.

It could also be that Zang Nguele is being excluded from formal party politics because she had broken links, while in office, with the informal clientelist networks which exert powerful political influence during nominations and elections. Patronage politics, as discussed in Chapter 5 above, rarely benefits women as a group. Nevertheless, Tsanga's case (7.2.2 above) shows that it can benefit a few women who have personal ties, directly or indirectly, with the national leadership.

Such patron-client politics still prevail in Cameroon where claims to authority based on personal relations of loyalty and dependence on clients, often stand above merit. This is because, in spite of what most politicians claim, public office is sought for personal gain rather than primarily to perform public service. These patron-client practices have characterised political participation in Cameroon, since independence. Zang Nguele's reference to the use of other women to destroy her political ambitions is therefore not surprising. There are two reasons for this: First, other women also want a share of the perks that go with successfully accessing the public arena of conventional politics, and politics is a very competitive arena.

The second reason lies in Cockburn's (1991) justificatory analysis of woman to woman antagonism:

> While some women defend them, others say women in authority become strident and aggressive, and there is a complex reality behind these words. The environment they have joined, which is that of men of power, has threatened to repel them if they do not adopt its culture. Yet, once such women have made a decision to compete with men, there is a tendency for them gradually to take on masculine traits. It is not surprising they often disappoint their sisters below.
>
> (Cockburn, 1991:69)

Zang Nguele's statements confirm Cockburn's (1991) analysis. Zang Nguele's conscious decision to emulate masculine aggressive behaviour because power and authority are defined as precisely masculine, contradicts Cameroonian cultural norms of a woman's proper place in society. De Beauvoir (1953) has argued that in patriarchal culture, the masculine is set up as the positive or norm and the female or feminine is set up as the negative or 'other'. De Beauvoir believed that women as 'other' are defined by men as inferior. Zang Nguele's narrative indicates that it is not only men who resent her forceful attitude in politics as people of her own sex also turn against her. Schor (1994:48) clarifies the problem of 'saming' and 'othering' thus: 'If othering involves attributing to the objectified other a difference that serves to legitimate her oppression, saming denies the objectified the right to her difference'. In the light of Schor's explanation therefore, Zang Nguele has both been 'othered' and 'samed'. Schor explains that it is not always easy to distinguish these opposing strategies since both seem to happen simultaneously, to the same 'others'.

It is a dilemma in which Zang Nguele finds herself trapped. For a woman who claims to want to be taken seriously for her skills and career potential in politics, it is a problem to know when to hide her difference from men and when to assert herself based on her constitutional rights. I then asked the question, 'They call you bad-tempered, what do you call yourself?'

> I think that I'm obliged sometimes to be bad tempered. When you are in politics and if you are a woman, you have to be submissive, and you have to be submissive 'doublement' [doubly]. If a man is submissive once, you have to be it twice. You have to prove that you are small, you're smaller than them who have power. When you are very proud of yourself, when you are conscious of your value, they don't like it. Men like to be always at the top, yes, to dominate. Domination is not a bad thing, but when you dominate with respect, you see. But when you dominate to crack, to crush, when you want to be wicked, you see, to destroy, it is not good. And when you refuse, you deny that domination, that kind of domination, you are considered like somebody who is very proud, too arrogant. It is a problem.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

The arguments raised by Zang Nguele in this section of her narrative portray her personal struggle to depart from the party-state's imposed identity on women in the political arena. Perhaps her ultimate aim is to assert herself and to push for the advancement of Cameroonian women and the betterment of Cameroonian society in general. Her rhetoric

however does not imply that. My interpretation of her experience here is that it is not consciousness of all the disadvantageous position of all Cameroonian women that spurs her on. Rather, it is her self-awareness of her own rights, skills and values as an 'equal' political force within the CPDM party,combined with her knowledge that within that party gender differences nevertheless have a determining effect on the positions which people can attain, and place considerable limitations on women.

Zang Nguele's lengthy C.V. shows that she represented the WCNU National Bureau at the Preparatory Workshop of the United Nations Women's Conference in September 1975. She was a member of the Cameroon Parliamentary Delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) from 1992 until 1997. She has had numerous opportunities to travel extensively within Africa and the West. I would suggest that Zang Nguele's self-awareness of her worth as an academic politician has inevitably emerged as a result of her association with these international bodies, with their gender-equality discourse. A distinctive feature of her political experience is that, as it progressed, she became more aware of specific problems women face and this gradually raised her consciousness of her rights and values. It seems that as her consciousness of gender equality of opportunity, even in politics, became more apparent and she became more assertive and forceful, she became more unpopular within the Cameroonian political culture surrounded by traditional sexual concepts entrenched in the CPDM ideology, where education is not particularly important. Zang Nguele finds it difficult to conform to the conventionally accepted norms which provide women with little escape from subordination. She highlights the gender struggle that implied male politicians' greater control over female politicians' lives. They criticised her in very strong terms: "proud of herself", "conscious of her value", "denies domination", "too proud", and "too arrogant". On the other hand, she takes these descriptions as an indication of her capability and political competence. She firmly believes that these attributes strengthen her politically.

Contemporary feminist theorists, de Beauvoir, (1953), and Millett (1971), agree that the subordination of women is a central feature of all structures of interpersonal domination, and Zang Nguele's narrative exemplifies this. De Beauvoir's (1953) argument is that because men view women as fundamentally different from themselves, women are then reduced to the status of a second sex and hence subordinate. Millett's (1971) theory of subordination argues that women are a dependent class under patriarchal domination. But

it is Millett (1971) who suggests that the way to end women's subordination is through the development of specific skills of co-operation and vulnerability. She believes that the two points could be a psychic starting point for the creation of a new society. This implies that Zang Nguele's head-on collision approach could be self-destructive. Zang Nguele's assertiveness is probably interpreted by the male politicians, and even by some women, as resisting what they consider to be legitimate patriarchal control over the conditions of her political participation. Hence their attempt to subdue her, through making her, metaphorically smaller than they are.

It is important to recap here that there was no significant women's movement in Cameroon like the ones in the Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s. Cameroonian women have not had to struggle for equality and rights themselves. In theory, they have been granted these by the state, in the Constitution drawn up at Independence. Since then, however, they have not found the space to do so, as the said equality is only in rhetorical terms. The implication of this is that these have therefore been granted on the Party-State's patriarchal terms. I argue that this is reflected in a general lack of gender sensitivity among male politicians who are barely conscious of the inequality reflected, for instance, in women's low representation in all spheres of the market-place and political life.. The party-state monopoly in the socio-economic and political domains, enabled state and party officials to wield considerable power over women's lives, as women depended on them for employment and even for social identity.

It is the male politicians therefore who are equipped with greater bargaining power and involvement in decision-making. Where women's interests conflict with those of male politicians, Zang Nguele's experience indicates that it is women who lose.

To appreciate Zang Nguele's present political predicament, it is pertinent to explain how she accessed high level politics. On 7th July 1984, she replaced Tsanga as Minister of Social Affairs, a position she held until May 1988. Prior to that, she was a Secondary School teacher of French and Spanish. At the party level, she was elected WCNU Section Secretary for Mfoundi Division in the capital city of Yaounde, in 1976. She was thrice elected as WCNU Section President of the same division from 1981-1990. She graduated from the then CNU Party Cadre School in 1981.With such an impressive array of party administrative portfolios it is rather puzzling to hear her say that on her appointment to the Ministry, her main obstacle was administrative inexperience.

> When I was appointed, I didn't have the slightest idea [of] how to run a ministry. I was 37 years old. It is not too young, but it is young enough for this position....my first task was trying to overcome many obstacles because many of my collaborators were older than I, [laughs]...The professional obstacles were many. Before the ministry I had not yet a big administration...The main obstacles for me were the knowledge, the technical know-how to run a ministry. You know, when you are a teacher, you go to teach in the classroom, you don't do administration. You're in touch with children, young people and so on. The relationship you have with them is not the same as you have with social workers in the Ministry of Social Affairs. ...My duties included women's problems, problems of couples, young people, school dropouts, handicapped people, disabled people.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1988)

Zang Nguele took over from another woman politician, also from the WCNU Presidency of Mfoundi, just like Fouda (see Chapter 8) after her. Tsanga, Zang Nguele and Fouda were squeezed into gender-specific and status-ascribed ministries, based on their culturally assigned sexual roles. This position is, however, seen in Cameroon as a sort of privilege for women to access the bureaucracy. This is because women are left with few occupational alternatives at that level to enhance their political status and their upward social mobility. The duties enumerated by Zang Nguele had earlier been listed by Tsanga (7.2.2) and by Fouda respectfully. Their particular areas of responsibility support the theories of Kanter (1977), Yeatman (1990), and Eisenstein, (1989, 1991), that the modern gender division of labour positions women as a gender class which is responsible for the privatised social relations of parenting, and of personal and familial ties. Cameroonian women seemed therefore to have been conditioned that this and the Ministry of Women's Affairs are the political currency with which they can be paid, as Tsanga states here. She was answering the question whether male politicians were using women against each other.

> You know, the main thing is that women are foolish. Women cannot [fight] to find other positions. They will gather their efforts to remove this woman because in their minds they say that this place [Ministry of Social Affairs] is now for women, so it is our place. They don't imagine that they can aim for another [Ministerial] position...They think that the only job for women is Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Women's Affairs. I have not heard a woman fighting for ... Minister of Finance. No! this is not good for women.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Having accessed the Ministerial position from the Women's Wing of the CNU, Zang Nguele admits to having only begun to understand how policy was developed and how the bureaucratic system operates after her appointment as Minister. This attests to the fact that the party education of its militants on policy issues and processes is defined by gender and status, because of the hierarchical party-state structure that marginalises women. Such fragmentation, which characterises the Cameroonian political culture, creates the kind of 'obstacles' encountered by Zang Nguele as recounted in her narrative. On such a basis, it is impossible to share power and political opportunities equally with men. It is through such separate spheres that the party-state creates the institutional conditions for women's participation in politics. Not surprisingly, therefore, Zang Nguele was full of self-doubt about succeeding as an administrator and bureaucrat, a hesitation that doubtless stemmed from her gender, from the responsibilities she was expected to handle in the public arena, and from her 'youthfulness'.

Another contentious issue raised by Zang Nguele is how the economic vulnerability of women hampers their access to organised politics. In regard to her failure to get the party nomination during the 1997 legislative elections, Zang Nguele alleges that:

> My enemies fought against me with money. They used money. This is one of the reasons, you see [why I lost the nomination]. I have not the means, ..no other means. I have no money…When..you take money, you go and give it to the President to be appointed, you can win. Many persons do it. It is the problem for a poor country like Cameroon. And if you are in a party ….in Cameroon, in [the] CPDM party, it is money which is very significant.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1988)

Zang Nguele did not name names, nor did she give examples, neither did I follow this line of inquiry. With hindsight, perhaps I should have. Nevertheless, stories about the use of money in exchange for votes abound in Cameroonian and SSA politics, even though the practice is in clear contravention of the law. Furthermore, taking money is usually no guarantee that the benefactor will be elected. There are gaps in this part of Zang Nguele's narrative which could have been filled if I had asked for clarification on, for example, whether these allegations are based on her own previous experience when she was nominated in 1992. My interpretation of her failure to get the CPDM Party nomination differs from hers. I suggest that the problem is more that of the withdrawal of the CPDM

Party patronage which supported, encouraged, and championed her cause before, at a time when she was even less well-known and less wealthy than in 1997.

Though I do not deny that Cameroonian politics, like those of most SSA states, could be rife with corruption, the conclusion arrived at by Zang Nguele about money changing hands, should be treated with caution. Rather, I argue that the system is heavily influenced by patronage politics, which thrives on making available only limited space for women on an equal basis. Patronage politics in Cameroon is through ethnicity, region of origin and, since the re-introduction of multi-party politics, it also runs along party lines. A further factor is that the CPDM controls and regulates both the WCPDM activities and the political party nominations. This is because the CPDM still operates a pattern of control typical of the pre-1990 one-party era. Ironically, allegations of corruption are only levelled against officials by those, like Zang Nguele, who have lost out. They never challenge or speak out against corruption and patronage politics when and if they are the beneficiaries. Nevertheless, patronage poses particular constraints on women, as a group, because no Cameroonian woman has ever held a patronage position in formal politics. From such a perspective, Zang Nguele is right to talk of resources, because women as a group do not have the leverage and financial power to exert influence through informal political networks. Tripp (2000) found a similar situation in Uganda and argues that:

> Women as individuals are not any less prone to the lure of clientelistic practices, especially in a society where patronage is sometimes the only route to power. At the same time, women as a group have been outsiders of these informal networks and have very little to gain and much more to lose from the continuation of such practices. Women's distaste for patronage politics, therefore, is not intrinsic to being a woman. Rather, it arises out of political, economic and social marginalisation, which has often allowed them to distance themselves from patronage politics and challenge it, especially when it has infringed on their interests…
>
> (Tripp, 2000: 179)

Zang Nguele's narrative revealed that a good number of politicians, of both sexes, run for office on account of the opportunities for personal wealth and access to party-state power. For these politicians, male or female, the question of how their constituents are represented is somehow beside the point as long as they themselves get material satisfaction. Zang Nguele herself concedes as much when she states that

> Oh, there is no disadvantage [to being a Minister]. When you are a Minister, there is no disadvantage. You're well lodged, you have a big house, you have a chauffeur-driven big vehicle you have things you hadn't before, you see. There, it is an advantage, big advantage. So you cannot say there are disadvantages, no. [If] you discover some disadvantages, you let me know.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1988)

Having tasted the fruits of power as revealed above, she cannot come to terms with having these privileges withdrawn and vows that for her, politics is not yet a redundant activity. It is the enduring source of her hope, as she emphasises that: 'I'm condemned, I'm condemned to remain in politics. I'm condemned. So I have to [change] my strategy, to improve my strategies' (Zang Nguele, August 1988). Zang Nguele is planning a comeback fight. I asked her how she planned to come back from this position. Zang Nguele now seems to be insignificant to the party and the state. She has said that after 1988, she was appointed Deputy Director of a newly created state parastatal, the name of which she could not remember. This structure was however, dissolved. 'They dissolved it. [Laughter.] They dissolved the structure and I had to wait for 1992, to fight election' (Zang Nguele, August 1998).I then asked her if the uncertainty surrounding her now meant that she would take a rest from politics. She said:

> You see, the President [of the Republic and CPDM Party] has appointed me Deputy Co-ordinator of the political activities in Mfoundi Division. The Co-ordinator is the former President of the CPDM Section. He is the main co-ordinator…He was my collaborator during all the time I was WCPDM President. It was very difficult. [He] was a very difficult collaborator and it was very difficult for me to work with him. It is this President who organised all the elite of Mfoundi against me. He does what he can to put me aside; not to work with me, but I am there. When he calls me, it is when he has done the job, after he has consulted many women around, you see. It is a formality to call me. (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

She is right to say that she is trapped, as they seem to have cornered her where they want her, voiceless, inactive yet under the control of someone she believes wants her out of politics.

> I speak about co-ordination to tell you that I am not aside, I am not aside [outside the system]. I am inside, in the party. I am working. I am involved but I am not. I cannot do what I am able to do, you see.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

The Zang Nguele of the 1998 interview seems to have lost the shine of the Zang Nguele of 1984. Around that time, according to her own account, she was hailed as a heroine by the staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs:

> I knew that when I arrived there, Madam Tsanga had led this Ministry for 14 years. So many people of the Ministry and in Cameroon also, I think, …wanted a change. Uhum, they wanted a change. So when I arrived it was like a breath of fresh air,… because they compare, you see, Madam Tsanga and I. They [told] me that in many senses, we think you're the person who'll bring something to us, to the Ministry.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

The apparent conclusion of one person's narrative, for example Tsanga's, is the beginning of the next person's, in this case Zang Nguele's. Zang Nguele's statement on the reception given her and her reference to Tsanga's 14 years which people had grown weary of, suggests that the heroines of one political generation are reduced in stature when the next generation takes over. Zang Nguele herself could now be regarded as a monster since the current Minister of Social Affairs, Fouda, is now being hailed by the media and staff as a hands-on Minister, unlike her predecessors.Tsanga herself remembers the period following her relief from every public responsibility as a very difficult time.In the context of Zang Nguele's current predicament , it is with worth repeating a quote I have already used from Tsanga:

> Everyone abandoned me. That is why when people are in politics, they must know that the day you are no longer in politics, you can be alone. You must be prepared for that. If you are not prepared, you cannot cope….You are so lonely, you are so lonely! I remained for a long time [when] no one invited me nowhere, nowhere! I don't know how to put it. Even calling my name was taboo.
>
> (Tsanga, September 1998)

Zang Nguele may not yet have taken centre stage as Tsanga has done in the UNDP, but she is plotting her return. Consequently, there can be no certainty that these women's political careers have indeed come to an end. Somewhere, in some form, their narratives will almost always continue.

Analysis

What is problematic for me with Zang Nguele's experience is that somehow, she has yet to realise that gender imbalance in the public arena is more than just an issue of perception.

Her symbolic inclusion as Deputy Co-ordinator of CPDM Mfoundi Division combined with the negative attitude of the male Co-ordinator renders her politically ineffective in several ways. This leads me to argue that if the system appoints a woman politician to a position in the party-state structure yet denies her the administrative status necessary to carry it out successfully, then the woman is being used as a label of progress in gender equality policies. Most interestingly, however, Zang Nguele believes that the most noble task that Cameroonian women can undertake at present is to join forces to undermine the system because it discriminates against women. Zang Nguele's personal narrative illustrates that if the government wants to show progressive attitudes by appointing women to decision-making positions, it needs to recognise that organised politics is gendered. Historically, the cultural attitude of Cameroonian men is to define, manipulate, regulate and control women's roles both in the private domestic sphere and the public sector. For Cameroonian men, for instance, it is reasonable to presume that the male 'collaborators' for whom Zang Nguele deputises, would interpret good leadership in the manner outlined by Lister (1997),(see 3.3.3):'heroic and strong, and upholding the realm of freedom, of the human' (p.69).Women on the contrary, they would probably characterise as 'dependent, passive, weak, maintaining the realm of necessity, of the natural and repetitious' (p.69). These men do not want women in the public arena who challenge and compete with them on an equal basis. I was reminded by one of Zang Nguele's former male collaborators at the Ministry, Koah Jean-Baptiste, that:

> The problem with people like Madam Zang Nguele is that they don't want to let go; they want to reverse tradition. In our [Cameroonian] culture, the hen knows when it is dawn, but it leaves the crowing to the cock.
>
> (Personal communication September 1998)

In many African cultures a crowing hen is considered an ill omen that must be eliminated through the immediate slaughter of the offending bird in order to make amends. By crowing as if she were a cock, she was assuming the male role. Hoffert (1995:1) has written on the moral attached in the West of crowing hens. Basing her analysis on a fable, she points out that the fable is instructive on a number of levels.

> It testifies to the control that men traditionally have had over the public discourse and by extension public life ("the right to crow"). It suggests that "crowing" (male language)... stands as a witness to the cohesiveness of the male community and its determination to protect the prerogatives of men against the incursions of presumptuous women.
>
> (Hoffert 1995:1)

In other words, 'hens do not crow', women politicians such as Zang Nguele have no business speaking out in a public arena nor standing for political office. . It is popularly believed that women were not supposed to speak up or express their opinion in public, as Zang Nguele does. It is a view that is deeply embedded in African patriarchal values. In negating the metaphor of the crowing hen, she is seen as defying custom, culture, discrimination, and marginalistion.

When I repeated this to Zang Nguele as an aside (without naming names), she retorted with a witicism of her own:'I don't blame him for saying that and I am not surprised. He is a man, and in the court of hawks, a hen is never found innocent' (Personal communication). On the whole, Zang Nguele's personal narrative and experience confirm Lorber's (1994:226-7) theory that 'when men choose a woman for a position of power and prestige, she is often considered "on probation"...men colleagues never really considered [women] "one of them"'. Zang Nguele relied on the goodwill of the men around her to maintain her high profile presence in politics.

Party loyalty, she claims, does not seem to be enough. CPDM men are yet to make major changes in the direction of gender equality because it would mean giving up their own privileges. Lorber's (1994) theorises that informally there are three concentric circles among colleagues – inner circles, friendly colleagues and isolated loners. She explains that power is concentrated and policy is made in inner circles, which are usually homogeneous in terms of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, social class, and education. She describes friendly colleagues as having some, but not all, of the social characteristics of members of the inner circle. She adds that although they are not totally excluded from the informal colleague network, they are rarely groomed to be part of the inner circle. She suggests that women with excellent credentials and work performance in occupations and professions dominated by men tend to end up friendly colleagues if they are of the same social class as the men of the inner circle, and do similar kinds of work. Otherwise, they become loners.

Influenced by Lorber's (1994) analysis, and the experience of Zang Nguele's political situation as perceived by herself, I argue that Zang Nguele simply failed to make it into either the 'inner circle' or 'friendly colleague' category. She seems to fit in with Lorber's (1994) 'isolated loner' category. Although enthusiastic and full of self-worth, she has been politically isolated by those she would,in Lorber's (1994) terminology, call 'the gatekeepers' of the CPDM party. The message being sent out to Cameroonian women politicians seems to be that women cannot afford to be as outspoken as Zang Nguele has been, or claims that she is.Apparently, this attitude seems to have lost her the opportunity to stay on and continue to militate at the top level of party politics within the CPDM.

Conclusion

By starting the personal narratives with that of the pioneer woman MP, Keutcha, I incorporate a time frame which enables me to measure how far Cameroonian women have come. Their joint narratives imply that despite the equality clause in the Constitution, women still have a long way to go before they achieve parity with men in politics. First, women's limited participation illustrates men's control of party organisation and men's greater ability to build viable constituency clientelistic networks, which strengthen their claim to nominations. Second, women's lack of access to similar resources and patronage that are increasingly crucial factors in candidates' ability to acquire nominations and win elections, play a big part.These forces have to be viewed in a wider context of women's limited autonomy especially in the CPDM organisational structure, mobility and economic standing, and the overall framework of unequal gender relations, concepts of which I already discussed in Chapters 1and 4 above. De Beauvoir (1953:xv) has described what it means to be a woman, from her perspective, yet what she says is relevant to the Cameroonian context as well.

> What is a woman? To state the question is, to me, to suggest at once, a preliminary answer. The fact that I ask it in itself is significant. A man never gets the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. A man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex; it goes without saying that he is a man. The terms masculine and feminine are used symmetrically only as a matter of form, as on legal papers. In actuality the relation of the two sexes is not quite like that of two electrical poles, for man represents both the positive and the neutral, as is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general.
>
> (De Beauvoir, 1953: xv)

Based on De Beauvoir's suggestion above, I argue that, since the study of behaviour generally among politicians has been essentially the study of male behaviour towards the female politician, there is much to be learned on the subject of gendered politics in Cameroonian governing institutions by concentrating exclusively on the peculiar situation of women.

At the moment, the principal national structure for the promotion of Cameroonian women is the MINCOF. Prior to the setting up of the MINCOF in 1984, programmes concerning women and their integration into national development were entrusted to the Ministry of Social Affairs created by Decree No. 75/467 of June 1975. The foregoing analysis indicates that women as a group are poorly integrated into the political and social system in Cameroon. Government efforts to promote the socio-political integration of Cameroonian women are invested in the MINCOF and the WCPDM. Because the MINCOF and WCPDM exemplify the opportunities and barriers that women face in overcoming disadvantages and discrimination, the next chapter turns attention to Cameroon's MINCOF/ WCPDM.

Chapter eight

Cameroon's female bureaucrats and MINCOF: fitting the gender agenda into gendered political space

8.1.1 – Cameroon's initial report to CEDAW (June, 2000)

During the Twenty-third session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), (12-30 June 2000), the Committee considered an initial report of Cameroon (CEDAW/C.CMR/1) at its 476th, 477th and 483rd meetings on 20 an 26 June 2000. The report was presented by Her Excellency Julienne Ngo Som, Cameroon's Minster of Women's Affairs from March 18, 2000 to April 28, 2001. She was replaced by Catherine Bakang Mbock in a surprise cabinet reshuffle. In introducing the report, Ngo Som informed the committee that in Cameroon, discrimination against women resulted from the *de facto* situation rather than *de jure.* Prior to the ratification of the Convention without reservations by Cameroon, the Government had implemented a variety of measures to address *de jure* discrimination. According to Ngo Som, these included the adoption, in 1972 of the Constitution which enshrined the principle of equality between the sexes. The Minister indicated that, although the laws were not discriminatory, certain legal measures, because of ambiguity, might disadvantage women (see 1.2.2 above). She informed the Committee that the Government had adopted several legal measures to ensure equality between men and women. She enumerated them as including the removal of the requirement of the husband's authorisation for the wife's travel abroad, the provision of housing benefits to women workers on an equal basis with men and the readmission of girls who had been suspended from school due to pregnancy. She cited court decisions, including ruling No.14/L, 1993, by the Supreme Court, recognising women's rights to inheritance, adding that this had also helped to address discrimination. Ngo Som indicated that since the ratification of the Convention, the Commission of Legislative and Juridical Reforms had been reorganised within the Ministry of Justice and now included a Commission on Civil Legislation, through which the Ministry on the Status of Women was represented. The Commission was drafting a new Family Code. A service unit in charge of prospecting

and reform had been created in the Women's Ministry, within the Directorate for Promotion and Reform, and planned to initiate bills to promote women's rights. In this regard, she added, a bill was being prepared that would address violence against women, including female genital mutilation.

Ngo Som concluded her report by enumerating factors impeding the implementation of the Convention in Cameroon as follows: the multi-ethnic nature of the country; the coexistence of conflicting norms of customary and general law; the existence of a dual system inherited from French and British colonialism; the limited knowledge of the Convention among different social sectors; the absence of a legal definition of discrimination and of discrimination-related sanctions; the high level of illiteracy among women; limited material, financial and human resource allocation mechanisms aimed at promoting the advancement of women; the difficult international economic environment which, through structural adjustment programmes, was leading to the dismantling of social security; and women's limited participation in efforts aimed at improving their status, both in terms of political participation and in awareness of the role they could play to improve their status.

The issues raised in Cameroon's CEDAW report indicate that the signing of the Convention without reservation has not altered Cameroonian women's relationship to the party-state. I argue, however, that the issues raised are evidence of more basic underlying problems, and that when party-state patronage practices are used by those in power to appease various constituents in the quest to retain power, the issue of women's rights as citizens is not seen as a priority. The major problem in the Cameroonian social context is the way sex differences are translated into gender relations, leaving women disadvantaged. The report fails to deal with gender relations in the economic sector, which need to be transformed to improve women's employment situation. Most importantly, the report does not refer to gender role expectation once they access the public arena, the type of positions available to women and their chances of promotion and appointment to decision-making posts. These are all expressions of gender inequality and need not be influenced by what ethnic group a person belongs to, or originates from. They are all elements of the larger party-state system. Factors on the economic sector go beyond cataloguing the impact of structural adjustment policies. The institutionalisation of how specific processes produce gender relations and deprive women of the right to own, control

and manage economic resources, preceded Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). These have simply added new policies to the existing ones. I argue that Ngo Som's report is the "official" version of the party-state's perspective of the situation of women in Cameroon. I start my arguments by stating that the problem lies with the manner of gender institutionalisation within the Cameroonian party-state system. Secondly, I ask: What is the connection between the Women's Ministry which she heads, and the important institutions of the party-state? Some of the issues raised in the report may simply be an attempt to conceal men's views, as spelt out in the customary laws (see1.2.2., above). The report moves the focus away from discrimination based on gender and fails to describe where women are located in Cameroonian governing institutions. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question: What is the Cameroonian party-state doing, or not doing, politically, to empower women to claim their full citizenship rights?

8.1.2-Institutionalisation of gender in the Cameroonian State system

Craske (1999) points out that it was at the Mexico Conference that women perceived inadequacies in the existing structures and stirred up public interest for the creation of national women and development institutions to monitor the status of women, and to make governments accountable to women's needs.

Baubock (1994) outlines the usefulness of the link between nationality and these UN Summits thus:

> New citizenship which recognises the existence of human rights outside the context of the state. First, the right to citizenship of identifiable state is itself a human right which represents both the 'cornerstone' of citizenship rights and universalised form of citizenship, transcending boundaries of state membership. As such they are increasingly acting as a reference point for feminists claiming human rights as women's rights, reflected most notably in the Declaration from the UN Women's Conferences.
>
> (Baubock, 1994: 247)

In terms of both outcome and process, the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action document marked a milestone in the development praxis which is now being built upon.

The *Ministère de la Condition Feminine* (MINCOF) was created by decree No.84/29 of 4 February 1984 by the Cameroonian Government, to address the concerns of the disadvantaged position of Cameroonian women. Such state institutionalising of women's

issues implies a relatively high degree of similarity in the formal governing structures of Cameroon's public administration. However, the normative and social setting of Cameroonian gender relations belies this similarity. In Cameroon, gender operates as a pervasive organisational principle across social, economic, cultural and political institutional arenas, as demonstrated in chapters 5, and 6 earlier.

Since the creation of the MINCOF in 1984, awareness and recognition of gender issues have increased at policy levels. Nevertheless, there is still a tendency to compartmentalise women's issues instead of integrating gender concerns into overall policy. Waylen (1998) has suggested the reason for this by explaining that a state with limited capacity for policy implementation, restricts the opportunity structure for women. Waylen's comment confirms Goetz's (1995) analysis that:

> By confirming and institutionalising arrangements that distinguish the public from the private, states are involved in the social and political institutionalisation of gendered power differences.
>
> (Goetz, 1995:4)

The ideology behind the creation of the MINCOF was to give Cameroonian women the opportunity to expand their participation in the social, cultural and political life as contained in two sets of mandates below. The 1984 mandate was:

> The setting up of structures intended to ensure a balance between women's role as housewife and mother and her potential role as participant in economic, social, political and cultural development.
>
> (IVth Five Year Development Plan, 1985:281)

Exclusion from power and decision-making often starts with the very definition of the criteria of participation. The language of the mandate reveals the type of policies , programmes and resources that Cameroonian women will be allowed to participate in at all levels. The mandate is an example of the party-state's organistion of social and political life with the private sphere being perceived as the domain of women and children. It illustrates that political positions were created for women in the public sphere by projecting their subservient domestic roles. I argue that in manipulating the public/private framework, the government intended the programmes and projects of the MINCOF to give the appearance of a progressive attitude towards women while ensuring their controlled mobilisation. The emphasis of the Mexico (1975) conference was on upgrading women's

political participation at all levels of society. The language employed by the Cameroonian party-state implies a provision of welfare services to help women improve their quality of life as wives and mothers, with only the potential/possibility of actively participating in the public arena. Such a development approach focused on women's basic needs and brought with it the perception that women required extensive welfare services. Additionally, it led to the erroneous attitude that empowerment would emerge from merely providing services. Power sharing does not follow automatically on the basis of such a mandate. Boserup (1970) pointed out that gender gaps in all sectors of society would not close until women participated in decision-making and power. Gender relations within the Cameroonian political context cannot be transformed on the basis such a mandate.

This "mission" was updated by Decree No.97/205 of 7 December 1997, and it reads as follows:

> The MINCOF is responsible for drawing up and implementing measures regarding the rights of the Cameroonian woman in the society, the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and strengthening of guarantee of equity in political, economic, social and cultural domains.
>
> (MINCOF brochure)

This revised mandate 'is part of the concern of the President of the Republic to honour his commitments vis-à-vis the Cameroonian woman.' (MINCOF).

Promoting gender equity is actually the objective of the international community, as represented by the United Nations. My interpretation of the 1997 MINCOF mission is the Cameroonian government's demonstration of their commitment to implementing the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Through rephrasing the MINCOF Mandate, the Government of Cameroon conveys to the rest of the world its concern with the promotion of equality and its contribution to the international debate on the topic. The 1997 decree also charged the MINCOF with replicating the Plan of Action for the Promotion of Gender Equality of the Government of Cameroon. To implement the Beijing Platform of Action, Cameroon drew up a National Policy Declaration on Women in Development (NAPWID). Drafting of the programme involved some 150 national organisations and authorities. The MINCOF produced a huge document of 350 pages providing guidelines for the Government. Up until the time of writing, the NAPWID is still in draft form. The Prime

Minister's office and the Presidency are still putting finishing touches to the Programme. The Plan of Action focuses principally on women in the following areas:

- the improvement of her living conditions
- the improvement of her legal status
- her participation in decision-making
- the protection and advancement of the girl-child
- the elimination of violence against women
- the improvement of the institutional framework for the integration of women in development.

(MINCOF)

Implementing the Beijing Platform for Action is a long-term process which is yet to begin in Cameroon, 5 years afterwards. The Beijing Platform of Action contains three main principles: the empowerment of women, the promotion and protection of the human rights of women and the promotion of equality by mainstreaming gender issues. This involves the promotion of gender equality in all walks of life. Women's empowerment is therefore the key mission of the Beijing Platform for Action; and by implication of the Cameroonian Government.

In gender terms however, the Cameroonian version represents no threat whatsoever to the continuation of the status quo in Cameroon. I argue therefore that equality cannot be promoted based on the themes focused on by the NAPWID draft document, and without the commitment of political decision-makers and authorities. The promotion of equality through the implementation of the NAPWID themes also faces persistent obstacles that have their roots deep within the structures of Cameroonian society, culture and the practices of bureaucratic institutions which have delayed its approval.

8.1.3- Chapter issues

The aim of this chapter is not just to ascertain whether, and to what extent, the problems encountered by the MINCOF have further influenced the construction of gendered politics, but also to find out how this occurs in Cameroon's governing institutions. What is immediately apparent from the mandates and objectives of the MINCOF and WCPDM is that formal equality in the constitution is not a sufficient condition for gender equality of opportunity. This contradiction between the State's theory on human rights, and the

everyday practice of manifests itself in the paradox of women's exclusion from the power hierarchy of national politics, and the dilemmas encountered by female bureaucrats in the line of duty. These problems raise the question of the kind of political space within which the MINCOf and its female bureaucrats are expected to achieve structural equality. Even though the potential exists, it has yet to be sufficiently mobilised. The political space within which the MINCOF executes the gender agenda still reflects the traditional roles. It is gendered political space. Consequently, such a gendered space fails to provide the desired genuine equality of opportunity for Cameroonian women.

8.2.1- The MINCOF's ghettoising objectives

As explained in 8.1.2 above, it was at a Conference of the 1975 UN Mexico Summit that a demand for the creation of National Women's Machineries (NWMs) like the MINCOF arose, although it was also recognised that governmental organisations are too often designed by men in line with what they perceive the needs to be, rather than allowing women's own perception of the situation to come through. The importance of the theoretical concepts of the Mexico Conference was the empowerment of NWMs like the MINCOF to provide alternative understandings of citizenship. Such an alternative understanding would acknowledge gender difference and inequality, and work for the removal of barriers preventing gender equality in Cameroonian society. The expectation would therefore be that a policy for equality between women and men in Cameroon cannot be formulated independently of other policy areas. Yet, the MINCOF objectives only focus on the welfare needs of women. By determining the contents of the programmes for women and by defining them from their own male-centred perspective, the Cameroon government, I argue, has subordinated gender interests to national economic and political goals. In doing so they have precluded women's political participation in the conventional sense. After all, the effectiveness of the MINCOF as an NWM hinges upon its functions. The state definition of the objectives of the MINCOF constrains its institutional vision of women's power and ghettoises it within the state.

In order to see how this worked out in practice, it is necessary to look briefly at the MINCOF's history. There have been various statements of the MINCOF's objectives. After the first such statement in 1984, successive revisions were made in 1988, 1995 and

1998. The objectives of the early years, 1984-87, echoed the rhetoric of the UN Decade for Women. The MINCOF emphasised the need to improve the status of women based, by implication, on the liberal feminist ideology. In doing so, the MINCOF condoned the public-private dichotomy which limits itself to reformism, seeking to improve the status of women within the system but not fundamentally contesting the system's operation. Like contemporary liberal theory , the MINCOF espoused women's rights in terms of welfare needs, universal education, and health service. The MINCOF approach also unconsciously leaned towards Wollstonecraft's (1789) hypothesis that women's rights can be redressed by equality of educational opportunities for women.

These assumptions, built into the MINCOF at its very inception, have continued in every subsequent revision of its objectives and remain unchallenged even today. The 1984 objectives as spelt out by Decree No 84-85 of 26 March 1984, in 8 Chapters, gives an indication of the goals the MINCOF was expected to meet.

Chapter 6 provided a co-ordinating role for Research Officers and Research Assistants, each of whom was charged with ensuring the implementation of a separate part of the action promoting the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

It is also in Chapter 6 that the measures and strategies which in principle were meant to reflect the Cameroon Government's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity, were spelt out. These measures read as follows:

- the first Research Officer shall prepare draft laws and regulations intended to promote without discrimination, the integration of women in the different social spheres of national activity;
- ensure the implementation of such instruments in collaboration with the ministries concerned;

In that capacity he shall:

- ensure that permanent contact is maintained with other ministries;
- study and submit to the Minister all proposals to facilitate the inclusion in laws and regulatory provisions that do not discriminate against women;

8. The Second Research Officer shall:

- ensure the promotion of women's vocational activities;
- ensure the preparation and implementation of programmes that facilitate the integration of women into the economic life of the nation and their full participation in the development effort.

9. The third Research Officer shall be responsible for:

- relations with national and international political organisations responsible for the [advancement] of women
- supervising bodies in charge of training women excluding educational institutions falling under the Ministry of National Education.

The first official revision, or updating, of the MINCOF's terms of reference occurred when Presidential decree No. 88/1281, of 22 September 1988, gave it five broad objectives in order to achieve its long-term mandate. These were as follows:

- The preservation of traditional values recognised by women;
- Women's education [vocational];
- The integration of women within the economic circuit;
- Relations with national and international public and private organisations of women's advancement;
- The setting up of documentation centres for women

Besides these five objectives, it was also decreed that the MINCOF would participate in the implementation of whatever educational action and training programmes for women initiated by other Ministries.

The next landmark occurred with Decree No. 95/100 of June 1995, which gave a revised list of objectives, as follows:

- To elaborate and control policies, programmes and action plans related to women's advancement;
- To monitor organisations in charge of women's advancement;
- To prepare, participate in, and monitor national and international meetings in the domain of women's advancement;
- To conceive, develop and popularise intermediate technologies;

- To handle technical relations with international organisations in charge of women's advancement.

The above listed objectives were to be achieved through these functions:

- The department of women's education
- The service for women's economic integration;
- The service for liaison with women's organisations.

Two sub-departments were also created:

- The Sub-Department For Training And The Promotion Of Women's Rights;
- The Sub-Department for Women's Economic Integration and Support to Women's Organisations.

The tasks given to the Sub-Department of Training and the Promotion of Women's Rights are ironic in their subtle allusion to customary law and in the no-go areas of women's jurisdiction. It was to:

- identify and preserve traditional values recognised [by] women;
- eliminate traditional and modern practices contrary to women's dignity;
- monitor institutions in charge of women's training except those under the Ministry of National Education;
- circulate messages conceived about women [through] the Communications Unit;
- identify and initiate legal and statutory texts in favour of women's rights in conformity with national instruments of rights in particular.

The phraseology of the 1998 objectives contained in Decree No.98/068 of 4 May 1998 organising the Ministry of Women's Affairs does not differ in any significant way from that of 1995. Spread out in 10 chapters sub-divided into 48 articles, this decree is signed by the President of the Republic, Paul Biya. Chapter II, articles 20-23, deals with the promotion of women's rights, Chapter III with women's socio-economic activities. Chapter II simply replicates Article 44 of the June 1995 decree as follows:

- to elaborate and control programmes and policies that protect women's rights
- to conceive programmes and formulate laws in favour of women

- prepare, participate in, and monitor national and international instruments ratified by Cameroon that fall under the domain and competence of the Ministry
- to inform and educate women on their rights in relation to the competent structures
- to eliminate traditional and modern practices contrary to the dignity of women
- to elaborate, in collaboration with the Ministry charged with External Relations, reports of conventions ratified nationally that relate to international Charters, etc.

I highlight these excerpts from the four sets of objectives given to MINCOF because of their analytical usefulness and to illustrate that the revised objectives were simply making use of the material used before. The themes featured in the objectives are very revealing of the philosophy underpinning MINCOF activities. First, the terminology signifies that although women have been allowed political space, the potential for their development is hindered by embedded gendered exclusion. The space only functions within the existing political system and changes, particularly regarding shifts in gender relations, are difficult to carry out within the parameters allowed by the objectives. I argue that the objectives seem to be designed with the aim of reconstructing the political boundary that confirms gendered identities within Cameroon's governing institutions in keeping with the state's conception of power.

Second, the process of revising the objectives, which are Cameroon's internal actions, are, in reality, purely for external consumption. This is because many government initiatives designed to benefit Cameroonian women have mostly been donor driven. For instance, both the creation of the sub-department for Training and Promotion of Women's Rights in the 1995 and the subsequent 1998 version of the MINCOF objectives seem to have been brought out primarily to impress the international agencies and foreign governments so as to enable the department to get funds, while at the same time, as the statistics in chapter 5 and 6 show above, no real, internal change in fact took place.

It should be noted here that the 1995 revision of MINCOF objectives coincided with the most publicised UN 1995 Conference on Women in Beijing. This was also 2 years after the 1993 Declaration of the UN Vienna World Conference on Human Rights that recognised, according to Amnesty International (A.I.),

> The human rights of women and of the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.
>
> (A.I., 1995 in Lister 1997: 203)

Five years after Beijing, women congregated again, this time in New York, in June 2000, to take stock of women's progress in each society. The reports indicate that the assessment was not encouraging. While many governments, social institutions and civic organisations have accepted the idea of gender balance in decision-making, a gap between *de jure* and *de facto* equality has persisted , and women continue to be under-represented at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels, as well as at the highest levels of the corporate sector and other social and economic institutions. Both national and international bodies are implicated in this resistance to change, including the United Nations itself which is one of the major organisations spearheading the call for radical transformations.

Lister (1997) adds that the 1995 Beijing Declaration likewise bore the imprint of the global feminist networking that preceded it. She adds that in terms of both outcome and process, Beijing marked a milestone in the development of an internationalist feminist citizenship praxis which is now being built upon. She points out that at a regional level also, women are networking across national borders.

> To the extent that it is through international civil society individuals can best act as global citizens, women are helping to shape the meaning of global citizenship and arguably are having more impact than at the national level in many countries. (Lister 1997:63)

In spite of appearances, therefore, I suggest that the terminology has little or no effect on mentalities within the Government or culture of Cameroon, and in practice. The old status quo is being preserved rather than challenged. What makes it more apparent is that the terminology being used by the MINCOF adjusts itself to developments in the terminology used by international or donor organisations which have the power to offer help, especially economic help.

During the interview I had with Madam Yaou Aissatou, the then Minister of Women's Affairs (1984-2000), on 12 August 1998 in her Cabinet Office in Yaounde, she responded to my follow up question on the difficulty of reconciling the Cameroonian woman's place in politics with what the constitution says.

> Oh, you see, our constitution says that everybody, women and men, are equal. It's not true. The Constitution says it, but we have to make it happen, to take measures in order to respect the Constitution. Yes, the reality is different…The main reason, I think, lies in the objective of the Ministry, in the mission of the

> Ministry. The Ministry of Women's Affairs is there to normally study the conditions of women, make recommendations to improve these conditions and [ensure] that the recommendations are followed...So every year we set up our objectives....We proposed that the Ministry of Women's Affairs be attached to the Presidency or the Prime Minister's [office] in order to have an overview. But it was not accepted you know. They put it out again at the same level. It is a big battle, it is a big [difficult] job. I used to think [that] creating a Ministry is not enough, it means nothing. True, the Ministry does exist, but for what?
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

Yaou Aissatou's response based on 15 years' experience at the time of interview, touches on issues that are indicative of the position from which femocrats in Cameroon operate. It is as supplicants trying to persuade those in power, who are not convinced of the value of gender equality, that gender issues need to become a priority. The main problem she faced was that of the Ministry's location, on the periphery of policy-making, resorting to foreign donors to enable her, to bring a gender agenda into state institutions and bureaucracy. As a female bureaucrat, Yaou Aissatou perceived herself as an embattled defender of women's goals operating in a difficult political environment. Whereas in herself, she had a clear agenda for social change which would enhance women's position, and go in the direction of gender equality, through monitoring and controlling from a central vantage point, the government that appointed her was much vaguer about doing something for women. The MINCOF had been given a broad-based mandate for women which aimed at giving women access to decision-making roles in different spheres and improving the quality of life of women, on their maternal basis. This objective however gave no conception of exactly how this was to be accomplished, and certainly without any significant resources. Whereas Yaou Aissatou was concerned to place women's concerns in the mainstream of bureaucracy and in the sphere of the Presidency or Prime Minister's Office, rather than have it marginalised in a separate women's unit, the specifically gendered nature of the Cameroonian state bureaucracy greatly constrained and frustrated her efforts. At the time of the interview, the MINCOF was organising a three-day workshop in an effort to build up partnership with women's associations. The rationale for doing this is explained by Yaou Aissatou as follows:

> You see, we noticed that first of all, and this is our way of life, that the organisation of our society makes it that every women belongs to at least one

> association, what they call family or cultural association. This means that if you want to contact women, you must go through these associations first. Second, we noticed also that women don't have time. They are so, so occupied, but they have time for these meetings, in the family associations. They meet on a regular basis. The third thing is that it is very expensive to mobilise women. So we use the present structures to do whatever we want to do for women at the grassroots level. So this a little bit about the objective of the seminar. It is a pilot project. If it works, we will organise a similar seminar in Douala and then evaluate and see if it can work.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

When I asked her how this is going to impact on grassroots women in the villages when all the women I had seen at the workshops were middle-class city women who were also civil servants, she replied that

> We think that since it is their family association [tribal groupings], they may have links with village association and through them we may get also women at the grassroots level.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

I then asked her where the women association leaders will get the funding to mobilise grassroots women when the MINCOF which is officially charged to do so lacks the financial resources to carry out its mandate. Secondly, the very strong issue of culture she had mentioned meant that it was problematic for women to obtain bank loans as they had no collateral. I asked if her government had made some of advancement in that area.

> We did not make any study. We did not make any study but I guess that the management system even in the bank is changing. A banker normally, looks at your status, they should normally look at the feasibility of your project to see if your project is viable. So I think that things may change. But we do not have any report, women have not reported to us any cases of discrimination, but again it is true that there is a problem. But married women did not report to me that they [the bank] refused to give them a loan because of the husband.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

I then reminded her about the existing restrictions in the Family Code. This is what she had to say

> Yes, we still have this law that the husband has to have word to say. He has to give you [the woman] his approval formally before you get a job or you go into business. Sometimes, they [men] say, okay, you have to get my

> authorisation. If you disagree, then you go to court, and the court has to study the case and pass judgement. But because people don't know, you see.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

So the issue of awareness is a big problem because you say that many women are not aware that they can challenge this in court.

> Yes, yes. [the awareness issue is a big problem] No, they don't [know that hey can challenge this in court]. And you see, also, the family problem makes it difficult all the time. The most important problem today is how to cope with family harmony and the debates of rights, you see. When you [woman] want to work, okay the law says indeed that if the husband does not agree, you go to court. But when you bring your husband to court, that is the end of the marriage. This the problem. That is why most women try to put in the balance, going to court and losing the marriage, with abandoning the children and so on, and so on, or accepting whatever the husband wants them to do.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

I then asked about the falling numbers of women parliamentarians in the context of the July 30th round table discussions on the 'Future of the African Woman in Politics'. This is how she responded

> According to the experience of the last elections, the quota system is necessary because the mentalities [of the electorate] are not developed to understand the work of the MP, because people don't' know what the MP is supposed to do. That is why they say that women cannot be MPs. They look at an MP as someone who is going to lead us. Maybe we have to start sensitising all Cameroonians on the role of the MP because they look at the MP first, as a leader and they say "oh, we don't need a woman to come and command us". Most of the time, that is what they say. I guess that our society is not yet ready to have women leaders. The second thing, according to the belief of the people toward MPs is that they think that an MP is a person who is there to solve all their problems. You see I used to compare tem to social workers you know. Whatever problem you have, you go to your MP. If children don't go to school, you go to your MP, to give you money. Your husband or your wife has a problem, or health problem, you go and see him to intervene. Most of all these interventions are monetary interventions and when a woman is not rich, people don't look at her as someone who will be able to solve their monetary problems.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

She then went on to summarise as follows:

> That is how I analyse the problem in Cameroon. First of all, they think an MP someone who will come back and command, they don't want women to command them; second, they think that an MP is a person who should solve all

> family problems , especially the problem of money. If they are not rich, then there is a problem. So I think we first have to educate the society on the role of an MP. We also have this financial problem. To run an election is very expensive. The third problem is that women don't have confidence in another woman. Whenever a woman stands [for elections], we don't look at her as someone who can do something. The issue of *moi aussi,* me too am going to stand. *Elle me depasse a quoi?* [we are the same]. We don't have confidence because we think that all women are the same and this goes back to our role in the family. Why? Because at your husband can take any woman, even your own maid [to bed] you see. You can share a husband with any woman. I think that women think that since you can share a husband with any woman, you can do the same things, so they don't have any respect for you. I see it, me as minister. I live it, you know. M, I am more respected by men than by women because they think that where I am, anybody can be there. Especially on women's issues. They think that anybody can talk about women's problems. This is clear that today's society is not ready, both men and women, are not ready to have women leaders. I all women lined up behind another woman, the woman will win.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

The explanation continued as follows:

> So this means that even we women are not ready to be led by another woman. The society is not ready to see this equality established. But we believe that we have competent ladies who can be MPs, who can do the job because what they have been doing in associations, at the grassroots level, it is what they do in the parliament. We have the list system
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

Yaou Aissatou's narrative on the situation of Cameroonian women and formal politics indicates that women face enormous obstacles in accessing decision-making positions. She highlights several concerns. She believes that the dynamism they display in the cultural and social lives of their communities through their associations and informal networks can be translated into creating new models of political participation. It is true that at both grassroots and national levels, more women's associations have been formed in Cameroon in the 1990s. It is also true that the emergence of these groups indicates their organisational potential. This is the informal arena within which women assert their leadership roles. Nevertheless, these have so far failed to expand women's political and social opportunities and advance women's rights in Cameroon. Cameroon has ratified all the CEDAW yet by the minister's own admission, many women are ignorant of the existence of laws that recognise their rights and can be invoked for their protection against

discriminatory practices based on the family law. Traditional practices have carried over into public life. One of the objectives of the building partnerships with women's associations is to create an enabling policy environment. Yet gender biases and rigidity within the customary law, family law and cultural stereotyping which prevent women from having equal access to political offices and positions were not addressed. In order for women's leadership skills in these associations to be formalised to give them political and decision-making power, these biases have to addressed and eliminated. An important issue raised in the Beijing Platform for Action is equality of responsibility between men and women for gender equality to become a reality. Seeking to empower women politically through women's associations carries the risk of further marginalisation. Participating in the practices of formal politics such as elections, political parties and parliament without first changing the culture and ideology of Cameroonian politics will not yield positive results for women's political representation. The removal of the distinctions between public and private especially in the meaning and relevance of women's branches in political parties is crucial in Cameroonian women's political engagement .
According to Dhalerup (1986), women's political empowerment through informal politics is not the same as gaining power in a wider society. Lister has also argued that

> the value of informal politics does not provide an alibi for the continued under-representation of women and minority groups in the formal political structures of power. A more inclusive formal politics will require changes in the formal political system itself so as to make it more open both to individual women and to the kinds of informal modes of politics in which many women will probably still prefer to participate.
>
> (Lister 1997: 155)

The issue of women's political representation is an important dimension of women's inclusion as full political citizens. Phillips (1991, 1995), for example, has identified three main areas of women's representation as follows: that women constitute a political interest which should be represented in the decision-making process; that society will benefit from the attributes which women can bring to the formal political sphere; and that their gross under-representation is an affront to the ideals of democracy and justice. Phillips (1991) argues that in 'engendering democracy', it is necessary to take a broader view of democratic participation as this is key to women and men's political equality.

Goetz (1995) looked at the trends, opportunities and constraints of the politics of integrating gender to state developmental processes, in six countries (Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco and Uganda). She concludes that hierarchical and undemocratic bureaucracies are hostile to agendas which challenge accustomed thematic organisational patterns. This is compounded by the patronage politics and the embedded gendered conventions in the public bureaucracies where women's needs are largely seen as a matter for private provision, not public administration. The roles and mandate of NWMs vary but remain plagued with a lack of sufficient personnel and financial and technical resources to fulfil any combination of their functions effectively. They lack powers of ultimate sanction over policy and programme proposals that fail to incorporate gender–sensitive perspectives. Goetz (1995) adds that the critical role that outside constituencies might play in supporting institutional change is muted for political reasons, given the tendency for patrimonial states to exploit women's presence in the state for political purposes. She discovered that where projects and institutions are set up primarily to an external initiative, there is little incentive to actively internalise and "own" a policy initiative. Instead, its legitimacy is suspect and even though the funds are welcomed, the imposition of "alien" cultural notions regarding gender is deeply resented.

Of relevance to the social context of my study are the results on Mali and Morocco which were most explicit about this problem. Goetz (1995) attributes this to the fact that cultural imperialism in the projection of Western notions of gender equity to other contexts arouses resentment that can have the unfortunate effect of stigmatising existing indigenous feminisms as Western derivatives. Goetz (1995) also observed that line bureaucrats are aware of the multilateral and bilateral support NWMs. She suggests that this too can inhibit the degree to which the issue is internalised locally. Moreover, Goetz (1995) noted that this could also contribute to a cynical exploitation of the issue for the purpose of accessing new development funds and burnishing the nation's image in external eyes. She points out that this cynical tendency is exarcebated by the typical donor pre-occupation with the rapid dispersal of funds on projects, to the detriment of investing in costly and slow processes of attitudinal change.

Goetz (1995) emphasises that extending opportunities for political participation to women is an effective symbol of progressive national attitudes. However, she points out that it can be a mechanism for co-opting women as a valuable supportive political constituency.

Goetz (1995) concludes that the reason why so many governments the world over have appeared willing to make commitments to women's rights and to gender equity is political. Goetz adds that no government or bureaucracy feels it has anything to fear from women. In civil society they rarely represent a tightly mobilised constituency, at the domestic level their interests are often closely bound in with those of men in the family. In politics and administration, they are under–represented and have rarely acted in distinctively feminist ways. The result is that far from having anything to fear from women, many governments can make important political gains at the international and domestic levels by espousing gender equity, without serious risk of being accountable.
(Goetz 1995, 51-56).

The difference between the location of the Australian NWM and that of Cameroon manifests itself in Sainsbury's (1999) synthesis of the Australian example.
Sainsbury (1999) points out that the Australian women's office has been attached to a central policy co-ordinating department with access to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. From this position, Sainsbury explains, femocrats sought to create a 'gender audit' of all government policies and programmes. She adds that not only have Australian feminists had the advantage of strong women's machinery, but the consultative aspects of the policy process have also offered a useful platform. Sainsbury emphasises that at crucial points a gender gap against Labour and the desire to win the votes of women have prompted the party to accept policy proposals promoted by the Women's Office.
The Australian example is a complete contrast to what occurs in Cameroon despite the fact that political parties in both cases clamour for the female votes.
The real objective of the change in terminology in the MINCOF's successive objectives, I suggest, is to have some activities, financed from outside, but not activities that will result in genuine gender-equality. These activities are hindered and prevented from happening by various means, especially the severe limits placed on MINCOF's budget which Yaou Aissatou says 'is not enough'. In fact it is less than 1% of the total national budget.
Findings by O'Barr et al (1995) lead them to conclude that women's ministries the world over are poorly funded and staffed. A similar argument is put forward by Staudt (1995) who states that the huge mandates of these ministries receive budgets that amount to only one percent of government spending. She sees this attitude as a reflection of the UN

system itself, in spite of the fact that it sponsored the International Decade for women (1976-1985). Even at the level of the UN, women's units command few resources in staff and funds, with only 3-5 percent of projects benefiting women, representing 0.2 percent of budget allocations. The question to ask here is : why is it so? Goetz (1995), O'Barr et al (1995) and Staudt (1990, 1995) all argue that government officials ignore the bureaux because they see them as peripheral to essential policy concerns, or because they deny the reality of women's subordination. Sainsbury (1999) indicates that the gender audit in Australia made the budget a centrepiece of concern. The institutional restrictions placed on the MINCOF on the other hand, curtailed its powers to influence any such policy in Cameroon.

The MINCOF objectives as outlined above fail to challenge these notions of gender which are prevalent within the state and which contribute to the sex-based hierarchy within the bureaucracy. Ferguson (1984) refers to such terminology as 'bureaucratic discourse' which:

> ..is expressive of certain political activities, activities in which distribution of power is both expressed and hidden within the discourse itself,...embedded within a politically laden field of meaning...operated as a kind of verbal performance, placing people and objects within the network of social, political and administrative arrangements.
>
> (Ferguson, 1984: 59)

When Ferguson's (1984) theory is applied to the Cameroonian example, the revelation is that the MINCOF objectives have no links with the overall redistribution of resources. Programme interventions are not adequate to ensure gender equality nor gender mainstreaming. The general drift of the discourse used in the four sets of objectives quoted above do not portray the MINCOF as an institutional source of power for the advancement of women's status in Cameroon. The discourse and themes confirm Goetz's (1995:35) argument that 'this process of modifying of women's projects to fit the blueprint of standard development projects...in the end...represents no threat to the existing power structures.'

In addition, two other characteristics stand out in the MINCOF objectives listed above. First, they only set out generalised statements of aims, rather than giving specific targets. Second, lists of functions are substituted for objectives, stating how precisely these

functions are to be applied to the programmes. They do not spell out how the activities are to be translated into specificities. Equality and development are clearly not linked.

The main MINCOF mandate no doubt sets out the long-term goal, but it is that of ensuring a balance between women's roles as mothers, housewives and domesticity. The mandate does not empower nor give the MINCOF autonomy to correct inequitable outcomes discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The affirmative remedies simply reinforce Daly's (1978) dismissal of such action as reform tokenism, which she says is used by patriarchy to deter women. The MINCOF mandate addresses women's roles in such a way that the whole of the gender equality policy is absorbed into, and subsumed in, maternity and domesticity. This casting of woman as mother and housewife even in the public arena contradicts and prevents women's social equality in this and in every sphere.

The objectives state what staff will do without indicating the response activities anticipated. Furthermore, the objectives are not concerned with the redistribution of status and social power between the sexes, illustrating that female bureaucrats were only partially involved in the determination of what equality is and how best to achieve it. The MINCOF has no position statement of its own on any issues that have negative outcomes on Cameroonian women such as wife beating, marital rape, violence against women, to name but a few. It relies solely on the mandate and objectives spelt out above. The purpose of the MINCOF is therefore embodied only in the given mandate and objectives. What emerges from the above analysis of the MINCOF objectives is a strong sense of the constraints within which gender policy advocates operate, constraints which lead to the watering down of the gender agenda.

The success of the MINCOF must be measured by a variety of criteria, discussed in the following sections. It is not enough simply to determine the extent to which it had an impact on women's employment policy, or to what degree any state action seeking to eliminate direct or indirect discrimination based on gender proved successful. It is vital also to explore the impact of the person or persons appointed to run it.

The section following focuses attention on the choice of the female bureaucrats to lead the MINCOF, and the dilemmas they confront within bureaucratic and political settings that are subordinated to the practical class interest of men.

8.2.2 The bureaucratic context of Cameroon's female bureaucrats

As already pointed out above, female bureaucrats provide a very interesting case for studying the constraints on and possibilities inherent in the role of bureaucrats who represent non-dominant groups. In the Cameroonian context, such a study requires an understanding of the dilemmas inherent in their organisational situation. As Edwards (1991:142) has pointed out, they 'face the kinds of tensions and constraints traditionally experienced by "token" representatives of minorities and other politically disadvantaged groups within hierarchical organisations.'

Yeatman (1990) also took up the issue and suggested that

> The gender segmentation of the state is bound into a more general patriarchal culture of power and authority that underwrites the culture of hierarchy which structures the workings of government agencies. There is a general tendency for central agency and policy activities to be more highly valued than agencies and activities which are programme or service oriented and which are close to the field and/or clients.
>
> (Yeatman, 1990:83)

The relationship of Yeatman's (1990) argument and the situation of Cameroonian female bureaucrats, among other things, is that whoever is appointed to head an NWM is accessing an institution not only structured by a patriarchal gender division of labour (see Chapter 5 above), but in Yeatman's words, 'structured so as to maintain a strict hierarchical ordering of the general division of labour in society' (1990: 80). Yeatman further suggests that such women are integrated to something like the gender order of patriarchal domestic government, where they are permitted to speak up on behalf of the household but nevertheless expected to obey loyally the patriarch's decision.

It is to such a gendered bureaucratic institution that Mrs Yaou Aissatou was appointed as Cameroon's first official female bureaucrat. Yaou Aissatou held this position from February 1984 to March 2000, a total of 16 years. She was replaced in a mini Cabinet reshuffle by Mrs Julienne Ngo Som. Ngo Som lasted 13 months in office as she was also replaced on the 28th of April in a surprise cabinet reshuffle by Catherine Bakang Mbock. The 1984 Presidential Decree that created the MINCOF also indicates that the service for

the advancement of women was under the department of Social Development within the Ministry of Social Affairs, headed at the time by Mrs Delphine Tsanga (7.2).

At the time of Yaou Aissatou's appointment in 1984, she had neither a high national profile, nor a strong political involvement nor public service management experience. She came from the parastatal culture of the National Investment Corporation (NIC), where she served as Deputy Director of Finance after returning from the United States in 1979, with a master's degree in finance. She had, in 1975, graduated from the University of Rouen in France with a *licence* in economics. Coming from a parastatal occupational background which is described by Chazan et al (1999:57) as 'semi-autonomous or statutory bodies with a fair amount of independence, both financially and institutionally, from the more established bureaucracy', Yaou Aissatou found herself in a position which emphasised her feminine stereotypical role.

The female bureaucrat who replaced her is Dr Julienne Ngo Som, who holds a PhD in Food Sciences and was a Director at Cameroon's Institute of Scientific Research in Yaounde. Though a card-carrying member of the ruling CPDM party, Ngo Som has never been in the core of WCPDM Party activities, just like Yaou Aissatou before her. Her first speech at the National Assembly was a gaffe as it exposed her ignorance of the thorny issue of women's dress code at work. Addressing Parliament two days after her appointment, the *Cameroon Tribune* of 21st March 2000 reports that she claimed she knew of no such law prohibiting Cameroonian women from wearing trousers at work. Although the circumstances under which the statement was made are not reported, the government's choice of individuals with such profiles and limited experience about gender equality concerns, supports Craske's (1999:75) suggestion that any appointee to a NWM position 'will not necessarily be a woman with an interest in gender issues', at the time of appointment.

Nevertheless, Yaou Aissatou's knowledge of gender issues and women's concerns demonstrates that once appointed, they are no longer simply females with a career in a bureaucracy, but acquire the acumen and commitment to a gender equality agenda.

Ngo Som's appointment to MINCOF is a loss to scientific research and Higher Education in Cameroon. It could also be interpreted as doubly disadvantageous to Cameroonian women: a capable and highly qualified candidate for Ministry of Higher Education and

Scientific Research is removed from the scene, and at the same time MINCOF comes to be led by a woman who cannot be considered a genuine gender activist since she has little or no experience of or commitment to fighting for women's issues.

The general expectation of Cameroonian women at the creation of the MINCOF was hope for a greater responsiveness to women's needs, in policy formulation and implementation by the state. Sixteen years after its establishment it was difficult to point out exactly what impact the MINCOF has had. The MINCOF being the only specific space for Cameroonian women operating as part of a larger whole within the state structure, expectations included certain advantages such as equal access to decision-making positions. Cameroonian women realise that this has not really happened and the statistics in Chapters 5 and 6 prove this. However, they remain unaware that the achievement of feminist ideals by the MINCOF was constrained by the very institution that created it, the Cameroonian State.

Furthermore, because it is the liberal feminist philosophy and agenda for equal opportunities in development that underpinned the UN Conferences that advocated for the creation of NWMs during the Mexico (1975) Summit, these naturally influenced the MINCOF activities. Kabeer (1994:24) has suggested that 'in accepting the liberal feminist argument and agenda for equal opportunities in development, the WID/GAD advocates were also bound into its normative dualisms.' The reason for such an argument is given by Ferguson (1984) and MacKinnon (1989). They reckon that this is because liberal feminists pursue their agenda through changes in laws and integration of women into the public sphere. They argue that no matter how many laws are passed, the state reflects, promotes, sustains and responds to a hierarchy of male prerogative and female subordination. To these feminist critics, public policies aimed at equality tend to bring women from private into public roles and politicise the private relations between men and women.

In relating her experiences during my interview, Yaou Aissatou pointed out that:

> It is very expensive to mobilise women. We can help them within the existing structures,...it can be a training programme, education. We have to address mainly adult women and use the women centres to give them [vocational] training.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

Political power as well as political careers bring huge status rewards to bureaucrats, even female ones, in Cameroon. In the case of female bureaucrats, this is not in terms of the

resources and assets placed at their disposal. However, as experienced by Yaou Aissatou, there are ongoing difficulties typical of women who have succeeded, one of them being what Craske(1999:68) has referred to as ' the tension of double militancy, which is that of balancing the Gender Agenda with party loyalties.'

Both Delphine Tsanga and Yaou Aissatou combined the roles of Cabinet Minister with that of the National Presidency of the Woman's Wing of the Governing Party, rendering their role as women's advocates politically paradoxical. As explained in 7.2.2, Tsanga lost first her ministerial position and, a few months later, her party one as well. The party role of WCPDM National President is still held by Yaou Aissatou. It will become clear at the next CPDM Congress, possibly in 2001, whether she will be retained or if Ngo Som is going to continue with the tradition of combining the two positions. The WCPDM National Presidency required her to mobilise women politically for social duties.

8.3.1-The degree of Cameroonian female bureaucrats dependency/autonomy within the national state

Although in theory Cameroonian women were freer to resist patriarchal controls, they faced conditions of higher insecurity and vulnerability in terms of their marital arrangements and human rights, as Yaou Aissatou states below:

> It is difficult because of the male domination, and the very strong issue of culture and the organisation of society. I mean things regarding the customs and culture are very difficult...Women, I mean, married women, have this law that the husband has a word to say, has to give you his approval formally before you get a job or you go into business. If he disagrees, then you can go to court. ...but when you bring your husband to court, that's the end of the marriage...that's why most women try to balance things and avoid going to court and losing their marriage, abandoning the children and so on. So they accept whatever the husband wants them to do. That is the problem.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

The other side of this insecurity and vulnerability is exemplified in Zang Nguele's experience. It illustrates that most women had no rights in their husband's village because only men were seen as rooted in the community in contrast to the transience of women as wives. Most kinship systems in Cameroon are patrilineal and this defined attachment to relatedness and power. At marriage, however, women became marginalised from the

structures of power and their lives were expected to be dominated by the concerns of male well-being, while women remained inferior in institutional processes. These processes were further reinforced during party nominations at the 1997 parliamentary elections in Zang Nguele's case.

> I lost my parliamentary position last year because I was eliminated. I was eliminated at the primaries not because I wasn't the best candidate but because my enemies say that I am now married at Nyong and So Division, I had to go to Nyong and So division to look for [a] position there. In Mfoundi Division, they say only a man has to [is qualified to] look for position there.
>
> (Zang Nguele, August 1998)

At the level of state politics, as is evident in the constitution (see ch.1, above) which promotes women's political participation also implies women's empowerment. Yet the empowerment of Cameroonian women is, ironically, strongly limited by patriarchal institutions like the ruling CPDM party. In the examples given above, even empowerment is located in a wider discourse of traditional identity in which women's agency continues to be constrained. The political dominance by Cameroonian men is reflected in national politics accompanied by a selective reconstruction of values and institutions. This reconstruction, like in Zang Nguele's case, has done little to promote women's agency, by making them politically invisible and by disempowering them. The self-perception of women regarding their political roles in contributing to national development are largely regarded in terms of their association with maternity and domesticity. Yaou Aissatou believes that

> It is not their [women's] fault, I think. It is because we [women] have been born, we grew in an environment which makes us behave as we do. Women grew in a kind of culture which constitutes barriers to their own promotion.
>
> (Yaou Aissatou, August 1998)

Yet the WCPDM seems to be the means through which women can negotiate an entry into restricted political space beyond the confines of the household as Chapter 6 demonstrates. Nevertheless, the political participation of women determined by motherhood and marital status continues to be constrained by patriarchal interests. Cameroonian women are therefore incidental to party politics.

The two most prominent party women in Cameroonian politics so far are Delphine Tsanga and Yaou Aissatou, in both of whom the positions of Cabinet minister and Party leader of

the Women's Wing were combined (between 1970 and 1984 for Tsanga and 1984 and 2000 for Yaou Aissatou). Yet neither of them have been able to make the view that women are equal partners in development and party politics. Cameroonian women in the Party system could be likened, in Swartz's (1990:45) words, to 'stagehands whose work is necessary for the performance of the real actors, but who themselves receive little attention or acknowledgement.'

The activity of the WCPDM, for example, is seasonal, reaching its peak at election times. It is an important means of mobilising electoral support and votes in Cameroon. The combination of bureaucratic responsibilities and party political mobilisation creates real difficulties for Cameroonian female bureaucrats. Besides organisational dilemmas, there is the question of the conflicting gender role for the MINCOF/WCPDM activities. The implications that of necessity accompany such dilemmas, are discussed here.

As a result of the strong connection between the governing CPDM Party and the Cameroonian state government, the fate of the MINCOF is inextricably intertwined with that of the WCPDM. The mandates are phrased in similar terminology. Both the MINCOF and WCPDM activities involve mostly social activities and party political mobilisation. The two organisations however appeal to two different groups of women. These divisions can be characterised as being between independent professional women and uneducated dependent women. The close link between the CPDM Party and the State and the overwhelming prominence of the WCPDM in the MINCOF programmes especially in a multi-party environment constrains MINCOF's efforts to act as advocate, in a broad sense, for all Cameroonian women. Such close links imply that the MINCOF is limited in its ability to be overtly critical of government actions that discriminate against women, or to fight vigorously for women's rights. From the outset, the MINCOF was marginal to national development as the 1984 objectives reveal (see 8.2.2 above). Instead of addressing issues that would place women centrally in national development priorities, such as laws that define sexuality, mobility and marital relations, including rights to land, education and economic resources, the MINCOF tended to focus on meeting short term goals that most often involved one-off or piecemeal, isolated projects, such as one day workshops or seminars on income-generating projects, consultations on how women's groups are run, vocational training workshops and seminars etc.

In 1997, the MINCOF, which had been merged in 1988 with Ministry of Social Affairs, was again split into two ministries. While the separation received much attention only because it created space for another female cabinet minister, I suggest that it was most significant in that it entailed the redefinition of the MINCOF to be primarily the political mobilisation of Cameroonian women. The mission of the MINCOF is to stimulate women's potential for national development, while protecting women's traditional roles. The real goal of having a government minister also presiding over the WCPDM is to enable the government to exercise greater official control over women. The Cameroonian State therefore mirrors the approach of the political party, where the provisions made for women's participation have an electoral purpose.

The MINCOF mandate carries no reference to promoting either gender equality of opportunity or equal rights for women. An equal rights clause would have enabled the MINCOF to focus on how laws treat men and women particularly within the family. This powerful cultural factor restricts the quality of women's participation in the public sector, where women are treated differently solely because of their sex. Rather, the only official political space created for women is focused on party political mobilisation. What is ironical about the MINCOF/WCPDM link, in spite of all the government's publicity about making efforts to mobilise women, is precisely the minimal participation of women in reaping the benefits. The combination of the WCPDM and the MINCOF and subordination of gender interests to national economic goals have meant that in many cases propaganda and fanfare have tended to substitute for substance and results. Consequently, the MINCOF/WCPDM, both constituent parts of the Party-State, are reluctant partners in the production of gendered outcomes.

Furthermore, the dilemmas faced by these female bureaucrats who straddle what Goetz (1995) terms 'two administrative identities' in a way that diminishes their potential impact are two-fold. The first is that female bureaucrats like Tsanga, Yaou Aissatou, Zang Nguele and Fouda avoid becoming the site of important political tensions over criticisms that the government was failing to live up to its promises, while still in the Cabinet. Tsanga and Zang Nguele seem to be able to do so only because they are out of the system now. Second, the administrative constraints experienced by Yaou Aissatou, for instance, demonstrate that what female bureaucrats in Cameroon have is the honour of ministerial

status without the decision-making powers to go with it. They have the semblance rather than the reality of power over policy formulation. To illustrate this, I focus in the next chapter section on two activities I participated in as an observer. These lend further support to the examples that show how women's concerns have entered Cameroon's political and development discourse and practice in a control-oriented fashion.

Chapter nine

Women, political participation and the Family Code

9.1- Introduction

To celebrate the 36th Anniversary of the Day of the African Woman in Cameroon, a number of events took place in Yaounde, the national capital. I was privileged to attend two of these activities as an observer, the celebrations having coincided with my field trip to Cameroon for data collection.

The first of these events was organised by the MINCOF on 30th July 1998 for broadcast on 31st July 1998, the actual anniversary date. Termed a round-table discussion on 'The Future of the African Woman in Politics', this heavily attended occasion was held at the Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) Mballa II recording studio in the capital city of Yaounde, which has a large capacity. Most women who read and heard of the title of the round-table discussion immediately assumed, as I did as well, that this was an opportunity to make Cameroonian women conscious of their political exclusion and more determined to create a collective public space for active participation.

The second event took place on 31st July 1998 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde. Jointly organised by the League for Women and Child Education, an NGO, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, the 'reflection' focused on the necessity of a Family Code. Cameroon's interest in tackling a major issue which is one of the key centres of power, the reflection was a subtle attempt to legitimate women's collective concerns. A reflection on the Family Code in Cameroon would redefine the position of women in the family as the existing portrayal of the family is constructed on a gender binary. Consequently, the policies and politics based on it are disadvantageous to women as they erect boundaries which separate politics from social life generally. This has created a bias in political thinking in Cameroon with women constantly portrayed only as wives, mothers and housekeepers.

The rationale for focusing on these two events is to demonstrate how they were used to give the semblance of raising pertinent social issues in public while using political power

to distort and deflate them. An empirical analysis of a round table discussion on the future of women in politics, and a reflection on Cameroon's Family Code, gives a clear picture that the traditional distribution of roles between the sexes in the household extends to the public sphere. The opportunity structure does not therefore permit a higher proportion of women in decision-making bodies. Even though the potential exists, it has yet to be sufficiently mobilised. This chapter brings together these empirical concerns. The final section attempts to explain that the encodement of family responsibilities characterised by a patriarchal social structure, influences decisions of power relations and the gender division of labour within family and society.

9.2.1 - A round table discussion on the future of the African Woman in politics

Moderated by two Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) journalists, Anne Nsang in English and Barbara Etoa Nkono for the French-speaking audience, the key issues were outlined by political scientist and CPDM Party ideologue, Professor Dieudonne Oyono. Flanked by prominent WCPDM representatives – Felicite Moutome, Sally Vega, Chief Mrs Asonganyi, with the Honourable Marie Madeleine Fouda, Minister of Social Affairs sitting with members of the WCPDM Advisory Group in the front row, Oyono outlined the key issues for discussion. The following is essentially a digest of the discussion with my analytical comments.

First, Oyono acknowledged that there are structural problems in Cameroon's governing bodies that hindered the promotion of genuine political partnership between men and women. He emphasised that Cameroon had ratified all international instruments of rights and enshrined the principle of equality between men and women in the national Constitution. What Oyono's assertion implied was that there is no apparent discrimination from that perspective. The political will, in Oyono's thinking, is already there. Oyono pointed out that the blame for women's under-representation both in Parliament and within political decision-making bodies lay with the present form of women's mobilisation. In fact it lay with 'the absence of mobilisation' – which meant a failure to make women aware of their rights. He added that it was necessary to have a women's lobby Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) 'to ensure the implementation of the ratified UN and Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Human Rights Charter'. (Oyono, 30th July, 1998).

The proposed NGO will 'educate women and create political awareness on their attendant rights in the Cameroonian constitution.'

The first issue of concern for me at the panel discussion was Professor Oyono's presence. Apart from the male camera crew and male staff of the MINCOF, he was the only male 'outsider' in this women's forum. Nevertheless, his declaration did not indicate that he was just any outsider as he occupied centre stage. His presence confirmed that participation in organised political activity in Cameroon primarily depends on the actions of male representatives of parties, personified this time in Oyono. Second, Oyono's proposal of a solution in the form of an NGO came as a surprise to me for a number of reasons.

Data in the IPU (1997) on *Men and Women in Politics* indicates that a number of countries have NGOs working solely on encouraging women to participate in political life and especially to take part in elections. Cameroon is not one of them.

One of the best known NGOs in Zambia is the National Women's Lobby Group (NWLG), which advocates and lobbies for the inclusion of women in decision-making positions of Government at all levels. It trains and supports women who want to participate in the electoral process. It also provides civic education to the public. Another Zambian NGO, Women for Change (WC), offers civic education and support for women who want to stand as candidates. Whereas the NWLG focuses on urban women, the WC focuses on rural women who might be interested to participate as candidates. Together WC and the NWLG have been a powerful independent voice for women in Zambia, and their achievements have been considerable. Both these NGOs operate outside the State and Party machinery. Both are autonomous. Any NGO proposed by the Cameroon State and/or governing party, by contrast, is almost certainly going to become a political extension of the authorities that influenced its creation. Its ability to influence the various political organisations in order to place the issue of social relations between men and women on the agenda of public authorities will be compromised, on account of the manner in which it was founded and its consequent lack of autonomy. The same is likely to happen to an NGO created and therefore controlled by a party. I had earlier shown that just as women do not manage to get into higher spheres of Government in any significant number, so too they fail to gain real power within parties. This suggests that a NGO

founded by a party will be an instrument of that essentially male-oriented party, rather than an instrument for women.

What is really needed is neither a Government-controlled nor a Party-controlled NGO, but rather the need for a really independent NGOs, perhaps on the Zambian model, which cut across party boundaries but will influence women in all parties and therefore influence parties themselves. They will also pose a real threat to Government if Government fails to take their demands seriously. Only independent NGOs can really put pressure in such a way that they achieve results. Independent NGOs could monitor political parties to see, and publish whether and how far they have taken steps to support women's candidature more specifically. I have already established that parties do not ensure at nomination that the women's candidatures have as much chance of succeeding as those of men. Independent NGOs would put pressure on the parties to change their current practice in the direction of genuine gender equality.

The contributions from the other panellists could be interpreted as party propaganda in praise of the National/CPDM President, Paul Biya, and all he is supposedly doing for the Cameroonian woman. Felicite Moutome, President of the Cameroon Women Jurists (ACAFEJ) and wife of a former Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Seals, outlined all the UN and OAU conventions and charters about women that Cameroon had ratified. The Minister of Social Affairs, Marie-Madeleine Fouda, a Member of the WCPDM National Executive Committee and member of the CPDM Central Committee since 1996, closed the discussions. The phrase that stood out in her speech was '*Les femmes n'ont pas confiance en elles-mêmes'* (Women do not have confidence in themselves). She blamed the women of Cameroon for not voting themselves into parliament.

Yaou Aissatou had earlier identified patriarchy and male domination as one of the root causes of women's failure to elect women. This view is confirmed by Nkandem Forbinake's Cameroon Tribune article as follows:

> Culture seems to push women to the back. The men will never make serious advances in their political careers if they had wives in their way. It seems to be part of this complicity which always lets the woman delegate, as it were, her powers to the man in a system which most women accept as the natural order of things. And even when a woman emerges…in a spectacular manner, there is the hidden hand of a man around.
>
> (Cameroon Tribune, July 1998)

When Professor Oyono proposes that a mobilisation of women by an NGO would better enable them to find an equal position in Cameroon's society, I argue that he is, on behalf of the state and governing party, simply extending the women's wing of the party for continuous control of women's political activities. Control seems to have been the major reason why Oyono was given a key role at the round table discussion. He spoke from above. Cameroonian women were present, bodily, they occupied a space in the Mballa II CRTV Studio, but it was as if they were not there. They were 'outmanoeuvred' by one man, who controlled them socially. The discussion was turned into something less threatening to the status quo, an effective way of significantly resisting women's presence in Cameroon's governing institutions.

The problem does not lie, as Oyono claimed, in poor organisation of women. I now turn to the second of the two events which I attended while on fieldwork in Cameroon, the one organised by the League for Women and Child Education under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs. The discussion focused on the necessity of a Family Code in Cameroon, and forms the contents of the next section.

9.2.2- A 'reflection' on the Family Code in Cameroon

The discriminatory stipulations in the current family law as influenced by the customary laws which dovetail into the French and British colonial laws, has already been discussed in 1.2.2, above.

The promotion of gender equality is one of the educational goals incorporated into the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action as inequality in educational attainment between men and women is one of the factors some feminists say is responsible for gender-division in career choices. *Ligue pour l'Education de la Femme et de l'Enfant* (LEFE) [League of Women and Child Education] is a post-Beijing NGO led by Mrs Pauline Biyong.

Various editions of Cameroon Tribune, that of 29 September 1997, for instance, indicate that Biyong is also *Presidente du Caucus des Femmes, Federation des Associations Feminines du Cameroun*, [President of the Women's Caucus, Federation of Women's Associations in Cameroon].

In the 3rd July 1997 edition of *Cameroon Tribune*, Biyong explains that the 'Women's Caucus' is a non-partisan, democratic, informal structure for the exchange of ideas. She adds that it is open to men who recognise women as indispensable partners in development. She emphasises that they are auto-critical, and involved in analysing the political situation, education and consciousness-raising, among other things.

It is, however, as President of LEFE, and sponsored by the French Co-operation Mission, that she organised the 'reflection' on the Family Code in Cameroon on 31 July 1998, at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde. Like the round table discussion of 30th July 1998, this 'reflection' on the Family Code was to celebrate the 36th Anniversary of the African Woman.The rationale for such a reflection is that currently, what passes for equality in Cameroon is governed clearly by societal conventions influenced by the Family Law. This Law plays such an important role in institutionalising hierarchy within the family and household. Biyong is advocating a new code to further Cameroonian women's interests. In outlining the theme of the reflection, Biyong stated that the most noble task that Cameroonian women feel they could undertake at present is to reflect on the necessity of a Family Code. She reiterated that so far, responsibilities in the Family Law were based on civil status inherited from the English and French and from over 250 ethnic groups. Biyong emphasised that a [new] Family Code would guarantee the rights of the woman, the child and the family for their better development.

The leading resource person at the workshop as at the round table, was a man, Daniel Minlo. Introduced as a Magistrate with the Ministry of Justice, Minlo elaborated on the legislation, regulation, customary principles, and jurisprudence governing relations between family members as well as those between families and their belongings. He explained that these are ostensibly referred to today as the rights of the family. Agreeing with Biyong that there was a need for a new Family Code, Minlo advanced the following four reasons that justify such a need; summarised as follows:

i) The family in Cameroon is a constituted private institution.

ii) Cameroon as a member of regional and international organisations is implicated in the process.

iii) The Cameroonian Government in 1972 set as an objective the codification of the civil laws in the civil code, a section which was to be legislated by the assembly under family rights; and

iv) The codification of the rights of the family as personal pride of the powers that be in their striving to harmonise family law. (Minlo, 31:07:1998)

It was revealed in the course of the discussion that followed that an ordinance on family rights was sent to Parliament to be examined in the 1998 July and/or December sessions. The Director of Family in the Ministry of Social Affairs, outlined some of the major issues featured in the proposed document. It set out to:

> Define what a family is all about by identifying types, constitutions, functions, and obligations. Family and marriage should be defined taking into consideration conditions, relations, and obligations among others. Such a code should consider family affiliations, origins, adoptions, parenthood etc. Family separations and divorce, family and protection of vulnerable members, family and succession etc. are some of the elements to be considered in drawing up a Family Code for Cameroon.
>
> (Ella, 31:07:1998)

9.2.3.- Analysis and critique

After the heavily attended round-table discussion of 30th July 1998, the attendance at the 'reflection' on the Family Code in Cameroon, held at the five star Hilton Hotel in Yaounde, was a low-key affair in comparison. Much of the funding seemed to have been spent on the hiring of prestige premises with limited space, hence, the limited invitations sent out.

This forum was organised by the NGO LEFE, which in principle is trying to translate some of the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action concerns into reality. The list of themes the NGO focuses on, is impressive. It emphasises the areas of inequalities between Cameroonian women and men with the aim of creating awareness and training and educating women on how to overcome those discriminatory practices. Cameroon Tribune of 17th April 1997, for instance, carries a report of a seminar organised by LEFE on 15th April 1997, in Yaounde. Sponsored by the United States Embassy, the seminar trained 30 female candidates for the 17th May legislative elections. Similar seminars were planned for other cities like Douala, Bamenda and Maroua.

My assumption on reading the themes that LEFE focuses on was that such attention would pressurise the relevant authorities to bring about equality outcomes that would lead to equal status and treatment of women in the Cameroonian society. They would want to be

seen to be effecting change before Biyong picks up the issue, in order to avoid being seen as being upstaged by Biyong.

The Family Code issue forms an integral part in gender equality and LEFE's contribution was, in my view, crucial in targeting cultural norms and practices in the Family Code, particularly those which impact negatively on Cameroonian women. My expectations were high. I expected to find many leading female legal practitioners armed with draft copies of their versions of a new Code.

I eagerly anticipated a draft Family Code from an independent legal expert on the family law, as this was an NGO forum. My hope was that some of the funding would be spent on paying an independent lawyer or lawyers to research on and produce a proposed Family Code that will be discussed at the workshop, and challenge the Government's proposals.

In her opening remarks, Biyong referred to the 'old' law. In my view, this law persists in fostering inequality and weakens women's position in the public sector. I therefore looked forward to hearing bold proposals emphasising that positive changes in the Family Code will play a big role in the promotion of gender equality of opportunity with women being given new significance. Failing that, the alternative was the setting up of a working party with a mandate to propose a new, more modern, Family Code which might have a broader positive effect on Cameroonian women's status whose role needs strengthening in several areas of life, for instance, the labour market and organised politics. To this end, LEFE should have set up a broadly-based committee of men and women to find a variety of ways of reinforcing the women's role through practical measures that will promote gender equality of opportunity.

I envisaged a dialogue, a heated debate, some discussion in which experts on family law defend and attack the existing law from different angles. My assumption was that the ultimate goal of the 'reflection' was that participation opportunities must be the same between women and men, with both influencing decision-making in the family and society. In the current family law (see 1.2.2, above), men wield power and this situation is projected, for example, in political parties, various structures of governments, as elected and appointed highest ranking officials. Cameroonian women, as demonstrated in this thesis, are active at the level of voting, party demonstrations and manifestations, and party social duties, and have little influence on decisions concerning them and Cameroon's

governing institutions. Both men and women play substantial economic roles in Cameroon, although they are not equally distributed among the productive sectors. Sectorial variations are evident in the division of labour between men and women as chapters 5 and 6 above demonstrate. Women face gender specific barriers in accessing the public arena. Customary Laws (see 3.2.2.3 and 3.2.2.4 above) that once provided adequate protection to women as members of large tribes or clans, today do not afford women similar protection in the context of nuclear families and market economies. This is nowhere more evident than in customary laws related to control and allocation of land- the most single important resource for rural women. Gender barriers limit women's participation and reinforce power gaps in the market place. These issues were not highlighted.

Expected progress at the 'reflection' was undermined by the information session by government civil servants. The NGO LEFE's position as an independent civil society voice for women was compromised by allowing the forum to be dominated by civil servants who simply elaborated on the state's position on this sensitive issue.
The existing Code places women in a difficult situation both in the household, as employees, and in politics. Women are being left out of mainstream politics and society due to the constraints in the Family Code. Yet the reflection failed to propose measures to at least reduce inequality by targeting the factors and processes that lead to inequality in the Family Code, different from what Minlo and Ella read out.
There was no summing up at the end to indicate that the objectives of the 'reflection' on the Family Code have been given a tangible expression or not.
Both topics, of the 'reflection' and the 'round-table discussion', deal with change role issues. These are issues that give power to women through understanding how women's experiences are constructed in everyday life. These are issues that question how power structures women's participation in the public sphere. These issues of power remain central in challenging women's secondary status in Cameroon's political culture.
Important in the context of these events, is the recognition that genuine analysis are concerned with reflecting upon women's experience as contained in Cameroon's Party ideology and Family Code, and considering how men can be convinced to grant women political rights and power by proposing changes in the existing structures. Both the party

ideology and the Family Code are illustrations of Cameroon's relations of power and any change in the discourse of these two structures will inevitably lead to some form of change in women's current subordinate roles.

Equality is one of the central objectives of the Cameroonian political constitution. The objective of equality in the context of the two topics highlighted above means that men and women should have equal rights, obligations and real opportunities in all spheres of life. Equality between the sexes does not mean that men and women are the same, or similar. Instead, I would argue that the dissimilarity between women and men must not lead to unequal status or treatment in Cameroonian society. What I looked forward to as outcomes from both forums was the production of documents with declarations of Cameroonian women's sentiments for presentation to the relevant authorities. This data would then be used as working documents for incorporation into the party texts, and into the proposed Family Code. None of this happened. Instead, both forums provided a fascinating glimpse into the manner in which, first, the political alliance between the Government's MINCOF is capable of reinforcing the construction of gendered hierarchies and therefore undermining rather than enhancing the position of women.

The stage-managed events confirmed a number of concerns that had hitherto been only assumptions on my part. These included the following 5 points:

- That the problems found in the Cameroonian political scenario such as the limits placed on panellists as to what they can and cannot say to define or control women's political future, remain embedded in the CPDM directed MINCOF/WCPDM;
- That by agreeing to sponsor and control the discussions at the 'round-table', MINCOF placed itself in the position of the political expert who holds the solution to Cameroonian women's under-representation in politics, while, in reality, the MINCOF is itself highly constrained in what it can and cannot do;
- That MINCOF does not really offer an alternative approach to the existing political situation, as many of its assumptions and notions are normative and remain firmly rooted in male-biased political society;
- Both forums highlighted the related issue that the autonomy and power to speak for women in Cameroon's 'ruling' democracy is unequally distributed and is masked by the party-state's male political and cultural interests;

- The issues around which independent women's NGOs, LEFE, for example, have emerged – civil rights, equal political, economic and sexual rights, still suffer from the influence of the state as particularly evidenced in the attempt at the reconstruction of the Family Code.

Conclusion

North argues that

> Institutions are the rules of the game of a society or more formally devised constraints that structure human interaction. They are composed of formal rules (statute law, common law, regulations), informal constraints (conventions, norms of behaviour, and self-imposed codes of conduct) and the enforcement of characteristics of both.
>
> (North 1996:1)

All the issues bracketed by North in the above quotation, have been experienced by female bureaucrats and women MPs in Cameroonian politics and state bureaucracy. North also distinguishes between organisations and institutions. 'Organisations specify the constraints that structure human interaction inside the institution, but in addition they are action groups' (North, 1996:12). Both the MINCOF and WCPDM fall in the category of organisations within the State and Party institutions respectively.
Based on North's(1996) analysis, it can be said that organisations and institutions are as intimately linked as MINCOF/WCPDM are both inextricably linked to the ruling CPDM party and the State. Whereas MINCOF is the primary source of institutional change, the Cameroonian State institution is the source of that change.

First, the Cameroonian State's approach to concerns of gender equality of opportunity does little more than to confirm that its political system is very traditional and institutional in this matter. It is female bureaucrats who are charged with the responsibility of bringing welfare to women in particular and, sometimes, to other disadvantaged groups like the handicapped. Such welfare as they are able to provide is usually dependent upon external funding. They are kept within the limits of a purely maternal, caring role. The gendered nature of the society further manifests itself through the tendency to assign higher-ranking

occupations to men, while women, on the other hand, are assigned lower status jobs, even within management.

Second, MINCOF's objectives, though revised, are not aimed at redressing the gender inequality that prevails. Gender equality in Cameroon, I argue, is founded on the state's pretence that the gender-equality battle is being won by the creation of MINCOF. Female bureaucrats are caught up in a dilemma in their efforts to advance the status of Cameroonian women. The dilemma is the problem of remaining committed to working for women's interests while participating in a male-dominated institution which orients them to a closely co-operative relationship with the Government. This often presents a conflict of interests and in the resolution of that conflict their loyalty to women's interests is subordinated to their loyalty to the party-state with its male-centred values and assumptions. As a consequence, they cannot really fight for genuine gender-equality and the MINCOF eventually undermines the purpose for which it was ostensibly created. Instead of promoting women it helps to reinforce patterns and assumptions of a male-dominated society.

As examples have illustrated in this thesis, gender relations are constructed on the premise that the issue of gender equality is too important a discussion to be left to women. The problem, based on evidence, lies partly in the gendered nature of the Cameroonian State bureaucracy. A further cause is the State's reluctance to embrace gender equality policies that run contrary to traditional beliefs embedded in Customary Law the current Family Code, especially beliefs about gender.

Since the State guides and influences human behaviour, interactions and thoughts in Cameroon, by implication, the same state is an important influence on outcomes. As the example of the MINCOF and its female bureaucrats demonstrate, above, the Cameroonian state institution does not always produce outcomes that are desired by Cameroonian women as an interest group. Male domination is the norm in Cameroon, whether we are looking at the representation in parliament, cabinet positions, or the labour market. Male domination at the round table discussion and the reflection on the Family Code either as politicians or civil servants demonstrates that policy-making is a process from which women are largely excluded even when the issues concern and affect them.

Nevertheless, it is women, rather than men, who are made to endorse a form of political loyalty which leans more towards female subordination than active participation. Even though the results of the round table discussion are binding on Cameroonian women, the process could rightly be termed 'bogus'. It was a 'bogus' consultation because 500 strong women were being directed, controlled and over-ruled, by one man. It was evident that women exercised political power even within the WCPDM, in name only.

The area I have illuminated is the gender inequalities of power existing in Cameroon. This is the key element in Cameroonian women's subordination in all spheres of the public arena. I have established, based on empirical evidence, that what passes for gender equality in Cameroon is governed by clearly discernible societal conventions which, in practice, prevent real gender equality from emerging. I have used the institutionally constrained positions of the MINCOF and its female bureaucrats to illustrate that Cameroonian women are rendered marginal to the centre. This is achieved through the exercise of male power by a range of practices during elections, in parliament, within the parties, in state bureaucracy, the market place all of which are underpinned by the Family Code.

CONCLUSION

Two bodies of theory underpinned this thesis. One is the feminist standpoint epistemologies (see 4.4.1 to 4.4.4) on which the methodology is based, within the qualitative method (see chapter 2) as informed by feminist ideology. The other theoretical framework which has been used is feminist critiques of the social contract philosophy of the liberal democratic institutions (see 4.5.1 and 4.5.2). This offered a particular explanation of the notion of gender, which I use as an analytic tool to examine gender embeddedness in Cameroonian governing institutions.

Pateman (1988) also forges a link between the 'Sexual Contract' (including, although not exclusively, marriage) and the Classical Social Contract. The Social Contract (see Chapter 4 above) assumed gender and other exclusions.

From a combination of both these theories, and the use of gender as analytic category, I examined gender difference in Cameroonian governing institutions. In the next section these are briefly re-examined in the light of the results from the field.

As explained in the introductory chapter, the overall objective of the work presented in this thesis has been to apply to a concrete case the notion of gender embeddedness in the relationships of power between and within different units which govern Cameroon. This is done through the examination of Cameroonian women's participation in the market place, in electoral politics, in parliamentary committees and state bureaucracy. These institutions make and administer public policy in Cameroon.

The extent of the problem of gender embeddedness in Cameroonian governing institutions is widely illustrated by statistics (see chapters 5 and 6), and the personal experiences of a representative sample of Cameroonian women politicians and female bureaucrats who have succeeded in accessing the public arena, in chapters 7 and 8.

The selection of the women politicians and female bureaucrats interviewed was determined by the research question and the degree of generalisation I was seeking- the national perspective. The aim was to emphasise how their life experiences inform Cameroonian politics and are informed by the political culture. Female bureaucrats as used here, are women who are responsible for running National Women's Machineries (NWMs), like Cameroon's MINCOF and women's wings of parties as the WCPDM. This distinguishes them from other women in government. The theoretical advantage of using personal

narratives is mainly the analysis of subjective views which are then generalised against the background of the position of Cameroonian women. Furthermore, their experiences in governing institutions represent Camerooonian socialisation patterns and cultural expectations of women in politics. Their experience was however, not the only means of analysis but it did recognise women as subjects and as agents of change. This approach is complemented with information from documents and observed events. A combination of these approaches enabled me to develop an understanding of the socio-political situation of Cameroonian women from a gender perspective. The sample was representative in that a combination of these methods provided me with an overall view of the obstacles Cameroonian women face as result of the gender biased Customary Law and Family Code. The women politicians' familiarity with the structures of Cameroonian socio-political culture based on their lived experiences have contributed meaningfully on gendered policies and enabled me to generalise the findings.

Cameroon's political process is one of ruling democratic party systems with a patronage style government, dominated by the ruling CPDM party, as Chapters 3, 6 and 7 illustrate. Such a system reflects, and results in, the lack of any discussion of power, especially in relation to gender, within state governing institutions as discussed in Chapters 6, and 9. The first necessity in order to achieve my overall objective was to set out the main, and secondary research questions, state the contribution of the study to literature, choose an appropriate methodology and outline the chapters. This is done in chapters 1 and 2. This is followed by a chapter on the political history and context of Cameroon, in chapter 3. Chapter 4 is the theoretical chapter in which I construct an appropriate framework from a feminist perspective, through a gender lens, which could be used and applied to the Cameroonian case.

It was discovered that through the mandate and objectives given to MINCOF the State in fact shaped discourse about gender in a way that served the interests of patriarchy. The bureaucratic discourse employed in the mandate and objectives of MINCOF indicates that the MINCOF was designed not to achieve any practical gender equality of opportunity, but just to give the appearance that action was being taken, for political purposes nationally and internationally. This was demonstrated in Chapters 8 and 9. The consequences of this control can be seen in the inability of female bureaucrats to organise effectively around issues of common concern to Cameroonian women. This was illustrated in Chapter 9 through the round-table discussion and the reflection on Cameroon's Family Code. Such

institutional constraints imposed by the state and by the political party in power have combined to disengage female bureaucrats and the MINCOF from UN inspired goals of gender equality of opportunity. This has resulted in the failure of female bureaucrats to bring about any significant increase in women's access to or opportunities within the political structures in Cameroon.

I have also revealed and explored some of the assumptions that underpin the Family Code in Cameroon. I have argued that what is traditionally designated as the Family Code favours certain forms of family arrangements, which sanction social hierarchy based on patriarchal assumptions. Focusing mainly on those issues relating to gender orientation, I have demonstrated that the family unit is the ideological ground on which gender difference and women's oppression are constructed. The miniature political economic process of the family is then projected on to the wider stage of the social public arena, so that the disadvantages to women which are inbuilt in the former are continued, confirmed and made manifest in the affairs and structures of government, and in the party organisations.

My conclusion will now proceed in three stages. First, the information obtained from the field and analysed in the main body of the thesis will be summarised. Second, some implications for future policy and practice arising from the field results, will be suggested. Then, finally, the theoretical issues will be discussed afresh in the light of the field results, and some recommendations and perspectives for further research outlined.

Summary of the Main Results

As explained in chapter 3 of this thesis, Cameroon's political structure, both during the Ahidjo years (1961-82), and the Biya era (1982 to the present day), often had a bearing on the level of women's political involvement. In accounting for the low representation of women in the 1997-2002 legislative assembly, for instance, I found that Cameroon's general political culture and the influence on that culture of the secondary status of women as enshrined in the Family Code (see 1.2.2 above), were more important factors than the electoral structure, as I shall explain. Norris and Lovensduski's (1993) (see 6.2.2 and 6.2.3 above) study of women's representation in Western parliaments recommended the reform of the electoral system, party system and of parliamentary institutions and culture. They identified the voting system as a key variable in a number of cross-national studies, with

proportional representation (PR), using a party list, as more conducive to women's political representation than a single-member, simple majority system. According to Norris (1993:313), 'all other things being equal, women tend to do best under multimember constituencies with a high number of seats per district.' This is because such systems make it easier for political parties to risk nominating women. Cameroon's electoral system is the PR system identified as being more suitable for women's representation in the Scandinavian countries, for example.

The problem with the Cameroonian system is that 'all other things' are unequal as the party system does not bring women into the mainstream political parties. The success of the PR system which Cameroon also practices, depends on democratic and equal rights principles. It was therefore not the structure as such which determined that very few Cameroonian women were elected, but rather the manner in which that structure was manipulated. The most powerful factor was the way influential male party managers failed to recruit and support female candidates for winnable seats.

That few women were elected is one point. What happened to the few women that were elected is another. I found that the opportunities which the few women MPs in Cameroon have had to promote greater gender equality have been severely limited, if not handicapped from the outset. The assumption that women in elected office would be able to speak effectively for women ignored the social dynamics prevalent in Cameroon, according to which women's word and actions are always subordinated to those of their male counterparts in male-female interactions. This attitude has resulted in a failure to provide greater political opportunity at decision-making levels for women.

Most women MPs, either willingly or because they have been given no other option, have therefore specialised in those substantive issues believed to be peculiarly within the interest and competence of their gender: education, health and social welfare. Rather than being allowed to come to the fore in all areas of policy making and political activity, women politicians were therefore held back and restricted to what are generally perceived as stereotypically female roles. Moreover, even in the areas of health, education and social issues, where they did play a certain role in the committees, female MPs did not influence committee deliberations as much as men did. Males were more numerous in these committees, and held more positions of authority within them.

The women's movement was institutionalised in the form of a women's interest group of the then CNU, now the CPDM party. The WCNU/WCPDM strongly developed its

awareness of the political concerns of the party and of the state president, and habitually acted on these grounds rather than specifically for women. Rather than representing women's concerns to the powers that be, it has allowed itself to be used by those in power in order to promote their concerns among women. Its preoccupation is not the cause of women but the desires of the party, of which it is an instrument and agent.

In spite of all the rhetoric about equality between the sexes in the constitution, the traditional division of labour prevails in an inequitable occupational structure. Many of the laws providing for equal and fair employment practices were more often ignored than enforced. This leaves women economically and socially vulnerable as a social group. Power relations are, therefore, deeply entrenched in this sphere as well.

The process revealed in the events reported in Chapter 9 demonstrated that the governing institutions had not created a substantive political agenda for women's concerns, with equality as a central role. Both issues would have encountered less resistance or no resistance at all if the topics held no challenge, and if the concerns were not role change issues. In seeking to avoid taking positive action, the governing institutions succeeded in defining and limiting the parameters of the debate, and deflated it. To the extent that the active participation of women in politics challenged traditional gender expectations, policy became more problematic.

This led me to note the importance of the status quo in using public space to oppose the agenda-setting efforts of female bureaucrats outside the MINCOF mandates and objectives. It also revealed that Cameroon's female bureaucrats are yet to realise that they need to distinguish between the politics of getting an issue onto the agenda, and the politics of influence once the issue gets there. In creating the MINCOF, the general expectation was that female bureaucrats were being offered a part in shaping and implementing a national, gender equality policy. However, data collected simply do not warrant this conclusion. While women politicians' experiences show that a lot can be done to make policy processes more responsive to the needs of women, the same experiences, coupled with further data, also reveal the many challenges and constraints involved.

There are many underlying reasons which contribute to the MINCOF's profound inability to deliver. Four of the most important of these reasons have been identified in the course of my study, and I now summarise them.

(1) The good intentions in creating the MINCOF failed to achieve the hoped for results in practice because the MINCOF's emergence has always been, and remains, externally

influenced rather than being driven by the needs and aspirations found internally within Cameroon itself.

(2) The MINCOF mandate and objectives are not results-oriented as they do not identify desired outcomes and plan the way towards them. Neither are these objectives comprehensive; they fail to take account of the multi-dimensional nature of the issues concerned with gender equality and equality of opportunity. Hence they focus only on activities pertaining to women's traditional roles.

(3) The objectives of the MINCOF are not long-term in approach. This is evident in the fact that, in the brief period since its creation, the MINCOF has already been given four successive sets of objectives, all of them short-term. This exposes the lack of recognition of the depth and complexity of some of the changes needed. Most of the MINCOF activities are based on one-off partnerships with specialised agencies of the donor community, and are very seldom an integral part of long-term government planning.

(4) The 'bureaucratic discourse' in which the objectives and mandates given to the MINCOF are couched makes them inaccessible to the majority of women, who are the legitimate and most important stakeholders. The kind of language used is a factor which alienates women from the MINCOF, rather than encouraging them to participate in, and influence, it. There is no mechanism whereby women, as the relevant stakeholders in the MINCOF, take on the responsibility either for defining or monitoring the process, and evaluating its success. Little rapport exists between civil society actions and governing institutions in Cameroon. The mandates and objectives and, consequently, the activities carried out by the MINCOF do not explicitly reflect the needs and priorities of women. Due to lack of resources and inefficient technical know-how among the majority of the staff, there exists a lack of follow-up and feedback. In many cases, this results in a failure to follow the process through to its conclusion.

These four points lead to certain conclusions concerning the necessity to reform and remodel the MINCOF. The female bureaucrats of the MINCOF need to learn fast how they can make the most of the space they have been given to build up their influence and establish their legitimacy in the longer term. In the appointment of a new female bureaucrats, Ngo Som (March 2000 to April 2001) and Catherine Bakang Mbock (April 28th 2001), after Yaou Aissatou's 16 years at the helm, they have the opportunity for a new beginning. This will require the female bureaucrats to strengthen their own link, as well as

that of the MINCOF as an institution, with women as civil society representatives. This will be an important starting point. Realistically, decisions as to who participates in the formulation and execution of the MINCOF's programmes and priorities, when, and how, are therefore crucial. Such an approach will require a range of skills.

Implications for Policy and Practice

From the data collected from the field for this thesis, it is clear that party political activities, electoral nominations, legislative committee assignments and State bureaucratic appointments in Cameroon are influenced by gender in very different ways, to the advantage of men and the disadvantage of women. Women were often invisible when serious matters of state and society were being discussed. Nevertheless, their social activities in the private sphere kept the party organisation going. Outspoken and combative elected women MPs, or appointed femocrats who took a stand in defence of their beliefs in regard to equality of opportunity, were perceived as a direct threat to the cultural view that a woman's place was in the home.

Furthermore, from information acquired on legislative committee assignments and statistics concerning the appointment of female ministers, it appeared that social bias against women in public office had a dual effect on their political recruitment. The committees on which women MPs served and the ministerial positions held by women seemed to focus largely or only on issues associated with the traditional roles allotted to women.

The implication of these limitations for policy and practice was that this allowed women politicians to have an influence only on legislation which is perceived to be related to women's issues, understood in a restricted manner, and family issues. Consequently, they were likely to prioritise issues pertaining only to these areas. In like manner, female bureaucrats were more likely than their male colleagues to propose legislation that promoted equality, or improved the status of women, in the private sphere of the family. This concentration on family matters nevertheless implied severe limitations in their effectiveness in regard to the wider political realm.

As a result of the above factors, women politicians in Cameroon faced external barriers from voters and political parties. They also faced internalised norms that implied that the most important areas of politics were not for women.

One of the most important defining characteristics of the MINCOF/WCPDM mandates was their emphasis on the conventional roles for women, from which they derived their status. These mandates and their attendant objectives demonstrated that the Cameroonian governing institutions had made a self-conscious intervention to create a culture for women that subjugated them to patriarchal control. This is because women had a double meaning for them: on the one hand, they were allowed entry into the political sphere but, on the other hand, within that sphere they were to be restricted only to those areas which linked up directly into their maternal and housekeeping roles. This access to real power was thus severely curtailed. They were subsumed under a public sector hierarchy the assumptions and practices of which were entirely patriarchal. Their entry into the public sphere was therefore seen purely as an extension and continuation of their restricted, traditional roles; it was not an entry into any sphere hitherto or traditionally controlled by men. They have therefore been unable to influence the full range of affairs dealt with in the political arena.

The State and Politics

This thesis can provide some explanation for the social constraints which obstruct the widening of women's participation in political structures – there were similarities between family sex roles and parts played out in the political arena. The State was regarded as the ultimate political authority and male power was embedded in the different branches of the State apparatus, and in State policies.

My interpretation is that two factors are responsible for this gender embeddedness in the Cameroonian society.

Most ethnic groups and tribes in Cameroon are patrilineal, patrilocal and patrimonial. Consequently, traditional Cameroonian society is exclusively male in its political organisation, and so too is today's Cameroonian State. This traditional conception of power is strengthened by the legacy of the French and British colonial institutions, from which Cameroon derives most of its present structures and experience. Traditional African ideas, in particular Cameroonian cultural and tribal concepts of political power and the state, have combined with the post-Enlightenment European conception of the State to create the gendered nature of Cameroon's political society. As Pateman (1988, 1989) has argued in her critique of the post-Enlightenment period, the State was viewed as male from its inception, founded on a fraternal contract between men.

The Cameroonian State did not therefore perceive women as part of politics. Rather, Cameroonian women were valued only as a social group providing certain services for the

State in the private social sphere. The male-oriented CPDM, and opposition party leaders as well, often spoke and acted as if the political party belonged to men. In addition, men were presumed to be authorities on which women's concerns should or should not merit public attention. It was thought that women could not say anything of much political or analytical value, but ought to confine themselves to the subject of what governing institutions have done for women. Ironically, this role is often unwittingly fulfilled by female bureaucrats and leading WCPDM activists, who fail to see the part they play in the construction of gendered identities which are ultimately harmful to women. Even when women do give their input in a public arena, they seldom if ever say anything threatening to the status quo.

Even women's survival within the top ranks of the WCPDM always depended on the whims of male political leaders. Therefore, though women were aware that numerically they were only tokens in Cameroon's governing institutions, radical strategy was not seen as a viable solution to tokenism. Moreover, Cameroonian women have not yet discovered how to utilise their combined political strength effectively to advance the cause of women. It is especially noteworthy that resistance to change comes in ways that are so subtle that they do not look like resistance at all. A good example is the round table discussion, where a tactical party strategy deflated a sensitive issue. The topic itself, *'The Future of the African Woman in Politics'*, was significant, but it was not allowed to dominate proceedings. The discussions were deliberately manipulated in such a way that they failed to illuminate the real issues within the governing and opposition parties regarding the gendered nature of political activity in Cameroon. The governing CPDM, for instance, claimed to have modernised their approach to women's political mobilisation for positive reasons. The truth was, however, that there was no acknowledgement of women's rights ever having been denied or downplayed. The CPDM could not, therefore, acknowledge the need for such rights to be fought for and won through a social struggle in which the inequalities of social gender would be erased. The CPDM also resorted to self-justification, emphasising the gender-neutral terminology of the constitution. However, the terminology of the Family Code conflicts with this, and contradicts the claim that women enjoy equal rights in political, social, economic and cultural affairs.

A policy for women cannot be formulated independently of other policy areas, like the family. Even though Cameroon claims to have introduced law reform based on the UN CEDAW document, there are factors which continue to impede women's progress as a

result of the constraints imposed by the Family Code. The ideology of the family, as interpreted in Cameroon's Family Code, plays a key role in defining and controlling social structures. It affects all aspects of life. This implies that to benefit from Cameroon's constitutional rights, women must depend on securing approval from patriarchs.
The real aim of the CPDM's presence at the round table discussion was supervisory, as women were viewed as needing tutelage before they could be politically active. Women's equality was subsumed under the party doctrine, and their primary responsibility was to work for the success of the Party. The contribution which they were expected to make in this way did not, however, erase their secondary status in the Party hierarchy. The WCPDM was, after all, just a power-base of constituency supporters from which the CPDM consolidated power and authority.

The Family Code

Finally, the 'reflection' on the Family Code which took place at the Hilton Hotel on the 31st of August as part of the celebrations marking the day of the African Woman, failed to focus on women's subordinate status. Not only is the Code structured on the basis of unequal relationships, but it fosters gender ideologies which restrict the range of activities that women can participate in. These gender ideologies also affect women's access to capital, which influences and reinforces the prevailing gendered division of labour in the market place. Through the Family Code, the law and the State have designated the boundaries between the public and the private. The terminology employed in the Family Code demonstrated the particular manner in which the law intervenes in, and orders family relationships which are dependent for meaning on a sexual relationship between a man and a woman. The man's economic and legal superiority over the woman means that one sex is subordinated to the other. Implicitly, this both causes and affects the wider social discrimination which subjects women to their men. The 'reflection' process failed to challenge this situation, and long-held convictions about the appropriate status of women in Cameroon were not questioned.
There is a need for comprehensive, consistent and gender-sensitive law reform on the family. A new public policy in this domain is necessary, and this will have to be supported by effective implementary procedures. There is a need for legislation which will be aimed at promoting this goal. Until there is justice in the Family Code, Cameroonian

women will not be able to gain equality in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

Female bureaucrats and the MINCOF/WCPDM

The MINCOF was created to work towards gender-equality of opportunity. However, the MINCOF was set up through external pressure rather than through the convictions of Cameroon's governing institutions. One of the main expectations of the MINCOF and its female bureaucrats was that it would monitor policies which promoted equality of opportunity. Cameroonian women, however, remain unaware of the constraints the MINCOF experiences within the governing state institution.

Female bureaucrats are incorporated into the system in such a way that their ideas are moderated and their values compromised. Female bureaucrats interviewed felt that they were being restrained from doing what they wanted to do in various ways. Yaou Aissatou, for example, indicated that she knew what she wanted to change and how to go about doing that, but was not allowed the space and institutional support to bring it about. For Cameroonian female bureaucrats, major transformations inspired by the gender equality of opportunity values of the various UN Conferences on Women are difficult to achieve. As a consequence, the MINCOF lacked policy clout, and female bureaucrats were having to implement some activities with which they themselves may not have agreed. The former femocrats, Yaou Aissatou and Tsanga, were aware of such contradictions. The contradictions manifested themselves in the narrow list of functions under their authority, which emphasised vocational training, and a less than 1 per cent budgetary allocation approved by the State. These functions have different priorities from those linked to gender equality in any real sense, and the resources are inadequate. Achievement of their ideals was therefore constrained by the fact that they had to comply with the gender norms of Cameroonian society. Such institutional constraints prevented femocrats from developing programmes which would cross gender boundaries. There was no way left open to them to undermine or reject, even implicitly, the agenda according to which the private sphere was considered the most appropriate context within which women could participate in society. The institutional constraints also sought, very successfully, to ensure that the norms of that private sphere would continue to operate in regard to those few women who would enter public life.

The implication of the terminology used in the MINCOF's mandate and objectives is that the governing institutions' overriding aim in creating it was not gender equality of

opportunity. The term 'potential' for political, economical, social and cultural development which featured in the 1984 version of the MINCOF mandate has yet to be translated into positive, or 'actual' results.

Although women are in the majority in Cameroon, even within the political parties, they have so far been unable to press successfully for gender equality. This is partly due to women's own inability to organise. Not all women, so far, put gender equality, as discussed and understood in chapters 1and 3 above, at the top of their priorities. Indeed, they often have other priorities which are subordinated to, or even undermine, the agenda of gender equality. The reasons for this , and what can be done about it, are important issues, which nevertheless lie outside the scope of the present study. So too is an examination of the ways in which men can exploit these realities for their own ends. The fact is that there are divisions among women concerning a) how they prioritise different political agenda; b) the degree of importance they attribute to gender equality, as defined and applied in this thesis; and c) what they think about feminist agendas. These are potential areas for further research which the present study has uncovered.

As a result of the differential scale of their activities in the social public arena, men and women have different degrees of access to resources and opportunity structures. The gendered division of labour within the governing institutions limits the diversification of women's activities in the occupational structure so that they tend to be confined to social welfare issues, bringing about a gendered access to the economy and party political participation, resulting in an imperfectly competitive political structure. This 'differential' economic, social, cultural and political concentration results in gendered socio-political outcomes.

There are two important conclusions that arise from the research findings in this section. One is about how to develop future strategies for achieving feminist and equity goals both in the area of employment opportunities and in Cameroonian governing institutions. These are matters involving civil and political liberties, as well as representation. This can be achieved only by a commitment to gender equality of opportunity which will effectively and deliberately, seek to remove direct and indirect discriminatory practices that are deeply embedded in Cameroon's occupational and political structures.

The second conclusion is of a more theoretical nature. Although some analyses of gender and organisations in Cameroon began to appear just prior to and after the much

publicised Beijing 1995 Conference, very few of these are based on an understanding of the gendered nature of political institutions. If Cameroonian women are to achieve feminist and equity transformations in national governing institutions, they need home-grown ideas, concepts and strategies. International resources, like the UN Beijing Platform for Action, for instance, will also be useful, but are not enough in themselves. These need to be supplemented with locally-rooted ideas and strategies which can inspire them, and help them to move forward.

During my field trip, I observed that there had been insufficient opportunity for women's studies and feminism to filter into the organisational practices of the MINCOF and the WCDPM. As a result, issues about feminism are less openly debated. Female bureaucrats need to build stronger bridges between themselves and those with similar values who work in Women's Studies units, in Cameroon's universities and elsewhere. This, I suggest, is one way the MINCOF can make new State policies on gender equity, as outlined in the 1997 version of the MINCOF mandate (see chapter 8), work for rather than against Cameroonian women. This would enable femocrats to work on identifying spaces for feminist transformations. These links might also offer female politicians more opportunities to acquire that greater familiarity with feminist ideas which they need, and which feminists working in Women's Studies already have.

Feminist Theory

As informed by related scholarly literature in the theoretical framework (see chapters 1, 2 and 4), feminist theory begins with women's experience of oppression, and argues that subordination extends from the private circumstances to political conditions. Certain themes dominate feminist theory, including the use of patriarchy as an organising concept to theorise the subordination of women, and the concept that the public/private divisions are complemented by the 'Sexual Contract' structure in women's lives. Feminist theorists Hartsock (1983, 1996, 1997) and Harding (1983, 1987, 1998), expounded a specific feminist way of viewing power in theoretical practices. This feminist perspective on power, as expounded by Hartsock (1996) for instance, highlights the systematic and significant differences in life activity experienced by men and women, leading to differing world views and distinctive theoretical commitments. Hartsock's argument on the conception of power within mainstream theory is part of the feminist standpoint.

The feminist epistemological typology proposed by Harding (1987, 1998) distinguishes between feminist empiricism, standpoint and postmodernism. Of the three, feminist standpoint epistemologies emphasise the extent to which knowledge is grounded in material experience. It is feminist standpoint theory which underwrites my theoretical framework because it introduced the notion that in institutions of domination, the vision available to rulers will be both partial and contradictory. The vision available to the subordinated group, on the other hand, exposes the real relations among people. The premise of such an argument, as informed by feminist standpoint theorists, is that the standpoint of the oppressed is the contextual knowledge. It comprehends both the surface appearance generated by the standpoint of the dominant group, and the deeper reality perceived by the oppressed group. This proved to fit the Cameroonian case very well. This is because power relations have been identified by feminist theorists (see chapters2 and 4) as being embedded in considerations of oppression. Such considerations of how women's experiences are constructed and within what systems of power relations enabled me to analyse their role in the process of building knowledge from their own and other women's experiences. Feminist theory is concerned with social and political change as well as developing analyses of politics and society. It enabled me to build upon available data and the lived experiences of some Cameroonian women politicians to do the following:

- To question how knowledge is constructed thus enabling me to raise questions about how knowledge can be built based on women's lived experiences to create social and political change.
- To identify the relationship between knowledge and power, critique constructions of knowledge in order to choose an approach most relevant to my study.
- To consider relations of power in Cameroonian women's everyday lives as contained in the discourse of the Customary Law and the Family Code. This helped in breaking down public and private distinctions; in expanding my understanding of the political in women's lives and made apparent the relations between aspects of women's lives and Cameroon's political culture.
- To use feminist citizenship theory and praxis to analyse how politics operates in Cameroon to create partial citizenship through the differential participation of men and women in the public arena. Feminist theory offered me a tool to reflect on the

rights and responsibilities associated with national citizenship through linking citizenship with universal human rights as defined by the UN.

- To link the exclusion of Cameroonian women from the public sphere or their inclusion based only on their maternal attributes, to the cultural , historical and political development of citizenship during Cameroon's colonial era. This enabled me to determine in what ways Cameroonian political participation is gendered.
- To integrate a gender analysis into a broader understanding of the significance of equality and difference.

It is on bases such as these, already discussed in chapters 1 and 4, that I adopted the idea that knowledge is contextual and different practices generate different forms of knowledge. These arguments empowered me to use the Cameroonian women's experiences (see chapters 7&8) to shape the distinctive female knowledge, using the Cameroonian context. The doubts raised by critics of feminist standpoint epistemologies, particularly on the question of how to determine which particular viewpoint of which particular women are to be considered sufficiently representative to generate a standpoint epistemology, are countered in my methodology. I do this through interviewing elite individuals, as explained in the chapter 2. The Cameroonian women interviewed, and on whose political experiences I base my analysis, were considered influential, prominent, and well-informed people in Cameroon's socio-political context. They were selected for interviews on the basis of their expertise in areas of Cameroonian politics relevant to my work in this thesis. They provided an overall view of the Cameroonian socio-political culture especially, in relationship to gender.

The other theoretical framework which has been used is that propounded by Elhstain (1981, 1982, 1993) and expanded by Pateman (1998, 1989). Their integrationist approach enabled me to focus on Cameroonian women's exclusion from the public world. Pateman's transformative analysis especially, allowed me to analyse critically the manner of their inclusion. Consequently a critique of the public/private distinction was complemented by a focus on the particular social, cultural, economic and political forces which resulted in women being confined to certain restricted roles in the public arena, especially those concerned with social issues. This was amply demonstrated in my study of the Cameroonian case.

Pateman (1988) claimed that the social contract, which generated liberal politics and established the political freedom of individuals, simultaneously entailed the sexual subordination of women in marriage. Pateman's sexual contract theory is exemplified in the Cameroonian social context in the general position of the Cameroonian woman in the family code as explained in 1.2.2 above. In particular, the clauses which stipulate that marital rape is culturally accepted on the basis that the consent to marriage constitutes consent to each sexual intercourse, and the provision which gives the husband the power to define his wife's work in the public arena, effectively denying a woman the right to freely choose employment guaranteed under the Constitution. This contradicts the 'inalienable' term enshrined in the Constitution. This confirms Pateman's argument, set out in chapter 4, that the Social Contract which was used to create both civil society and the State required a 'sexual contract' to accommodate the system of patriarchy that predated liberalism. The liberal Social Contract therefore represented the reorganisation, but not the abolition, of patriarchy. These critiques focused on the way in which the historical origins of liberal theory relied on the incorporation of the already existing patriarchal relations. In the Cameroonian context, for example, the State, presented itself as gender-neutral, yet perpetuated patriarchy in the Family Code. The critique enabled me to understand what was excluded in the Cameroonian Constitutional definition of equality. The Constitution endowed all Cameroonian citizens irrespective of race, religion, or belief, with 'inalienable rights'. The dictionary meaning of 'inalienable' is, 'not to be removed or transferred to another'. This declaration, is however, contradicted within the phraseology of the family code which in effect makes the rights of women 'alienable', that is, capable of being transferred to the ownership of another, in this case, the male of the species. The manner in which the 'Sexual Contract' was defined and explained in the Family Code in fact ensured women's social subordination to men in all sections of life. The Constitution, instead of overcoming this inequality, actually presumed and therefore implicitly, and in practice, confirmed it.

Together, both feminist standpoint epistemologies and feminist critiques of the classical Social Contract philosophy, offered a particular explanation of the notion of gender which I used as an analytical tool. This gives me the means to examine gendered politics and the secondary status of feminist bureaucrats in Cameroonian governing institutions. I articulated all these within gender theory.

The main results obtained from the field tended to confirm these theoretical standpoints. At all levels of the governing institutions, my examination revealed that the division of labour was gendered and there was no genuine partnership between men and women in Cameroonian politics. This gendering results in the under-representation of women in parliament, in parliamentary committees, as electoral candidates, and in executive positions, where women habitually occupied secondary status ministries. Particular features of the law in Cameroon helped to regulate the family and pave the way for legal rights that enabled men, as heads of households, to exercise power and authority over women. Findings also revealed that women frequently exercised what political power they were allowed to wield in the particular arena of the Women's Wings of political parties, like the governing WCPDM for example. The political activism within these wings tended to restrict the roles which they could play in the parties. The predominantly social functions allotted to men effectively prevented them from campaigning for gender equality in a real sense. At the same time, I also observed that all Cameroonian women could be considered as socially, economically and politically disadvantaged as compared to some categories of men. Female bureaucrats and women MPs, for example, had a more favourable situation than many men below them. Nevertheless, as men, the latter still had control over the women in their households and families, as spelt out in the Cameroonian Family Code. Men as a whole, as a social group, therefore retained the decision-making powers within the private realm and exercised a vast control in the public arena. Cameroonian women as a whole, as a homogenised social group, therefore remain disadvantaged, as the percentage of privileged women is negligible (see chapters 5 and 6). Differences between the privileges enjoyed by the small number of elite women in Cameroon and the generality of Cameroonian women were also noted.

Politics as an Institution

The meaning and significance of the term 'politics' as used in my work in this thesis was influenced by Millett (1971). This term underpins the investigation of the causes and laws which underlie the reality which this thesis has been studying. As used in this thesis, politics denotes the activities associated with the Cameroonian government which, I argue, has framed its definitions in terms offered by Aristotle. Power is fundamental to participation in the governing institutions. It is used to control both the means of production and the institutions through which law is made or applied. This control

manifests itself in the distinction between the public and the private in that even though the Cameroonian party-state is constitutional, and carefully specifies the rights of all citizens, it distinguishes Custom from Law. Custom then forms a background to which the party-state attaches the important private institutions of the family and property, and within which women are treated differently. These distinctions, which are based on gender are politically significant in that they justify the assigning of different rights to the two sexes. Men dominate and control both in the private and public sphere. Adultery, for example, is differently regarded according to whether the victim is male or female. Many rights in the Customary Law such as property rights, have been specified to the detriment of women. Family law is replete with unequal rights and these inequalities follow an obvious pattern in the public arena and are reflected in the gender division of labour. Politics from this perspective enabled me to identify inequality in power relations in the Cameroonian context. The definition enabled me to highlight two related issues:

1. It drew attention to how terms such as patriarchy, 'the family' or 'bureaucracy' 'customary law' named hierarchical ways of organising what people do, rather than the real human activities under these institutions' supposed control. It suggested that they were not neutral terms because assumptions about hierarchy were part of a social order constructed by men.
2. It also emphasised that such differential participation of men and women in public life gave rise not only to male authority over women but to a higher valuation of male over female roles. It enabled me to understand that while Cameroonian women had gained *de jure* equality, they were yet to gain *de facto* equality.

All this was found in the Cameroonian context. Some of those which have been mentioned during the course of this thesis included: ethnoregional balance, education, family, marital status, party politics, patronage politics, occupations in the market place and State bureaucracy. Others have not been mentioned but also play a role, including the urban/rural divide, family associations, women's groups, NGOs, polygamy, religion, violence against women, practices of international agencies, and, most importantly, class divisions among women. These differences are systemic and independent of cultural identities.

Possible avenues for further research

These unresolved issues are potential subjects for further research in order to see how they affect and are affected by the gendered nature of Cameroonian politics and

Cameroonian society. In the course of the study, several further possible avenues of future research have also opened up.

One of the concepts that derives from Black feminist critiques is race. Cameroonian women's experiences do not reflect the racist struggles that encompass struggles of Black women in the Diaspora; as shaped by their ethnic history. These examine the boundaries of sisterhood with white feminists. The context of my work is not multi-racial. A related unresolved issue in the Cameroonian context however, is imperialism. The consequences of this aspect of the Cameroonian past on gender equality could be a further area of research. I have only touched on this topic very briefly here, when I discussed the effects of the Napoleonic code on the relationship between men and women in the household and the family. My assumption would be that internationally orchestrated exploitation bears on Cameroonian women as much as patriarchy does but this requires further investigation. Furthermore, although Cameroon is not a multi-racial society in the sense understood by Black feminists in the West, there are ethnic, tribal and linguistic differences within it. The question of whether and how far one ethnic group or geographical area is politically oppressed by another or by several others, or how it is advantaged or disadvantaged, are further aspects of the issues which need more investigation. In regard to these, it is possible that something can be learned – analogically – from the work of Black feminists. The same may be true in regard to the discrimination practised by one linguistic group against another, especially in terms of the relation between the French-speaking majority and the English-speaking minority.

Final Remark

The approach employed in my theoretical framework in this thesis focused on gender as the base for power differentials in Cameroonian governing institutions. The techniques above enabled me, as a researcher, to uncover the extent to which the distinction between public and private, combined with Cameroonian traditional and customary beliefs, are central to the philosophy which underpins Cameroon's socio-political context. It has to be acknowledged that since social rules and norms can be changed, the picture presented in my analysis is time specific (1960) when the first woman accessed parliament to the last parliamentary elections (1997) and cabinet was reshuffled (2001) to usher in a new female bureaucrat. Such analyses have the drawback of having no predictive power, at least in

the long term. In spite of this, my study has demonstrated it is possible to establish a direct link between the public/private, nature/culture split and the level of women's participation in the public arena. Arguments and evidence were accumulated to demonstrate that there was a gendered separation of public and private, as well as nature and culture spheres. This resulted in the allocation of positions of low levels of authority and power to women in Cameroon's socio-political context. The rhetoric of the Cameroonian party-state is about the symptoms and not the deep-rooted causes of inequality. The party-state realises that as a government, they lose nothing by appearing to act.

Bibliography

Cameroon government's internal documents

Basic Texts of the Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement: Constitution of the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement and Auxiliary Organs (n d.)

Cameroon, Directory of Industry and Commercial Enterprises-191/92 (1991) Chamber of Commerce.

Cameroon, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning (1978). Main Results of the April 1976 General Population and Housing Census. Cameroon: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, Department of Statistics, and Paris: *Societe d'Etudes pour de Development Economique et Social*

Cameroon, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning (1987) Main Results of April 1987 General Population and Housing Census. Cameroon: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, Department of Statistics, and Paris: *Societe d'Etudes pour de Development Economique et Social.*

Cameroon, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning (1981). The Fifth Five- Year Economic, Social, and Cultural Development Plan 1981-1986. Yaoundé: Minstry of Economic Affairs and Planning.

Cameroon, Ministry of Justice and Keeper of the Seals (1996) Annual Statistics, Yaoundé, Ministry of Justice, Department of Statistics.

Cameroon, Ministry of Women's Affairs (1984) The Right of a Woman Who Earns a salary (Pamphlet).

Cameroon, National Committee for the Preparation of the World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. National Report on the Evaluation of The Implementation of the Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies of Action and the Abuja Declaration on Participative Development . (April 1994): Republic of Cameroon.

Cameroon, Official Gazette of the Republic (1984) Decree No. 84-95 of 26 March 1984: To Organise the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Cameroon, The President of the Republic (1988) Decree No. 88/1281 of 22 September 1988, Organising the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs .

Cameroon, The President of the Republic (1995) Decree No. 95/ 100 of 9 June 1995; To Organise the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Cameroon, The President of the Republic (1998) Decree No. 98/068 of May 1998 Organising the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

Periodicals consulted

Africa Confidential, 1 March, 1996, Vol. 37 No.5

Africa Confidential, 1 November 1996, Vol. 37 No.22

Africa Confidential, 10 October 1997, Vol. 38, No 20

Africa Confidential, 18 July, 1997, Vol. 38 No.15

Africa Confidential, 2 August 1996, Vol. 37 No 16

Africa Confidential, 20 June 1997, Vol. 38 No 13

Cameroon Tribune 10 June 1997

Cameroon Tribune 10 October 1995

Cameroon Tribune 16 June 1995

Cameroon Tribune 30 July 1998

Cameroon Tribune No 6014: 11 January 1996

Economist Intelligence Unit: Quarterly Country Reports: Cameroon: 1982-2000

Economist Intelligence Unit: Country Profile: Cameroon : 1982- 2000

Electronic sources

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Twenty-third session, (12-30 June 2000) Consideration of Reports by States parties; **Cameroon:** initial report.
At http:/www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cameroon%20as%adopted.html

Fonkah, Evaristus Chofor (1997) Cameroon (Anglophone) : The Judiciary- not really credible. At http:// www.peacelink.it.anb-bia/nr337.e05.html

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) At http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm.

Secondary sources

Acker, Joan (1992) 'Gendered Institutions: From Sex Roles to Gendered Institutions'. Contemporary Society 21: pp 565-69.

Alcoff, Linda and Elizabeth Potter (eds.) (1993) Feminist Epistemologies. New York and London : Routledge.

Alvarez, Sonia (1990) Engendering Democracy in Brazil: Women's Movements in Transition Politics. Princeton, N. J. : Princeton University Press.

Amadiume, Ifi (1987) Male Daughters and Female Husbands. London : ZED Books.

Amos, Valerie and Pratibha Parma (1984) 'Challenging Imperial Feminism', Feminist Review No. 17, pp3-18.

Andermahr, Sonya, Terry Lovell and Carol Wolkowitz (eds.) (1997) A Concise Glossary of Feminist Theory London and New York : Arnold.

Anderson Margaret (1993) Thinking About Women . New York : Macmillan.

Arrato, Annabelle (1993) From Neo-Marxism to Democratic Theory: Essays on the Critical Theory of Soviet-Type Societies. New York: M.E. Sharp.

Arneil, Barbara (1999) Politics and Feminism Oxford : Blackwell Publishers.

Arnot, Madeleine and J. Dillabough (1999) 'Feminist Politics and Democratic Values in Education' Curriculum Inquiry 29(2): 159-90.

Atkinson, P., Delamont, S., & Hammersley, M. 'Qualitative Research Traditions: A British Response to Jacob. Review of Educational Research 58, 231-250.

Bar On Bat-Ami (1993) 'Marginality and Epistemic Privilege' in L. Alcoff and E. Potter (eds.) Feminist Epistemologies, New York: Routledge.

Barrett, Michele (1988) (First Published 1980) Women's Oppression Today: The Marxist Feminist Encounter. Second Edition. London: Verso.

Barrett, Michèlle (1991) The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault. Cambridge: Polity.

Barrett, Michèlle and Anne Phillips (eds.) (1992) Destabilising Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates. Cambridge: Polity.

Bauböck, Rainer (1994) Trans-national Citizenship: Membership and Rights in International Migration. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.

Bayart, Jean-François (1989, 1993) The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly London and New York: Longman.

Bayart, Jean-François (1989) 'Cameroon', in Donal B. Cruise O'Brien, John Dunn and Richard Rathbone (eds.) Contemporary West African States. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp 31-48.

Bell, Vicki (1993) Interrogating Incest: Feminism, Foucault and the Law. London and New York: Routledge.

Bem, Sandra (1993) Lenses of Gender . New Haven, Conn. : Yale University Press.

Benhabib, Seyla (1992) Situating the Self. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Benhabib, Seyla, and Cornell, Druscilla (eds.) (1987) Feminism as Critique. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bernstein, Robert, A (1983) Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermentics and Praxis. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bernstein, Robert, A (1986) 'Why are There so Few Women in the House?' in Western Political Quarterly, Vol.46 (1)pp 155-164.

Blakie, Norman (1995) Approaches to Social Enquiry Polity Press.

Blum, Linda M and Vicki Smith (1988) Women's Mobility in the Corporation: A Critique of the Politics of Optimism. Signs 13: pp 528-45.

Boneparth, Ellen, and Emily Stoper (eds.) Women, Power and Policy: Towards the Year 2000. New York: Pergamon.

Boserup, Ester ((1970) Women's Role in Economic Development. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Wacquant, Loic J.J. (1992) An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology. Cambridge: Polity

Braidotti, Rosi (1994b) Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory. New York: Columbia University Press

Brain, Robert (1972) Bangwa Kinship and Marriage Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brookes, Pamela (1967) Women at Westminster: An Account of Women in the British Parliament, 1918-1966. London: Peter Davies

Bryson, Valerie (1999) Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice Macmillan.

Bulmer, M (1982b) The Use of Social Research: Social Investigation in Public Policy-Making. London: George Allen and Unwin

Butler, Judith (1990) Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York and London: Routledge

Butler, Judith (1993) Bodies that Matter. New York and London: Routledge

Cain, Maureen (1990) 'Realist Philosophy and Standpoint Epistemologies or Feminist Criminology as a Successor Science', in Gelsthorpe, Lorraine and Morris, Alison (eds), Feminist Perspective in Criminology. Milton Keynes: Open University Press

Carroll, Susan (1984) 'Women's Candidates and Support for Feminist Concerns: the Closet Feminist Syndrome' Western Political Quarterly, 37

Carroll, Susan and Ella Taylor (1989) 'Gender Difference in the Committee Assignment of State Legislators: Preferences or Discrimination?' Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April, Chicago, Illinois

Carter, Michael J and Susan Boslego Cartar (1981) Women's Recent Progress in Professions, or, Women Get a Ticket to Ride After the Gravy Train Has Left the Station Feminist Studies 7, pp477-504.

Chalmers, Alan F. (1982) What is this Thing Called Science ? 2nd Edition. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Charlton, Sue Ellen, J Everett and Kathleen Staudt (eds) (1989) Women, the State and Development. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press

Chazan, N, Peter Lewis, Robert Mortimer, Donald Rothschild, and Stephen Ian Steadman (1999) Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa. 3rd Edition, Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

Chodorow, Nancy (1978) The Reproduction of Mothering. Berkeley: University of California Press

Clark, John F (1997) 'The Challenges of Political Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa: a Theoretical Overview', in Clark and Gardinier (eds.) Political Reform in Francophone Africa.

Cockburn, Cynthia (1991) In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations. London: MacMillan

Code, Lorraine (1993) 'Taking Subjectivity into Account' in L. Alcoff and E. Potter (eds.) Feminist Epistemologies, New York: Routledge

Collins, Patricia Hill (1990) Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment. Boston: Unwin Hyman

Collins, Patricia Hill (1986) 'Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought' Social Problems 33(6): pp14-32.

Collins, Patricia Hill (1997) 'Comment on Hekman "Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited"; Truth of Justice?' Signs, 22(2) pp 375-81.

Connell, R.W. (1987) Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics. London: Polity.

Connell, Robert W (1987) Gender and Power. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Connell, Robert W (1990) The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal. Theory and Society, (19) pp 507-544.

Corrin Chris (1999) Feminist Perspectives on Politics London and New York: Longman.

Cott, Nancy (1987) The Grounding of Modern Feminism. New Haven, CT : Yale University Press.

Craske, Nikki (1999) Women and Politics in Latin America Cambridge: Polity Press

Croissant, Jennifer L (1998) 'Criteria for a Theory of Knowledge' in Sica, Alan (ed.) What is Social Theory? : The Philosophical Debates. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers

Dahl, Robert A (1989) Democracy and its Critics. New Haven, CT : Yale University Press.

Dahlerup, Drude (1994) 'Learning to Live with State- State, Market, and Civil Society: Women's Need for State Intervention in East and West' Women's Studies International Forum 17, (2/3) pp 117-27.

Dale, A and Foster, P (1986) Feminists and State Welfare London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Davis, Angela (1981) Women, Race and Class New York: Random House.

de Beauvoir, Simone (1953) The Second Sex. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

de Lauretis, Teresa (1984) Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

de Lauretis, Teresa (1987) Technologies of Gender. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Deem, R (ed.) (1978) Women and Schooling. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Delancy, Mark W and H. Mbella Mokeba (1990) Historical Dictionary of The Republic of Cameroon, Second Edition, Metuchen, N.J, and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Delancy, Mark W. (1989) Cameroon: Dependence and Independence. Boulder, CO:

Denzin, Norman K (1978) The Research Act New York: McGraw- Hill.

Denzin, Norman K (1994) 'Postmodernism and Deconstructionism' in David R Dickens & Andrea Fontana (eds.) Postmodernism and Social Inquiry. New York: Guilford.pp182-202.

Dever, Holly (1989) Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Devereux, Stephen and John Hoddinot (eds.) (1992) Fieldwork in Developing Countries. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Doan, Mary Ann (1987) The Desire to Desire Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Donovan, Josephine (1985) Feminist Theory New York: Continuum.

Doyal, L and Gould, Carol (1991) A Theory of Human Needs. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Du Bois, B. (1988) 'Passionate scholarship: notes on values, knowing and method in feminist social science' in Theories of Women's Studies Bowles, G. and R. Duelli Klein (eds.) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Duelli Klein, Renate (1983) 'How to do what we want to do: thoughts about feminist methodology', in Bowles, G and R. Duelli Klein (eds.) Theories of Women's Studies. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Duverger, Maurice (1955) The Political Role of Women. New York: UNESCO.

Duverger, Maurice (1959) Political Parties: Their Organisation and Activity in the Modern State. London: Methuen.

Eduards, Maud (1983) Sex, Power and Citizenship: Woman in Political Thought from Pluto to Engels. Stockholm: Lieber.

Edwards Meredith (1991) 'The Dilemmas of Femocratic Reform' in Mary F.Katzenstein and Hege Skjeie (eds.) Going Public: National Histories of Women's Enfranchisement and Women's Participation Within State Institutions. Oslo: Institute for Social Research.

Eichler, M. (1988) Non-sexist Research Methods: A Practical Guide. London: Unwin Hyman.

Eisenstein, Hester (1984) Contemporary Feminist Thought. London: Unwin.

Eisenstein, Hester (1991) Gender Shock: Practising Feminism on Two Continents. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

Eisenstein, Hester (1996) Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Eisenstein, Zillah (1979) Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism. New

Eisenstein, Zillah (1979) Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Eisenstein, Zillah (1981) The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism. New York: Longman.

Eisenstein, Zillah (1984) Feminism and Sexual Equality: Crisis in Liberal America. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Eisenstein, Zillah (1991) 'Privatising the State: Reproductive Rights, Affirmative Action and the Problem of Democracy' Frontiers (1) 98-125.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke (1981, 1993) Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Elshtain, Jean Bethke (ed.) (1982a) The Family in Political Thought. Brighton: Harvester.

Epperson, Sharon (1988) 'Studies Link Subtle Sex Bias in Schools with Women's Behaviour in the Workplace' Wall Street Journal. September 16.

Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs (1971) Woman's Place Berkeley :University of California Press.

Epstein, Cynthia Fuchs (1993) Women in L aw. 2nd Edition. New York: Basic Books.

Evans, Judith (1995) Feminist Theory Today: An Introduction to Second-Wave Feminism. London: Sage.

Felski, Rita (1989) Beyond Feminist Aesthetics : Feminist Literature and Social Change. London: Hutchinson Radius.

Ferguson, Anne; Kimberly Ludwig; Beatrice Liatto Katundu, and Irene Manda (1995) Zambian Women in Politics: An Assessment of Changes Resulting from the 1991 Political Transition. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University.

Ferguson, Kathy (1984) The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Ferguson, Kathy (1993) The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory. Berkeley: University of California.

Firestone, Shulamith (1970) The Dialectic of Sex. New York: Norton.

Flax, Jane (1983) 'Political Philosophy and the Patriarchal Unconscious: a psychoanalytical perspective on epistemology and metaphysics' in Harding, Sandra and M. Hintikka (eds.) Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Flax, Jane (1987) 'Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory' in Signs Vol.12 no.4 pp255-270.

Fraser, Nancy (1989) Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Fraser, Nancy (1994) 'After the Family Wage: Gender Equity and the Welfare State' in Political Theory, 22 (4), pp 591-618.

Fraser, Nancy and Gordon, Linda (1994b) 'Civil Citizenship against Social Citizenship?' in B.van Steenbergen (ed.) The Condition of Citizenship. London: Sage.

Friedan, Betty (1963) The Feminist Mystique. New York: Norton.

Furner, M. (1975) Advocacy and Objectivity Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Gatens, Moira (1988) 'Towards a Feminist Philosophy of the Body' in B Caine, E.A. Grosz, and M. de Leparvanche (eds.) Crossing Boundaries: Feminism and the Critique of Knowledges. Sydney: Allen and Unwin. pp 59-70.

Geisler, Gisela (1987) 'Sisters under the Skin: Women and the Women's League in Zambia.' Journal of Modern African Studies 25 (1) pp 43-66.

Gertzog, Irwin (1984) Congressional Women: their Recruitment, Treatment and Behaviour. New York: Praeger.

Gilligan, Carol (1982) In a Different Voice: Essays on Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goetz, Ann Marie (1991) 'Feminism and the Claim to Know: Contradictions in Feminist Approaches to Women in Development.' in Mohanty Chandra, Russo, A and Torres, L (eds.) (1991) Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indian University Press.

Goetz, Anne-Marie (1995) The Politics of Integrating Gender to State Development Processes: Trends, Opportunities and Constraints in Bangladesh, Chile, Jamaica, Mali, Morocco and Uganda. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Occasional Paper 2.

Gordon, Linda (1988) Heroes of their Own Lives: The Politics and History of Family Violence. New York: Viking.

Gormick, Janet C (1999) 'Gender Equality in the Labour Market' in Diane Sainsbury (ed.) Gender and Welfare Regimes Oxford: Oxford University Press pp 210-42.

Gough, Ian (1992) 'What are human needs?' in J. Percy-Smith and I. Sanderson, Understanding Local Needs. London: Institute of Public Policy Research.

Gould Carol (1984) Beyond Domination Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

Gould, Carol (1988) Rethinking Democracy Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gouldner, A (1971) The Coming Crisis of Western Sociology. London: Heinemann.

Grant ,Judith (1993) Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory. New York and London: Routledge.

Guyer, Jane (1986) 'Women's Role in Development' in Robert J Berg, Jennifer Seymour Whitaker (eds.) Strategies for African Development. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp 389-422.

Hanisch, Carol (1971) 'The Personal is Political', in Agel, J. (ed.) The Radical Therapist. New York: Ballantine.

Haraway, Donna (1988) 'Situated Knowledges : the Science Question in Feminism and Privilege of the Partial Perspective' Feminist Studies, 14, 3 pp575-99.

Harding, Sandra (1986) The Science Question in Feminism. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Harding, Sandra (1987) Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Harding, Sandra (1991) Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Harding, Sandra (1993) 'Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Strong Objectivity?' in Linda, Alcoff and Elizabeth, Potter(eds.), Feminist Epistemologies. New York and London: Routledge.

Harding, Sandra (1998) Is Science Multicultural?: Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Harding, Sandra and Merrill, Hintikka (eds.) (1983) Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Hargreaves, John D. (1967) West Africa: The Former French States. Englewood Cliffs,N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Hargreaves, John D. (1969) France and West Africa: Anthology of historical documents. London: Macmillan.

Hartsock, Nancy (1985) Women, Sex and Power. Boston: Northeastern University Press.

Hartsock, Nancy (1987) 'The Feminist Standpoint: developing the ground for a specifically feminist historical materialism.' In Harding, Sandra (ed.) Feminism and Methodology. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Hartsock, Nancy (1996) 'Community/Sexuality/gender: rethinking power', in Nancy Hirschmann and Di Stefano, Christine (eds.) Revisioning the Political: Feminist reconstructions of traditional concepts in Western political theory. Oxford: Westview Press. Pp 27-50.

Hekman, Susan (1990) Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism. Boston: North-eastern University Press.

Held, David (1987) Models of Democracy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Held, David (1991) Between the State and Civil Society: Citizenship. in Geoff Andrews (ed.) Citizenship London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Held, Virginia (1993) Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Hindness, B (1993) 'Citizenship in the Modern West' in B.Turner, (1993) Citizenship and Social Theory. London: Sage.

Hirschmann, David (1990, 1997) 'The Malawi Case: Enclave Politics, Core Resistance, and "Nkhoswe No.1"', in Kathleen Staudt (ed.) Women's International Development, and Politics: the Bureaucratic Mire (Updated and Expanded Edition) Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Hirschmann, David (1991) 'Women and political participation in Africa: Broadening the scope of research' in World Development, 19 (12).

Hoffert, Sylvia D. (1995) When Hens Crow : the Woman's Rights Movement in Antebellum America. Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press.

Hornsby-Smith, M (1993) 'Gaining Access' in N. Gilbert (ed.) Researching Social Life, London: Sage pp 52-67.

Howe, F (ed.) (1975) Women and the Power to Change . New York: McGraw Hill.

hooks, bell (sic) (1984) Feminist Theory from Margin to Center. Boston: South End Press.

Hull, Gloria T, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith (eds.) All the Women are White; All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us are Brave: Black Women's Studies. New York: Feminist Press.

Humm, Maggie (ed.) (1992) Feminisms: A Reader New York and London: Harvester Wheatesheaf.

Humm, Maggie (1995) The Dictionary of Feminist Theory (Second Edition). New York, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Inter-Parliamentary Union: " Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making", Reports and Documents Series, No.28 (Geneva 1997).

Inter-Parliamentary Union: Women and Political Power. Reports and Documents Series, No.19 (Geneva, 1992).

Inter-Parliamentary Union: Women in Parliaments, 1945-1995: A World Statistical Survey, Reports and Documents Series, No.23 (Geneva 1995)

Jacob, E (1987) ' Qualitative Research Traditions : A Review'. Review of Educational Research , 17, pp1-50.

Jacob, E. (1988) 'Clarifying Qualitative Research: A Focus on Traditions. Educational Researcher, 17 pp 16-24.

Jagger, Alison M (1997) 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Standpoint Epistemology', in Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (eds.) Feminisms. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp 188-93.

Jagger, Alison M (1994) Living with Contradictions, Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics Boulder : Westview Press.

Jameson, Frederic (1988) 'History and Class Consciousness as an Unfinished Project' Rethinking Marxism 1. Pp 49-72.

Jaquette, Jane S (1982) 'Women and Modernisation Theory: a decade of feminist criticism' World Politics xxxiv (2) pp 267-84.

Jaquette, Jane S (1990) 'Gender and Justice in Economic Development ' in Tinker, Irene, (ed.) Persistent Inequalities : Women and World Development . New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Janeway, Elizabeth (1971) Man's World, Women's Place . New York: Delta.

Jayaratne, T.E. (1983) 'The Value of Quantitative Methodology for Feminist Research', in Bowles, G. and R.Duelli Klein (eds.) Theories of Women's Studies. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Jayawaderna, Kumari (1986) Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World London and New Jersey: Zed books.

Jones, Kathleen B. and Anna G Jónasdottir (eds.) (1988) The Political Interests of Gender: Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face. London: Sage.

Jones, Kathleen, B. (1988) 'Towards the revision of politics' in K.B. Jones and A.G. Jónasdottir (eds.) The Political Interests of Gender: Developing Theory and Research with a Feminist Face. London: Sage.

Kabeer, Naila (1994) Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought. London: Verso.

Kahn, R, and Cannell, C (1975) The Dynamics of Interviewing, New York: John Wiley.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss (1977) 'Some Effects of Proportion on Group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Response to Token Women' American Journal of Sociology. 82, pp 965-990.

Kanter, Rosabeth Moss (1977) Men and Women of the Corporation. New York: Basic Books.

Keller, Evelyn Fox. (1978) 'Gender and Science' in Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought. 6 pp409-33.

Keller, Evelyn, Fox (1982) 'Feminism and Science', in N.O. Keohane et al. (eds.) Feminist Theory. Brighton: Harvester.

Keller, Evelyn, Fox (1984) Reflections on Gender and Science. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kenny, Sally J. (1996) 'New Research on Gendered Political Institutions' in Political Research Quarterly Vol. 49, no. 2 pp 445-466.

Kessler, Suzanne and Wendy McKenna (1978) Gender: An Ethnomethological Approach. New York: Wiley.

King, Deborah K (1988) 'Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology. Signs 14, pp 42-47.

Krieger, Milton (1994) 'Cameroon's Democratic Crossroads 1990-94', in Journal of Modern African Studies. Vol.32, No.4 pp 605-628.

Le Vine, Victor (1964) The Cameroons: From Mandate to Independence. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Le Vine, Victor (1971) The Cameroon Federal Republic. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Lewis, Barbara (1990) 'Farming Women, Public Policy and Women's Ministry: A Case Study from Cameroon' in Staudt, Kathleen (ed.) Women, International Development and Policies: the Bureaucratic Mire. Temple University Press.

Lister, Ruth (1990) 'Women, Economic Dependency and Citizenship', Journal of Social Policy, 19 (4) pp 445-67.

Lister, Ruth (1997) Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives. Macmillan.

Lloyd, Genevieve (1984) The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Longino, Helen (1987) 'Can There be a Feminist Science?' Hypatia, Vol.2, pp 51-64.

Longino, Helen (1990) Science as Social Knowledge. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Longino, Helen (1993) 'Subjects, Power and Knowledge: Description of Prescription in Feminist Philosophies of Science' in L. Alcoff and E. Potter (eds.) Feminist Epistemologies, New York: Routledge.

Lopata, Helena Z, and Barrie Thorne (1978) 'On the Term "Sex Roles"' Signs, Vol.3, no.3, pp 718-21.

Lorber, Judith (1991) 'Can Women Physicians ever be true equals in the American medical profession?' in Judith A Levy (ed.) Current Research in Occupation and Professions. Vol. 6 Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

Lorber, Judith (1994) Paradoxes of Gender. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Lorde, Audre Geraldine (1979) 'The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House, in The Audre Lorde Compendium : Essays, Speeches and Journals ; the Cancer Journals, Sister Outsider, A Burst of Light (1996) pp 158-161.

Lovenduski, Joni (1981) 'Toward the Emasculation of Political Science' in Dale Spender (ed.) Men's Studies Modified. Oxford: Pergamon.

Lovenduski, Joni and Pippa Norris (1993) (eds.) Gender and Party Politics London: Sage.

Lovenduski, Joni and Pippa Norris, (1995) Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1982) 'Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory', Signs, 7: pp 515-44.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1987) Feminism Unmodified . Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1989) Toward a Feminist Theory of the State, Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1990) 'Legal Perspectives on Sexual Difference' in Rhode, Deborah L. (ed.) Theoretical Perspectives on Sexual Difference. New Haven: Yale University Press.

MacKinnon, Catharine (1992) 'Does sexuality have a history?' in Stanton, Donna (ed.) Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan. Press.

Marchand, Marianne, H. and Jane L. Parpart (eds.) (1995) Feminism, Postmodernism and Development. London and New York: Routledge.

Marshall, Catherine and Rossman, Gretchen B (1995) Designing Qualitative Research 2nd Edition: Sage.

Marshall, T.H. (1950) Citizenship and Social Class. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mason, Jennifer (1997) Qualitative Researching London: Sage.

May, Tim (1993) Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process. 2nd Edition. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Maynard, Mary (1994) 'Methods, Practice and Epistemology' in Maynard, Mary and Purvis, June (eds.) Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective. London: Taylor and Francis.

Maynard, Mary and Purvis, June (eds.) (1994) Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective. London: Taylor and Francis.

Mbaku, John Mukum (1997) Institutions and Reform in Africa: the Public Choice Perspective. Praeger.

Mbilinyi, Majorie (1989) ' "I'd have rather been a man" : Politics and the Labour Process in Producing Personal Narratives in Personal Narratives group (ed.).

McAllister, Ian and Denley T Studlar (1992) 'Gender and Representation among Legislative Candidates' Australian Comparative Political Studies. 25 (3) pp 388-411.

McCormack, Thelma (1975) 'Towards a Non-Sexist Perspective on Social and Political Change' in Marcia Millman and Rosabeth Moss Kanter (eds) Another Voice. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, New York.

McIntosh, Mary (1978) 'The State and the Oppression of Women', in Annette Kuh and AnnMarie Wolpe (eds) Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

McLennan, Gregor (1995). 'Feminism, epistemology and postmodernism: reflections on current ambivalence' Sociology, 29, 3, pp391-409.

McNeil, Leslie (1979) 'Women of Mali: a Study in Social Stratification' B.A.Thesis, Harvard University.

Merton, Robert K (1957) Social Theory and Social Structure. Revised and enlarged. Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press.

Mies, Maria (1983) 'Towards a methodology for feminist research' in Theories of Women's Studies Bowles, G. and R.Duelli Klein (eds.) London: Routledge.

Millett, Kate (1971) Sexual Politics. London: Sphere .

Mitchell, Juliet (1974) Psychoanalysis and Feminism. London: Allen Lane.

Mohanty, Chandra (1991) 'Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism' in Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (eds.) Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Moraga, Cherrie (1983) Loving in the War Years. Boston, MA: South End Press.

Nicholson, Linda J (ed.) (1990) Feminism/Postmodernism New York and London: Routledge.

Norris, Pippa (1987) Politics and Sexual Equality. The Comparative Position of Women in Western Democracies. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books.

North, Douglas (1990, 1996) Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance: the Political Economy of Institutions and Decisions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nye, Andrea (1988) Feminist Theory and Philosophies of Man. New York and London: Routledge.

Nzomo, Maria (1995) 'Women and Democratisation Struggles in Africa: What Relevance to Postmodernist Discourse?' in Marchand and Parpart (eds.), Feminism, Postmodernism and Development. London and New York: Routledge.

Nzomo, Maria (1996) 'The Dynamics of Democratic Transition in Kenya: The Gender Dimension'. Paper presented at Transitions in Africa, Niamey, Niger, 3-6 June.

O'Brien, Mary (1982) 'Feminist Theory and Dialectical logic' in Keohane, N.O. et al. (eds.) Feminist Theory. Brighton: Harvester.

O'Connor, Julia S (1992) 'Citizenship, Class, Gender and the Labour Market: Issues of Decommodification and Personal Autonomy' paper presented at the ISA Conference on Comparative Studies of Welfare State Development, Bremen, Germany.

O'Connor, Julia S (1999) 'Employment Equality Strategies in Liberal Welfare States' in Diane Sainsbury (ed.) Gender and Welfare Regimes Oxford: Oxford University Press pp47-74.

Oakley, Ann (1972) Sex, Gender and Society. London: Temple-Smith.

Oakley, Ann (1974) The Sociology of Housework. New York: Pantheon Books.

Oakley, Ann (1982) Subject Women. London: Fontana.

Ogot, Grace (1980) The Graduate Nairobi: Ucmia Press.

Okin, Susan Moller (1989) Justice, Gender and the Family. New York: Basic Books.

Okonjo, Kamene (1976) 'The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Mid Western Nigeria' in Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna, G. Bay (eds.) Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.

Orloff, Ann S (1993) 'Gender and the Social Rights of Citizenship: the Comparative Analysis of Gender Relations and Welfare States' American Sociological Review, 58: pp303-28.

Parpart, Jane and Kathleen Staudt (1989) Women and the State in Africa. Boulder: Lynne Reinner.

Parsons, Talcott (1967) Sociological Theory and Modern Society. New York: Free Press

Pateman, Carol (1983) 'Feminism and Democracy' in G. Duncan (ed.) Democratic Theory and Practice, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pateman, Carole (1988) The Sexual Contract. Cambridge: Polity.

Pateman, Carole (1989) 'Feminist critiques of the public/private dichotomy' in Pateman, C, (ed.) The Disorder of Women. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pateman, Carole (1989) The Disorder of Women: Feminism and Political Theory. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Pateman, Carole (1992) 'Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship' in Gisela Beck and Susan James (eds.) Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity. London: Routledge. Pp 17-32.

Pateman, Carole (1997) 'Beyond the Sexual Contract?' in G. Dench (ed.) Rewriting the Sexual Contract. London: Institute of Community Studies.pp1-9.

Pateman, Carole and Elizabeth Gross (eds.) (1986). Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory. London: Allen and Unwin.

Patton, Michael Quinn (1980) Qualitative Evaluation Methods. Beverley Hills and London: Sage.

Peil, Margaret, with Peter, K. Mitchell and Douglas, Rimmer (1982) Social Science Research Methods: An African Handbook. London and Toronto : Hodder and Stoughton.

Phillips, Anne (1987) Feminism and Equality. Oxford: Blackwell.

Phillips, Anne (ed.) (1991) Engendering Democracy. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Phillips, Anne (1993) Democracy and Difference. Polity Press.

Philips, Anne (1995) The Politics of Presence : the Political Representation of Gender, Ethnicity, and Race. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Potash, Betty (1995) ' Women in the Changing African Family' in Hay and Stichter (eds.) African Women South of the Sahara (second edition) New York : Longman and John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Potter, Elizabeth (1993) 'Gender and Epistemic Negotiation' in Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (eds.) Feminist Epistemologies. New York and London: Routledge.

Potter, Garry (2000) The Philosophy of Social Science: New Perspectives. Prentice Hall.

Ramazanoglu, Caroline (1989) Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression. London: Routledge.

Ramazanoglu, Caroline (ed.) (1993) Up Against Foucault: explorations of some tensions between Foucault and Feminism. London and New York: Routledge

Ramazanoglu, Caroline and Holland, Janet (1993). 'Women's sexuality and men's appropriation of desire' in Ramazanoglu, Caroline (ed.) Up Against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions Between Foucault and Feminism. London: Routledge.

Randall, Vicky (1987) Women and Politics, Second Edition, Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Reingold, Beth (1992) 'Concepts of Representation Among Female and Male State Legislators' Legislative Studies Quarterly 17 (4) pp 509-37.

Reinharz, Shulamit (1983) 'Experiential Analysis: a Contribution to Feminist Research' in Gloria Bowles and R. Duelli Klien (eds.) Theories of Women's Studies. London: Routledge.

Reinharz, Shulamit (1979) On Becoming a Social Scientist: From Survey Research and Participation Observation to Experiential Analysis. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Reskin, Barbara F (1988) Bringing the Men Back in: Sex Differentiation and the Devaluation of Women's Work. Gender and Society. 2, pp58-81.

Rich, Adrienne (1976) Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution. New York: Norton.

Rich, Adrienne (1980) 'Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence', Signs, 5 (4): pp631-60.

Rinehart, Sue Tolleson (1992) Gender Consciousness and Politics. New York and London: Routledge.

Rose, Hilary (1983) 'Hand, Brain and Heart: A Feminist Epistemology for the Natural

Sciences' in Signs 9:1.

Rose, Hilary (1986) 'Women's Work: Women's Knowledge' in J. Mitchel and A. Oakley (eds.) What is Feminism? Oxford: Blackwell.

Rubin, Gayle (1975) 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex' in Reiter, R.R. (ed.) Toward an Anthropology of Women. New York, Monthly Review.

Ruddick, Sara (1980) 'Maternal Thinking' Feminist Studies 6(2):pp 342-67.

Ruddick, Sara (1984) 'Preservative Love and Military Destruction' in Trebilcot (ed.) Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld.

Rule,Wilma(1981) 'Why women don't run. The critical contextual factors in women's legislative recruitment.' Western Political Quarterly, 34,pp60-77.

Rule, Wilma (1987) "Electoral Systems, Contextual Factors and Women's opportunity for Election to Parliament in Twenty-three Democracies", Western Political Quarterly, 40, pp477-498.

Rule, Wilma (1994) "Parliaments of, by, and for the People: Except for Women?" in Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman (eds.) Electoral Systems in Comparative Perspective: Their Impact On Women and Minorities. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Sainsbury, Diane (1999) 'Taxation, Family Responsibilities and Employment' in Diane Sainsbury (ed.) Gender and Welfare State Regimes. Oxford: Oxford University Press pp185-209.

Saint-Germain, Michelle A. (1994) 'The representation of women and minorities in the national legislators of Costa Rica and Nicaragua' in Wilma Rule and Joseph Zimmerman(eds.) op.cit.

Saint-Germain, Michelle A. and Martha, I. Morgan, (1991) "Equality : Costa Rican Women Demand 'The Real Thing'," Women &Politics 11(3),pp23-75.

Sassoon A (ed.) (1987) Women and the State. The Shifting Boundaries of Public and Private, London: Hutchinson.

Savage, Michael and Ann, Witz (eds.) (1992) Gender and Bureaucracy . Oxford: Blackwell.

Sawar, Marian (1995) ' " Femocrats in Glass Towers": the Office of the Status of Women in Australia' in Stetson and Mazur (eds.) Comparative State Feminism. California: Thousand Oaks.

Sawar, Marian (1999) 'Women's Ministries: An Australian Perspective' in Feminist Review No.63, Autumn pp 91-94.

Saxonhouse, Arlene (1980) 'Man, Woman, War and Politics: Family and Polis in Aristophanes and Euripedes' Political Theory 8: pp65-83.

Saxonhouse, Arlene (1985) Women in the History of Political Thought. New York: Praeger.

Schmidt, Elizabeth (1995) 'Patriarchy, Capitalism, and Colonial Politics in Zimbabwe' in Laslett, B., J. Brenner, and Y, Arat (eds.) Rethinking the Political : Gender, Resistance, and the State London: University of Chicago Press.

Schor, Naomi and Elizabeth, Weed (eds.) (1994) The Essential Difference. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Scott, Joan Wallach (1986) 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis' in American Historical Review 91:pp1053-75.

Scott, Joan, Wallach. (1988) Gender and the Politics of History New York: Columbia University Press.

Scruton, Roger (1982) A Dictionary of Political Thought. Pan Books.

Shanley, Mary l. and Carole, Pateman (eds.) (1991) Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Shrader-Frechette, Kristin (1995) 'Feminist Epistemology and Its Consequences for Policy'. Public Affairs Quarterly, Vol.9, (2.) pp 155-171.

Silverman, David (2000) Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook. London: Sage

Silverman, Kaja (1988) The Acoustic Mirror. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Simmel, Georg (1921) 'The Sociological Significance of the Stranger in the Park', in Robert, E and Burgess, Ernest W. (eds.) Introduction to the Science of Sociology. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Singer, Linda (1993) Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in an Age of Epidemic. New York: Routledge.

Smart, Carol (1984) The Ties that Bind: Law, Marriage, and the Reproduction of Patriarchal Relations. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Smart, Carol (1989) Feminism and the Power of Law. London: Routledge.

Smart, Carol (1995) Law, Crime and Sexuality: Essays in Feminism. London: Sage.

Smith, Barbara (1981) 'Across the Kitchen Table', in Cherrie Moraga, and Gloria Anzaldua, (eds.) This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour. Watertown, MA: Persephone Press.

Smith, Dorothy E (1979) 'A peculiar eclipse: women's exclusion from men's culture', in Women's Studies International Quarterly 1,pp28-95.

Smith, Dorothy E (1988) The Everyday World as Problematic: A Sociology for Women Boston: North Eastern University Press.

Smith, Dorothy E (1990) The Conceptual Practices of Power: A Feminist Sociology of Knowledge. Boston: North-Eastern University Press.

Smith, Dorothy E (1992) 'Sociology from Women's Experience' Sociological Review 10 (1) pp 88-98.

Smith, Dorothy E (1993) Texts, Facts and Femininity: Exploring the Relations of Ruling. London: Routledge.

Smith, Steven G (1992) Gender Thinking . Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Smith, Valerie (1990) 'Split affinities: the case of interracial rape' in Hirsch, Marianne and Keller, Evelyn, Fox (eds.) Conflicts in Feminism. London: Routledge.

Spelman, Elizabeth (1988) Inessential Woman. Boston: Beacon.

Spender, Dale (1980) Man Made Language., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Stanley, Liz, and Morgan, David (1993) 'Editorial Introduction'. Sociology, 27, 1, Pp 1-4.

Stanley, L and Sue, Wise (1983) 'Back into the Personal, or Our Attempt to Construct "Feminist Research"' in Theories of Women's Studies, Bowles, G and R Duelli Klein (eds.) London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Stanley, Liz and Sue Wise (1990) Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes, in L. Stanley (ed.), Feminist Praxis Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology. London: Routledge.

Stanley, L and Wise, S (1993) Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Staudt, Kathleen (1986) 'Class Stratification and its implication for women's politics' in Berger, Iris and Robertson, Claire (eds.) Women and Class in Africa. New York and London: Holmes and Meier.

Staudt, Kathleen (1995) 'The Impact of Development Policies on Women' in Hay and Stichter (eds.) African Women South of the Sahara. Second Edition. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Steady, Filomena Chioma (1976) 'Protestant Women's Association in Freetown, Sierra Leone' in N J Hafkin and E G Bay (eds.) Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Stetson, McBride, Dorothy (1987) Women's Rights in France New York and London: Greenwood Press.

Stetson, McBride, Dorothy and Amy Mazur (eds.) (1995) Comparative State Feminism: 'Introduction' London: Sage

Stoller, Robert (1968) Sex and Gender. London: The Hogarth Press.

Stoller, Robert (1985) Presentations of Gender. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Suleiman, Susan Rubin (ed.) (1985) The Female Body and Western Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Summerskill, Edith (1967) A Woman's World. London: Heinemann.

Swartz, Mildred A (1990) Politics and Territory: the Sociology of Regional Persistence in Canada. Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

Takougang, Joseph (1997) 'Cameroon: Biya and Incremental Reform' in Clark, John F and Gardinier, David E (eds.) Political Reform in Francophone Africa. Westview Press.

Takougang, Joseph and Krieger, Milton (1998) African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's Political Crossroads. Westview Press.

Tamale, Sylvia (1998) When Hens Begin to Crow: Gender and Parliamentary Politics in Uganda. Westview Press.

Thomas, Sue (1991) 'The Impact of Women on State Legislative Policies' The Journal of Politics 53 (4) 958-976.

Thomas, Sue (1993) How Women Legislate. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomas, Sue and Susan Welch (1991) 'The Impact of Gender on Activities and Priorities of State Legislators', in The Western Political Quarterly Vol. 44, No.2 pp.445-456.

Tripp, Aili Mari (2000) Women and Politics in Uganda. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Tong, Rosemarie (1989) Feminist Thought : a Comprehensive Introduction. London: Unwin Hyman.

Tuana, Nancy (ed.) (1989) Feminism and Science. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Turner, Brian (ed.) (1993) Citizenship and Social Theory. London: Sage.

United Nations 1979: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. New York: Department of Public Information.

United Nations 1990: The World's Women 1990: Trends and Statistics New York: UN Statistical Division.

United Nations 1993a: "Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women" New York: UN General Assembly.

United Nations 1993b: UN Conference on Human Rights: The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. New York: Department of Public Information.

United Nations 1995a: The World's Women 1995: Trends and Statistics 2nd edition. New York: UN Statistical Division.

United Nations 1995b: Fourth World Conference on Women: Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. New York: UN Department of Public Information.

United Nations 2000a: The World's Women 2000: Trends and Statistics. New York: UN Statistical Division.

United Nations Development Programme (1995) Human Development Report 1995, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Development Programme 1979: Human Development Report 1979. New York: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2000) Human Development Report, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNIFEM 1998b : Bringing Equality Home: Implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. New York.

Vallance, Elizabeth (1995) Women in the House: a Study of Women Members of Parliament. London: the Athlone Press.

Van den Berg, Adri (1992) Women in Bamenda: Survival Strategies and Access to Land. Lieden : African Studies Centre. (Research Reports 1993/50).

Vereecke, Catherine (1993) 'Better Life for Women in Nigeria: Problems, Prospects, and Politics of a New National Women's Programme' African Study Monographs 14,pp (2) 79-95.

Vetterling-Braggin, Mary (ed.) (1982) "Femininity", "Masculinity", and "Androgyny". Totowa, N.J.: Little Adams

Vickers, J. (1983) 'Memoirs of an Ontological Exile: the methodological rebellions or feminist research', in Miles A. and G. Finn (eds.) Feminism in Canada. Montreal: Black Rose.

Vogel, Ursula (1988) 'Under permanent guardianship: Women's condition under modern civil law', in K B Jones and A G Jonasdottir (eds.) The Political Interests of Gender. London: Sage

Vogel, Ursula (1994) 'Marriage and the boundaries of citizenship' in Van Steenbergen, B. (ed.) The Condition of Citizenship. London: Sage

Walby, Sylvia (1986) Patriarchy at Work . Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Walby, Sylvia (1986) Patriarchy at Work: Patriarchal and Capitalist Relations in Employment. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Walby, Sylvia (1990) Theorizing Patriarchy. Oxford: Basil Blackwell

Waters, Malcolm (1994) Modern Sociological Theory. London: Sage.

Watson, Sophie (1989) Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions . London: Verson.

Waylen, Georgina (1996) Gender in Third World Politics. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Waylen, Georgina (1998) 'Gender, Feminism and the State' in Vicky Randall and Georgina Waylen (eds.) Gender, Politics and the State. London: Routledge.

Welch, Susan and Albert, Karning (1979) 'Correlates of Female Office Holding in City Politics' Journal of Politics, 41,pp 478-491.

Werber, Marx (1982) 'Selections' in Anthony Giddens and D. Held (eds.) Classes, Power and Conflict. Berkeley: University of California Press: pp 60-86.

Westkott, M (1983) 'Women's Studies as a strategy for change: between criticism and vision', in Bowles, G and R Duelli-Klein (eds.) Theories of Women's Studies. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Whip, Rosemary (1991) 'Representing women: Australian Female Parliamentarians on the Horns of a Dilemma', Women & Politics Vol. 11, No.3, pp.1-22.

Widner, Jennifer (1997) 'Political Parties and Civil Societies in Sub-Saharan Africa' in Ottaway, M (ed.) Democracy in Africa: The Hard Road Ahead. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Wilkinson, Helen and Diplock, Shelagh (1996) Soft Sell or Hard Politics: How Can the Parties Best Appeal to Women? London: Demos.

Wilkinson, Sue (1988a) 'Focus Groups in Feminist Research: Power Interaction and Co-construction of Meaning'. Women's Studies International Forum, 21 (1), pp111-125.

Wipper, Audrey (1995) 'Women's Voluntary Association' in Hay and Stichter (eds.) African Women South of the Sahara, (second edition) New York: Longman and John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1787) Vindication of the Rights of Woman reprinted 1982, Penguin: Harmondsworth.

World Bank 1995: Toward Gender Equality: The Role of Public Policy. Washington DC: World Bank.

Yeatman, Anna (1990) Femocrats, Bureaucrats, Technocrats. Syndey: Allen and Unwin.

Young, Alison (1990) Femininity in Dissent. London: Routledge.

Young, Iris Marion (1994) 'Gender as Seriality – Thinking about Women as a Social Collective' Signs, 19 (3): pp 713:38.

Appendix 1

Interviews

All Interviews conducted in Yaounde, Cameroon

Yaou, Aissatou (1951-)

First Minister of Women's Affairs (1984-2000) and President of the Women's Wing of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Graduated from the University of Rouen in France in 1975 with a *licence* in Economics. After a short experience in the National Investment Corporation (SNI), a parastatal, she moved to the United States of America, where she obtained a Master's Degree in finance in 1979. She returned to SNI, serving as Deputy Director of Finance until her appointment as Minister of Women's Affairs in February 1984. After a party congress in Bamenda, she replaced Delphine Tsanga as National President of the Women's Wing of the party in March 1985. Interviewed on 12 August 1998 in her Cabinet.

Rose Zang Nguele (1943-)

Cameroon Minister of Social Affairs from 1984-88. Graduated from the University of Yaounde, Cameroon with a BA in Modern Letters and a Post Graduate Diploma in languages in 1974. After several years as a teacher, she was appointed National Pedagogic Inspector for French and served in this capacity until July 1984, when she became Minister of Social Affairs. She was Member of Parliament from 1992 to 1997. Prior to entering the government as Minister, Zang Nguele had been active in party affairs. From 1976 to 1981 she served as Secretary of the WCNU in Mfoundi Division and later she became President of the same section (1981-1985). At present she is Member of the Central Committee of the CPDM (1996-) and served as Vice President of the National Bureau of the WCPDM. Salaried, but unemployed. Interviewed on 27 August 1998 in her home.

Julienne Keutcha (1924-)

Untaped interview on 14 August 1998 at the CPDM Congress Hall, WCPDM complex. First Cameroonian woman in the National Assembly 1960-1972. Secretary: Bureau of the East Cameroon Legislative Assembly and to the Federal National Assembly. Member of the CNU Central Committee. Member of the WCPDM Advisory Council.

Delphine Tsanga (1935 -).

Cameroon's first female minister. She trained as a professional nurse at the Catholic Institute and at the School of Nursing and the Red Cross in Toulouse, France. In 1964, she was named President of the National Council of Women (Cameroon). In 1965, she was elected into the Legislative Assembly and re-elected in 1970. Prior to that she was elected President of the Women's Wing of the Unified Party, the WCNU, in 1969. In July 1970 she was appointed Vice Minister of Health and Public Welfare and on June 30, 1975, she became Minister of Social Affairs. She served in this capacity and as President of the WCNU until the end of the Ahidjo regime. Her other political positions included Section President of the WCNU, Mfoundi, 1966-1979, President of the National Executive of WCNU, 1969-85. Interviewed in her home on September 1st, 1998.

Marie-Madeleine Fouda

Appointed Minister of Women's Affairs in January 1997. Member of Parliament 1988-1992. Member of the Central Committee of the CPDM. Member of the WCPDM National Bureau. Medical doctor by profession.
Interviewed in her ministerial cabinet on September 3rd 1998.

Omitted interviews

Lydia Belle Efimba

Career Outline

M. A. Education. (Institute of Education, University of London)
English Language Teacher – 9 years
Educational Administrator - 9 years
Inspector of Schools - 7 years
High School Principal - 1 year
(Head Teacher)

Political Career: Chairman of the Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA) (1997).
(Interviewed on the 26th of August, 1998, at her home)

MINCOF Staff
(all interviews of MINCOF staff took place on the MINCOF premises).

Madam Lucienne Tsobgni
Chef de Service de l'Integration Économique de la Femmes.
27th July, 1998.

Madam Rose Njatcha
Chef de bureau de promotion des activitès socio-*économiques*
28th July, 1998.

Madam Tony Madeleine
Chef de Service d' Appui aux Organsiations Fèminines.
3rd August, 1998.

Madam Elizabeth Salley Eta
Inspector of Women's Affairs
6th August, 1998.

Madam Sally Weriwoh
Inspector of Women's Affairs
7th August, 1998.

Madam Victorine Ngale
Chief of Service for the Promotion of Women's Rights.
10th August, 1998

Madam Anastasie Mbongo
Chef de Service des Relations avec les ONG DE Promotion Feminine
17TH August, 1998.

Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Related Interviews

Miss Natalia Mbile
Divisional Field Agent for Women, Information and Co-ordination Forum (WICOF)
7th July, 1998.

Mrs. Mary-Ann M. Mukete
Director, Kumba Women's House
9th July, 1998.

Mrs. Christiana E. Beseka
President, Business and Professional Women, Kumba.

10th July, 1998.

Mrs. Julie Y. Ebako
President, Bafaw Women's Association, Kumba.
10th July, 1998.

Mrs. Emilia Eyong
President, Manyu Women's Association, Kumba.
10th July, 1998.

Mrs. Mary Manyi Chu
President, Association for Creative Teaching/Women in Development (ACT/WID)
3rd August, 1998.

Mrs. Olive Shang
President, Kongadzem
13th August, 1998

Madam Maipa Wespa Koukréo
Leader, Moslem Women in Yaounde
13th August, 1998

Mrs. Sally Vega
President, Upper Balong Women in Yaounde
14th, August, 1998

Miss Elsie Effange
President, Bakweri Women's Association
14th August, 1998

MINCOF Collaborators

Madam Adaku Apedu-Amah
Gender Adviser
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Interviewed on the 26th August, 1998 at the UNDP office in Yaounde.

Ginette Carré
Chef de projet: Micro-Projets Productifs en faveur des Femmes au Cameroun (MPPF)
Organisation Canadienne pour la Solidarite et le Development (OCSD)
Interviewed on 4th August 1998 at the OCSD office in Yaounde.

These interviews were later found to be irrelevant for the topic of gendered politics in Cameroon.

Appendix 2

20 JUIL. 1998

0048 SG/DPF

N O T E D E S E R V I C E

Dans le cadre de la préparation d'une thèse en relation avec les Femmes et de le Développement, Madame Catherine MUDIME AKALE, étudiante à l'Université d'Oxford en Grande Bretagne, effectuera un stage de recherches d'informations du 20 juillet 1998 au 14 septembre 1998 dans les services de la Direction de la Promotion de la Femme du Ministère de la Condition Féminine. Ce stage se déroulera selon le calendrier suivant :

- du 20 juillet au 31 juillet 1998 : SIEF
- du 3 août au 14 août 1998 : SAOF
- du 17 août au 28 août 1998 : SPDF
- du 31 août au 10 septembre 1998 : SFF
- les 11 et 14 septembre 1998 : Projet "Femmes, Population et Développement"

J'invite par conséquent chaque Chef de Service à mettre à la dispositon de l'intéressée toutes les informations utiles.

AMPLIATIONS :
- MINCOF/CAB
- SG
- SIEF - SFF - SAOF - SPDF
- Projet "Femmes, Population et Développement"
- intéressée

P.LE MINISTRE ET PAR DELEGATION
LE SECRETAIRE GENERAL

Bakari Robert