BLACK AFRICAN WOMEN'S MOTIVATIONS FOR INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHERN AFRICA'S LIBERATION STRUGGLES

A Senior Scholar Thesis

by

ALAINA M. JALUFKA

Submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Research
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

April 2011

Major: Sociology

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Approved by:

Research Advisor: Ashley Currier
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ABSTRACT

Black African Women's Motivations for Involvement in Southern Africa's Liberation
Struggles. (April 2011)

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Since the introduction of colonialism, African women have frequently been ignored in
and excluded from political life in southern Africa. However, many women participated
as freedom fighters and activists in southern Africa's liberation struggles.   In this thesis,
I analyze what initially motivated women to participate in their nation's liberation
struggle and what kept them motivated to remain despite their negative gendered
experiences. Little attention has been paid in past research concerning what kept Black
African women motivated to remain in southern African liberation struggles and the role
coercion plays in mobilizing individuals. In order to discern this for myself, I collected
110 published interviews with and memoirs written by Black African women who were
active in the liberation struggle of their country as combatants, political activist, and
guerilla supporters. My analysis demonstrates that women's motivations were twofold.
First, women wanted liberation from colonialist national policies which suppressed the
Black African population as a whole. Second, colonialist and traditional African

patriarchies were also obstacles women sought to overcome through participation in national liberation movements. Additionally, not all women joined out of their own volition; some women were coerced into joining the national liberation movements.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

National liberation movements emerged in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe in the mid-twentieth century. They were formed in response to the imposition of colonial governments and religions, which oppressed and discriminated against the Black African population. For instance, white colonialists forced the native African population to leave fertile lands and to move to poor, infertile lands (Soiri 1996). Additionally, with the introduction of a cash economy, Black Africans were paid below poverty wages, and women were restricted to rural locations in order to subsidize Black African men's poor wages with subsistence agriculture (Schmidt 2005).

African women and men in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe formed national liberation movement organizations to overthrow colonial rule. Women joined national liberation movements in unprecedented numbers as guerrilla supporters who provided food and other necessities to travelling nationalist guerrillas, as combatants in the armed wings of the nationalist organizations, and as political activists. However, within these nationalist organizations, women were discriminated against because of their gender. Some African women were not allowed to fight in combat, but forced to perform support tasks instead, raped by nationalist organization members and pro-government soldiers, and struggled within nationalist organizations to have their gendered grievances heard.

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This thesis follows the style of Gender & Society.

So, this begs the question: What motivated women to join and subsequently remain in the national liberation movements despite these negative gendered experiences?

In order to discern African women's mobilization and participation in national liberation movements, I first examine how African and colonial patriarchies in Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe oppressed women. This contextualizes how men leaders and combatants perceived women in national liberation movements. After briefly addressing social movement perspectives on mobilization, I discuss previous literature on gender relations during t5imes of conflict. This will help set the backdrop for examining gendered nationalist organization mobilization strategies. Next, I explain how and why I used a feminist perspective to understand Black southern African women's initial and continued motivations in participating in the national liberation movements in Namibia, South African, and Zimbabwe. I pay particular attention to strengths and weaknesses associated with using published interviews with and memoirs written by social movement actors as data. Finally, I will discuss what initially motivated and what kept women motivated to remain in the national liberation movements. While many women participated in the national liberation movements out of their own volition, not all women were afforded this degree of agency in making the decision to become an activist or remain a non-activist. I categorized women's motivations based on the most salient role they identified with in published interviews and memoirs. However, I will demonstrate that women's roles and motivations in national liberation movements were

fluid. In other words, some women performed multiple roles during the national liberation struggles while also maintaining multiple or changing motivations. I conclude with women's thoughts on their contributions to the nationalist cause and conclude with women's resilience.

Literature review

Feminist scholars have investigated why African women joined national liberation movements, but have not considered why women stayed in them (Cock 1991; Disney 2008; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000; Soiri 1996; Walker 1991). African men did not always welcome women in national liberation movements. Hence, investigating women's initial motivations will shed light on the continuity and discontinuities between women's motivations (Schmidt 2005). Additionally, determining women's motivations will bridge the gap between structural and rhetorical mobilization strategies – such as holding recruitment meetings and using slogans to mobilize individuals – and personal motivations. Many women remained in national liberation movements despite their negative gendered experiences, which included men's hostility towards women's presence, sexual coercion and harassment, and the appointment of support and social duties. Deeply rooted masculinities, femininities, and gendered division of labor were largely responsible for women's experiences. To demonstrate women's inferior status within colonial Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe, I provide an overview of women's status in traditional African and colonialist patriarchies. In addition, I briefly touch on how social movement literature has evolved from only addressing the agency

of social actors to incorporating social movement constituents' gender, race, ethnicity, and class into analysis of social movement participants. However, not all social movement actors possess the agency in deciding whether or not to join a social movement, a point I will later elaborate on. I then discuss gender relations between African men and women during national liberation movements in order to demonstrate women's binary roles during times of conflict. Finally, I examine how nationalist rhetoric motivated African women to join these movements.

Women's dual oppression: traditional African and colonialist patriarchies

Traditional African and colonialist patriarchies intersected and doubly oppressed African women. While traditional African patriarchy constrained women's activities in some ways, yet allowed them autonomy in others, colonialist patriarchy eradicated women's political and economic independence. Traditional southern African patriarchies, or social arrangements that relegated decision-making positions to men, both subordinated and valued women (Kriger 1992; Soiri 1996; Walker 1991). In an African patriarchal gendered division of labor, men held decision-making roles, and women garnered limited power from their productive and reproductive capacities. African elites and colonialists profited from this arrangement. Women were responsible for reproducing the work force and men were free to participate in the public sphere as workers (Walker 1991). However, women did not necessarily express this arrangement as oppressive. Some traditional African patriarchies recognized women's decision-making power; elders consulted with women before council made decisions. Also, women's capabilities

to bear children were highly valued in precolonial Ovambo society in Namibia; marriage became a pathway to higher status for women (Soiri 1996). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, marriage also raised a woman's status (Kriger 1992).

In traditional African patriarchy, overall, women have "traditionally occupied a junior position in the basic unit for that society, the patriarchal and extended family" (Walker 1991: 13). For instance, Ovambo women in precolonial Namibia were traditionally not allowed on decision-making councils. This exclusion demonstrates the traditional gender division of labor and underrepresentation of women from decision-making structures in Ovambo society (Soiri 1996). While Ovambo society was a matrilineal structure, which afforded full rights of the children to the mother, pre-colonial Zimbabwe maintained a patrilineal structure. The patrilineal structure, which dictated that children belonged to the husband's family, required women to "respect and serve her husband's family [which] made her perform the unpleasant chores around the house" (Kriger 1992: 75). Brideprice disadvantaged southern African women. The husband's family traditionally paid brideprice to the wife's family after their marriage in order to compensate her family for the loss of her labor (Kriger 1992). By reducing women to a commodity that could be bought, brideprice prevented many divorces, which would have allowed some women to escape from physically abusive husbands (Kriger 1992). After getting a divorce, the wife's family had to return the brideprice, which they were often reluctant to do.

Traditional African and colonialist patriarchies mutually reinforced one another. These patriarchal structures benefitted from African women's restriction to rural areas. Colonialist capitalists, white settlers, and African men tried to prevent women's migration. Mobile women had the potential to change urban and rural living in a way that would disadvantage African men and white women and men. Colonialists had a vested interest in limiting women's mobility because they needed women to subsidize men's low wages and raise the next generation of workers (Schmidt 1988). If African women accompanied their husbands to urban areas, there would be a growing African population which would inevitably "demand political rights and higher wages" (Schmidt 1988: 49). African men also discouraged women' migration. Women's occupation of rural homesteads prevented families from losing rights over that land and provided security to migrant husbands who know they had a home in unemployment ensued. African women shouldered additional agricultural work when labor migration called men away (Enloe 1990: 44). Furthermore, with the shortage of women in urban areas, men were fearful that their wives who relocated to the city would leave them for a more wealthy man (Schmidt 1988). Therefore, socially esteemed and respected African women remained at the rural homestead.

While African men and women shared a common precolonial past through race, ethnicity, religion, and class, they had different gendered experiences under colonialism. African women's negative gendered experiences included their restriction to rural areas or work as domestic servants in the homes of white women. Within these homes, black

African women subsequently bolstered white women's self-esteem by adopting colonialist religions and "social instruction" (Enloe 1990: 44). In their own communities, African women sustained men's threatened masculinities under colonialism. For instance, the Boer War shook Britain's masculinist confidence to maintain their empire, so the image of a strong, tall, and muscular white man was created in comparison to a short, slouching, and emasculated black man (Enloe 1990).

In response to the degradation Africans felt under colonialism, national liberation movements were organized to oppose colonialism. National liberation movements introduced a strong national identity into Africans' daily rhetoric and routines. Enloe (1990: 45) defined a nation as "a collection of people who have come to believe that they have been shaped by a common past and are destined to share a common future." Consequently, if using Cynthia Enloe's (1990) definition of a nation, women are excluded from membership, because men and women had different gendered experiences under colonialism.

In some ways, nationalist organizing reduced African women to mobilizable symbols as mothers of the nation meant to inspire African women and men to support the nationalist cause (McClintock 1995). For instance, the Zimbabwean national liberation movement valorized women's roles as mothers in order to encourage their cooperation (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). South African women mobilized into the African National Congress (ANC) in response "to their socially assigned roles as nurturing mothers"

(Cock 1991: 182). Not only did national liberation movements overlook women's negative experiences under colonialism, but also when women articulated their grievances to nationalist leaders, these grievances "have historically been subsumed by, and deemed secondary" to nationalist goals (Disney 2008: 28). The subordination of women's experiences and grievances to those of men's has taken place on a global scale. For instance, during Nicaragua's guerrilla struggle, the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) encouraged women to suppress their beliefs about gender equality and instead prioritize the elimination of dictatorship (Molyneux 1985). Similar to Nicaraguan women's experiences of patriarchal revolutionary strategies, African women have experienced something similar in national liberation movements. Women were expected to deal with the consequences accompanied armed conflict and to submit to traditional and colonial prescriptions for African motherhood. Therefore, nationalist leaders expected women to participate in the national liberation movements in a way that reinforced the patriarchal structures that benefited men.

Theoretical framework: social movement theory

Social movement scholars have primarily paid attention to activists' personal motivations and how movements mobilize activists. Recently, scholars have focused on how individuals' motivations, experiences, and responses to mobilization strategies vary by gender, in particular, and race, class, and age. However, these discussions often ignore the deprecation of agency, or the denial of free choice, of social actors who participate in social movements.

Some scholars take into account that movement participation involves interacting processes, both subjective (motivations) and objective (amount of mobilizable individuals, paths to recruitment, and barriers which are capable of impeding social movement participation) (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; Snow and Soule 2010). Motivations for and barriers to participation positively interact. Put another way, when social movement actors are highly motivated for change to take place, they can overcome higher barriers put in place which serve the purpose to block easy access to social movement participation (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). Likewise, if recruitment networks use multiple mobilization strategies, more available subjects can be recruited into social movements. However, Klanderman and Oegema (1987) do not take into account how gender, race, ethnicity, and class affect social movement actors' experiences and motivations, and specific obstacles that hinder their participation.

More recently, feminist scholars have paid close attention to how social movement participants' experiences, motivations, and mobilization pathways are affected by gender in particular, as well as race, class, and age (see Cable 1992; Irons 1998; McAdam 1992). In a study of African American women's participation during the American civil rights movement, Jenny Irons (1998: 694) argues, "gender interacted with race to shape women's recruitment to, and participation in, the civil rights movement." Women's pathways to recruitment and motivations differed from those of men. Likewise, African American women's pathways to recruitment and motivations differed from those of

white women. Similarly, Doug McAdam (1992) found that during the Freedom Summer Movement of the mid-1960s in the United States, women faced gender-specific barriers blocking their participation, experiences within the movement, and effects for their involvement which men did not have to overcome or experience.

Although social movement theorists explain participants' agency in deciding whether to become activists or remain non-activists, they have not accounted for how social movement participants are coerced into activism. Some Black southern African women did not become national liberation movement participants out of their own volition. What does this imply for social movement theory?

Gender relations during times of conflict

At times of revolutionary social change, gender relations are not static; they undergo considerable transformations. In men's absence from rural areas, African women assumed duties men traditionally performed (Meintjes et al. 2001). During such times, women transgressed gender roles by participating in the public sphere, which provided them with opportunities, such as military training, educational opportunities beyond domestic labor, and decision-making positions in women's armed wings or auxiliaries of the national liberation movements. However, Southern African national liberation movements additionally reinforced traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity. Nationalist movements reminded women that they were the natural and customary bearers of the nation responsible for nurturing and raising their children

(McClintock 1995). National liberation movements also reminded men that they were responsible for protecting the "'motherland'" (Moser and Clark 2001: 19). When women participated in nationalist organizations during times of conflict, they must do so in normatively gendered ways.

African women's role as nurturer put them in a double bind. On the one hand, women's nurturing facilitated national liberation movements. Traveling guerrillas in Zimbabwe would guilt women into doing their bidding, or women's own parental obligations persuaded them to procure provisions, such as food and clothing for their "sons and daughters", or in other words, their adopted guerrilla children (Kriger1992; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). On the other hand, men sometimes misinterpreted nurturing as vulnerability, which justified and perpetuated violence committed against women (El-Bushra and Mucarubuga 1995). For instance, the use of women's bodies as a "battlefield" is evident in the Rwandan genocide and in testimonies from political and non-political activists at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (El-Bushra and Mucarubuga 1995; Cleaver and Wallace 1990; Cock 1991: 203). During the TRC, some women who were sexually abused during their imprisonment testified to how police officers humiliated and desecrated their bodies (Moser and Clark 2001).

Despite African women's subjection to negative gendered experiences during national liberation movements, women joined southern African liberation movements in unprecedented numbers as combatants, political activists, and guerrilla supporters. To

demonstrate what initially motivated women to participate in southern African national liberation movements, I provide a brief overview of the rhetoric the national liberation movements used to mobilize the masses, and, in particular, women.

Nationalist ideology: rallying women's support

Leaders of national liberation movements often actively recruited women and men from lower peasant classes in order to have strength in numbers to overthrow white, colonialist rule (Disney 2008; Kriger 1992; Molyneux 1985). As a recruitment strategy, national liberation movements used rhetoric to bolster women's sense of responsibility to the movement as mothers and supporters of men (see Cock 1991; Molyneux 1985; Magaziner 2011; Nhong-Simbanegavi 2000; Reif-Lobao 1998; Soiri 1996; Urdang 1989; Walker 1991). They mobilized women by using slogans that praised women's roles as mothers and proclaimed gender equality within the movement. However, national liberation movements reproduced this dichotomy and only recruited women when they needed women to extend their roles as reproducers of children and society, temporarily, into the public sphere. Recruiting women allowed nationalist organizations to assign women to support roles which were often an extension of their domestic duties, such as carrying ammunition to men at the front, cooking, and logistic support (Moser and Clark 2001; Cock 1991; Enloe 1990; Kampwirth 2002; Kriger 1992; Magaziner 2011; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000; Reif-Lobao 1998; Soiri 1996; Urdang 1989). Also, women were used as a form of "electoral capital" (Reif-Lobao 1998: 260), or only when the demand for women's aid rose which would free men to engage in combat. In

addition, many movements relegated women's grievances to a secondary status. Women found that they had to make space for their grievances.

The Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) recruited women through phrases that bolstered motherhood and encouraged women to support traveling guerrillas through a sense of womanly duties, such as "forward with the cooking stick" (Kriger 1992; Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 17). Therefore, it is no surprise that ZANLA did not initially recruit women into guerrilla combat roles; the traditional and colonial gendered divisions of labor deemed combat a masculine pursuit. However, ZANLA leaders realized they needed to recruit women in the early 1970s when there was a need for women's work. ZANLA urged women "to take their social duties seriously and to understand that without their co-operation as cooks and mothers," the nation would fail; the freedom fighters could not survive without their aid (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 19). ZANLA commanders assigned women combatants to carry supplies and ammunition to men on the front lines and had "to look after children" (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000; Kriger 1992: 191). Rural women cooked and washed the clothes of traveling guerrillas (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). In ZANLA training camps, African men elders expected women to adhere to a strict sexual-conduct code that emphasized abstinence in order to "satisfy the rural patriarchs" (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 17). When African women began to realize that performing support tasks did little to guarantee their safety, women demanded the same military training as men, in order to

defend themselves (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000: 17). ZANLA did not permit women to fight as combatants until 1978, which only arose from their demands of military training.

Within Namibia's nationalist organization, the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and SWAPO's armed wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN), exploited patriarchal conceptions of women as "sisters", "mothers", and "wives" to recruit women (Soiri 1996). It was not until women demanded gender equality and access to leadership positions that SWAPO men leaders established the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC) after the Tanga Congress of 1969-1970. In the 1970s, SWAPO adopted an official policy on women, shortly after the formation of the SWC. SWAPO's policy on women allowed for women's involvement in the movement's decision-making structures. Namibian women could make decisions for the nation, just like men. SWAPO also advocated for women to "develop herself to be a comrade in all aspects and *not just a 'homemaker'*" (Soiri 1996: 83; emphasis original). SWAPO's policy on women demonstrates that African women had to take on multiple roles and responsibilities during that national liberation movement. SWAPO's rhetoric did not expect men to maintain the private and public sphere simultaneously. Men were not encouraged to help women with domestic responsibilities, but women were encouraged to help with the struggle while also maintaining the home. Furthermore, within the military ranks of PLAN, SWAPO leaders claimed that women had the "opportunity to be promoted in the military ranks" like men because of SWAPO's pursuit of gender equality (Soiri 1996: 76). However, in actuality, women had little

representation within the high-ranking military positions, while men comprised the bulk of soldiers who actually fought at the front (Soiri 1996). Therefore, it is apparent that SWAPO propagated for the assimilation of women into military ranks but did not follow through in making space for women to participate in PLAN as guerrilla fighters.

The Namibian and South African national liberation movements both challenged apartheid rule. The South African national liberation movement, the ANC, was formed in 1912 by a small group of African elites made up of lawyers, ministers, and teachers (Walker 1991). This elite group had embraced the "system of values of the dominant group within the society, the white middle class," including African women's subordinate positions within society (Walker 1991: 26). In 1940, almost thirty years after its founding, the ANC supported women's emancipation (Walker 1991). From 1913-1920, in Orange Free State, women organized and protested against the South African government's imposition of pass laws to women. As mothers and wives, women felt they could not risk imprisonment and arrest because of their refusal to carry passes which served to limit the African population's mobility. Women needed freedom of movement in order to properly provide food and other necessary provisions for their children and husbands (Walker 1991). The threat of not being able to provide for their children mobilized women to become politically active in response to the pass laws. Thus, women demonstrated that they could collectively organized and "revealed that a potential for political activism did exist among women" (Walker 1991: 67). Regardless, women had to prove themselves as political actors before the "potential on which the

coming of the war…was to act as a catalyst" (Walker 1991: 67).   Within the Black

Consciousness movement in South Africa (1968-1977), Daniel Magaziner (2011) argued

that women had two options available for participation as political activists. The first

option required women to disregard their gendered being and participate in the

movement as "one of the boys" (Magaziner 2011: 49). The political environment was

centered on men and masculinity as normative standard. In the 1970s, as government

repression was on the rise, movements reemphasized gender roles by equating women's

duties as motherly duties. The imprisonment of political activists was largely

responsible for this shift; as mothers, "women were not supposed to suffer, but offer

solidarity" (Magaziner 2011: 59). Thus, women had to prove their capabilities to aid in

the movement while also subsuming their own suffering to those of men.

While understanding that women mobilized and participated in national liberation

movements in unprecedented numbers against multiple oppressions, they often did so in

response to the movement's rhetoric. Nationalist organizations mobilized women

through their role as mothers and commitment to gender equality. Were there other

personal factors that kept women motivated to remain in the movement? Men did not

always welcome women in southern African national liberation movements. Once

incorporated into national liberation movements, some men treated women in a gendered

way that at times could benefit them, but also often resulted in women's assignment to

support tasks, men's refusal to acknowledge women's contributions and the abuse of

their bodies to humiliate and demean them. While nationalist rhetoric initially sounded

idealistic, when confronted with the realities of their negative gendered experiences, what kept black African women motivated to remain in the national liberation struggles? If they remained despite what they were subjected to as women, did they believe that gender equality could be demonstrated and thus a given with national independence?

CHAPTER II

METHOD

My awareness of women's participation in southern African liberation struggles inspired

this research. After reading about the gendered experiences women encountered

throughout the period of their participation, it led me to ask: What motivated women to

take an active role in national liberation struggles? How did they say they felt about their

experiences as women? What instances of progress or regression fueled women's drive

to remain in the national liberation struggle?

My data came from 99 edited interviews with and memoirs written by African women

that I gathered through Internet searches and from Internet database (see Table 1). I

obtained edited interviews with and memoirs written by women from Namibia (4), South

Africa (31), and Zimbabwe (64). Women's activities fell into three different categories,

depending on their role in the national liberation struggle of their country. Political

activists made up the sample of edited interviews with and memoirs written by women

from Namibia and South Africa. Guerrilla supporters and ex-combatants made up the

sample of edited interviews with and memoirs written by women from Zimbabwe.

Table 1. Sample distribution

	Namibia	South Africa	Zimbabwe	**Total**
Women Political Activists	4	31	0	**35**
Women Guerrilla Supporters	0	0	30	**30**
Women Ex-Combatants	0	0	34	**34**
Total	**4**	**31**	**64**	**99**

Guerrilla supporters include women who attended political meetings held by traveling guerrillas and took care of feeding, clothing, and providing soap and cigarettes to them. Ex-combatants include women who joined the national liberation military training camps. Not all women were permitted to fight on the front lines in combat; however, many carried ammunition and weapons and risked being killed or wounded like men comrades. Political activists include women who protested in student organizations, formed women's organizations such as nongovernmental organizations, or worked in anticolonial organizations.

A feminist approach guided my analysis of edited interviews and memoirs. To understand Black African women's motivations to join and subsequently remain in the national liberation struggles, I use a gendered lens. Memoirs provide a background history for women's lives that influence their later understandings of their experiences in the national liberation struggle. "Personal narratives" reveal detailed lived experiences not only in a historical context, but also in a cultural context (Maynes et al. 2008: 16). Memoirs disclose women's experiences, ideas, and motivations because women are often voiceless or left out of transcribed history (Maynes et al. 2008). Thus, women are writing themselves into history. For instance, the experiences of Zimbabwean women ex-combatants who carried ammunition and weapons in combat zones and fought the enemy are missing from accounts from the struggle. If no record indicated these women ex-combatants received military training, they were classified as refugees after

independence (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). Because men leaders often denied women military training, men often received full credit for independence. In interviews and memoirs, African women create a historical record of their gendered experiences, making invisible experiences public.

Edited interviews with and memoirs written by Black African women provide rich data for analyzing women's experiences in social movements. Rich data "provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Maxwell 2010: 283). Memoirs and interviews allow movement members' critical ideas to surface, which can be accepted, rejected, "produced," or "communicated" in relation to movement ideology (Taylor 2008: 707). Also, memoirs give a voice to marginal actors and "indicate the fragmented nature of identity" (Taylor 2009: 708). For instance, many southern African national liberation movements promised to bring about gender equality after independence. However, women's memoirs reveal this promise was hollow in some countries.

There are shortcomings to using edited interviews and memoirs for qualitative data analysis. These include issues of internal validity: the problem of retrospective data and Black African women's later development of political ideology. Validity is "the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account" (Maxwell 2010: 280). An analysis of edited interviews and memoirs will never achieve absolute "correctness" from a positivist standpoint. However, instead of seeking an objective and absolute truth, I infer Black African

women's motivations from their narration of past events recall to aid in identifying initial and continued motivations (Range and Leach 1998: 25). Women's negative emotions, personal and collective injustices, endorsement of nationalist propaganda, and experiences of coercion were all reasons why women joined and stayed in different national liberation movements. Women also expressed a commitment to advancing women's job and educational opportunities and eradicating ethnic barriers put in place by repressive colonial governments. By using edited interviews with and memoirs written by African women, I can identify their experiences and lives as women which will aid in realizing their motivations through avoidance of "context stripping" (Range and Leach 1998: 29). Taking the lives of African women into account is essential because women do not always state their motivations explicitly.

First, retrospective data pose a problem when subjects articulate the past using the present as a reference. Because researchers rely on subjects' memory, accuracy is often a primary data analysis concern. For instance, sociologists critical of memoir data argue that, because they are narratives, fiction is more prevalent than facts. Putting a quantitative measure on the accuracy of retrospective data, Bernard et al., concluded that "on average, about half of what informants report is probably incorrect in some way" (1984: 503). Because national liberation movements created ideology through narrative stories, some scholars assume that memoirs merely elaborate on or extend these stories (Taylor 2008). I am not concerned with historical accuracy in this project, because women's complex motivations cannot be reduced to an absolute truth. Motivations,

whether they stem from actual or elaborated experiences, still provided women with the willpower to aid in the national liberation struggles in light of their negative gendered experiences.

Second, some women use political ideology to frame their experiences of oppression, which motivated them to join the movement. In this way, women's use of political ideology to describe their childhood and young adult experiences might distort what they recall. However, most women probably became aware of their double oppression under colonial and traditional African patriarchies until they became active in the movement and learned about political ideology.

In order to handle the problems with retrospective data, I used an inductive method, coding the text while reading for women's motivations. While coding interviews and memoirs, I realized that "motivation" was a limiting concept for understanding why Black African women joined national liberation struggles. Freedom fighters often coerced women into joining the Zimbabwean liberation movement (Nhongo-Simbanegavi 2000). When women have no autonomy in choosing to join the national liberation struggles, coding coercion as "motivation" would have been nonsensical.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

Introduction

Black southern African women often became active in national liberation movements as guerrilla supporters, ex-combatants, and political activists depending on their rural or urban location. Most rural women either trained as combatants or were guerrilla supporters.   This geographic division of roles performed by Black southern African women during southern African national liberation movements stemmed in part from colonial and traditional African patriarchies and men's labor migration. Under colonial and traditional African patriarchies, women were responsible for domestic and agricultural labor and childcare. In the early 1900s, African men in colonial Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia migrated away from rural areas to find waged employment, leaving women in charge of the homestead and "raising their children alone" (Ramphele and Cole 1999: 24). Therefore, guerrillas expected women to cook for and make provisions for the guerrillas at the risk of imprisonment, beatings, or murder by the soldiers. For instance, Emma Munemo who cooked and attended the political meetings of traveling Zimbabwean guerrillas stated, "Even today ZANU acknowledges this [women's contributions] as did the comrades then when they used to say… 'Forward with a cooking spoon'" (Staunton 1990: 301). While not all women received acknowledgement, many women felt their contributions during the national liberation movements were important.

While not all men migrated for employment, some men fled when abusive comrades and soldiers infiltrated the rural areas. Since many women guerrilla supporters had several children, travelling with or leaving their children behind with relatives was not always an option for women. Thema Khumalo, who cooked and provided supplies for Zimbabwean travelling guerrillas, observed, "Mothers, women are the people who fought this war…Some men ran away and went to towns. They only came back after the war was over and then only to ask what happened to this and that (Staunton 1991: 81). Other women guerrilla supporters remained in rural areas to feed and provide items like clothes and cigarettes to the comrades so that their older children who left to become freedom fighters had a home to which they could return. Women not only had to take on a heavier domestic load, but they also witnessed the death and suffering of their children. Loice Mushore's son was killed by two grenades thrown by soldiers when her children were attempting to escape shooting by pro-government soldiers. Upon hearing the news, Mushore elaborated, "I wanted to commit suicide and tried to throw myself in the water" (Stauton 1990: 92). Also, some younger girls, usually aged twelve and older, worked for the comrades as *chimbwidos*.[1] They were forced to have sex with guerrillas, at times resulting in children. Women were largely left with the responsibility of caring for and raising them (Staunton 1990: 147). Agnes Ziyatsha, a woman guerrilla supporter for Zimbabwean travelling guerrillas, stated, "Those girls [*chimbwidos*] had great problems.

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[1] Zimbabwe Women Writers (2000) define *chimbwido* as an "errand girl; girl who carried food to the freedom fighters" (p. ix).

A lot of them have children by the comrades…some girls in our area have now married

the comrades who fathered their children…although many have had to manage alone"

(Staunton 1990: 173). Men comrades threatened to name *chimbwidos* publicly as sell-

outs, forcing them to remain silent about their sexual abuse (Staunton 1991: 49). Being

labeled a sell-out was similar to a death sentence because "that person would be killed"

(Staunton 1990: 151). Therefore, threats made by travelling guerrillas carried much

weight in persuading *chimbwidos* and other rural dwellers to conform to their wishes.

Many urban Black southern African women participated in nationalist organizations as

political activists. Women in urban areas were often exposed to particular grievances

that were not applicable to rural women. With other Black South African women,

Connie Mofokeng, a former member of the Soweto Student Representative Council

(SSRC) and a founding member of the Vaal Civic Association, protested the high rent in

urban areas (Russell 1989). Women political activists living in urban areas often

attended universities, which allowed them to meet other like-minded individuals.

Students organized demonstrations and participated in student organizations, which

facilitated their later involvement in the nationalist organizations (Ramphele 1995). In

rural areas, comrades often made rural dwellers burn down the schools, because the

school fees went to the white-led government (Staunton 1990). Without schools, there

were fewer opportunities for rural women and girls to be exposed to political ideology,

which would have initiated them into political organizations. Additionally, some women

guerrilla supporters stated that they were unaware of Black Africans' oppression until

they attended (or were forced to attend) *pungwes*[2] held by travelling guerrillas. Meggi

Zingani was one Zimbabwean woman who attended *pungwes*. She was a guerrilla

supporter who attended political meetings and provided the travelling guerrillas with

supplies from her shop. Before travelling guerrillas came to her village, she had nine

children, put them through school, and opened a shop while the Zimbabwean national

liberation struggle raged, and, "[i]n all that time…knew nothing of politics of the

liberation struggle" (Staunton 1990: 122). While some women guerrilla supporters had

no or very little knowledge of racial oppression due to their rural location, this did not

mean that once aware, women guerrilla supporters were no less committed to the

liberation of their country.

Despite these geographical distinctions, some women performed multiple roles in the

Namibian, South African, and Zimbabwean national liberation movements. Some

women guerrilla supporters were also political activists in their village. Feresia

Mashayamombe was a political activist[3] in and guerrilla supporter of Zimbabwe's

national liberation movement. She "became a chairwoman of the women's section. Our

duty was to organize meetings to mobilize members. We told people that we should all

join political parties so that when the country was free we would rule ourselves"

(Staunton 1990: 288). Women ex-combatants additionally engaged in political activity

while they received military training. Nancy Saungweme, became a political activist in

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[2] According to Irene Staunton (1990: xiv), a *pungwe* was "a meeting that lasts through the night."
[3] Feresia Mashayamombe did not specify the political organization in which she served a chairwoman of the women's section.

the Zimbabwean Youth Movement, because she heard the organization funded study abroad education in England. She initially believed she would, "come back educated and better prepared to rule our country" (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000: 45). After the murder of Herbert Chitepo, Zimbabwe's[4] first Black lawyer, a riot broke out in Masvingo. Since Saungweme was treasurer for the Youth Movement, she feared the Rhodesian government would arrest her. Subsequently, she left for Mozambique to a Zimbabwean military training camp to receive training as a combatant (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000). Women's roles did not remain static; they were flexible and fluid.

Black southern African women mobilized as guerrilla supporters, ex-combatants, and political activists either through their own personal initial and continued volition or through external coercion. Women guerrilla supporters included women who attended political meetings put on by travelling guerrillas, which acquainted villagers and recruits with the national liberation movement's political ideology. Some women guerrilla supporters were disproportionately coerced by travelling guerrillas, while other women were motivated to aid traveling guerrillas out of a sense of duty as mothers. While some women guerrilla supporters were physically coerced, a large majority of women were coerced through physical threats or witnessing the beatings others received by the travelling guerrillas. However the degree to which women were coerced was not always prevalent. In other words, women were not always stricken with fear which caused their

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[4] At the time, Herbert Chitepo became the first Black lawyer; Zimbabwe was then Rhodesia.

compliance with travelling guerrillas. Many women were initially coerced to feed travelling guerrillas and attend *pungwes*. After hearing the nationalist ideology, many women willingly joined national liberation movements. Also, many women guerrilla supporters had children who joined the national liberation movements, so they often saw the travelling guerrillas as their own children. In addition, some women guerrilla supporters desired to see their country liberated from racist colonial policies, while sometimes holding onto a post-independence idealism when undertaking risky tasks.

Women combatants included women who sought out military training camps in order to receive combat training so they could battle government soldiers. While not all women were permitted to fight, or even received military training, women often carried ammunition and weapons to men in high combat areas. Their lives were as much at risk as men's lives were. Women combatants joined southern African national liberation movements for an array of personal reasons. Women combatants responded to their own and others' experiences of racial discrimination. A consequence of colonial and apartheid racial discrimination was Black Africans', and more specifically, Black African women's, limited access to educational opportunities. In order to expand their access to educational and employment opportunities, some women combatants joined southern African military training camps in an effort to liberate their country. Some women believed that educational and employment opportunities would increase after independence. Also, some women combatants received military training because they desired to fight government repression. Others wished to overturn gender inequalities.

Through military training, some women perceived themselves to be transgressing traditional gender roles, which proved their equality with men. Introduction to and remaining in the national liberation movements was a less common theme mentioned by women combatants. Social networks acted as a catalyst for women's initial involvement and helped women remain in the military training camps. Finally, similar to women guerrilla supporters, some women combatants were coerced to leave for and remain in military training camps by other guerrillas.

Women political activists supported southern African national liberation movements through their involvement in student organizations, nationalist organizations, women's wings of nationalist organizations, and non-governmental organizations. Women political activists were disproportionately motivated to become and remain politically active because of their and others' experiences of racial discrimination. Similar to women combatants, some women political activists responded to the poor or lack of educational opportunities available to Black Africans, more specifically to Black African women. Others mobilized and remained in southern African national liberation movements in response to government repression experienced either by themselves or those within their social networks. In addition, women political activists were exposed to liberation ideology through their social networks. When strong social networks were maintained, women accredited their relationships with other activists as a reason for remaining politically active. While most women political activists mentioned an interest in overturning gender inequalities, liberating the southern African population as a whole

was their primary concern. Some women did mention their interest in overturning gender inequalities as their initial motivations, but even more women continued to remain politically active in response to their experiences of gender discrimination in the movement. They concluded that liberating the country and emancipating women were complementary goals.

Women typically had specific motivations, such as motherhood and a desire for gender equality, for joining southern African national liberation struggles. Men, who were already in a more advantageous position, harbored more general motivations, such as fighting for national liberation. Women fed and clothed the comrades, "as their own mothers would have done" (Staunton 1991: 101). Many women believed that they played a vital role in liberating their country and that national liberation could not have been achieved without their contributions.

Women guerrilla supporters

While many women guerrilla supporters were coerced to join southern African national liberation movements, others aided travelling guerrillas out of a sense of motherly obligation. Fewer women guerrilla supporters understood their oppressed status under colonial racist policies as a reason for attending political meetings and cooking for guerrillas. In order to cope with beatings and threats from pro-government soldiers, and at times from travelling guerrillas, women guerrilla supporters believed that once the war was over, there would be no more suffering.

Coercion played a major role in making women guerrilla supporters attend political meeting and make provisions such as food and clothing to the travelling guerrillas. Coercion came from both sides during the national liberation movement as Margaret Viki, a guerrilla supporter during Zimbabwe's national liberation movement, explains. She states,

> We had to do it this way because we were afraid of both sides, afraid of the soldiers who would kill us if they found out [providing aid to Zipra and Zanla soldiers], and afraid of the freedom fighters because if we refused to feed them that would also mean we would die (Staunton 1990: 150).

However, soldiers and travelling guerrillas were not the only groups coercing women to offer provisions to guerrillas. Agnes Ziyatsha, a guerrilla supporter during Zimbabwe's national liberation struggle, was afraid of the *mujibas*[5]:

> They [*mujibas*] were the ones who sold out on people by telling comrades stories…we were afraid the *mujibas* would tell the comrades that you had refused to attend [political meetings] and they would kill you…we did what the *mujibas* wanted us to do…" (Staunton 1990: 171).

While a large majority of women guerrilla supporters were coerced to provide the travelling guerrillas with food and other provisions like clothes and cigarettes, other

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[5] According to Zimbabwe Women Writers (2000), *mujibas* were "young men, boys, who assisted the freedom fighters, particularly those who informed on the whereabouts of the Rhodesian soldiers, during Zimbabwe's War of Liberation" (p. ix).

women were additionally forced to purchase nationalist party cards. Josephine Ndiweni,

a Zimbabwean guerrilla supporter, she recalls,

> While we…were busy fighting for the country and contributing food and money,
> we were also required to buy party cards…We had no money to feed our children
> and yet we were required to buy party cards…Some people were killed because
> they were not card-holders (Staunton 1990: 211).

Women, who were the majority in rural areas because of male labor migration and flight,

were coerced into supporting travelling guerrillas, even though they risked abuse from

pro-government soldiers.

However, women guerrilla supporters also made provisions for travelling guerrillas out

of their sense of duty as mothers. Many women were the first to discover that travelling

guerrillas had persuaded their sons and daughters to join the military detachments of the

national liberation movements, although some youths joined out of their own volition in

response to racial oppression. Women guerrilla supporters saw travelling guerrillas as

their own children because they were fighting to liberate their country. Lisa Teya, a

Zimbabwean guerrilla supporter, stated, "We were consoled in the knowledge that we

were doing everything for the common good because we felt that these young men were

our sons to mothers like us—mothers who would give the best to their own sons"

(Staunton 1990: 101). Travelling guerrillas also felt that women were their mothers and

would freely come to women's homes. Tetty Magugu, who provided food and supplies

to Zimbabwean travelling guerrillas, stated,

> The freedom fighters felt free to visit my home and, if they needed anything, they
> did not hesitate to come and ask. They were confident that they could ask us
> because they now took my home as their own and considered us as their
> brothers' parents (Staunton 1990: 161).

Travelling guerrillas and women guerrilla supporters both used the language of family and developed an informal kinship. Some women guerrilla supporters' sense of duty to their "children" was so strong that they risked their lives and beatings, which sometimes arose if pro-government soldiers knew about their role (Staunton 1990: 163). Agnes Ziyatsha, who attended political meetings and cooked for the travelling guerrillas stated, "When the freedom fighters first came…I overcame my fear by telling myself that the freedom fighters were just like my two children who had gone to fight" (Staunton 1990: 170). However, travelling guerrillas used women's mother role as a coercive mechanism. Margaret Viki, a Zimbabwean guerrilla supporter elaborated:

> Our children, by that I mean any child over the age of twelve, would also stay at
> the base with the freedom fighters so that parents would not sell them out to the
> soldiers. They took our children, so that if ever the soldiers came to shoot them,
> not only would they die, but so also would our children. They said it would be
> our fault for selling out on them (Staunton 1990: 147).

In order to protect themselves from sell-outs, travelling guerrillas held women's children hostage in order to prevent women from passing any information to the pro-government soldiers on the concealed location of the travelling guerrillas.

While some women guerrilla supporters lived in relative peace prior to the launch of the

national liberation movement and were not conscious of the racial discrimination that

was more prominent in urban areas, some women recognized how the white-led

government exploited the Black African population. Therefore, some women guerrilla

supporters were initially motivated to aid travelling guerrillas to liberate the country as a

means to eradicate racial discrimination. Elizabeth Ndebele, a committee member of the

local school board and a cook for the Zimbabwean travelling guerrillas, remembered

that:

> During and before the war there was a lot of discrimination. I noticed that the
>
> boers [white Afrikaners] hated us. They took the good land and fenced it in for
>
> themselves, so even their cattle were healthy and strong…Black people at the
>
> time were always looked down upon, whether they had money or not. Black
>
> children could not go to school of their choice…and black children were often
>
> not allowed to go beyond a certain standard…I was pained by this
>
> discrimination" (Staunton 1990: 192-193).

After travelling guerrillas had politicized women guerrilla supporters, some women

continued to be motivated, providing aid to travelling guerrillas. Meggi Zingani, a

Zimbabwean member of a base committee that organized and distributed support tasks

like cooking and mending clothes to rural women, stated, "They [travelling guerrillas]

said that we parents had undergone many such unhappy experiences and so we should

help them to defeat the system…We were pleased the guerrillas had come and decided to co-operate and work closely with them" (Staunton 1990: 126). Some employed mothers like Zimbabwean Betty Ndlovu, were willing to allow her sons to join the national liberation movement when she experienced the intensification of racial discrimination. She stated,

> I said to myself, OK, if the children think it is worth fighting for the country, let them go. I thought about it and realized that the situation was getting worse, even in the way we were treated by our employers. We were now treated like animals, not like people (Staunton 1990: 240-241).

For women guerrilla supporters, their identity as mothers was at times inseparable from other personal motivations or from forms of coercion. Travelling guerrillas used children as leverage to keep women from divulging any information to the pro-government soldiers. And, when the racial oppression became unbearable, women were willing to give their children for the liberation of others.

Women ex-combatants

Women combatants were motivated to join and remain in the liberation struggle of their country for three primary reasons: objection to colonialist and patriarchal policies, interest in overturning gender inequality, and coercion. After witnessing or experiencing the racial discrimination imposed by colonial policies, African women mobilized to liberate their countries. Also, patriarchal policies limited women's educational

opportunities and allowed African men with more social mobility in terms of educational and employment opportunities. In order to prove their equality with men, women ex-combatants sought to engage in traditional masculine activities. Women combatants' rationale was if they proved to men they could perform masculine activities, then women would prove their equality to men. Other personal motivations that some women combatants cited were social networks that facilitated their initial motivations to travel to military training camps outside their country.

Faced with structural constraints imposed on women combatants by white minority rule, women joined military training camps in order to improve the opportunities for themselves and their family. Repressive colonialist policies women combatants mentioned included little or no access to education, exclusion from the high-paying jobs, and government repression. The combination of white elitism and under education left women with few employment options. The economic exploitation of Black Africans forced some parents rely on the additional income their older children could provide. Monica joined Zimbabwe's liberation struggle when she was sixteen in 1975 because she thought joining would provide "more opportunities more chances of getting a better job, position, and be able to get my mother some good food, good clothes, good houses" (Lyons 1996: 5). Optimistic women ex-combatants joined national liberation movements in the hope of a better future for their families and themselves. Sekai joined a Zimbabwean training camp located in Zambia in 1974 because she was "denied access to education" (Lyons 1996: 4). Mavis Nyathi, who fled to a Zimbabwe training camp in

Zambia at the age of 16, recalled that girls' job choices were limited to teachers, nurses, or clerks, while white people had the option of being doctors or lawyers. Nyathi's recognition of racial and gender discrimination motivated her to join Zimbabwe's national liberation struggle (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000).

Women combatants desired a double liberation: racial liberation and gender liberation. Sarudzai Churcheminzwa, who joined ZANLA's detachment for military training in 1974, was aware of this double oppression growing up as a child because

> Being an African woman I suffered so much both from class-racial exploitation and the wretched feudal idea of "male-supremacy" that I grew to resent sharply the society I found myself in. At home more freedom of social movement was easily accorded to my brothers than to me and my older and younger sisters…After finishing school, I was more disappointed with my life and my society because even with my successful school results I couldn't find a job… It was a revelation to me and my village when ZANLA[6] opened my way to the struggle in Zimbabwe in 1972 (Zimbabwe News 8.3: 11).

Colonial and traditional African patriarchy allowed men more freedom of movement, while women's duties were domestic. Churcheminzwa had no interest in following her predetermined gender role and sought out ZANLA. Women ex-combatants were optimistic their contributions in the training camps would afford them equality during and after their country's liberation struggle. Similarly, Taurai who receive training at

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[6] ZANLA stands for the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army which was the armed wing of one of Zimbabwe's nationalist organization, Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU).

Victoria Camp was certain they would achieve victory, because "through the enforcement by the…women from the society in Zimbabwe…all the society, parts or structures were represented…in the liberation struggle" (Lyons 1996: 10). Therefore, by participating, women ex-combatants were confident that gender liberation would also take place.

Not all women who went to the training camps were allowed to fight in combat or receive the equivalent military training in guerilla tactics as men. For instance, Rufaro, who trained at an all-women training camp, Victoria Camp, felt frustrated at the commander's decision to not train them.

> We were training how to use guns, but this was not enough for us, because we left the country thinking of being trained as soldiers. Then we used to cry for that, saying "Why are you discriminating us from men. Men are training in camps, we, just keep us here in V.C. So why should you keep us in here? Please we want to train as soldiers (Lyons 1996: 10).

When women received military training equivalent to men's, many were assigned support tasks, such as resupplying men with ammunition on the front line. Therefore, women ex-combatants found themselves in the same predicament they left at home. The carryover of gender discrimination into the training camps motivated women to obtain military training and fight in combat.

Obtaining military skills empowered women combatants. Men commanders caught onto women combatants' growing pride with their mastery of firearms, and some took offense. Some men commanders told women combatants that possession of a weapon was not an instrument to "show-off" nor was, "it a certificate that you are equal to man comrades" (Zimbabwe News 8.3: 12). Despite the discouragement men commanders attempted to instill in women, they were still aware of their capabilities. Nancy Saungweme, began training at Nechingweya Camp in Tanzania and received rigorous military training, same as men. While training, she noticed the power relationship between men and guns, which kept her motivated to carry out the training process. She explained, "Men felt they were the real fighters – the ones to lead…We were just like men. We were pleased because we thought we were macho. We wanted to be identified as fighters, as men" (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000: 51). While initially motivated to join Zimbabwe's military detachments because she noticed the racial and gendered oppression in colonial Zimbabwe, Churucheminzwa realizing that having the option to perform traditionally regarded men's task caused "a sense of pride [to grow] in us being the only women in the camp of men and being in possession of a weapon. We moved proudly up and down the camp" (Zimbabwe News 8.3: 12). Therefore, some women combatants perceived their military participation as an opportunity to transgress traditionally gendered tasks and a sense of pride when they performed masculine activities.

Not all women joined their country's liberation struggle or remained in it out of their own volition. Physical coercion and the threat of violence left some women feeling they had few options about joining the national liberation struggle. Fearful of negative repercussions if they returned home, some women veterans remained in the camps despite their desires to return home. Nyarai, who joined Zimbabwe's liberation struggle at eighteen, decided to remain in the struggle because she felt she was "going to get killed by soldiers, and they'd say you are a sell-out" (Lyons 1996: 12). Rufaro was coerced into joining the liberation struggle, after guerillas had kidnapped her (Lyons 1996). Carine Nyamandwe was initially motivated to join the Zimbabwean military training camps because the thought of receiving military training and being a fighter was intriguing. On her initial journey to Mozambique, Zimbabwean guerrillas intercepted her and instructed her to return home and continue cooking. She complied with the travelling guerrillas orders because Nyamandwe was "scared of them" (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000: 1). Nyamandwe was coerced to obey the guerrillas out of fear of repercussions from them if she did not comply with performing the gendered task of cooking. Physical coercion to join and remain in the national liberation struggles similarly affected men. A key distinction, however, is that women, because of their racial and gendered oppression, were less able to resist coercion than men.

Other women ex-combatants simply joined the national liberation struggle because others were going. Mavis Nyathi, a Zimbabwean ex-combatant who received military training in Zambia, partly joined the national liberation struggle simply because

Everyone wants to copy what someone else has done or is doing so as to belong. You hear that so-and-so…has done something different…, then the tendency was to want to do the same. So…I and my cousins…started to talk about what we were doing" (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000: 131).

Others, like Barbara Nkala, a woman ex-combatant who also received military training in Zambia, joined Zimbabwe's national liberation movement, because she observed her peers were also leaving and interpreted it as a personal challenge. She explained,

Thandiwe Khumalo who was one of the broadcasters used to teach at a school near where I went to teach. Our school used to play sports with her school. So when I heard her voice, I envied her and said to myself, if a fellow teacher can go to Zambia and end up broadcasting on the radio, maybe I too can go and do something useful. But then it was just fantasy; I was not seriously considering doing this. And then I heard others saying, it is very far, you walk very long distances. And I would say to myself, if others can do it, I can do it too (Zimbabwe Women Writers 2000: 101-102).

Therefore, women's social networks with their peers facilitated their initial involvement in the national liberation movements as ex-combatants.

In sum, women veterans were motivated to join their country's liberation struggle to improve their conditions across ethnic and gender lines. Not only did this entice women to join in the first place, but optimism also kept women's hopes up. They too had hopes for more freedoms in a post-independent society. It is important to remember that not all

women veterans went to the training camps out of their own volition; the participation of some women was coerced.

Women political activists

Women political activists were primarily motivated to join their country's liberation struggles in order to address ethnic/racial and gendered oppression. However, women political activists also often formed strong social networks that remained intact throughout the national liberation struggles. These social networks introduced some women to venues in which they could express their grievances as Black African women. In Namibia, the leading anticolonial movement organization, South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), provided alternate venues for employment and education. However, with the spy scares[7] haunting the organization, some women political activists found themselves imprisoned from being labeled a spy or remained a member of the nationalist organization through coercion. Most women political activists did not separate national liberation from women's liberation. By forming women's branches in political organizations dominated by men, women political activists created space for themselves.

Poor living conditions resulting from low wages, employment discrimination, and land policies characterized the lives of Black Africans under colonial rule. Undereducation or a lack of access to education also motivated women to become political activists. In

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[7] In 1985, the SWAPO spy care officially broke out. Around 2,000 SWAPO members were detained mostly in Angola and Zambia under the suspicion of being South African spies (Scholtz 2006: 44).

South Africa, Black children often performed housework for white teachers in order to maintain social distance and remind Black children that "education was not an escape route from the inferior position Blacks were 'destined' to occupy" (Ramphele and Cole 1999: 38). While in high school, Connie Mofokeng was a member of a youth group in which she "learned that education in South Africa indoctrinates whites and domesticates blacks" (Russell 1989: 46). This led her to become a member of the Soweto Student Representative Council (SSRC) during the Soweto Uprising of 1976 in South Africa. Jane Ngwenya, who was Zimbabwe's Deputy Minister of Manpower Planning, Development and Labour in Zimbabwe from 1980-1984, became politically active. She stated, "From school I was not very happy when I saw we were learning separately from other children" (*Southern Africa* 12.9: 8). Black women's options for a sovereign future were even more restricted than those available to Black men. Nashilongo Elago, who was General Secretary of a Namibian publication designed to address the consequences of colonialism on women's lives, stated,

> The whole apartheid system – the South African system – has been set up in a way that is aimed at discouraging women from participating in anything! If you look at the structures in education, for example, there is no opportunity for Namibians to advance their education. If you look at the secondary schools, and the dormitories they have for the students there, they usually have more rooms for boys than for girls (*Dateline Namibia* 1987: 3).

Fewer resources were allocated for Black girls' education. Gendered employment discrimination also left women with few career options; most women became teachers or

nurses because "gender stereotyping in career choices was deeply entrenched in those years" (Ramphele and Cole 1999: 43). Also, as Nashilongo further elaborated, "In the (urban) workforce (there is) the whole thing of low wages for women" (*Dateline Namibia* 1987: 3). When it came to employment, women were dealt a double negative. Job choices for women were limited and paid minimally whereas Black men had more access to a wider array of job opportunities. However, through activism, women could change policy that would begin the uplift of oppressive structural conditions.

Racial and gender discrimination largely motivated South African women political activists to mobilize during the national liberation movement. Firsthand experiences of racialized gender inequalities politicized some Black South African. For instance, Winnie Mandela was aware of her Xhosa ethnicity contributed to her experiences of injustice. Referring to the colonial domination of Xhosa people, Mandela felt that she must "start from where those Xhosas left off and get my land back" (Benjamin et al. 1985: 31).   Her political awareness started young when Mandela noticed her father look so "shabby" in comparison to the white teachers (Benjamin et al 1985: 31). Gertrude Fester, who was a political activist in South Africa, noticed as a child that, because of her race, she was excluded from certain parks and shops. Fester elaborated that she "started to realize that something was wrong about all this when I was thirteen or fourteen" (Russell 1989: 244). While there were no anti-apartheid organizations available for her to join at that age, "all of us were involved in it in 1975 and 1976, the

time when black students broke away from NUSAS[8] [National Union of South African Students] and started SASO [South African Students Organization]" (Russell 1989: 245). Pashukeni Shoombe, who was later elected to the Constituent Assembly of Namibia, which wrote the post-independence Namibian Constitution, belonged to the SWAPO Women's Council while in exile in Angola during Namibia's national liberation movement. Discussing how she became a refugee in Angola, Shoombe stated,

> I am a refugee because I found myself involved in condemning the regime of
> South Africa, because I rejected totally being treated according to my colour, and
> I don't want my people to be treated according to their colour. It is very difficult
> to accept treatment like that. I can only think that my grandfather was a slave,
> my father was a slave, I myself and my children will be slaves, only because we
> are black…To be paid a quarter of the salary [of whites]! We have the same
> education, we have the same qualifications, we have the same experience, but
> only because I am black, I have to be paid like that. That is why I decided it
> would be better to join the struggle (*Dateline Namibia* 1984).

Lindi Kazombaue, daughter of a Namibian father and German mother, shared similar sentiments with Shoombe. Kazombaue's mixed ethnicity left her with an isolated feeling of not belonging to either ethnic group. Despite this, she joined SWAPO because she felt Namibia was her country (Brown and Leys 2005).

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[8] NUSAS was predominantly a white organization (Russell 1989).

Not only did women collaborate to improve women's conditions, but they also had to fight internal patriarchal forces. Kazombaue experienced hostility from SWAPO because she affiliated with Namibian Women's Voice instead of the SWAPO Women's Council (SWC). However, the SWC was headed by men, which she felt was counter progressive (Brown and Leys 1985). Ruth Mompati, a political activist in the African National Congress Women's League of South Africa and a founding member of the Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW), believed that women's liberation was necessary condition for national liberation:

> We feel that in order to get our independence as women, the prerequisite is for us to be part of the war for national liberation. When we are free as a nation, we will have created the foundation for the emancipation of women. As we fight side by side with our men in the struggle, men become dependent on us working with them. They begin to lose sight of the fact that we are women. And there's no way that after independence these men can turn around and say, "But now you are a woman" (Russell 1989: 116).

Even women who were in exile, like Pashukeni Shoombe, who worked in the SWAPO Women's Council while in exile in Angola, focused on the improvement of women's conditions with the hopes of improving women's lives during and after the national liberation struggles. Shoombe's political activities were largely centered on literacy campaigns and programs that focused on improving women's conditions. These programs were centered on developing skills for Black women like tractor driving, mechanics, tailoring, and sewing. She noted that because of the apartheid system, Black

women were held back through education, so she helped work on a literacy campaign. She also helped organized other educational programs because "we want to be self-reliant, and, in the future, we hope to contribute to our country, to be part and parcel of the reconstruction of our country" (*Dateline Namibia* 1987). Mavivi Manzini, a member of the ANC Women's League, recognized women were underrepresented on the National Executive. Manzini felt that in order to adjust for women's underrepresentation was to "raise women's issues" within women's wing of the ANC (Russell 1989: 129). Therefore, women possessed a strong national identity that not only inspired their activism, but also provided women with new ideas on how to improve women's conditions.

While many Black Namibian, South African, and Zimbabwean women and men responded to racial and gender inequalities, white-led governments repressed anticolonial and antiapartheid movements. White-led governments passed policies that suppressed any organizing that was not in agreement with the state. Anyone who was discovered to have engaged in political work that ran counter to the white-led government could be imprisoned without a trial. Namibian, South African, and Zimbabwean nationalist organizations had to operate either underground or in exile at some point during the national liberation movements. After witnessing what was happening to their families and friends like imprisonment and torture, many women mobilized to oppose state repression. Feziwe Bookholane, who was imprisoned for six years due to her political activity within South Africa, witnessed "children getting

killed" while she worked at a hospital in Port Elizabeth, and she "decided I had to do something about it" (Russell 1989: 57). When she worked as a teacher, Jane Ngwenya noticed that

> the leader of the teachers' association could not accept any criticism. I was expected to speak nicely and be English-mannered, by being submissive. I didn't want to lose my job so I went softly…But I still was not very happy, because there was never a place for questions…When I attended a political meeting sometime before the formation of the African National Congress, I felt I had found the right thing that I wanted. These others spoke of the same thing I had doubted in my mind for a long time (*Southern Africa* 12.9: 8).

Therefore, while Bookholane witnessed the suffering of others in response to governmental repression, Ngwenya experienced governmental repression through her inability to raise opposing viewpoints. Regardless, both women's experiences of governmental repression motivated them to become politically active in order to stop the suffering inflicted on them by pro-government forces and to have their voices heard.

Social networks often introduced women political activists to organizations working against colonialism and patriarchy. A school friend of Mamphela Ramphele introduced her to a group of friends opposed to white liberal politics of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) (Ramphele and Cole 1999). At meetings where opposition to colonialism was discussed, Ramphele became intrigued with the politics discussed. Ramphele's social network ties motivated her to remain politically active despite her

experiences of imprisonment, which is evident when she states, "Strong personal bonds with fellow activists contributed to the commitment to the cause and the desire for active participation" (Ramphele and Cole 1999: 68). Feziwe Bookholane, who worked at a hospital during the time of the Soweto uprising of 1976 in South Africa, attended political meetings and funerals with her stepson. Her relationship with her stepson allowed her to forge other relationships with children and students. These children and students eventually sought Bookholane's aid in fleeing South Africa so they could further their education or obtain military training outside South Africa (Russell 1989). Close personal bonds with other activists not only motivated women to participate in the national liberation movements, but also provided support networks for women. Gertrude Fester, an active political member of the United Women's Organization in South Africa, was initially motivated to take part in student politics after experiencing racial discrimination as a child. However, when she found herself in an abusive marriage and had no family support, other women political activists in the organization provided her with support, making it possible for her to leave her husband and resume her political activities (Russell 1989).

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

My analysis of Black southern African women's motivations to join and remain in southern African national liberation movements has demonstrated that not all social movement participants necessarily join out of their own volition, contrary to the wisdom of social movement theory. Women who voluntarily joined national liberation movements maintained different motivations for participation than men. This was due in part to the influences of colonial and traditional African patriarchies, but also to the political rhetoric used to mobilize women into nationalist organizations that shaped women's motivations. For instance, while some women were politicized by being witnesses to or of experiencing racial and gender discrimination, others felt a strong desire to provide aid to travelling guerrillas as mothers after attending political meetings. Because women were faced with coercion or held multiple motivations, these circumstances prompted some women to perform multiple roles during the national liberation movements. In some cases, rural women would recruit members into the nationalist organizations while also making provisions for travelling guerrillas. Other women initially started out in one role and took on another when certain circumstances prompt the switch. For some women, fear of governmental repression for involvement in political activities facilitated their flight to military training camps in neighboring countries. Even in cases where coercion was initially involved, once having become politicized by nationalist organizations, some women readily continued their participation in the national liberation movements.

While women performed different roles in southern African national liberation movements, there were no motivations solely unique to women guerrilla supporters, women ex-combatants, or women political activists. Women maintained multiple motivations, which were not static, but susceptible to change with developments in the national liberation movements. Also, even though some women performed different roles, some women maintained similar motivations. For instance, women guerrilla supporters, combatants, and political activists responded to the racial oppression inflicted by the white-led government. With no one motivation unique to women guerrilla supporters, combatants, and political activists, it is not surprising that Black southern African women from different countries shared similar experiences. Mere participation in the national liberation movements made participants susceptible to imprisonment at the hands of pro-government forces. For women who went to prison, prison guards often used gendered forms of torture in attempts to extract information, regardless if she was feeding travelling guerrillas, fleeing to a military training camp, or politicking against repressive colonial regimes. Women prisoners were often threatened with rape, raped, received administered electric shocks on their breasts, or were simply denied hygiene products during menstruation. Such acts were enacted by prison guards in an attempt to make women divulge political information, feel deprived of agency, or feel alienated from their own bodies, these were forms of torture that men could not have or rarely experienced.

Despite women's negative gendered experiences, women felt a sense of solidarity among themselves. This is evident in the formation of women's leagues and wings under nationalist organizations. Also, the joint effort enacted by many women guerrilla supporters in feeding and making provisions for travelling guerrillas demonstrates women's sense of solidarity. Almost all women expressed a desire to overturn racial inequalities, to eradicate the suffering imposed on them and their families by the colonial regimes, and to create a better future for everyone. Motherhood, while more emphasized among women guerrilla supporters, was, to some extent, a motivation held by all women. Women guerrilla supporters saw their contributions to the struggle as feeding their children; women political activists wanted to eradicate suffering amongst their and others' children through political involvement. While women's roles in southern African national liberation movements were fluid and changing, so, too, were their motivations to join and remain active in their respective movement.

It comes as no surprise that women felt proud of their contributions to national liberation. Without the roles and tasks women performed, whether they were gendered or not, southern African national liberation movements, women felt, would have been largely without success. Without the aid provided by women, men would have been left to perform the duties women did whether it was engaging in combat and military training, making provisions for travelling guerrillas, or politicking against repressive colonial regimes. Altogether, most women were irrepressible, enduring hardships like rape and attempted exclusion from political organizations. Women demonstrated their

agency by obliging men to listen to their grievances and to make space for those

grievances to be heard.

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