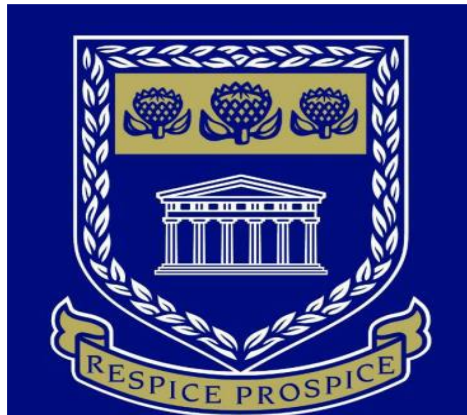


THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE



**FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
TOPIC**

COMMISSIONED WOMEN SOLDIERS AND POLITICS IN ZIMBABWE
A MINI-THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF ARTS, DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR MA DEGREE IN ANTHROPOLOGY (STRUCTURED).


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DECEMBER 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that: *Commissioned Women soldiers and politics in Zimbabwe* is my own work. All sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by referencing. This thesis is submitted at the University of the Western Cape in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Masters of Arts Degree in Anthropology. This work has not been submitted for a degree at any University.

Signature..... 

Date.....15/ 12/ 2020.....



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ABSTRACT

The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) and the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), are strongly interlinked in politics since independence, that is, the Army largely functions as the military wing of the party (ZANU-PF) and the state. The ZNA is also deeply involved in civilian politics. This study examines the experiences of commissioned women soldiers, as well as their understandings of power and politics in the ZNA. While many male soldiers are in positions of power and authority in the military, party, state, and civilian politics, commissioned women soldiers are marginalised in all of these areas. The role and position of women soldiers in this regard nevertheless remain under-researched. In this thesis I interrogate the complex processes and relations of power which discipline women soldiers and exclude them from processes of power and politics in the ZNA. I argue that there are various practice and discourses which affect women soldiers' roles in the military. To do so, I draw on Foucault's (1977) work on power/ knowledge, particularly the concepts of practices, relations, power and panopticism to examine how woman soldiers' aspirations regarding power and politics are monitored and restricted in the military. I also draw on Enloe's (2000) work on power politics and Sasson-Levy's (2003) work on military gendered practices as interpretive and critical paradigmatic approaches to analyse how women experience hegemonic military masculinities in- and outside the army. The study employed ethnographic methods such as life histories, in-depth interviews and informal conversations with ten commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA. These methods were triangulated to corroborate responses from research participants and the data was thematically analysed.

Key Words: Military, Women, Politics, Power, Zimbabwe.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Degree to my special grandmother Gogo S. Magwati who died on the 18th of November 2019, at the age of 120 years. This Degree is for you Granny.

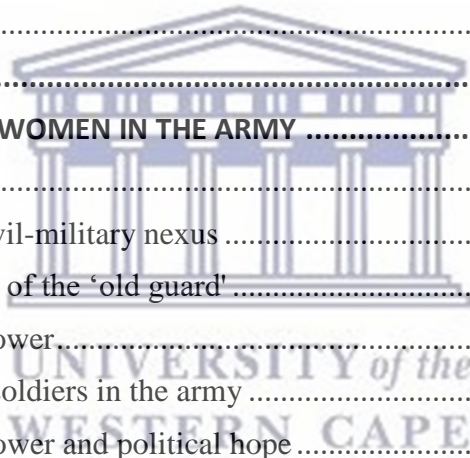


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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZWS	Zimbabwe Women Services
RNA	Rhodesian National Army
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
CIO	Central Intelligent Organisation
ZMI	Zimbabwe Military Intelligence
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
MI	Military Intelligence
ZDH	Zimbabwe Defence House
CBD	Central Business District
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police
PTC	Promotional Training Course
SANDF	South African Defence Force
CoF	Chief of Staff
ZMA	Zimbabwe Military Academy
GS	General Staff
BC	Brigade Commander
AB	Administration Branch
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
BG	Brigadier General
ASS	Army Social Services
FSC	Financial Services Comptroller

PCC	Platoon Commanders Course
RPCC	Reserve Platoon Commanders Course
CCC	Company Commanders Course
PROMEX	Promotional Exams
BFT	Battle Fitness Test
IDF	Izrael Defence Forces
IAF	Israel Armed Forces



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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The military in Zimbabwe has been, and is currently, deeply involved in politics in this country (Ndawana 2020; Tendi 2020). The Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) arguably acts as an extension of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) party. The politicisation of soldiers starts in the barracks and then feeds into the country's national civilian politics (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2013). The involvement of the military in civilian politics is a trend that has become a common feature in many African countries and is sometimes referred to as a civil-military matrix. Burk (2002:7) argued that such a civil-military nexus involves the "direct and indirect dealings between the military and civilian institutions". This trend differs from other militaries around the world, where the army is expected to remain apolitical and subordinate to civil authority (Huntington 1957; 1981). In contrast, the ZNA Army functions as an extension of the ruling ZANU PF and the state (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2013; 2020). That is, there is complete synchronisation of the military, the party and the state in Zimbabwe. It is against this background that this study explores and examines the experiences of women soldiers in such a complex environment.

In post-independence Zimbabwe, many political leaders are former combatants who had either participated in the liberation struggle or had been deployed in another armed conflict as part of the ZNA, e.g. in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2020; Sachikonye 2011; Rupiya 2012; Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2009). Overall, men with previous combat experience have easy access to power and authority in the army, ZANU PF, the State. As a result of the continued entanglement of the military with politics in the civil domain, military men are also strongly present in the latter. Women soldiers, however, are not similarly present in positions of authority in the aforementioned areas.

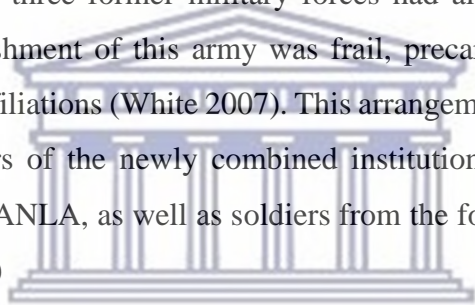
One of the reasons for the current situation lay in the fact that military processes are generally

highly gendered and challenging for women soldiers (Sasson-Levy 2003). The military is a masculine domain, and women soldiers are at once expected to embody its masculine military culture, while simultaneously being perceived as gendered and 'other' (Henry 2017; Hopfl 2003). As indicated above, the ZNA and its male members are deeply involved in and often deployed to intervene in civilian politics in Zimbabwe. Women soldiers on the other hand, are seldom seen or heard in this regard. Despite a quota system for, e.g. women's representation in Parliament, civilian politics in Zimbabwe is overwhelmingly male-dominated (Hamandishe 2018; Dube 2018; Gaidzanwa 2004; Geisler 1995). The following section outlines the historical background of the Zimbabwe National Army and also the historical context of the women soldiers' constructions and understandings of power in the army, as well as their experiences in this regard.

1.2 Background of the Study: The Zimbabwe National Army and Women Soldiers.

The military in Zimbabwe has a long history of involvement in, and continues to be engaged with, civilian politics (Sachikonye 2011; Rupiya 2012; Maringira 2017; Raftopoulos and Mlambo 2009; Tendi 2013). This military-civil fusion is problematic, yet often present in many contemporary post-colonial governments in developing countries, where the political role of the military is long-standing, frequent and widespread (Finer 2017; Malmvig 2019). Globally, the participation or intervention of the military in civilian politics has been questioned, and it has been a bone of contention in several global debates, particularly on how best to define the professional or non-professional role of the military. The civilian-military nexus is nevertheless a system that is common in the Middle East and Africa (Bove et al 2020; Kamrava 2000). Many Middle Eastern leaders and states have formalised and operationalised a close link between civilian politics and the military as a system of governance with a view of consolidating their civilian political autonomy (Mello 2014; Kamrava 2000). This structure is familiar in countries such as Yemen, Iraq, Israel and Turkey to mention just a few. Governments use this system to fortify their civilian political power and dominance in the country, thereby increasing their political influence through the control and use of the military (Edeh and Ugwueze 2014; Kamrava 2000). The distinct and increasingly political role of the military in the several African States is often regarded as aimed at controlling the State (Ngoma 2006; Burk 2002; Stevenson 2006; 2010).

Although Zimbabwe is supposedly a democracy, it is also one of the countries in Africa where the military is deeply involved in the State and in civil society. Soon after the independence in 1980, former soldiers of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), and the Rhodesian National Army (RNA) were integrated into one National Army (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2020; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). This 'new' army was established under a ceasefire agreement and was to include all the former guerrillas (White 2007). The new government led by Robert Mugabe, former leader of the ZIPRA military wing, advocated for a one-party state. Thus, effectively having a military that adheres to the command of the then Prime Minister of Zimbabwe (Tendi 2013; Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003; Lyons 1999). The above mentioned three former military forces had all been politically affiliated to different parties. The establishment of this army was frail, precarious and trivial issues would quickly translate into party affiliations (White 2007). This arrangement caused a lot of fissures and despondence among members of the newly combined institution which now included former guerrillas from ZIPRA and ZANLA, as well as soldiers from the former Rhodesian Army (Tendi 2013; Ndlovu-Gatcheni 2017)



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In February 1981, fights erupted between opposing groups of soldiers at Entumbane - after an argument between former ZIPRA and former ZANLA members (White 2007; Tendi 2003). The uprising was called the Entumbane uprising, which escalated and spread to the National Army (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). The conflicts resulted from the demotion of most of the ZANLA leaders from political power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017; Sylvester 1990). Contestations between the above former military wings ensued. ZIPRA wanted to protect the Patriotic Front-Zimbabwe African People's Union (PF-ZAPU) and fought to be involved and recognised in the new army. The two groups were also striving to propel their leaders into the top leadership of the civilian authority in Zimbabwe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017). ZANLA was a military wing which was protected by ZANU's ideology and political power. Finally, the Unity Accord was signed and it cemented the creation of the one-party State (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front-ZANU PF) and one army which became the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). When the armies were

amalgamated after the liberation struggle, leaders of the two military wings (ZANLA and ZIPRA) were promoted into the ZANU PF Party and the State as a reward for patriotism (Tendi 2013; 2020, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2017; Maringira 2017). It was also to appease formerly discontented service chiefs (male military commanders) after the integration of the armies. In the process women who had participated in the armed struggle were side-lined.

Nonetheless, the participation and the involvement of women guerrillas in the armed struggle had increased from 1972 until independence (Chimedza and Chirimambowa 2014; Seidman 1984). The revolutionary movements in Zimbabwe were highly dependent “on the support of women combatants” during the liberation struggle (Seidman 1984:420). Women soldiers participated in the armed conflict; first as carriers of military equipment, and later as front-line fighters (Sylvester 1990; Geisler 1995). The voluntary and forced participation of women increased as the fight for independence intensified. It is estimated that both ZANLA and ZIPRA military wings “recruited and trained close to 10,000 women guerrilla fighters” during the entire period of liberation struggle (Geisler 1995: 551).

In all the aforementioned arrangements and rearrangements of the armies, the role of women combatants remained unaccounted for and their position, or lack of it, problematic. Given the numbers and the extensive participation of women in the armed conflict, they were arguably supposed to be equally represented in the newly created army, the ruling party (ZANU PF) and the State. Yet, women combatants were relegated to obscurity and powerlessness instead. Unlike men, as discussed above, only a small number of women who had been combatants in the armed struggle “were appointed to the high command” (Chogugudza 2005:551). The “gendered constructions” of the liberation struggle, (where women soldiers were viewed as weak and subservient to the command of men combatants) seemed to have affected the appointment of women soldiers into the top leadership of both the army and the ruling party ZANU PF just after independence (Lyons 1999:1). Today there is little understanding of women soldiers’ reality or of the way women soldiers in the ZNA make sense of and their experience of power and politics in the army and outside it.

In the post-independence era the ruling ZANU PF, to all intents, became an appendage of the ZNA. All the leaders of the party and State came from former party military wings. Most male combatants moved into positions of power within the State or the army, while their women counterparts were excluded from it. As discussed above, former women guerrillas were barely integrated into the top leadership of the military and civilian politics (Lyons 1999). Because of the highly masculinised 'new' one party-military-state system, the participation of women soldiers in combat and politics largely disappeared. Some commissioned women soldiers became trapped in the lower ranks of the ZNA. Only a small number of women soldiers, who were close to the high command, managed to move into civilian politics. Despite "the availability of equitable law" that was enacted in post-colonial Zimbabwe (Geisler 1995: 547), there was little progress possible for women soldiers towards authority and power. Overall women soldiers, both in pre- as well as in post-independence Zimbabwe, had to face the predicament of "being ruled by patriarchal and male agenda" (Lyons 1999: 65). In this regard, the gendered position of women soldiers in the military reflects that of women in broader Zimbabwean society (Maunganidze 2020; Dube 2013). Thus, the challenges for women soldiers in this context were, and are still complex. This is why the analysis of women's struggles and their experiences has to be contextualised (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983)

Many studies have focused on the experiences of male soldiers and the political role of the military in civilian politics of post-independence Zimbabwe (Tendi 2013; Alexander and McGregor 2013; Maringira 2017; Chitukutuku 2017). Contrastingly, the challenges and experiences of commissioned women soldiers in this context remained unexplored.

Power is relational; it is generated and exercised through a multiplicity of practices within an institution (Foucault 1977; 1980; Gordon 1980). The scant representation of women in the top leadership of the military reflects how power and subjectivity lay in "force relationships" (Foucault 1978:97), e.g. in the military. Gaventa (2003:1) writes that; for Foucault power is "embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them". Niezen (2018) further argues that dominant ideas and practices in any institution creates and shape how power is accessed and exercised in it. In this context, gendered conceptions, which are highly visible in the ZNA, arguably produces and reproduces a

culture of hegemonic masculinities (Hinojosa 2010), where men dominate the processes of power. Bates (1980) further argued that a cluster of ideas and practices creates dominance in the structures of power, and this dominance plays a crucial function in controlling and subjugating others. Consequently, ideas and practices that promote the superiority of men and the ‘othering’ of women soldiers in the army should be interrogated.

Therefore, in analysing my findings, I draw on Foucault’s (1977) theory of power-knowledge, particularly the ideas of practices, relations and panopticism. This work was useful to examine the practices and relational activities which are used by military men to surveil and control women soldiers in the ZNA and in civilian politics. Sasson-Levy’s (2003) work on military gendered practices was very instrumental in analysing how women experience highly masculinised practices in the army. Power is political and gendered in the military, hence Enloe’s (2000) work on power politics was very crucial to examine and understand power dynamics exist in the ZNA.

1.3 Problem Statement

Since independence, the involvement of soldiers in civilian politics in Zimbabwe has remained profound (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2013; Rupiya 2004). Male soldiers are visible at the top command and leadership in both military and civilian politics, where they actively support the ruling party ZANU PF (Maringira 2017). That is, there is an inherent presence and deep involvement of military men in Zimbabwean politics (Maringira and Masiya 2017). This situation seems to have become normalised for the past four decades in Zimbabwe. At the same time, the ZNA has increased its recruitment of women soldiers (Chimedza 1985; Geisler 1995). Yet the relative absence of women in the top leadership of the army, a trend which was already apparent during the liberation war, seems to have continued in post-independence Zimbabwe (Lyons 1999). Since the ZNA is highly involved in party and state politics in Zimbabwe, few women soldiers progress in the rank structure of the army, which, in turn, affects their lack of presence at the top echelons of the military, the party and the state. Currently, compared to male soldiers, there are very few women soldiers who serve in the top leadership of the army. The study, therefore,

problematizes the ‘invisibility’ of women soldiers at the top military leadership, which in this case, also arguably affect their access to civilian authority in the Zimbabwean context. The study uses the lens of gender and the politicisation of the military to understand the challenges facing women soldiers in this setting. I assume that, while women soldiers have the agency to ‘perform’ soldierhood and buy into the masculinist culture of the military, they may also be constrained and sidelined by it (Butler 1990; Connell 1987).

1.4 Justification of the study

Existing literature pays attention to the military institution and its masculine culture and its practices (Sasson-Levy’s 2003; Heinecken 2017; Gibson 2010; King 2017; Cockburn 2001), as well as the gendered experiences of women in military institutions (Woodward and Duncanson 2017; Hacker and Vining 2012). The army is a legitimate institution, and its narratives have a political and social influence in facilitating or inhibiting women soldiers’ understanding of their own position in relation to authority and power, as well as their progress, or lack of it, in politics (Herford 2013). Despite a variety of studies giving different narratives of women soldiers’ presence in a masculinised and gendered institution (Heinecken 2017; Holyfield 2011; Gibson 2010; Shefer and Mankayi 2007), women soldiers face common challenges in the military. Various settings, histories and practices, however, pose diverse challenges to women soldiers and affects their experiences differently: these must be interrogated and understood in context (Herford 2013). Ultimately, women’s work in the military is enormous and cannot be ignored (Hacker and Vining, 2012). In the case of the ZNA, nothing has been written about the experiences of women soldiers in a post-independence Zimbabwean setting, where the military is highly masculinised and politicised. In this context, women soldiers, as well as their gendered bodies, are seemingly constrained through disciplinary power at a variety of levels: in relation to the army and eventually also in civilian politics. This research details women soldiers’ understanding and experiences of relations of power and how it operates in the ZNA and in politics. Thus, this scholarship focuses on the emic views of women soldiers about power and politics in the barracks.

The study scrutinises how these experiences influence women soldiers' understanding of politics inside and outside the barracks. By so doing, the research can contribute to the broader literature on the transdisciplinary critical military studies. Jäger (2001: 35) argued that the knowledge that is produced through lived experiences is not static, but can influence and shape “collective or formative actions”, i.e. (policies and discourses) in any society. Hence, this study will contribute to a body of academic knowledge.

1.5 Research questions

This study examines women soldiers' experiences in the ZNA and in civilian politics in Zimbabwe, where the military and civilian politics are highly intertwined. The following broad questions were raised to help unpack women soldiers' experiences in the ZNA:

1. What are the challenges women soldiers face when navigating the highly masculinised and politicised terrain of the ZNA?
2. How do women soldiers construct power and how it is produced and reproduced in the ZNA?
3. What are commissioned women soldiers subjective views about the gendered politicisation of power in the ZNA?

How do commissioned women officers make sense of their poor representation in the top echelons of the military in post-colonial Zimbabwe?

1.6 Chapter Outline of the Study

This thesis is structured and organised in six chapters.

The first chapter introduces the study and presents the argument of the thesis. The chapter further delineates the problem statement, justifies the study and gave the background of the study as well as elucidates all the chapters of this thesis.

Chapter Two: This chapter reviews various scholarly attempts on military involvement in civilian politics, women soldiers in the military and lastly women soldiers and military hegemonic masculinities. This literature review helps to understand the purpose of this thesis

Chapter Three: This chapter gave a recount of the methodological journey of the study, i.e. it reflects on a detailed description of my research site and my participants. The chapter further relays the methods that I used in this inquiry, particularly on how I accessed my research participants (the commissioned women soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army) and how I used these methods to collect data. The chapter further reveals my experiences, observations and challenges that I encountered in the field. It also gives some methodological contributions, which were noted through my interaction with research participants in the field.

Chapter four: The chapter presented about politics of soldiering in the ZNA. It discussed their early experiences of women soldiers in the ZNA, i.e. their experiences during their initial stages military training and appointments. It further presented how power and male dominance is engineered and maintained in the ZNA, i.e. it reveals certain practices which promote male dominance in the ZNA structures and beyond. The chapter draws on Foucault (1977) ideas of knowledge/power particularly the concept of power to analyse certain practices in the ZNA and how they affect the position of women soldiers in the ZNA. It further detailed how power is engineered and modelled ZNA, through the use of military units and masculinity as barometers which measure access of power in the military and eventually in civilian power in Zimbabwe. In analysing these everyday experiences, this chapter also draws from Sasson-Levy's (2003) work on military gender practices as an interpretive and critical approach to analyse how women experience gendered practices in the army.

Chapter Five: This chapter presents the findings on how access to power and positions in the military is politicised in the ZNA. The descriptive data was presented in thematic forms. The chapter also draws on Foucault (1977) theory of power/knowledge particularly the ideas of, panopticism, practices and relations. The chapter presented the gathered data on how women

soldiers understand the civilian-military nexus system in Zimbabwe. It recounts the participant's subjective views on gendered access to power in the ZNA. The chapter further revealed how the presence of the 'old guard' (veteran male officers) affect the role of women soldiers in the army. The chapter also detailed how the military men surveille and control women soldiers' roles and access to power in the army and beyond. Finally, the chapter chronicled how the family-military complex affects the role of women soldiers' in the ZNA and their participation in civilian politics. In analysing these findings, this chapter also draws from Enloe's (2000) work on power politics to examine and understand the gendered power dynamics that exist in the ZNA.

Chapter Six: This chapter gives the conclusions of this thesis. The conclusions were drawn from the findings, discussions about the experiences of women soldiers in the ZNA in relation with the research questions. These conclusions were also drawn from discussions made with research findings, literature reviews from various researches on other militaries around the world. The chapter concludes by revealing how the findings obtained from this inquiry contribute to the broader literature on the transdisciplinary military studies, particularly on the experience's women soldiers in militaries engaging in civilian-military system.



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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter recounts scholarly attempts to explain military involvement in politics, women soldiers in the military and women soldiers and hegemonic masculinities in the armed forces. Therefore, much of my literature reviews pays attention to experiences of women soldiers in the military (Woodward and Jenkins 2011; Woodward and Duncanson 2017). The chapter further discusses the military-civilian nexus, that is, the politicisation of the military and the militarisation of civilian authority (Kamrava 2000; Maringira 2019; 2017; Tendi 2020). The relationship between women and the military has been at the centre of debates in recent critical military discourse. Most of the studies have discussed militaries as hegemonic and hyper-masculinised institutions (Sasson-Levy 2003; Gibson 2010; Barret (1996) and gendered in policy and practice (Enloe 2000; Woodward and Duncanson 2017). Women soldiers' experiences in the civilian-military environment is a complex analysis which had little attention from many scholars. Hence, it is crucial to understand women soldiers' experiences in their context of operation.

2.2 Military involvement in politics

The political role of the military is frequent, widespread and long standing in most developing countries (Finer 2017; Loveman 1994; Feaver 1999). The literature attends to the military-political nexus, particularly, in the Middle East, Africa and Zimbabwe (Burk 2002; Maringira 2017; Tendi 2013) where it has become a "common feature of the political systems" (Kamrava 2000:17). Most contemporary countries create 'quasi civilian charades' (Houngnikpo 2016), where militaries increasingly play a large role in the establishment and maintenance of political power of governments. The distinct political role of the military has increasingly turned the military and states into political phenomena. Such systems intertwine the relationship between the military and civilian authority, extending the centre of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015), with the military and

civilian authority synchronised and understood as part of one institution. Once used as a system of governance, the political activity of the military becomes persistent and generative (Finer 2017). In the late 19th century there has been an increased synergy between the military when, for instance in states in the Arab world, sought to protect and consolidate their political power and maintain their dominance through the military (Kamrava 2000). From then, the civilian-military nexus has become a common trend in Middle East including countries such as Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Israel and Turkey (Safran 2018), to mention just a few.

Khisa & Day (2020: 174) argue that the civilian-military system is an “unusual phenomenon” in Africa. Some scholars opine that, in such a system, the army is expected to adhere to civil principles and to be subservient to the elected civil authority (Ngoma 2006). However, while in theory these are two separate institutions, in practice and in such contexts, the military dictates civilian politics of the day. This form of relationship saw the military becoming a political force in many developing countries. The continued use of the military-civil political nexus has led to military coups in Africa, including the recent ones in Sudan (Khisa & Day 2020), the one happened from the 14- 21 November 2017 in Zimbabwe (Beardsworth et al 2019; Feldstein 2017) and the recently foiled one in Gabon (Bachmann 2020). The fixation of the civil-military matrix has changed the political landscape in most African countries (Burk 2002). This includes the rebranding of many contemporary militaries as “people’s army rather than as regime security” and it is strategically done to ‘sanitize’ illegitimate power grabs (Ngoma 2006:100), and to use of military forces to usurp power and for military generals and protect their interests and authority in the civilian domain.

Zimbabwe is a good example of a country functioning as a military-state system. The military-political nexus in Zimbabwe is a peculiar political phenomenon, which has been consistently and conjointly functioned since independence in 1980 to date. Military generals in Zimbabwe represent themselves as the guardians of Zimbabwean sovereignty and as civil political kingmakers in both ZANU-PF and the state (Cheeseman and Tendi 2010; Maringira 2017). The increased presence of army generals and former ex-combatants in the top echelons of political power stretches back to independence (Tendi 2020; Maringira 2017; Rupiya 2004).

Although the ZNA is subservient to ZANU (PF) (Tendi 2013), the synchronisation of the military and civilian authority in Zimbabwe has nevertheless led to a highly politicized army (Maringira 2017). Hence, the main feature of the post-colonial state in Zimbabwe is its transformation into a military state (Mandaza 1996). ZANU-PF promoted former freedom fighters in the military to reward them for their continued loyalty to party (ZANU PF and state) (Maringira 2017). At the same time soldiers, army generals and the military commanders publicly support ZANU-PF (Maringira Ibid).

Civil-military relations in Zimbabwe do not provoke political controversy only, but also gender friction (Ranchod-Nilsson, 2008; Ndawana 2018). Thus, the nexus does not just have its political challenges, but also promotes patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities in the military institution. This has seen most men from the military gaining more political power and visibility in civil politics at the expense of their women counterparts, which is problematic. Thus, the civilian – military relation has seen the 'securocrats' (men), buttress their political power through various state organs, such as the judiciary, legislature., home affairs and in party structures (ZANU(PF). They participate in elections as 'retired' members of the security service (Mahuku 2017; Raftopoulos 2003), but still serve the interests of the army. In this situation women soldiers remain side-lined.

2.4 Women in the Military

Extant literature on women soldiers' experiences in the military discuss the increase in numbers of women in the army (Lomsky-Feder and Sasson-Levy 2017; Duncanson and Woodward 2016; Sasson-Levy 2001, 2003; Woodward and Duncanson 2017). Militaries are not feminine cultures (Cockburn 2001) and the presence of women in the institution has been and is problematic, especially for their recognition and the development in an essentially rigid and the military institution and masculinity are 'mutually' affirmed (Shefer and Mankayi 2007). Some scholars argue that military practices operate along gender lines (Acker1990; Martin and Collinson 1999;

Britton 2000) and the masculine nature of the army perpetuates women's inferior role militarily (Woodward and Duncanson 2016). Hence, to understand the experiences of a woman in the army, it is important to explore military structure and context, and scrutinise how the military shapes women soldiers' understanding of power and politics, and how they navigate in that environment and context.

As it has shown by the literature above, it is very crucial to understand women soldiers' role and relevance in combat and political spheres in the military (Devilbiss 1990). In military institutions, there are many clichés, for example of men as “warriors” and women as the “beautiful souls” of the barracks (Sjoberg 2010:54). These stereotypes have been commonly used to secure women's status as ‘non-combatants’ and men's identity as warriors and leaders of the military. This is also echoed by Woodward and Winter (2007) who emphasise the pervasiveness of this gendered stereotypical endeavor, where women work in the barracks and are constructed as its clichéd ‘beauties’, while men ‘confiscate’ political power.

Such formulaic views of women in the military and everyday gendered practices when operationalized, influence actions and roles of women soldiers, who while present in the army, are silenced in the institution (D'Amico 1996) with its masculine nature (Shefer and Mankayi 2007). These culturally patterned practices negatively affect the political influence and the role of women soldiers, as well as their invisibility in the top leadership of the army. Heinecken (2002) asserts that there is a spillage of cultural values into the military institution. Interestingly, the military tends to ignore policy orientations regarding female presence in the armed forces (Higate and Hopton 2004). That is, militaries and the multitude of men employed, shape women soldiers' daily lives and define the lived experiences of those working alongside them (Woodward and Duncanson 2017). Militaries are known for having direct or indirect influence on soldiers' thoughts, behaviour and decisions. The military institution influences the lives of its members, both male and female, during their time of service, but also in post military life (ibid).

The social reproduction of gender in the military as institution leads to gendered power relations (Cock 1989) and the challenges for women in the army relate to the embedded hyper masculine

culture within the institution, which makes it difficult for female soldiers to take up positions of power and pursue political aspirations. The masculine discourses and ideologies in the military also affect relations between women and men in the military. Nevertheless, Stiehm (1989) suggests that, if men in the military see women in positions of agency and power it makes it more difficult for them to objectify and control women. Hence, Enloe (2007) argues that enculturation of military masculinity has implications for gender relations and how power is distributed in the military. Such relational constructions in military culture work as a contingency of future politics in and beyond the military institution (Woodward and Winter 2007). Thus, it is imperative to interrogate commissioned women soldiers' experiences in the ZNA and political power through a gender lens. The military institution is generally not a gender sensitive and neutral institution (Acker 1990) and the enculturation of masculine discourses within military structures affect how women soldiers navigate in such terrain. Women soldiers fight to gain acceptance in the army, because they are supposedly equal to their male counterparts, yet they are deemed a disruptive gender in the institution (Woodward and Winter 2007). It is also a historical and ongoing reality that men are perceived as capable commanders and women are not: this is the case in most militaries worldwide (Devilbiss 1990). The ways in which masculinity and power is defined, constructed and performed in the military (Gibson 2010; Woodward and Duncanson 2017) shape the lives of soldiers, male and female, in the contexts of their establishments.

According to Maphosa et al (2015) the inconsistencies between men and women soldiers in relation to power in the military involve systemic, hegemonic moves by military men to be structurally and politically dominant. In this way the military as a patriarchal institution, which relies on the complicity of those it subordinates, is maintained (Rones and Fasting 2017). Due to the complexity of the military- civilian nexus in most developing countries, there is increased alienation of women soldiers from relations of power in such contexts. This is further escalated by military practices, values and culture, which create a gendered system of dominance for men in the military institution. Unlike in Zimbabwe, militaries such as the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) (Heineken 2000; 2002), and others in the developed world, have promoted the transitioning of women soldiers from ranks as commissioned officers into the hierarchy of top military commanders (Devilbiss 1990).

2.3 Women soldiers and military hegemonic masculinities.

According to Barret (1996; 130)

masculine hegemony refers to the groupings of men and their ideals, and the process in which these ideal forms, organisational situations and constraints that shape other groups in the organisation.

Masculinities are inextricably intertwined and embedded in relational practices, symbols, discourses and ideologies related to men (Barret 1996: 130). Many scholars have written about hegemony and masculinities as an embodiment of the military (Mankayi 2010; Gibson 2010; Morrell et. al 2013; Higate 2003). In the army a particular masculinity is engrained in soldiers, is institutionalised and visible in every act and practice (Maringira 2016). Because the military is a powerful hyper masculine institution (Mankayi 2008), its training and practices create images and statuses where soldiers identify as part of the institution and its hegemonic culture. The process of militarisation furthermore creates hierarchical masculinities within it. These masculinities are constructed and ingrained in all soldiers through various activities of soldiering (Woodward and Jenkings 2011).

The role of women in the military has been topical in scholarly debates for a while. Nevertheless, military hegemonic masculinities “largely obscure and mystify” the role of women in the army (Cock 1992: 2). That is, military masculinities shape soldiers’ consciousness, imaginary and behaviour within the armed forces. Sasson-Levy and Lomsky-Feder (2013) argued that the militarisation process synchronise “gender, dominance and violence”.

In the military, hegemonic masculinities are thus inculcated and perfected through a military ideology of aggressiveness and dominance. The hegemonic endeavours and masculinist culture in the military (Gibson, 2010; Morrel et al 2013), affect the role of women in the military by subjecting them to its masculinist values and practices. The reproduction of men’s power and coercive practices in the military are endemic (Shefer et al 2000) and shape women soldiers’ lives

in the army. The military does not separate men and women during training and supposedly produces non-gendered, yet highly masculinised soldiers (Hockey 2002). The hegemonic culture in the military ultimately creates gendered structures, where women and men are categorised differently.

Nevertheless, military identity and masculinity are blurred and inseparable (Maringira 2015). According to Höpfl (2003: 13)

To become a member of the military body, a woman must either conform to the male projection offered her or else acquire a metaphorical ‘member’ as the price of entry into ‘membership’.

To operate in a prescribed military terrain, the army ultimately embeds a masculinized identity in all soldiers (Hockey 2002; Gibson 2010) and the lives of its female members become masculinised. Halberstam (1998) argued that the participation of women in masculine professions forces scholars to rethink masculinity and to scrutinise the dilemma of women in such environments. Halberstam (ibid:45) focuses on “the very existence of masculine women” and argues for a reconsideration of “our most basic assumptions about the functions, forms, and representations of masculinity”, as well as “why the bond between men and masculinity has remained relatively secure despite the continuous assaults made by feminists, gays, lesbians, and gender-queers on the naturalness of gender”. The author’s work also speaks to other literature on female masculinities, by arguing that the analysis of masculinities must not be restricted to men’s bodies, sex and gender, but, should also interrogate and analyse the roles masculine men and women play in their professions (Francis 2000; 2010; Halberstam 1998; 2019). However, women soldiers who self-identify as female, often find it challenging to ‘fit’ into such hyper masculine identities and to operate within a military hegemonic culture. For this reason, most feminist scholars view the military institution as ‘just patriarchal’ (Enloe 1988; Sasson-Levy 2003). At the same time the discourses and practices of heroic masculinities, which are personified and used as a yardstick of a real soldiers in the military, affect the way women’s roles are appreciated within the institution.

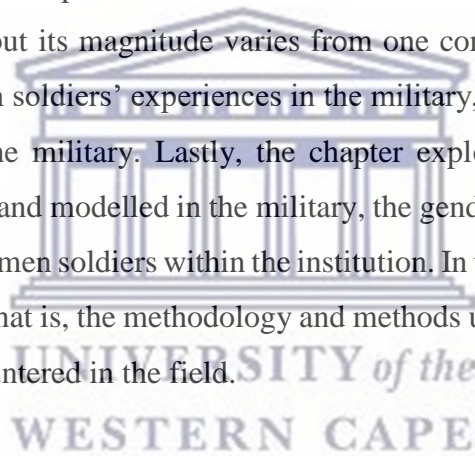
To train, work in and negotiate relations and hierarchies within the military domain is complex and ambiguous for women. Arkin and Dobrofsky (1978: 167) argued that the military “socialise men according to some traditional blueprint”. Prodanciuc (2018: 380) further argues that the construction of military masculinity is four-dimensional: bio-psycho-social-cultural. Such programming of masculinities, which are largely aimed at men, their bodies and effects (Halberstam 1998), can undermine the roles and efforts made by women soldiers in the military. Halberstam (1998; 2019) further argued that masculinities should also be scrutinised in relation to female masculinities, where masculinities are performed by women’s bodies. The creation of military masculinities largely defines attributes within a particular model (Woodward 2000; Elshtain 1998), of men-which suits the army’s hegemonic culture. That is, the military inculcates masculinized ways of thinking, doing and socialization between men and women. However, such ideas and practices and their reproduction in the military affect women soldiers’ progression in it. The development of certain institutional practices and gendered policies which govern activities in the military (Cockburn 2001) cement the dominance of male soldiers in its hierarchies and power relations. Conventional socialisation of men in the military also suppresses women’s capacities and create a gender order (Barrett 1996). However, the reproduction of military masculinities varies from one context to the other. This is why women soldiers’ experiences must be interrogated in their context of operation.

As indicated above, in the process of ‘militarising’ women’s lives, the military subject women soldiers to masculine control through diverse means (King 2017). Military identities are constructed, articulated, negotiated and expressed through different discourses and practices that ultimately enhance male power. Hence, from a social constructionist perspective, hegemonic masculinities are created and reproduced in a prescribed patterns and practices in the military (Barrett 1996). The army is very rigid and hierarchical. Armed conflict, combat and defence underlie the very existence of the military: not surprisingly experience in these areas also affect how soldiers are perceived and allowed to rise through the ranks. Combat units and soldiers with armed conflict experience are constructed as the most masculine and often become powerful. Because hegemonic masculinities create and influence power and policies in the military, membership of combat units will, in turn, affect an individual’s position in the institution. These

hierarchies of masculinity in the army further influence how “men and women discursively position themselves in the military (Hinojosa 2010: 191). According to Hinojosa (2010: 179) “men in the military create hierarchies that subordinate women”. As indicated above, in the military, hegemonic masculinities are organised and structured in a hierarchical manner (Walker 2006), and also, in this case, in a gendered way.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed existing literature by different scholars in an attempt to explore and explain the military and the position of women within it. Many militaries worldwide are involved in civilian politics but its magnitude varies from one context to the other. The chapter discusses literature on women soldiers’ experiences in the military, that is how the military affect their lives and position in the military. Lastly, the chapter explored how hegemonic military masculinities are constructed and modelled in the military, the gendered nature of the military and it all affect roles played by women soldiers within the institution. In the following chapter, I present the methodological journey, that is, the methodology and methods used in this thesis and it further discuss the experiences encountered in the field.



CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGICAL JOURNEY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter attends to my fieldwork experiences. It mainly focuses on conversations and encounters that I had with commissioned women soldiers of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) in Harare, Zimbabwe. Doing a study with highly trained military personnel was an extraordinary experience. In the field, significant commitment, patience, and dedication combined to enhance the success of this research. In this chapter, I will describe and discuss my research design, i.e. the research instruments that I used for data collection. I will unpack how these tools helped me in the process of locating my research participants and to collect my study data. In this chapter, I accordingly explore my methodological journey, experiences and observations during my time in the field. Ethical considerations were central to this study, and I will additionally discuss the ethical process and how it made this research a success.

Researching in Zimbabwe is a fraught experience, given the political volatility in the country as well as the omnipresence of the Military Intelligence Officers (MIOs) and Central Intelligence Officers (CIOs) in every part of the country. Due to the nature of my field site, as mentioned above, and its exploratory essence, I had to have a clear and well-planned strategy, to enable me to execute my fieldwork and solicit the much-needed data for my research. I chose a descriptive research design, using qualitative methods. In the end, and because of COVID-19, I relied more on in-depth interviews, life histories, hanging out with study participants and ultimately on extensive discussions on WhatsApp. I originally chose a qualitative research design because I wanted to have access to first-hand experiences (Leedy 1993) of my participants in the ZNA In-depth interviews helped me to me to gain a better of understanding the participants' worlds (Walker 1985) and to access their deeply imbedded 'subjective views' of military relations of power in the ZNA. Also, due to the state/military conflation in the country, I wanted to solicit their views on how they experience and make sense of 'civilian' political power in this context.

Since my study focused on women soldiers as vulnerable gendered subjects in the military, in-depth interviews enabled me to have secure and confidential conversations (Gill et al. 2008), with

my research participants. The above methods assisted me to gain insight into the experiences of my research participants in an exploratory and descriptive way (Burgess 2003). I then triangulated these methods, as well as study data to enhance reliability (Neuman 2003).

3.2 Research site

My research was carried out mostly in Harare, Zimbabwe. My research participants worked in various military regiments situated in Harare¹. All my participants came from five brigades. Carrying out a study about the experiences of women officers in the ZNA as an outsider was a challenging thing for me as a researcher. Having identified and understood my field site as politically and security sensitive, I prepared myself psychologically for the demands of my study. Because my research participants were concerned about their safety, I interacted with them as private citizens, never in their work settings. They were constantly afraid that they might be followed or intercepted during the time of research, hence, I had to take their fear and mistrust very seriously. Their biggest concern related to military and government intelligence agents, i.e. MIOs and CIOs. Hence, my field site experiences were complex and fraught.

My research participants were commissioned women soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army. I chose these participants because they have higher ranks (which I cannot disclose for security reasons and to protect their identities) in the command structure of the ZNA. They are close to and knowledgeable about the military and political power matrixes in Zimbabwe. Recruiting my research participants was a strenuous and complex exercise. Due to the high security circumstances in the country, I could not spend time with my participants in their workplace. They were willing to participate in my research outside their work setting because they were worried about their safety. I had to comply with their demands, and I interviewed and spent time with them outside the military barracks as private citizens.

¹ Harare is the Capital City of Zimbabwe. It houses 5 Brigade sized establishments, and 15 Army units.

I did in-depth interviews with each, and in some instances, I would hang out with them after work and during weekends. Because of the COVID-19 lockdown, the time I could physically spend with them was limited: I had to enter Zimbabwe and return to South Africa within a short period of time. Back in South Africa, I then used WhatsApp for further conversations with my participants. WhatsApp was very instrumental for me, especially in the situation where I wanted to have a detailed understanding of certain aspects of my participants' accounts. I also used WhatsApp to further probe on specific issues that were raised during my face-to-face interviews.

As I highlighted above, the political and security situation in Zimbabwe has been unstable for some time, this situation raised a lot of mistrust and fear concerning me. The feeling of uncertainty and unease did not just come from my research participants. It was highly visible during my entire fieldwork period and made it more difficult for me to identify and engage with my study participants. However, I had to improvise strategies to recruit and interact with my participants in such a volatile environment. I heard a great deal and often witnessed the vicious responses of the Zimbabwe Military Intelligence (ZMI) and the Central Intelligence Officers (CIOs) towards civilians, researchers, or anyone whom they thought to be a security threat to the institution and country. Initially, the security situation in Zimbabwe made my participants suspicious of my intentions and trustworthiness. Fear and mistrust were at a peak during the initial stages of my fieldwork and either visible or in the background in every aspect. The entire fieldwork experience was not for the fainthearted; hence I needed to be mentally and physically prepared for it. I had to draw on my body and personality (Gans 2017; Goetz. and LeCompte 1981) to ameliorate and manage my own, as well as my participants' concerns for safety and confidentiality.

3.3 Snowball sample

My research participants work in the military, which is a highly sensitive sector when it comes to security issues. While my participants work in the ZNA, the institution is also deeply involved in civilian politics in Zimbabwe. Arguably, such an environment is reminiscent of a 'closed' institution, where access to research participants is always difficult for a researcher. Because of

the nature of my field site and my research participants, I used a snowball technique to identify them. This technique is what (Creswell and Poth 2016) regards as a chain of referral. The technique worked as a conduit that unpacked strings of networks of commissioned women soldiers who were willing to participate in my research. Neuman (2000) described this as a non-probability sampling method that helps the researcher to get access and learn about social life in a specific context. In this setting, I wanted to capture the experiences of commissioned women soldiers, with specific references to power politics in the ZNA. To get a clearer understanding, I further wanted to obtain their ‘subjective views’ about the military and ‘civil’ political power in Zimbabwe. Hence, I had to choose this purposive sampling method. The use of this technique helped me to solicit deeply embedded knowledge from my research participants. The rich narrative accounts of women soldiers gave me what Spradley (2016) described as an ‘insider’s view’. This special knowledge helped me to unpack their understandings of and experiences concerning power relations and politics in the Zimbabwe National Army. Below I discuss how the snowball method unfolded.



3.4 Locating the leads: The ethnographic huddles and halts

In June 2019, I travelled to Harare during my vacation for an exploratory attempt to identify research interlocutors. I knew that the nature of my study and my research site needed time to explore, assuming many challenges in locating participants. I had to establish contacts before my research commenced. Hence, given those circumstances, I intentionally travelled to Harare to familiarise myself with my research site and to set the stage for my fieldwork. When I arrived in Harare, I contacted my uncle, who is a retired Major in the Zimbabwe National Army. He had agreed to assist me to get in touch with commissioned women soldiers who are still serving in the ZNA. When I arrived, I did not waste time and visited his house the following day. Since I had informed him about my travel and research plans, he had already spoken to Musana (Pseudonym), a high ranking female officer who works at a particular unit (name withheld). He gave me her cell phone number and I contacted her. She sounded very enthusiastic about the research and promised to assist me. My uncle promised to keep Musana’s identity confidential. I hoped that she could

help me with ‘leads’ to locate my participants. I expected that patience and endurance would carry me through my fieldwork.

That same evening, I sent a text message to Musana to confirm our meeting the next day. I was nervous because we had never met in person, and as a civilian, it was my first time to work with a member of the defence forces in this context. I kept checking my phone for her response. Given the unpredictable political and security in Zimbabwe, I was worried that Military Intelligence (MI) might intercept me because of their ruthlessness to civilians in the country. The MI and CIO are the most feared organisations by every civilian in the country. In time Musana sent me a WhatsApp and told me to come to the Defence House the next day. I had to bring my National Identity card, which is a compulsory requirement for anyone who wants to enter the Zimbabwe Military Headquarters. She further instructed me to call her at 10:30 am when I arrive at the security desk on the ground floor. I was excited, but at the back of my mind, fear was eating at me. I tossed and turned the whole night, thinking of how I was going to present myself to a military officer. I was also full of trepidation because the military is infamous in Zimbabwe for its scrutiny of the civilians. This would be my first time to be in such an environment.

The following morning, I prepared and dressed formally since I was going to meet a highly ranked military officer. I then asked my brother to drop me off at the Zimbabwe Defence House (ZDH). When I got there around 10 00 am, I called her from across the street at Zimbabwe Parliament Building. She asked me to give her my full name and national identity number, and she told me to wait a bit. In five minutes, she phoned me back, telling me that she had informed the security staff at the entrance. She was expecting me. As soon as I arrived at the security check desk, I took out my identity card, and the tall, dark man in a black suit asked me where I was going? I told him that I have an appointment with Musana. As soon as I mentioned her name, another security member, interrupted “oh are you Gabriel”? “Yes”, I responded, “I have been told about you, she had just phoned me about you”. He quickly asked me to enter my details in a very thick book at the security checkpoint. He then gave me the floor and office number where I was supposed to go. He showed me to the elevator close by.

As I stepped out, I was approached by a tall man. He asked me my name, and I quickly told him that I wanted to see Musana. He led me to an office, knocked, and we entered. I was welcomed by a friendly, short and stout woman. “Hi Gabriel”, she greeted me and soon after she offered me a chair. Two young women officers were sitting on my left side, working on laptops. She then introduced them as her secretaries. She then asked her secretaries to leave so that we could talk in private. She afterwards asked me to explain my research to her. I gave her the background of my study, my objectives in conducting such research about women soldiers, etcetera. I was trying to negotiate an introduction to my potential participants. She was willing to help me, but unfortunately, she could not be part of the study. She then proposed to refer me to one of her close friends, who work in a different regiment in Harare. As she was thinking aloud, she said, “yeah, I think Sibanda will do, but she does not work here, she works at one of our regiments, let me call her”. She called Sibanda, spoke to her for almost fifteen minutes, telling Sibanda that I was her ‘brother’ who wanted to research with women soldiers. She then handed the telephone to me so I could speak to Sibanda. I narrated my research to her, she agreed to help me, given that Musana had introduced me as her ‘brother’. However, she did not commit herself to be part of my research.

Once home, I sat trying to reconnect the dots of the day, I was stressed, tired, and despondent because I had hoped for commitment from my prospective interlocutor(s). I wondered whether I would succeed in getting participants. Because of the strong presence of the military and state security agents in every walk of life in Zimbabwe, I was also worried that they might become interested in me. I felt paranoid because I was talking to people I had never met before and fear of the unknown struck me heavily. I felt that I had to be cautious as I moved around and to also limit the number of people I interacted with or with whom I shared the fact that I was planning to do a study. I was concerned about my safety and as well as the safety of my potential participants. These initial hurdles were a warning to a prolonged process that I was going to experience as I tried to access research participants.

The next morning, before I left the house, I said a little prayer. Then I called Sibanda to confirm our meeting. I called her five times, but she did not pick up my calls. I patiently waited the whole morning, expecting her to return my calls. As the day progressed, I became anxious. Two days passed, and on the third day, she finally answered my call. She informed me that she was attending

a work-related function in Matabeleland North², and she was busy at that moment. After another day, I started to send texts messages to her, but she did not respond, I became very apprehensive about her silence. I kept on hoping, but my expectations withered as days went by.

I concluded that she was swamped, or she was scared to be a part of my research. I told myself to be calm and keep finding ways to get in touch with potential and willing interlocutors. I contacted Musana again. She called me back a week later. Musana informed me that she had not received any response from Sibanda either. I became convinced that the latter was concerned about being my interlocutor. A careful reading of all these eventualities reflected the terrain that I was getting into during my fieldwork. At that point, I was reminded of Bechhofer (1971), who described research as a messy interaction of processes which needs to be managed carefully by the researcher. At that moment, my process of recruiting interlocutor(s) was in a 'mess'. I thought that I had reached a dead-end. I was on the verge of despair!

3.5 'Tracks' in the research Jungle

On June 24th, 2019, on my way back from our family farm. I met two decorated women soldiers after they had a car tyre puncture at Banket Town³, I saw them from a distance and I slowed down, greeted them, and asked them what the problem with their car was. They had been stuck for almost an hour. I took the tyre off and took it away for repair. On return, I put the tyre back again, all the while asking them about their jobs, how it is for them to work with the military, which is known to be a male-dominated field? I recall, one of them who seemed very proud to be a soldier said;

Ndezvakare zviya zvekuti chisoja ndechevarume chete vakadzi, tinotoitawo zvinoita varume, kasi hazvisi nyore, (it is old fashioned that the military is only for men only, as women can do what men do and we are proud about that as women, but it is not easy).

² It is a province in Western Zimbabwe

³, Banket is a small farming town that is situated 94 kilometres western side of Harare.

She giggled as she narrated. I realised how proud she was to wear her brown, green, and a sandy-yellow uniform as a woman. At this point, I was not just helping them with repairing their car tyre, but I was also making a concerted effort to build a relationship that would pave a way into their hearts and to other research participants. This was a crucial element of my fieldwork, and I had to do everything in a circumspect manner. After I was done, they thanked me and wanted to pay me, but I refused. We exchanged numbers, and at that point, I was delighted. Back in my car, I shouted with joy to have met them.

In my mind, I was already planning to recruit these women soldiers as my research participants. I decided to carefully navigate the field site terrain and negotiate my access to them carefully and circumspectly. I realised that as a researcher I had to be patient and resilient. In a way, I was creating pathways for my research. I had only one week left before I had to travel back to Cape Town. I kept calling them to chat and also left messages just to keep them close., I was building a strong relationship with them on WhatsApp and these officers were forthcoming in every conversation that we had. I knew that I was creating tracks and setting up the stage for future conversations and my research. I realised that getting them to commit to my study was my challenge, and I had to create a close relationship with them. At this point, having met these two potential participants was very precious and satisfying.

Back at the university, I kept communicating and chatting with these two officers over the next five months. I became convinced that these two would participate in my study. Before I returned to Zimbabwe for Christmas, I called one of the women officers and asked her, if it was possible for us to meet as soon as I arrived in Harare. I informed her about my plans to do a study on women soldiers, looking at their experiences in the army, which is a male-dominated field. I wanted to discuss the nuts and bolts of my research with her in person. Making such a decision was meant to avoid and also negotiate the complexities that I would encounter in my field site. I had to be very conscious and reflexive in my thinking and conduct as a researcher. I was very careful to keep my discussions with these two women confidential, I did not wish to create any risks for them. Toward the end of November 2019, I received a text message which read;

Gabriel if we do not meet before January as we planned, then it means that I will not be able to see you for eight months because I am leaving for training out of the country.

At first, I was devastated and called my supervisors with the bad news. I knew that if I missed this opportunity to meet my potential interlocutors, it was going to be a significant setback for my research plans. The uncertainty was heart-wrenching. However, negotiating such eventualities in the field was my only option. Recruiting participants involves negotiation and excellent interpersonal skills. More so, for me, it was a test on how I was going to navigate and surmount the complexities of my field site. I then received another text message from her, which read;

Is it possible for me to give you my friend's number who can help you with your research? I will talk to her before I leave, she is a highly ranked officer, and she is a nice person, I trust that she can help you. I am sorry about that *mukwasha*⁴.

After receiving that WhatsApp message, I contacted my supervisors, and they advised me to leave for Zimbabwe as soon as possible. I hurriedly informed Masamba that I was on my way to Zimbabwe to meet her. I knew that she was crucial to my research, and I could not take any chances.

On arrival, I immediately contacted Masamba. I was desperate for her assistance in locating other potential research participants. Time was not on my side and I had to settle the issue of interlocutors before I started my research. When I called her, she was very responsive and forthcoming. We agreed to meet the next day at 8:30 am in Harare Central Business District (CBD). This was the response I had hoped for all along. I was passionate about the research but worried about getting enough participants. It weighed on my mind because I did not want to miss an opportunity to do such an exciting study.

As indicated above, as a Zimbabwean, I was wary of the MIOs, even Masamba seemed concerned. Early in the morning, she answered my call, she sounded happy and in a jovial mood. She asked

⁴ It is a Shona word which means son-in-law.

me if I was already in town, and I told her that I am on my way. I preferred to use public transport to get into town, and I deliberately did this for security reasons and to be extra cautious. I did not want to alarm Masamba. I was ever concerned about raising the interest of military security at this stage of my research. Working in unfamiliar territory in such a politically sensitive environment was one of my main challenges in the field. In such a setting, there is no prescribed way to locate study participants. Negotiating with potential participants in such spaces is mentally exhausting.

On meeting Masamba for the second time, I felt enormously relieved. The way she greeted and embraced me was something that I had never imagined. She told me how lucky I was to find her before she left Harare for her training. We sat in her car and she gave me an array of her to-do lists for that day. I accompanied her on all her shopping errands for her family. She was preparing leave for the training. For me, it was about building lasting relationships that will help me to access more participants and to get the much-needed data that I was desperate for. She explained about the Promotional Training Course (PTC) she was going to attend: it is for commissioned soldiers for their internal promotion. Afterwards, Masamba assured me that she was going to help me to locate some study participants. I could not believe my good fortune. She said;

Masoja echikadzi akawandisa haumbomapedze, chero uchida gonyeti rakazara ndokupa (women soldiers are many, even if want a truckload of them, I will give you but, I will give you those whom I know that they will give you the information that you want).

I felt relieved, some of my anxieties eased. After a lengthy discussion, she drove to Pick and Pay. Inside, I turned out to be a trolley-boy. We shopped for almost five hours. Pushing a trolley and helping her to buy her groceries for all those hours was part of my strategy. It created a relationship between us. Masamba was shopping for herself and her children, who would remain behind when she left for training. Unexpectedly, it turned out to be a long and laborious day for me. We went to several markets, including Mbare Musika⁵ to buy delicacies such as *matemba*⁶ and fruit for herself and her family. We also visited fashion shops to find clothes for Masamba and her children.

⁵ It is a fruit and vegetable market.

⁶ small dried fish

At that point, as a researcher, I could tell that Masamba had power over me, she was the one who dictated events of that day and I was happy to oblige. As we roamed the streets of Harare, we could dispel some of our own anxieties. Spending the day together calmed both of us. As the day went by, we both became comfortable with each other as we discussed a wide range of issues, including economic challenges and social issues. Careful about security, we would only speak about the research in the car. I avoided asking questions about anything research or work-related in public. I deliberately did this to avoid attracting unwanted attention.

Towards the end of the day, she asked me to buy her airtime to enable her to call three of her colleagues to inquire about their availability and willingness to participate in my research. What caught my attention was that; when she was talking to her colleagues, she referred to me as her ‘cousin brother’ who is doing his research about women soldiers in Zimbabwe. I also noticed that, from that moment, all her colleagues would call me their ‘brother’. It was one of the most intriguing observations I made while in the field. After she made those calls, two of her colleagues confirmed that they were available. They were willing to meet me and discuss my research project. I was elated, motivated and encouraged. The process of locating participants is crucial for any difficult domain.

Masamba asked her two colleagues to provide me their contact details. Two officers agreed, but a third one said that she did not feel comfortable to be part of my study. Masamba told me that she was probably afraid. Voluntary participation is one of the critical research principles that I had to adhere to throughout my entire fieldwork period. Our day ended at Copacabana taxi rank, where she dropped me off to catch the taxis back home. I was excited; it was a big breakthrough for me. I was a man on a mission, and I was mentally determined to push everything to fall into place before my ‘precious’ interlocutor left for training.

Before I contacted my potential new participants, I phoned Masamba, to tell her what I intended to do. She was very appreciative of my gesture. I then contacted Mutaka. She wanted to meet me in person before she agreed to participate in my research. After a lengthy discussion and assurances to each other over the phone, she gave me her WhatsApp number. We agreed to meet the following

day. I then contacted my second potential participant Lizwe. She was immediately willing to participate in my study. I met her two days later.

I deliberately recruited participants one at a time as a precautionary measure and to protect them and myself. It also gave me space as a researcher to reflect on my work with each participant. I had to work in a systematic way so that I would not expose my participants, since anything about the military is highly scrutinised and politicised in Zimbabwe. I had to ensure that my potential research participants were safe from the word to go. The reciprocal commitment shown by these three interlocutors gave an edge to the recruitment of my other participants. At that juncture, I felt at ease since I had secured three participants. It was the breakthrough that I was hoping for all along. Back in Cape Town, I frequently contacted them, and they also stayed in touch with me. My goal was for these three to eventually introduce me to other participants.

When the time for my research came, I travelled back to Zimbabwe. This was during the initial months of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic. The Zimbabwean Government had not yet implemented lockdown measures. Since I knew what was coming, I did not waste much time. I went to the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP) to get an approval letter for permission to move around doing my research. I emphasised that I was a student who had to do a study for my degree and managed to obtain a letter that authorised me to move around doing my research. I had to observe the national health and lockdown rules on COVID-19, bought face masks and hand sanitisers for myself and for my participants. I then contacted Masamba on WhatsApp, informing her that I was back in the country. She introduced me to Mutaka. She is a tall and gangly woman and when I met her, she was in uniform. Our meeting point was at the corner of Angwa Street and Kwame Nkrumah Street. The streets were not so busy; the Government of Zimbabwe took a long time to enforce lockdown rules, but most people were afraid of the coronavirus. When I arrived, I called Mutaka by her name, and she beamed a wide receptive smile. Her friendly response calmed my trepidation.

After a short discussion we decided to sit in a nearby restaurant. I showed her my student card and University Ethical Clearance Letter, consent form, and information sheet. I worked with her through the proposal and consent forms. Initially, she talked freely, but when she perceived my

questions as political, she frowned, yet after some hesitance, and explanation from me, she again talked freely. At this point, I realised how important it is to maintain good rapport with my participants. I also noted that it is crucial for me as a researcher to be ethical in my conduct. Such actions turned my fieldwork impossibilities into an exciting research process, where both myself and my participants enjoyed free-flowing conversations. However, Mutaka refused to be audiotaped in any of our discussions. She told me that her voice was easily recognisable, so she did not want to endanger herself. I complied with her request. She was fascinated by the fact that my study focused on women soldiers and her interest grew over time. She claimed that my study was a chance for women soldiers in the ZNA to tell the world about their experiences in the army. I was so excited to receive such a positive response. She gave me hope that I could build strong links that would help me to gain much-needed access to more women soldiers. I knew that access to these ‘closed’ networks would help me unpack embedded realities and women soldiers’ experiences in the ZNA.

Tsiga, was a larger-than-life person. The first time we talked, she insisted that I meet her in a bar along Robert Mugabe Road. Although, at first, she was hesitant to give an interview, she was one of the most interesting people I spent time with. After we had a long conversation on the phone, Tsiga was ready to meet me. She sent me a text;

Nhasi mukwasha mototenga doro chairo ma koti maviri ne ndiro yesadza nemazondo, ndinyatsonwa ndichidzikamisa hana, ‘today my brother you have to buy me two quarts of beer and a plate of sadza⁷ I want it served with beef because I am hungry and I want to relax.

I much enjoyed working with Tsiga. Although there were few people in the bar, I managed to get access to a VIP section for us. It was a quiet, secure environment that enabled us to have a private conversation. This eventually helped me to pursue and gain an emic view⁸ of being a woman commissioned officer in the Zimbabwe National Army. Tsiga agreed that I could audiotape her. However, we did not want anyone in the club to become aware of this. In the end, I went outside,

⁷ It is a cooked cornmeal, that is a staple food in Zimbabwe.

⁸ The view of an insider of a social setting

bought a newspaper, and covered the recorder with the newspaper as I interviewed her. This was meant to cover the recorder so as not to attract unnecessary attention from the revellers in the club. Tsiga had come up with this initiative. Afterwards, I began to think of my study participants as research collaborators in this context. That is, the participants do not just participate through giving information, but they also actively contribute through finding ways to make sure that we are both safe, in the field. The production of knowledge was thus our collaborative effort in this context. However, as soon as we sat down, I took out my research forms and my ethics letter, she quickly warned me:

Iwe isa zvimapepa zvako mu bag, hey you! please put your papers in your bag; they will draw unnecessary attention

She was concerned about our safety in that place during this interview. Shortly afterwards, the Zimbabwean Government implemented the first national lockdown. The late implementation of the national lockdown in Zimbabwe due to low cases of COVID 19 worked for me as a researcher. I wanted to get as much research done as possible before the Government placed the country at lockdown on Level 2. Although I had permission from the ZRP to move around, I had to exercise due diligence in the field. Although my participants were willing to be part of my study, I had to think and act ethically in all my conduct so as not to put my research participants at risk: neither to COVID19 nor to security informants. The unprecedented situation of lockdown led me to focus more on in-depth interviews.

Despite ever-present fears (of security informants) expressed by participants in the field, using a snowball sample proved to be a perfect technique for this research. Potential participants would accept my invitation to participate once I mentioned the name of the person who had referred me to them. Interestingly, before we engaged in further conversation, they called and confirmed with the person who had referred me. Only then would they agree to take part in my study. Masamba referred me to Shumba who asked me to meet her in the CBD with my proposal, consent form, and information sheet, she wanted to read it overnight. The next day she gave me a call and asked me if I was free to meet her at her house. It was one of the most relaxed interviews I had. In the

security of her house she freely narrated her lived experiences in the military without showing any signs of fear. Like all my participants, she was not comfortable talking much about politics.

After lockdown became stricter, I stayed in contact with her through WhatsApp. I could then follow up on our initial conversation and get further clarity on specific issues. I could probe deeper on certain issues which she had been cryptic about during our face-to-face interview. I also used WhatsApp to further engage with my participants after some tense and emotional conversations. They and I realised that they felt comfortable to chat on WhatsApp and they seemed more relaxed after interviews. Thus, having first met them personally made them open to more conversations on WhatsApp. Because of COVID 19 regulations this became an important medium for me for further engagements and discussions with participants.

Towards the end of my fieldwork time, I met Gumbo. Shumba referred me to her. Gumbo was an easy-going and funny person. I met her on her way from working the CBD. She asked me to escort her home. Subsequently, she went through all my forms while on our way to her home. When we reached her neighbourhood, she asked me if I was comfortable sitting with her in a local *shebeen*⁹. Since the National lockdown was on level 2, people could still drink in such places. Despite the noise, we sat like friends who were just enjoying their beer while we discussed my research. Unexpectedly, an old friend from my neighbourhood suddenly appeared shouting;


Ahh Gabriel *marovera kupi mudhara*, where have you been all this while
my brother

I quickly dashed to intercept him. I told him that I was discussing a serious family matter with an aunt. This was meant to keep him away and also to keep my conversation with my participant private and confidential. He asked for money for a beer, and I gave him a few notes. I quickly went back to Gumbo. She was open and happy to participate. However, I was now worried about my own as well as my participant's safety because Zimbabwean security details are found everywhere, i.e. from vendors, bartenders, or taxi drivers. I was meticulous in public because the surveillance machinery of state and military in Zimbabwe is unbounded.

⁹ It is an illicit bar.

Through my growing snowball sample, I was put into contact with Katswe, one of the most fearful participants. When I called her, she agreed to meet me in the outskirts of her suburb. She did not like to meet in a crowded area or at her house. When I arrived, she kept me waiting for an hour and a half, but she finally appeared with her baby on her back. She seemed worried, constantly checked her back and looked sideways to ascertain whether we were not being followed. She led me to the shrine of an apostolic sect in a small bushy area nearby. There we could converse freely. As we sat in the dust, two men with two young boys passed by. I heard them telling those youngsters to be quiet because they thought we were apostolic members who were in a spiritual consultation session. I did my entire interview there, it was quiet and conducive for a free-flowing discussion, though Katswe seemed worried. I realised that she had deliberately chosen that place was to avert any form of risk or tracking from the state agents or military intelligence.

3.6 A 'network' beyond snowballing



When I was in the field, the snowball technique helped me to explore deeply embedded networks of relationships that bind these women soldiers within the military system. These are networks of confidantes who share a special bond of comradeship. The network itself represents oneness, and it gives a sense of togetherness among my participants. As a researcher, it is challenging to penetrate such networks. During my time in the field, I realised that when I approach each of my potential participants, they would ask me an array of questions such as: who referred you to me? What are you looking for, and for what purpose? How are you going to write about my story? Answering such questions sufficiently and satisfactorily determined our relationship going forward. Some of my participants wanted assurance about their safety before they allowed me into their network. Katswe gave me a warning when she said:

once I tell you about my experiences, please do not expose my identity,
and if you do, we will hunt you and skin you alive to the last grain of your
hair.

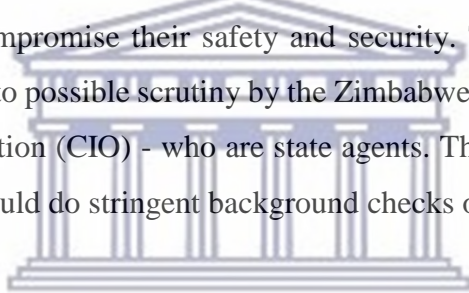
Another one said:

usambonyora kana zvekureba kwe bhutsu yangu kana kupera muto kwe uniform yangu nekuti zvinondibatisa, please do not even write about the size of my patrol boots or how faded is my uniform because it can be used to identify me.

Such concerns and sentiments made me realise that, once I was allowed to be in the network, I had to be extra careful. For them it was a sacred relationship of trust. No one is allowed to enter a network without being accepted by all participants in it. One cannot know about the existence of such a network unless you are invited to enter and is approved by everyone in it. As an outsider, I had to undergo continuous 'security checks', I had to be 'cleansed' or cleared of any suspicions. Once I was allowed into the network, I had to follow and adhere to the rules and everything within its confinements. Every participant would ask me an array of questions before I could request their participation in my study or be allowed to enter into the network. This happened each time I meet each participant; despite being referred to them as a 'brother' by their comrade/colleague(s). This caution and circumspections were so uniform and consistent that I realised that I was under scrutiny. It was the responsibility of every member in that network to guard its members. This was done through continuous questioning and interrogation throughout the entire research process. To them, trust is not a given, but is established in a roundabout way by checking and rechecking me all the time. For example, when I first met with a participant, she would, "who referred you to me?" and "where do you come from?". Then, much later in the middle of our conversation, she would pop in another question, "*saka wakamboshanda kupi usati waenda ku chikoro*" (where have you worked, before you went to university)? As this happened from one participant after the other, I realised that I was undergoing a stringent vetting process. This careful examination made by my participants seemed informal, but it was very strategic and sequential. This process was critical and would define our relationship going forward.

My participants also wanted to understand why I chose women soldiers, and they particularly wanted to know why I was interested in them as women officers. They also sought to understand my interest in the military as an institution. I thought about this as a three-dimensional probe in

which they inquired about my person as a researcher, my interest in them as women officers, and my interest in the military institution. They scrutinised me regarding each of the aforementioned. I realised that even though everything had been given to them in writing (and which they carefully read by themselves), they wanted to interrogate me personally. By engaging in what I came to think of as due diligence, my participants were protecting themselves as individual woman officers. However, they were also protecting 'their' network once they became part of this research. At the same time, by investigating me, my participants were hedging themselves, ensuring that their jobs were safe and making sure that my research will not compromise their work in the army. I realised that they also wanted to corroborate that I was not a spy who was preying on them as individual officers or on the ZNA as an institution. For me, their constant obsession with security and scrutiny of everything was mind-blowing. My participants were all the time trying to close any loopholes that would compromise their safety and security. This was evident in how they seemed to be constantly alert to possible scrutiny by the Zimbabwe Military Intelligence (ZMI) or Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) - who are state agents. They were always worried about places we could meet, and would do stringent background checks on places, as well as on me.



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Another fascinating observation was that; once I was accepted into their network, the proposal, ethical clearance letter from University of Western Cape (UWC), information sheet, or consent form (with all the official addresses and signatures) were not viewed as offering protection or assurances. The reading and signing of all my documentation were just a research procedure. To them, personal referral by their fellow network colleagues provided the necessary approval for each of them to become participants in my study. Whoever had referred me to them mattered the most. The referral was also the key to my entrance into my participants' network. It subsequently defined our relationship within the network. At the same time, once I was allowed into that network, they would call, continuously surveille me, and try to remain safe themselves.

My participants' cohesion was fascinating. They would not refer me to anyone outside their network, and once I was inside their network, they would not allow me to go out of the network or to work with anyone outside it. Hence, I had to confine myself within that network. Once I had

started with interviews, they would frequently call me and sent me messages on WhatsApp. I could tell from the kind of conversations and messages I received from them that I was under immense surveillance. They kept abreast of what I was doing or planned to do with the data I collected from them. During my entire study period, I had to maintain my integrity, honesty, and sincerity in all my actions. I did so, not only to please my participants and their network, but also it was a form of respect for my research participants who had entrusted me with their personal information, jobs, and possibly their safety by allowing me to become part of their network.

3.7 Fear and hope the ‘antagonistic’ in the field.

Gaining my research participant's trust in such a hostile environment was not easy. When I set out on my study, I was concerned and fearful about doing a potentially sensitive study in a country under military control. When I first met my main interlocutor Masamba, she was very suspicious of me, sceptical and even rebuffed me. In a sense, my field reflected a ‘warzone’ of fear and anxiety. However, hope held everything together for this research. I had to make concerted efforts to mitigate and manoeuvre through the constant presence of fear and suspicion. I had to gain the trust of my participants through continuous negotiations and repositioning of myself in their space (network). I did not only want to gain their trust, but I also wanted myself to trust them since I was concerned about my own security and safety while in the field. I would often hang out with them when they did their errands. This was a mentally and sometimes physically draining process, due to the sense of the fluidity of my field, i.e. anything could happen. At one point, I escorted Tembo to her rural home, 210 kilometres from Harare. She went there to bid goodbyes to her family since she was transferred to another brigade out of Harare. I stayed with her and her family, slept on a dusty floor in a mud and grass-thatched hut, covering myself with only one old and smelly blanket. I greatly wished to build a strong relationship with Tembo and to gain her trust. I became her ‘brother’, my name tag in the network of my participants. Meeting Tembo’s family further increased her trust towards me and strengthened our bond. During our journey, she told me many stories and confided a great deal about her experiences in the army. After that trip, other members

of the 'network' also saw me differently. Some of the fear and anxiety diminished as the research progressed. I was personally relieved to leave Zimbabwe.

The narratives of commissioned women soldiers about their life histories and experiences in the military gained and was elaborated through these in-depth interviews. They gave me a new perspective. Gill et al. (2008) argue that in-depth interviews bring in confidential and secure conversations between the researcher and participants. Hence, while I was in the field, in-depth interviews helped me to validate and overcome the limitations of other methods (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This further helped me to verify the data that I collected from one participant to the other. Also, in-depth interviews brought various subjective views of my participants into focus, which, in turn, revealed deeply embedded realities of women soldiers' experiences in the ZNA. In-depth interviews, and their cross-questioning nature helped me to unpack the 'why' and 'how' of my participants' experiences in the ZNA. The interviews gave me a deeper insight into issues of relations of power, politics, and what my participants' experience in the strange civil-military ideology that is prominent in Zimbabwe. Such ongoing conversations with my participants revealed that; although these women soldiers are highly ranked officers, they all expressed fear in some or other way. I realised that; although they are soldiers themselves, they are also wary of the military institution and its security systems. These fears cannot be easily observed from the outside but were expressed through deep and prolonged conversations, as well as their constant alertness for potential danger. Soko said;

Please *musazondiisawo panguva yakaoma, kubasa kwangu hakuite ndrikungokuudzai nekuti pamwe zvinhu zvedu zvingachinjawo*, please do not expose me at all, I will be in big trouble at work, I am just telling you this because we want things to change for women soldiers.

The sentiments were shared with most of my participants. While fearful, the research seemingly offered an opportunity for my participants to express their experiences and frustrations within the military freely. To them, my research resembled a corridor of hope; it was a channel to think through and engage with the problems they encounter at work. At some point, during my fieldwork, I felt like an activist for these women soldiers. This was necessitated by the way they

poured out their experiences in the military. I was feeling comfortable as a 'brother' to their network throughout my entire study. We became a family, felt comfortable and shared personal issues that were beyond this research. I am, and I will be part of them for a long time. I maintained their anonymity to protect them during my fieldwork and in my writing. My participants emphasised that I must not reveal their names or ranks, because they are few commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA and they can be easily identified. Hence, I used pseudonyms for my participants, starting with my field notes and continuing into writing the actual thesis. Therefore, I will not give any description of my research site per se, of ranks or any information which could expose my participants.

3.8 A 'brother' to the network

During fieldwork, I realised that being called a 'brother' was not as casual as it might sound. Instead, it was a 'code name' that resembled my approval and it enabled my entrance into my participants' network. It was a pass which became a title that was used to identify me. Being recognised as a 'brother' defined my presence, visibility, and recognition in the network. Hence, it signified the relationship that existed between us. It was my title of entry in the network, and it laid the ground for my future engagement with the members of the network (research participants). Whenever I called one of my research participants, I will have to confirm that by saying; '*ndini hanzvadzi*¹⁰ iya ya Masamba (I am the brother of Lieutenant Masamba)'. Then the research participant would say, "Oh *makadini hanzvadzi* (oh how are you, my brother)"? Hence the epithet 'brother' was my pass, my identification for recognition and entrance into this closed network. This was also an entitlement given to me so that everyone in the network can give me their attention whenever I needed it. This entitlement was approval and enabled me to access deeply immersed information from that network. Without a given 'access code' it is quite difficult for one to get insight into such embedded information that exists and flows within the closed network. Hence, being a 'brother' to all my participants in the network made me a part of their family of 'comrades'. Just as I previously discussed, being called 'brother' by my participants defined the nature of the data that I was able to solicit from all members of the network. I had to create a strong bond with

¹⁰ It is a Shona word which means brother

my participants from the onset. Being a ‘brother’ in such a secretive and self-protective group was an honour as a researcher because it also gave me the responsibility of guarding such a network since I had become part of it. I realised that, at first, my research participants could filter certain information depending on the initial relationship. However, once I became visible and known to all members of the network, everyone became free to share any information that I needed. This form of relationship-building was critical for my research. If I had not initially assisted my interlocutors with their punctured tyre and kept consistently in contact with them, this research could not have been possible. It was a process in which I was thoroughly vetted and became a trustworthy ‘brother’ to all my participants.

My research was governed by the principles of voluntary consent and confidentiality, and these principles steered my study and informed my ethical practices during the entire course of my study. As indicated above, to protect the identity of my study participants, I do not mention their regiments or units or give any background information about them. I use pseudonyms for all of them. After I finished my fieldwork, my data was stored and locked up in my supervisor's office. It is imperative to note that in this research, I realised that research ethics are an ongoing process and go beyond a piece of paper of consent forms that I issued and asked my participants to sign. I had to be ethically vigilant and aware throughout the study and even afterwards, as I started to write up my results. I maintained honesty, sincerity, and diligently worked in pursuit of the protection of my research participants during the entire study to assure complete safety (from scrutiny by the ZNA or CIO) and protect the health (from COVID19) of my research participants.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter was a narration of the methodological journey. That is, from locating my interlocutors, recruitment of my research participants, and my experiences and observations during my entire period of fieldwork. It is also a story about the complexities that I encountered during my research and how I managed to navigate through them. The outlined methodological journey was designed with a view of contributing to knowledge concerning issues of women soldiers’ experiences of politics in the ZNA. This chapter further detailed the research methods and the sampling techniques used and how they worked to solicit the desired information from

commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA. This chapter also chronicled fears and tensions that came out and was observed during the entire research process. I emphasise the need for continuous ethical behaviour during fieldwork and how I continued to observe and maintain ethical standards after fieldwork and during my thesis writing. In the following chapter I present and analyse my research findings on politics of soldiering in the military institution.



CHAPTER 4

WOMEN AND THE MILITARY INSTITUTION: POLITICS OF SOLDIERING

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the experiences of commissioned women soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), in particular, their understanding of relations of power and authority in the military, as well as how they experience it during training and afterwards, i.e. when they are fully incorporated into the national army. As indicated in Chapter 1, the ZNA can, to all intents, be understood as a political extension of Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). The party, state and civilian politics are conflated. It is imperative to note that for one to make sense of specific gendered practices within the military, it is crucial to understand how the military operates as a social space. This chapter seeks to discuss and analyse the experiences of women soldiers in the ZNA, i.e. from the period of training until they become commissioned officers in particular units. It further reveals how power is defined and experienced in the ZNA barracks. This chapter details how army barracks, as a highly masculinised institution, focus mainly on preparing men for military and, by extension, for civilian authority. The analysis of findings from this chapter draws on Foucault's (1977) conception of power as created and defined in relational experiences and structural processes in the army. In this way I can make sense of the subjective views and experiences of women soldiers in the ZNA. The chapter further narrows its attention to the practices and discourses of the military institution, which, in turn, influences women soldiers' experiences in the army. I examine how those experiences shape their perspectives on issues to do with power and political processes in the military.

This chapter also draws on Sasson-Levy's (2003) work on military gender practices as an approach to analyse women soldiers' experiences and their subjective views about power in the military and civilian politics. Even though women soldiers are present in the military, this does not necessarily mean that they are perceived or treated as equals (to men) in the institution.

This chapter argues that women soldiers remain marginalised within the army, and in the broader involvement of the ZNA in civilian politics. According to Tendi (2016:203), the military and security sector in Zimbabwe is not only deeply involved in politics and political interventions in

the country, but its stereotypical gendered discourses and practices underpin and promote “patriarchal national politics”. In Zimbabwe, political influence is seen and understood as a kind of symbolic capital (Harrison 1995), but women soldiers in the ZNA are viewed as the weak gender, thereby reinforcing patriarchal culture and according more symbolic power to military men.

4.2 Military- a rugged terrain from the beginning.

Militaries are terrains where women soldiers have to deal with the constant difficulties of navigating masculinist endeavours (D’Amico 1996). Most commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA were recruited as cadet officers to the Zimbabwe Women Services (ZWS). Cadet training is known as a rigorous and challenging process, but it is also a significant entry level in the army for commissioned soldiers (females and males). When a woman soldier completes cadet training, she graduates to a higher rank as a 2nd Lieutenant. Women soldiers in the ZNA train together with their male counterparts at the Zimbabwe Military Academy (ZMA). Most of my participants claimed that the first stage of cadet training, which is called the ‘de-freezing’ phase, was the most challenging for them. This is the period during which the military transforms its trainees from civilians into soldiers, physically, mentally and in the ZNA, also ideologically. The main objective of the ‘de-freezing’ phase is to create, what my participants referred to as, a ‘tabula rasa mind,’ i.e. when the military clears or emptied out civilian thinking and instils a militaristic mind-frame into trainees. Cadet training is physically extremely demanding as well. Masamba claimed that;

This first training phase is not easy for most women trainees my brother, many women fail military training at this phase, because at this stage, most trainees will still be civilians (physically and mentally). It is at this stage where our gender as women is under serious attack from training instructors as well as from our fellow trainees. For me to pass that phase, was a real miracle, maybe it was also because I was mentally strong when

I went for military training. I was very determined, focused and disciplined.

The extract above indicates the difficulties for women soldiers during their first period of training in the military. At the same time, women soldiers are continuously represented and perceived as weak and fragile. This negative, gendered representation is exacerbated by the fact that military masculinity is highly visible and valued at this phase in the army. It is because the primary goal of the military is to train warriors (Woodward and Duncanson 2017) and highly masculinised training regimens are used to produce and measure combat-ready soldiers. This period of training is a stage during which the military institution emphasises masculinity and toughness as it inculcates a militaristic identity into soldiers (Hampf 2010). Such discourses and practices are also tools that are subsequently used to marginalise women's capacities in the institution (Woodward and Duncanson 2016).

Although women soldiers meet the set criteria of having completed military training and identifying with symbolic representations of the military as inherently masculine, they are nonetheless often questioned or undermined (Harrison 1995). Therefore, women soldiers do not have the space to fully exercise military masculinity, i.e. they can only try to emulate it. If they fail, or do not have the necessary strength, perseverance and endurance during the training process, they will not be able to physically or mentally navigate the military terrain. My participants emphasised that during training they were competent enough to achieve the tasks they were expected to, yet they were constantly told that they were not as physically strong as their fellow male recruits. In this regard, the masculine nature of the army perpetuates women's inferior role militarily (Woodward and Duncanson 2016). Nevertheless, my participants' endurance helped them to complete this stage of cadet training. The gendered conception of women soldiers as lacking physical strength seemed to be a discourse or representation that is practised and emphasised from early stages of training in the ZNA. It is further amplified and cemented through highly masculinised practices and training regimes in the military. Thus, the training stage further reinforces the constructs of gender inferiority among women soldiers themselves. Arguably, such

practices are mobilised to classify women trainees, as a ‘weak’ and ‘second class’ gender in the army. In this way, the military and masculinity are mutually affirmed (Shefer and Mankayi 2007).

My study participants pointed out that, although they want to excel in the military, its highly masculinised practices reinforce the belief that women soldiers are a second sex in the army. In this regard Stern and Zalewski (2009) argue that women soldiers are a disruptive gender to male dominance in the military. That is, women’s presence in the military disfigure and deconstruct patriarchy and heteronormativity, which are present in militaries globally.

According to my study participants, during training women are demeaned and discouraged by men in the ZNA which, in turn, make them “feel lesser within the institution” (Masamba). To make sense of the representation of women as somehow disruptive, Foucault’s (1977) idea of disciplinary power is useful to understand how women soldiers are not only made docile but eventually also discipline themselves. That is, it helps me to examine how everyday practices in the ZNA (of treating women soldiers as weak and making them feel ‘lesser’), empower male soldiers while disempowering women soldiers.

According to study participants, the representation of them as female and as somehow not on par with their male counterparts remained a part of their everyday realities – which starts during training and continue even once they became commissioned officers. Women soldiers in the ZNA are continuously challenged as they navigate the military hierarchy. Despite all these experiences, women soldiers showed that they know and understand how power is highly gendered and political in the ZNA. In this context, the military system is nonetheless rigid and highly masculinised (Enloe 1988, 2000; Sasson Levy 2000) for the women soldiers.

The gendered encounters by study participants during military training and other early processes in the ZNA exacerbate their negative experiences in the army. The ideological system in which women soldiers operate arguably derails their mobility and chances to rise to positions of power in the military and in public/civilian politics. Foucault (1977) argued that the present situation in any social space is a reflection of both past and present relational processes. I found Foucault helpful in making sense of the current position of women soldiers in the ZNA. I could also trace such discourses and practices historically. It became apparent during my study that the armed

liberation forces historically undermined women combatants. This situation continued post-independence (see also Chapter 1, Sec 1.2). The subjugation of women in the ZNA is reproduced from past to present actions and processes which diminish women soldiers in the army as a social space.

As indicated above, this study provides insight into gendered stereotypes and hegemonic culture and how these affect women soldiers (Carreiras 2004, Sasson-Levy 2010), during their early days of military training. As evident in my study, such early hurdles for women soldiers, cause unfavourable evaluations for women soldiers, which will eventually limit their participation in the processes of power in the ZNA. Hegemonic culture, which is a common feature of the military, is exercised through various institutional mechanisms such as training regimens, stereotypical connotations and relational practices which undermine women and simultaneously reinforce the dominance of military men in the army. The dictates of the army, as revealed by most of my participants, creates a system that which promotes men at the expense of women officers. This reduces their chances to advance not just in the military, but also in the terrain of civilian authority.

Consequently, the emphasis in this study is on the experiences of commissioned women soldiers. That is, zeroing in on how certain practices in the military effects how power is produced and subsequently inform the position of women soldiers. Foucault (1991:194) argued that power “produces reality”, which in this case, means that various gendered practices effected and reproduced during training and afterwards make everyday reality for my participants. I look closely at how women soldiers experience these difficult and uncertain circumstances in a challenging environment. Masamba narrated that:

I was so excited when I entered this profession, but what I experience during my training days showed me that I was in a tough space and up to now I still see that it is not an easy road as I thought before I joined the army.

Masamba's desire above represents that of many women soldiers, as well as the contrasting actuality they experience in the army. My participants stressed that they entered the military intending to excel in a male-dominated field and to become influential figures in the army and, eventually, civilian politics. Similarly, Soko said:

When I joined the military, my mind was fully prepared. I went into the military wanting to be a potent woman in the country because I grew up inspired by other women-combatants such as former Vice President Joice Mujuru and now the Minister of Defence Orpah Muchinguri. However, the level of gendered 'politicking' that is currently in the military is unbearable. That is why you see me working in that regiment... (name withheld) that I told you before. At least what I am doing now will help me to get a civilian job after my retirement.

However, the extract above reveals that women soldiers like Soko find it difficult to negotiate and traverse relations from their first days of military training into military service. This is because women in the military are seen and perceived as soldiers who lack desired masculine attributes, which in turn, embody the military. Hence, the odds are stacked against women because army structures and power relations are rigid and exclusionary to them. Boldry et al (2001) argued that preferential ratings for men in the military is based on how the military view women soldiers as weak and not capable leadoff leadership. These challenges are why most feminists view the military institution and its identity construction as overwhelmingly patriarchal (Enloe 1988; Sasson-Levy 2003). Similarly, Woodward (2000) postulates that the military is a most rigid masculine setting for women soldiers. Francke (1997) argued that there is much hostility for women soldiers during their cadet training in the military. Hence, it is crucial to problematize women soldiers' experiences at both structural and subjective levels, so that I can trace and understand their challenges in their context of operation. (Burk 1995; Enloe 2000; Sasson-Levy 2003).

4.3 Training: men and masculine dominance.

As discussed in the previous section, from their first days of training women find the military terrain a difficult space which propels men and demean anything feminine. Hence, it is critical to understand how the military institution through its masculinities builds and enhances men's dominance in the processes of power whilst alienating women soldiers. In Zimbabwe, the military, patriarchy and masculinities are inextricably linked: military identity and masculinity are blurred and inseparable (Maringira 2015; Gibson 2010). The military is a powerful masculine institution (Mankayi, 2008) and military training aims to embed a masculinised identity into soldiers (Hockey 2002; Gibson 2010). My participants, inter alia, talked about how they experienced cadet training. This period aims to transform a civilian woman's body into a military and masculinised one, that fits into and operates within a prescribed terrain. The identities and expertise that are subsequently inculcated into military trainees are fundamentally crucial for them to execute military duties (Höpfl 2003).

My participants professed that cadet training was challenging for them, particularly its physical requirements such as carrying a 1000kg log called the 'Black Sabbath' for long distances, river crossings, route marches, obstacle climbing and many other difficult tasks. Although lifting heavy objects is primarily represented as the work of men, women soldiers also carried 'Black Sabbath', successfully participated in all those arduous tasks and activities and completed their training. While women soldiers accomplished these tough and supposedly masculine tasks (which are also failed by some male recruits), as a group, women soldiers are still considered as the weak gender in the ZNA.

Foucault (1977) argued that power is constructed from everyday relational practices and experiences. By extension, the gendered stereotypes and demeaning practices that are emphasised during training create and reinforce the dominance of male soldiers in the structures of power in the ZNA. Thus, the enculturation of soldiery identity arguably reproduces male power, as well as coercive practices which are endemic to the military (Shefer et al. 2000). My participants revealed

that during training, men who are not physically strong are also considered soft and weak and often referred to as women (yet, as men, they still have more advantages than women). These constructions reflect how the military undermines anything that represents femaleness. At the same time such stereotypical constructions are highly visible, familiar and primarily aimed at women. This conscious positioning of women as weak is typical in most armies around the world (Höpfl 2003; Boldry et al 2001).

According to my participants the ZNA sometimes subtly, but often-times blatantly, marginalise and denounce anything perceived as feminine or as softness in soldiers. To become soldiers my participants had to conform to a male projection of them, which is the price of entry into membership in the army (Höpfl 2003). However, for ZNA authorities to allow women as a group to be represented negatively and attacked consistently during training underscored and reinforced the notion that females are not competent or welcome in the military. Such treatment of women soldiers questions the rationality of how military masculinities are exercised in the institution (Woodward and Winter 2007; Barrett 1996; Hale 2008).

According to my participants, during training, they were undermined in sometimes ingenious ways: for example, male soldiers assisted them to carry guns and food packs when they walked long distances, during mountain climbing, route marches and warfare training in the bush. Male soldiers also aided women soldiers to dig their trenches when they had to sleep in the bush. Such assistance by male soldiers to females are represented as acts of kindness, but are not. They reflect a multiplicity of ways through which male soldiers discursively, and through action, manipulate and subtly discipline women soldiers by positioning them as in need of 'help' during training. If such offered assistance is not accepted, woman is vilified as ungrateful, bossy, lesbians or bitches. Through such discursive practices and actions military men cement the notion that women soldiers are the weak gender in the army. These acts of apparent kindness and support are eventually accepted by women as normative and a result of their 'natural' physical inadequacies, but in the long run undermine them in the military institution. According to Meyer (1992), such practices reduce women soldiers to 'camp flowers' of military barracks. These acts by male soldiers maintain the 'femaleness' of women soldiers in the military institution. In this regard, the work of

Foucault (1977) is helpful as he argued that power is relational; it is not just a projection of institutional and structural distribution of interactions between parties. That is, it is arguably also about the types and forms of relationships that are constructed between male and women officers during training and working in the army. It is also about synergy of various activities that are performed and exercised within the military institution. Barrett (1996) argued that the construction of organizational masculinities is seen in various social practices in the institution.

My participants emphasised that during training men voluntarily and to all intents apparently self-evidently, take up leadership during activities such as route marches, bayonet fighting or map reading during survival and combat training in the bush. The continuous repetition of such informal undertakings by male soldiers gives a psychological upper hand to men, which will eventually affect women soldiers' position in the military and beyond. The above practices of male soldiers emphasise that militaries are not in favour of feminine cultures (Cockburn 2001), but are perceived and practiced as hard, strong, capable and masculine: and will subsequently serve to undermine women soldiers' capacities within the army. The experiences of women soldiers in the ZNA clearly shows that this military institution is not easily compatible with women's services (Segal 1995). The practices mentioned above arguably deter women soldiers' aspirations and progression within the military, because it is evident that the ZNA prepares military men, not women soldiers, for leadership. Hence, it is important to note that while women soldiers are 'embraced' in the ZNA, they are simultaneously negatively constructed through particular kinds of gendered preconceptions. That is, they are made as gendered subjects through various practices in the military. This trend is common from their inception into the military, throughout training and during their time of full military service.

As discussed above and in this context, the experiences of women soldiers during training will eventually affect their roles within the military and later influence their positions in civilian politics (Carreiras 2004). Herford (2013) argues that, despite some women being commissioned officers, they still face gendered scrutiny and hurdles that deter them from pursuing political interests within and outside the military. All my participants indicated that during military training, all their drills

instructors and other training officers in the ZNA were male soldiers. These instructors are strict, and they use derogatory and stereotypical connotations concerning women trainees during drills. Such practices indicate that the ZNA is inherently masculine and patriarchal: male dominance is reproduced and perpetuated through statements such as;

sumudza gumbo hausi mukadzi iwe (lift your leg, you are not a woman)

The notion of '*simudza gumbo*, 'lift your leg' during drills is a sexualised chant used by instructors (meaning that women are supposed to keep their legs closed) and intimates' specific stereotypical ideas about gender respectability (Meyer 1992), while simultaneously emphasising the 'virtues' of masculinity. In this regard Meyer (1992), for instance, emphasised that the military is anxious and obsessed about women's sex. Using sexist chants as part of training makes women soldiers uncomfortable and the butt of jokes, it demeans them, even as the military tries to turn women into disciplined masculinised soldiers. While striving to instil militaristic attitudes and behaviours into its trainees (Furman 1999), the ZNA remains a highly masculine institution, to an extent that affects women's roles in it. Although the above practices are regarded as standard, the perpetuation of sexualised chants and innuendos disproportionately demean and affect women soldiers in the ZNA. According to study participants these sexualised, stereotypical commands not only continuously represent women as somehow inferior, but equally negates and potentially undermines their progression to positions of authority in the ZNA. It also constitutes an active process of subjugating women soldiers in the military. This experience clearly shows how military masculinities to all intents seek to undermine anything feminine (Enloe 2000; Maringira 2015).

The constructions of military culture functions as a contingency for future politics in and beyond the military (Woodward and Winter 2007). At the same time, in the process of inculcating a combat-ready identity into its recruits through repetitive movements imbued with significance for teamwork, the military also creates gender distinctions in its trainees. As most of my participants talked to me, I could tell that the majority of them have a profoundly gendered understanding of

their relevance or irrelevance to power in the army and Zimbabwe's political power matrices (Chuma and Ncube, 2010; Maunganidze 2020). This situation is further complicated by a deeply gendered state/military nexus that exists in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, this alienation emanates during the training period, where women are made fun of and undermined. There are some common stereotypical statements repeated and reinforced in chants used during training, for example;

roll like a drum, you thought the military is easy like cooking sadza (pap)

Emphasising gendered notions such as cooking instead of drumming also underscores how the military mocks anything regarded as feminine as discussed before. In normative conceptions, cooking is regarded as a socially constructed role of women and in this case, those roles are demeaned during training. It furthermore reinforces the inferior position of women soldiers in the military. Woodward and Jenkins (2011) highlight that the military is a gendered institution, and the experiences of women soldiers during training in the ZNA creates a deep ambivalence, especially concerning their views and understanding of power relations within it (Karazi-Presler et al. 2018). When women soldiers are continuously exposed to such hostile environments, it is difficult for them to disentangle and navigate the gendered hegemonic system in the military institution during their entire time of military service. In the long run, their position in the army will be affected. In the case of ZNA, this situation also translates into how women soldiers make sense of relations of power concerning the involvement of the army in the (ZANU PF) party, state and civil society.

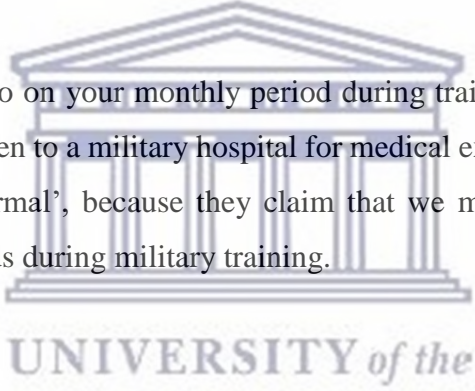
From my conversations with my participants, it became clear that the military's unremitting emphasis on masculinity and its stereotypical representations of women, affect the role of women soldiers in the army. By mocking particular culturally socialised roles (e.g. cooking, being sexually available or not) and physical 'shortcomings' (being inept at marching, weak, unskilled at using a compass or giving direction etc.), the being of women soldiers is undermined. In this case, military

masculinity is emphasised and celebrated by denigrating femininity through coordinated gendered practices. Hence, Segal (1999) argued that the military is a gender-codified institution: it promotes masculinity over femininity. The systemic denigration of anything feminine, proved to be problematic for women soldiers in my study, as it creates gendered power relations and processes in the ZNA. Most of my participants claimed that sexism is overwhelming in the ZNA, and it is visibly in every part of the military institution.

The current position of women soldiers in the ZNA is best described by Foucault (1977) as the 'social effects' of power. Thus the relational experiences of men and women soldiers in the army during training shape their position in the military. Foucault (ibid) argued that subjectivity is not essentialised by identity, but by social interactions that exist in an institution. This assertion is useful in analysing the Zimbabwean setting as it helps to explain the importance of socialised experiences within the army and how it affects roles within the military. In this context, I had to further explore the anomalous system (state/military conflation) in Zimbabwe to make sense of the military structure and how it shapes my participants' understanding of power relations and politics, as well as how they navigate in such a masculinist environment. As indicated above, the advancement of women soldiers in the military institution is frequently stalled by highly masculinised and bureaucratic structures (Heinecken 1998; Carreiras 2004). Listening to my participants' narratives, I could also see a flow of broader societal, cultural values into the military institution (Heinecken 2002). This assertion is underscored by Stiehm (1989) who stressed that, apart from the masculine and bureaucratic nature of the military, male soldiers also feel threatened when they see women soldiers in positions of power. Hence, from these findings, the military masculine culture prepares male soldiers to dominate in positions of authority, while women soldiers are, in many subtle and obvious ways, relegated to inferior positions. The position of women soldiers in this case, is created through soldiery interaction between men and women in the army (Segal 1995).

The training regimens and activities which women soldiers are exposed to during training can affect their monthly menstruation. For example, when they train rigorously, they lose too much

body fat, they menstruate less often and sometimes miss their periods for 4-5 months. Some of my participants claimed that during those months of intense physical training, if a woman menstruates, she is considered as somehow ‘abnormal’. Some of my participants alluded that when instructors became aware that a female trainee was menstruating or experiencing stomach cramps during military training, she was regarded as a ‘sick’ and ‘weak’ soldier not fit to be in the army. This form of humiliation and trolling of women's biological processes are frequently used to demean women soldiers’ capacities in the army. It is why the military is seen as a principal agency for the constructions of hyper masculine gender identities (Barret 1996; Connell 1995). These constructions are reflected in negative representations and practices related to women’s biological processes. Tsiga attested that:



Suppose you go on your monthly period during training. In that case, you will be taken to a military hospital for medical examinations to see if you are ‘normal’, because they claim that we must not go to our monthly periods during military training.

The extract above revealed how women soldiers’ natural bodily processes are dehumanised and shamed in the military. Most of my participants professed that they found these experiences very traumatic and disturbing. Such a negative focus on female reproductive processes cause additional emotional labour for women soldiers (Karazi-Presler et al. 2018). This experience can also influence their confidence as they continue to work in the army. Sasson-Levy (2008) argued that, by constructing soldiering as inherently masculine, the military vindicates the hegemonic and gendered structural order of the army. Such masculinist practices are the reason why women soldiers occupy lower echelons in the military (Jerby and Levy 2000). Some of my participants claimed that by being demeaned because of their bodily biological processes, embarrassed them, especially since it was done in the presence of other soldiers. To cement this assertion, Segal (1995) argued that most women in the military are embarrassed as a result of how their biological functions and feminine attributes are represented negatively in the military. Mortifying women

soldiers in this way, serves to warn them not to cross the gender lines (Bartky 1990) and relegate them to certain acceptable positions in the military (Scheff 2006).

In the military, the biology of a soldier is normatively and dominantly male. The representation of menstruation as a disease which requires hospitalisation, reflects how women soldiers are humiliated in the army. The exposure of women soldiers to such gendered and demeaning treatment may cause feelings of insecurity and apprehension (Chisholm 2016). Such treatment of women soldiers is an indication that a woman's being and sex is perceived as subversive in the army. In military training, masculinity is the gold standard; women and femininity are represented as inferior and 'other'. Negating femininity is also used as a measure to encourage men to achieve desired military fitness and aggression (Enloe 1983; Whitworth 2008; Kovitz 2003). This approach perpetuates hostile masculinity, which seeks to suppress women soldiers and reinforces the idea that masculinity and the military are inextricable (Carreiras 2004). Hence, the military culture of masculinity edifies gendered hegemony and defines how power and dominance of men over women soldiers are produced and reproduced in the army.

Gordon (1980) argued that power constructs *savoir* knowledge, that is, the knowledge where a certain group understands themselves in relation to the others. This knowledge is created through relational experiences which later define one's position in any institution (Foucault 1979). These are what Foucault (1991:194) described as "rituals truths" which enhance power for the dominant group. Therefore, the dominance of men in the military is perpetuated through various practices and discourses which denigrates women, while cementing the inferior position of women soldiers in critical power processes in the military and civil politics in Zimbabwe.

Endurance and compliance with the demands of masculinity define women's experiences in the military (Sasson-levy 2003). To survive the military system's stereotypical view of women, female soldiers have to be conversant on how to navigate, act and behave in such a terrain. That is, women in the military have to act 'mannish' to be considered a soldier and to increase their recognition in the army (Meyer 1992). Interestingly, the ZNA legitimises such clear misogynistic tendencies. These predispositions favour men in the military. Males subsequently rise and attain

power through subjugation of women, but also as a result of women soldiers who, to all intents, self-discipline, ‘sanction’ and even participate in such attitudes and practices (Cockburn 2007; Cockburn and Enloe 2012). Such experiences arguably indicate that the discrepancy between male and female participation in the army and civilian politics in Zimbabwe is systemic. These are also deliberate practices by dominant military men to amass power for themselves (Maphosa et al. 2015). Gumbo chronicled that;

My brother, this job is difficult for us women soldiers. I had moments that I wanted to leave the army, leaving everything to men because the level of denigration during training is rampant, and it is clear that men do not feel comfortable with our presence in the military.

The excerpt above details the overwhelming experiences that psychologically and emotionally affect women soldiers during their time of service in the ZNA. By simply narrating those experiences, my participants were reminded how dehumanising it had been for them. They emphasised that such occurrences ultimately impaired their chances for appointment to crucial positions in the army (Chisholm 2016). Such coordinated acts and representations in the military is best described by Foucault (1977) as a regime of practices which creates power in an institution. In this case, men in the military arguably engage in certain constructions and practices which enable them to both control and obstruct women soldiers’ self-conceptions and their efforts to advance in the army hierarchy. That is, it affects how women try to manoeuvre into positions where they may have power – either inside the army or outside it, in civilian politics. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how gendered power dynamics and every day practices affect the position and choices of women in the military (Daphna-Tekoah and Harel-Shalev 2017; Chisholm 2016).

One of the most confounding revelations from my interviewees was that the sanitary infrastructure at the Zimbabwe Military Academy, such as toilets and urinals, are only designed for men. They claimed that most of the toilets have floor stand urinals, which are plentiful, but not usable for

women. This situation leaves them with no option, but to share the few conventional toilets with their male counterparts. I could see that to my participants, the issue of toilets was highly problematic during training. The unavailability of women's ablution facilities at the ZNA, to them, it is an indication that the institution is still struggling to embrace women soldiers as equal participants in the army. Surprisingly, the ZNA claims to be a new military (Bourke 2006). However, women's specific needs are not at all taken into consideration (Van Breda 2016). Men's needs are the norm and women's requirements are othered as reported by Van Breda (2016:24) concerning women in the South African National Defence Force,

The SANDF women reported the lack of ablutions facilities, and they have to share ablution facilities with men. The lack of sanitary bins for soiled pads, the lack of water for personal hygiene, the inability to access sanitary pads and medication to deal with menstruation, and unsafe ablution facilities and living quarters. They argued that all of these factors are necessary for women to maintain personal hygiene, and thus cannot be considered luxuries, but necessities.



Maintaining the kind of infrastructure which does not accommodate women soldiers, is a representation of the dominance of patriarchy, and a continuation of 'old military' culture in the ZNA (i.e. the military that is exclusively for men). As found in this research; the military environment has multiple layered systems of practices which continuously subjugate women's capacities. Hence, in this case, it is difficult for women soldiers to access power in an institution where basic issues such as the provision of sanitary infrastructure is not respected. The maintenance of the military as a patriarchal institution relies on its hyper masculinised and rigid structures and culture (Rones and Fasting 2017). After training, women soldiers are appointed to their respective units. It is in particular units where power relations in the military and civilian politics are elaborated and practised.

4.4 Military units and masculinity- The centres of power

Foucault (1977) argued that power is strategic and could be viewed as a cluster of relations. It is critical to scrutinise how power is created and distributed in the ZNA, i.e. attending to clusters of units, their roles and relations as developed among military entities. It is also essential to interrogate how these army units inform the geopolitics of the army. In this case, it is important to understand an army unit as a social space, which acts as a resource of power in the ZNA and civilian politics in Zimbabwe. Fontana-Giusti (2013; 95) argued that “it makes no sense to investigate the social space in general, but rather systems of space-power co-relation”. Hence, it is crucial to understand army units as critical parts within which power is constructed and exercised in the military system,

As women soldiers complete their training, they are appointed to army units which will also be their areas of operation. These units vary from combat to non-combat units. The units are what Foucault (1976) described as invincible unit structures that are responsible for the execution of particular strategic practices. Therefore, this section unpacks the role of military units in the power and political matrices in the ZNA, and it further reveals how these units work as conduits which produce civilian political leaders for ZANU PF and the state. Most of my research participants claimed that combat units are the cockpits of the military and political power in Zimbabwe. This is exacerbated by the uncharacteristic state-military nexus in Zimbabwe, where the military simultaneously extends its influence into the civilian domain in Zimbabwe. These units thus arguably produce and ideologically define both military and party leadership in the ZANU PF and the government of Zimbabwe.

Although the army militarises women soldiers' lives, they also subject them to intense masculine control, through diverse and indirect structural means (King 2017). Masculinity is an embodiment of the military (Woodward and Winter 2007), and it became apparent in my research that combat roles are deemed the most masculine and potent in ZNA. In its endeavour to reinforce soldierly identity, through epistemic inculcation of military ideology (Maringira, 2017; Gibson, 2010; Lande, 2007), the military separates soldiers through its systematic gendered allocation of roles in

the army. It is, once again, important to emphasise that the military is a powerful masculine institution (Mankayi 2008). Therefore, to unpack the role of women soldiers, I categorise military units as explicit masculine units (combat) and general masculine units (non-combat). This separation is necessitated by how women soldiers narrated their experiences during the process of intensified masculinisation, i.e. during cadet training and appointment in these units.

My research participants claimed that, once most women soldiers in the ZNA became commissioned officers, they are posted to non-combat units, which in this case represents general masculinity. The appointment of soldiers to ultra-masculinised combat units is most valued in the ZNA. The hyper-masculinity of such units epitomise power in the army as well as in the state. That is, it is used as a bar to define how power is allocated, exercised and distributed within the army. Most men in the military lose their “inner essence” when they see anything that threatens their access to power in the military (Kimmel 1994:121). Throughout this study, it was apparent that there is continuous prejudice against women soldiers in the ZNA, especially when it comes to the appointment in crucial positions in the army. Women soldiers’ ability (or not) to engage with or in military power relations in the ZNA is linked to and prescribed by different types of masculinities which are encapsulated in particular military units. Hence, commissioned women soldiers will become victims of the systemic and gendered masculinities in the military.

The various military units (combat and non-combat) represent strategic relations which are embedded in ZNA structures. The significant presence of former liberation struggle combatants and post-independence combatants at the apex of the ZNA, ZANU PF presidium and critical arms of the state indicate that power in the military is traced to combat units in the Zimbabwean context. The disposition of power to combat units in the ZNA, is also a resemblance of how patriarchy and power are synchronised in the military institution (Connell 1987). It is equally an indication of how of cultural values are represented in military institutions (Heinecken 2002), where men dominate key and influential positions in army and civilian authority. Contrastingly, my participants reported that most commissioned women soldiers are appointed in non-combat units such as administration, offering support and non-tactical services such as intelligence, social

services or work in army factories. These are cultural construction of roles being represented in the ZNA, where women soldiers are expected to work in less masculine roles.

This form of arrangement harks back to the old (pre-independence) military system, where the army and combat roles were exclusively meant for male soldiers. The overwhelming presence of male soldiers in the ZNA high command seemingly reproduces constructions of the military as inherently masculine and about combat. The status quo in the ZNA shows to all intents how masculinity and hegemonic cultural ideas and practices still linger in the military (Matos 2008) and the ZNA. According to the information provided by study participants, the ZNA does not, in practice, allow fair and holistic inclusion of women soldiers in its top leadership (Duncanson 2017).

My participants pointed out that there is clear differentiation and othering of women soldiers (Eisenstein 2007) in the Zimbabwean Defence Forces (ZDF). According to research participants, most military officers from the combat units will eventually advance to powerful positions in the state or become civilian political leaders for ZANU PF. Due to the atypical state-military conflation in Zimbabwe the majority of the current political leaders are men who had formerly fought in the liberation struggle, are ex-combatants or soldiers who served in combat units in the ZNA. Such leaders are frequently army generals who are still serving or those who have retired to engage in civilian politics. One of my participants, Lizwe, insisted that;

The majority of these politicians who retire from the army come mainly from the positions of Chief of Staffs (CoS), General Staff (GS), Brigade Commanders (BC).

Masamba further reiterated that only a handful of the current civilian politicians come from units such as the Admin Branch (AB) and other ancillary service companies in the ZNA. Masamba further reiterated that;

Most of ZWS officers are appointed or transferred to non-physical and demanding units in the military, and it is now familiar to us as ZWS officers that all women officers work in non-combat units.

The extract above reveals how women in the ZNA are socialised into non-combat roles by the ZNA system, which later affect their position in the military. These gendered appointments in the ZNA reflect resistance to equal opportunities for women soldiers in the army (Sasson-Levy 2003). In examining this reality, I draw on Foucault (1977; 1979) who argued that power exists in local capillaries of institutions, in this case, these military units, battalions and different companies in the army. Power is arguably defined in relationships created by soldiers in these units. These inter and intra relationships among units or people in these units affect actions, attitudes and discourses that emanate from those units. To take this further, appointments of women soldiers in non-combat units reveal the stereotypically gendered ideas and practices of the military towards women soldiers' roles in the institution (Woodward and Winter 2007). According to my participants, women soldiers are socialised into such roles in the army to the extent that most of them prefer to work in non-combat rather than combat units. Just as Foucault (ibid) argued: such forms of socialisation affect women soldiers' thinking and attitudes concerning power. However, most of my participants think that they are mentally and physically capable of taking up positions in combat units if they are given the chance and support to do so.

According to Duncanson and Woodward (2016) women in the military are often denied combat roles. Mackenzie (2013) reiterates that women in the military are discouraged from taking up combat roles. While my study participants presented the reality of them being in non-combat units in the ZNA, the military had arguably made them think and believe that combat roles are

exclusively for men. This reality faces women in the ZNA, and is contradictory to Halberstam's (2019) argument concerning female masculinities, in that it arguably constructs masculinities in a very male way, promotes the notion of power and dominance of men, and symbolically gives privileges and affords the unequal distribution of power between men and women (Nguyen 2008). The military system does this through its masculinist practices, thereby socialising and compelling women officers to work in non-combat units and roles. Sasson-Levy and Amram-Katz (2007) argue that such institutional arrangements and practices justify gendered power relations in the army. Lizwe also made a salient point when she said;

Most women who went to the DRC War, there were posted to rear, where they would offer support services to male officers who were in the battalions and the battlefield and the rest of women officers who had gone there were later instructed to return to Zimbabwe. So in the army, we are viewed as weak and support officers to male soldiers.

During cadet training, every military officer is inculcated with masculine and soldiery identity, for them to be able to execute infantry duties (in theory despite the gender disadvantages of women soldiers). However, from the extract above, Lizwe and other participants indicated that most cadet-trained commissioned women officers are appointed to non-combat units just because they are 'just' women. That is, these appointments or allocation of roles in the military are systemically gendered in the ZNA.

Since most of my participants claimed that military power and civilian political power in Zimbabwe is determined by an individual's combat or non-combat role in the army, the experiences and views of women soldiers in the ZNA are critical to my understanding. The military engages in systematic practices to diffuse women soldiers' potential and capacities in the defence forces (Mankayi 2009). In this context, the majority of women soldiers in the army will be unable to attain advanced positions of power and authority as they are deployed in non-combat roles. It is

accordingly also difficult for women soldiers to become involved in civilian politics in Zimbabwe, where the military is highly politicised (Maringira 2017). As claimed by my participants, most women are appointed in non-combat positions such as nursing, social work or administration in non-combat units. Working in these roles will eventually restrict women soldiers from attaining influential positions in the army

Segal (1995) argued that the soldiery interaction between women and male soldiers within military structures defines the extent to which females endure power struggles in the institution. That is, using the analytic insights of how military masculinities are constructed, it reflects how men deliberately create gender order in the military. Women's experiences of power in the military must also be scrutinised in the context and specific spaces they exist (Shekhawat 2015; Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah 2015; 2016). In contrast to ZNA, Sasson-Levy (2011) in their study in the Israeli Armed Forces (IAF), found that most women who were fully integrated into combat roles or positions previously held by men, flourish in positions of authority.

It was clear in my study that women soldiers face ongoing systematic and structural violence induced through constant, patterned gendered practices that alienate women from accessing power in the military (Enloe 2007; Barrett 1996; Peterson and Runyan 2010). Since most women do not take up combat roles in the military, their marginality in this respect is mirrored by their absence from positions of authority in both military and civilian leadership (Golan 1997; Izrael 1997).

4.5 Power and gendered politics in military units

The inadequate representation of women, as well as their low status in the military hierarchy, is problematic (Lomsky-Feder and Sasson-Levy 2015; Chisholm and Tidy 2020). In this context, the ZNA views women soldiers and power through a gendered binary lens (Scheff 2006; Bartky 1990). Geertz (1985:15) argued that “at the political centre of any complexly organised social space, there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in

truth governing”. Geertz (1985:15) further argued that those in power often “justify their existence in such positions through a collection of stories, insignia, formalities and appurtenances” that they have learned or invented within the institution. This is also how men in the military organise themselves and use “military culture’ to normalise the subjugation of women’s capacities. Although many scholars wrote about how the military reconstructs a civilian into a fully-fledged soldier (Barret 1996; Lande 2007; Maringira 2015), it important to also understand how these soldiers themselves are subsequently transformed by the contexts in which they live and work.

According to my participants, the combat units segue into centres for military and political power (as discussed in the previous section). Such units also become the bases from which political leadership is extended into civil authority. There is arguably no clear separation between these domains in Zimbabwe. Even when former military officers leave the army to become civilian leaders, they are always described as, ‘Retired General’ A or B. That is, the rhetoric 'once a soldier, always a soldier' (Maringira and Carrasco 2015), justifies the description or construction of Zimbabwe as a military state. In this military state, the role of women soldiers has always been obscured, because only male soldiers who work in combat roles in the ZNA can eventually migrate to civilian authority in Zimbabwe., my study participants stressed. Therefore, these combat units in the ZNA ‘breed’ both military leaders and civilian political leaders. Hence, the exclusion of women soldiers from combat units and roles creates a 'hollow' or a void for women soldiers both in the military and 'civilian' structures in Zimbabwe. The arrangement of roles in the military is “dependent on wider gendered assumptions about what men and women are and should be” (Basham 2015:1). It further shows that there is no complete institutional commitment in the ZNA to enforce or reconstruct gender policies (Enloe 1983; 2007; Stachowitsch 2013), which support the role of women in this highly masculinised institution.

Niezen (2018; 1) argued that power refers to the process whereby people “have control of authority and domination” in any institution. The majority of my research participants are knowledgeable about how civilian power is engineered and organised in the ZNA. In this case, the appointment of men in combat units enable males to control decisions regarding, as well as the functioning

(Niezen 2018) of, women soldiers in the army and civilian authority. Thus, the military institution produces a military culture through which practices and structural arrangements are gendered. In turn, this shapes and influences the role of women within the institution (Segal 1999). The gendered alienation of women happens because military men often view women soldiers through a gendered lens and feel discomfited when women soldiers perform well in the same roles (Heinecken and Van de Waag-Cowling 2009). Nonetheless, Masamba emphasised that;

Although we have that knowledge of how power is modelled in the army, it is hard for us to win the power struggles at the highest command element of ZNA and the government of Zimbabwe.

The view above revealed how military masculinities are used to restrict women soldiers from accessing relations of power in the ZNA. From Masamba's narrative above it is apparent that the representation of military men as 'rightful' occupants of influential positions in the ZNA is not accidental or neutral, it is something that is known and exercised within the army structures. Women officers experience these gendered constructions and practices from their early days in military training and right through their careers in service. As I listened to my participants, I came to understand that the relations of power in the ZNA are not only gendered, but are systemically embedded and exercised within all its structures. Here Foucault (1977) is useful for me as he refers to such actions within an institution as the process of mapping of power. These are the practices that make power productive in the eyes of those in control. In the case of this study, it involves the purposeful coordination of activities and practices which seek to achieve one goal, the consolidation of power by military men in the ZNA, which in turn, is made evident by how military men are highly visible in the top leadership of the army. It is also reflected in how the military acts as an appendage of ZANU PF and the state. I then I agree with Foucault (ibid) that people in power "know what they do, and why they do it" (Dreyfus and Rabinow 2014: 187), that is, they engage in practices that help them to create dominance in the structures of power.

As indicated above, male combatants – both current and especially those who were part of the armed struggle in the past – control the State and dominate civilian politics in Zimbabwe. My research participants opine that the capacities of women soldiers are undermined in such a system. This happens even though women soldiers attain soldierly identities, which authoritatively embody the masculine attributes of a soldier and equip them to be leaders (Abma 1990b et al), in both the military and in civilian politics in this context. It is why it is important to understand women soldiers' identities as something that cannot be separated from their level or ranks in the army or "the tasks that are commissioned to them" (Haltiner and Kümmel 2009:76). Just as their male counterparts, all women officers managed to pass through rigorous training regimes. However, their current positions do not commensurate with the military identity and the badge which they fought and struggled to attain.

Mitchell (1989) asserts that men in the army see women as a threat to their military and political power while Jackson and Mazzei (2011) argue that institutional interactions produce different kinds of knowledge that influence the actions and positions of those in interaction. Most of my participants disclosed that most men in the army do not feel comfortable to be commanded by women commanders. Tsamba said;

You hear some men shout that *handiudzwe zvekuita nemukadzi*, I cannot be given orders by women.

The army is hierarchical, and the unwillingness to take orders from anyone in the commanding position is usually an offence. However, the extract above reveals that when a female officer gives an order, she might not be taken seriously by male soldiers. It shows that men's power in the army is collusive, and it is exercised against women soldiers in this context. The above comments by Tsamba further reveals patriarchal thinking by men in the ZNA, where women are expected to be followers not leaders. These gendered and undermining utterances by male soldiers are inherent in the army; it is why women soldiers find it difficult to excel in it. This trend is apparent also in

other armies, for example a survey done by the Directorate Social Work in SANDF, which unveiled that 46.5 percent of male soldiers in the SANDF said that male soldiers must take control of women and hold influential positions in the army (Directorate Social Work 2000; Heinecken 2002).

Chisholm and Stachowitsch (2017) argue that issues concerning women in the military cannot be understood without making sense of their personal experiences within the institution. In my study, participants professed that women soldiers are undermined and that sexism is rampant in the ZNA. Zhou, one of my participants, stressed that being in the military is a real struggle for women soldiers – starting from training and extending to when they leave the military. Once again, Foucault (1977) is useful; he uses the notion of power relations to argue that micro-power struggles create relationships of superiority and inferiority. This helped me to understand how male soldiers promote gendered practices, which are often apparently internalised by women soldiers in the ZNA. Given the explicitly gendered power differentiations in the ZNA, most women soldiers prefer to retreat and maintain what Foucault (1977) described as standardised behaviour in that context, i.e. women soldiers accept the status quo in the army and shift their focus to less contested positions and roles. These are everyday relational behaviours and struggles (Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah 2017), which are experienced by women soldiers in the army. It is essential to understand that these structural constraints are not unique in the ZNA, but it is a challenge that is faced by many women soldiers.

It is crucial to analyse women soldiers' experiences and challenges in the military through the lens of a gender (Moser and Clark 2001). To do so, it means that women soldiers should also be understood as active agents in the military and its political processes (Bouta and Frerks 2002; D'Costa 2011; Harel-Shalev Daphna-Tekoah 2017). Nevertheless, I argue that women soldiers experience the military as a complex terrain which is difficult to navigate. In the army, a combat role represents the apex of masculinity and women soldiers in the ZNA find it challenging to break through to higher ranks because of how military masculinity is modelled and exercised. The present hegemonic nature of the military system does not make it easier for women officers. The conceptual elaboration of this analysis of how power is distributed and centralised in the military

units continues to how combat units represent an embodiment of power in the army and extends into civilian politics.

My participants were apparently satisfied to work in less powerful and non-combat units and positions. Some would take great pride in their work in e.g. the Admin Unit or in offering support services to combat units. Once again Foucault's (1977) work on the ideas of structural undertakings, was crucial in analysing how the ZNA organises its spaces through symbolical structural relationships which classify groups (women and men in combat units and non-combat units) and empowers the dominant group. In relation to my study participants the military arguably indoctrinates women soldiers to understand themselves as less capable and strong and more incompetent to lead, hence they should work in support services units.

Masculine enculturation and its practices have adverse implications for gender relations in the military (Enloe 2007) and persuade women soldiers that they belong in non-combat support units. It was surprising when most of my participants claimed that they were content with the role they play in the military. However, during discussions with me it became apparent that women soldiers disappear in the corridors of power in the military (Carreiras 2004). At the same time, the role of women soldiers in the ZNA resembles some normative gendered conceptions (West and Zimmerman 2009), which are practised in the wider Zimbabwean society. This is also the case in other countries. For example, in a survey carried out in the SANDF, Heinecken (2001) similarly shows that "the cultural values of the society invariably spill over to gender relations within the military".

My study, on the other hand, revealed that power is created through discourses and practices in the military and civilian system. In this case, men in the ZNA negotiate their way up the military ladder through various masculine practices which are constructed and promoted in the ZNA. On the other hand, women find it difficult to manoeuvre within the ZNA structures because of how the military construct women's roles and capabilities in the army. Therefore, the patriarchal

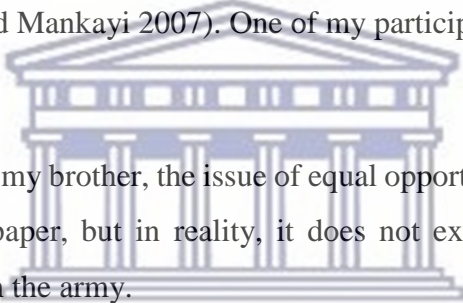
culture in the military creates political marginality for women soldiers (Spencer and Podmore 1987). In the case of the ZNA, the institution draws on an antiquated military ideology, which is exclusively dominated by men. This scenario is different from, for instance, the SANDF, which offers a path of equality and provisions in theory and practice to “allow women soldiers, to serve in any position” in the SANDF (Heinecken 2001:721). In the ZNA, only a handful of women attain powerful positions in the ZNA structure. These women are celebrated and admired by other commissioned women officers. Shumba professed that;

At least, as women soldiers, we feel proud to be represented by two ZWS officers. Shailet Moyo and Lindiwe Ngwenya who are the only two women Brigadier Generals in the ZNA, and it is the highest rank which has been ever attained by a woman in ZNA.

Shumba made me understand what Wason and Evans (1974) call the dual perspective of women soldiers who seem to be denied equal opportunities, yet claim to be content with the status quo. There are only two women Brigadiers General (BG) in an entire ZNA and while study participants were proud of the achievement of these women, they did not seem to question the fact that they were so few in number. However, from the narratives collected from my participants, it became clear that the civil-military structures in Zimbabwe constrain the choices for women soldiers and power is exceptionally gendered and politicised. Jones (1984) argued that militaries should democratise choices for both men and women in the army. Yet in the ZNA men hold onto positions of power and authority in both the army and in the state. That is, the military limits opportunities which support women soldiers’ capacities (Carreiras 2004). Enloe (1989) argued that for one to understand the issues of women in the military, it is crucial to attend to their everyday encounters in the military.

4.6 The reality of the everyday

In my research, I wished to make sense of the daily realities of women soldiers in the ZNA. Sasson-Levy (2003: 440) argues that women soldiers' experiences in the military must be understood "at the micro level of women's lives". That is, these experiences are derived from women soldiers' everyday interactions, and gender regimes in the army (Connell 1995). Much scholarship investigates how the military socialises both men and women officers in the institution (Sasson-Levy 2008; Barret 1996; Karazi-Presler et al 2018; Ben-Ari et al 2001). Thus, women's position in the military is constructed and influenced by practices that recur every day through their interactions with their male counterparts. Interrogating my participant's experiences in the ZNA made me realise, once again, that military roles and masculinities are inseparable (Sasson-Levy 2008; Gibson 2010; Shefer and Mankayi 2007). One of my participants, Soko, said;



To be honest with you, my brother, the issue of equal opportunities in the ZNA is just something on paper, but in reality, it does not exist. We face these challenges every day in the army.

The assertion above clearly shows the deep-seated reality facing women soldiers daily in the ZNA. These repetitive practices will afford or inhibit opportunities for women soldiers in the ZNA. Foucault (1977) described these realities as regimes of truths, which create power in an institution. Women soldiers are socialised every day into hegemonic military masculinities until they believe that its 'normal' for them to work in certain units and positions in the military. Sion and Ben-Ari (2009:2) describe everyday masculinist practices as "interactional situations" which create meanings and actions within the military. Although some scholars argue that power is malleable (Foucault 1977; Rose and Miller 1992), it is difficult for me to understand the position of women soldiers in the ZNA in this way. Power seems intractably gendered in an uninterrupted way. Woodward and Duncanson (2017) similarly argue that despite the military being gendered and in contrast to the ethos of equality, its system of power and masculinity are congruent to each other. The military, through its hyper-masculinised culture, is always potentially hostile to women

soldiers' progression in all its rank and file (Enloe 2007). These realities are essentially social effects which are mapped and shaped by relations of power in the military (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982). Hence, most of my study participants stressed that in ZNA, it is a known reality that non-combat and service units' employ women soldiers (see also sec 4.4). For example, Mutaka stressed that;

The Army Social Services (ASS) and Finance Services & Comptroller (FSC) units are religiously offered to women officers.

The excerpt above reveals how the ZNA deploys and structurally socialise women officers to non-combat units and services. The word 'religiously offered' to women soldiers reveals that these positions of ASS and FSC are not contested by males. It is a gender order which is created by structures of social relations informed by every day hegemonic practices by men in the military. In their study in the SANDF, Heinecken (2001) revealed that 56 per cent of male soldiers interviewed felt uncomfortable in working with women in their combat units. Other studies have also shown that men in the military believe that it is expected to exhibit "mastery and control" in the institution (Sion and Ben-Ari 2009:10). These studies reveal how hegemonic masculinities are idealised and reproduced in the military. It is also why; my participants find it challenging to work in the army.

Barrett (1996: 130) argued that "hegemonic cultures have no validity other than affirmed through daily practices and actions". By extension, women soldiers' troubled everyday experiences in the ZNA is a projection of recursive hegemonic masculinities in the military. These realities are produced and reproduced every day until they create gendered meanings and gendered structures in the military. The most used militaristic motto is "power-over-the-other" military(s) (Burke 1994:2), however, this slogan is also deployed by men to control and 'other' women structurally in the army and in civilian politics as revealed by this study. Hence, everyday practices, power and geopolitics are mutually affirmed in the military (Basham 2016). Jenkins et al (2012: 357) further

argue that “people and everyday experiences routinely intersect with systems and discourses that are linked to geopolitics” of the organisation. That is, I cannot separate the production of power from everyday practices in the military. Looking at everyday relational practices and realities in the ZNA, helped me to unpack structural complexities facing women soldiers in accessing (or not) relational power in the military.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter revealed the experiences of commissioned women soldiers during their training in the Zimbabwe Military Academy. I discussed women soldiers’ experiences during the entire period of military training as cadet officers to their appointments in various units of cantonment as commissioned officers. The findings were discussed and analysed using contemporary scholarly contributions on women’s experiences in various militaries in the world. The discussions were centred on how my participants interact with their male counterparts and the ZNA internal systems during training at the Zimbabwe Military Academy. I further looked at how these experiences influence their position and access to power in the hierarchy of power in the ZNA. The discussion and analysis of my participants’ narratives revealed different and deeply embedded systemic practices and sexualised stereotypes that demean women. Since these women soldiers operate in an abnormal state-military conflation, I found that it is difficult for them to access power in such highly politicised military due to the patriarchal and hegemonic cultures. Listening to such revelations by participants, it can be concluded that the ZNA system demeans and subjugates women soldiers from their early stages of the cadet training until they are appointed to full commissioned officers. The next chapter will focus on how power is politicised when commissioned women soldiers are full-time commissioned officers serving in the ZNA.

CHAPTER 5

POLITICISATION OF POWER: WOMEN IN THE ARMY

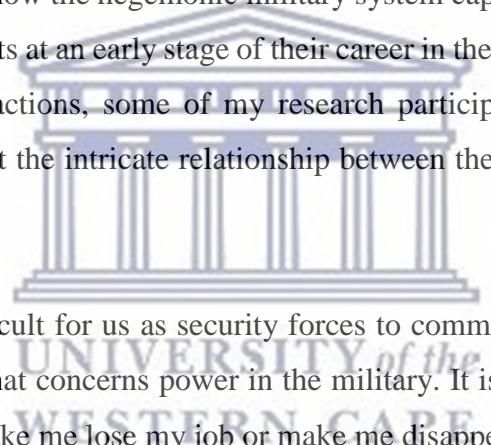
5.1 Introduction

This chapter scrutinises the experiences of women soldiers during service in the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). The chapter draws on Foucault's (1977) theory of knowledge and power, particularly the ideas of practices and relations which will help me to make sense of how power is constructed and by paying attention to specific relational practices that exist in the ZNA. Power in the ZNA plays out politically and structurally. This chapter focuses more in depth on the role of “old cargoes”, male officers who participated in the liberation struggle and who still maintain power within the ZNA, the Part and the state. These men erode the possibilities for women to access authority in the army or - by extension- civilian politics. In this chapter I try to give more insight into how such relations and processes unfold.

5.2 Women soldiers and civil-military nexus

Many scholars reaffirm the fact that Zimbabwean civilian politics are a domain of influence of the army, which is partisan and highly politicised (Masunungure 2011; Maringira 2017; Tendi 2016), (see Chapter 1 sec 1.2), The conflation of the state, party and the military in Zimbabwe represents a hybridised institution (it is one institution with a single chain of command) where the army arguably nurtures leaders for civilian politics in the country (see also Chapter 4 sec 4.4). Understanding women soldiers' experiences in such an environment was critical to this thesis. As indicated before, my participants made it apparent that they are aware of this complicated relationship, understand the military-civilian nexus in Zimbabwe and know how it operates. According to study participants this link is made clear to all army recruits during the first phase of cadet training. “It is one of the compulsory courses that we learn in our first days as cadet recruits”, claimed Gumbo. Levy and Sasson-Levy (2008) argue that such militaristic education shapes the conceptions of military, political identities and politics of the day in context. Making sense of my research participants' (commissioned women soldiers) subjective views about and experiences of the civilian/military conflation in this particular milieu in Zimbabwe was crucial.

It quickly became apparent from the narratives of study participants that this close connection between the army and state does not promote the advancement of women soldiers in the army or civilian authority. As emphasised above, Zimbabwe's political system is informed and shaped by militarised masculinity that promotes hegemonic culture, i.e. the superiority of male soldiers over women soldiers (Sharoni 2008). This situation promotes a patriarchal model of masculinities and dictates how power is accessed in the military (Myrntinen et al 2017). As I interviewed my participants, I realised that the reality of the military-civilian nexus as part and parcel of the courses inculcated into ZNA trainees at the Zimbabwe Military Academy eventually shapes the cadets' own narratives and perceptions about power in the military and its role in civilian politics in Zimbabwe. This is arguably how the hegemonic military system captures and positions both male and women soldiers' mind-sets at an early stage of their career in the army (see Chapter 4 sec.4.3). During interviews and interactions, some of my research participants were hesitant and even fearsome, while talking about the intricate relationship between the military and civilian politics in Zimbabwe. Katswe said,



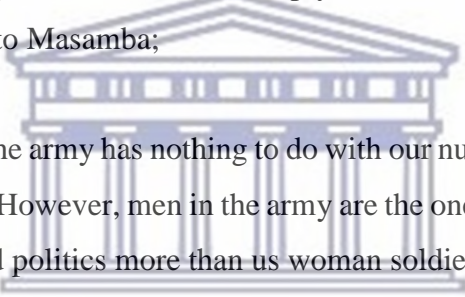
My brother, it is difficult for us as security forces to comment about civilian politics or anything that concerns power in the military. It is very risky. I tell you because it can make me lose my job or make me disappear.

Katswe indicated that, even though women soldiers are part of the system, it is “risky” and difficult for them to discuss it. Although they are very aware of and understand the dynamics of power in the army and the state, they are also nervous to voice it. They made it clear that their anxieties represent their position in the army. In this regard the situation of women seems to differ from that of military men who “publicly supports and speaks about civilian politics” and support the President of Zimbabwe as the Commander in Chief¹¹ of the army (Maringira 2017: 19). While male combatants openly talked about the military's involvement in civilian politics, my research participants were afraid to do so. This situation gave me a sense of how power and politics are gendered, hyper masculinised and punitive in the civil-military system in Zimbabwe. Peterson and

¹¹ The Officer in charge of all armed forces in Zimbabwe.

Runyan (2010) similarly argued that the military's aggressive and hyper-masculinised culture is not ideal for the progression of feminised identities.

This situation makes it unlikely that women will gain or exercise power, even when they attain higher ranks. Once again Foucault (Rabinow 1991) is helpful. He writes that certain discourses are accepted as true, which in turn, makes it function as such. In the ZNA the “old cargoes” have high status and they construct ‘truth’. Women, on the other hand, are, through particular procedures and techniques, socialised to accept such viewpoints but also their own relative lack of ability to voice another truth. In turn, this will ultimately restrict their potential ability to become active in civilian politics (even as members of ZANU PF) and, by extension, constraint their chances to gain authority in this regard. It is a phenomenon that is deeply embedded in most militaries (Woodward and Winter 2007). According to Masamba;



The issue of power in the army has nothing to do with our numbers or us as women being less in the army. However, men in the army are the ones who are desperately interested in power and politics more than us woman soldiers.

Although women soldiers know the boundaries of power in the ZNA they cannot shape it, the possibilities for them to do so are constrained. The military creates starkly gendered identities (Woodward and Winter 2007; Basham 2015) and the hesitance of women soldiers to speak about the participation of the military in civilian politics as means to have power in Zimbabwe seems to represent the gendered tensions that exist in the ZNA. Also, it emphasises the cultural constructions of masculinities (where women's voices are subdued when it comes to issues to do with power). These constructions of military masculinities thus vindicate the suppression of women's capacities in the military (Gibson and Lindegaard 2007). The gendered power disparities that exist in the ZNA and civilian politics disclose what Reskin and Roos (2009) regard as power asymmetry in the military: where male soldiers are a dominant gender, have access to power and are also more vocal than women. Such relational experiences affect the role of women in most militaries (Sharoni 2008). The imbalances in power nevertheless indicate a mutual relationship between the military and masculinities (Sasson-Levy 2010; Enloe 1998; Pateman 1989).

As discussed in Chapter 4 (See sec 4.5) power in the army emanates from combat units, which, in turn, are the embodiment of the military (Cowen and Siciliano 2011; Dixon and Marston 2011; Dowler and Sharp 2001; Greenburg 2017). For Foucault (Rabinow 1991) power goes beyond politics and can be seen in quotidian, socialised and embodied occurrences and experiences for both male and female soldiers, albeit quite differently. For example, in militaries, such as the US combat forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, counter-insurgency teams consisting of women only were deployed as combatants, yet "certain gender essentialisms, such as feminine domesticity" were nonetheless promoted in tandem with "military violence" (Greenburg 2017:1107). According to Greenburg (ibid), a "new form of military femininity has emerged that eschews humanitarian rhetoric, and instead emphasises servicewomen's lethality". In contrast, my research indicates that in Zimbabwe, even though many women had been combatants in the liberation war, their battle experience was to all intents subsequently erased. In the ZNA, most women do not work in combat units and are not deployed on the battlefield; instead, the reality is that women in this army are made docile through its hegemonic and patriarchal culture (Sharoni 1998).

According to my participants, it is hard for them to attain high ranking positions such as Generals or even Brigadier Generals in the ZNA. Such military structural dissonances and ambiguities undermine women soldiers' aspirations and their position in the army (Carrairas 2017). My participants claimed that their lack of engagement with civilian politics has to do with the gendered structural impediments they experience throughout the entire career in the army. Rosen et al. (1996) argued that the lack of institutional support for women soldiers should be understood as structural challenges for them. This argument was supported by participants in my research. They professed that the military system is highly politicised, rigid and erodes their chances to be involved in relations of power in the army and beyond. The deliberate institutional alienation of women from positions of power is a form of legitimised inequality (Enloe 1983; 2000; Goldstein 2010). According to Foucault (1977) the reproduction of certain practices over a period of time creates knowledge which will eventually shape how power is experienced in an institution. Hence, in this study it became apparent that the stereotypical view of women soldiers, as officers who cannot lead battalions or brigades in the ZNA, creates and promotes the alienation of women

soldiers and at the same time promotes men as capable leaders in the army and in civilian authority. All of this is ultimately constructed and accepted as the natural ways of things. This situation is also visible in the wider Zimbabwean society, which represents a patriarchal order (Gaidzanwa 1996). Even though women officers in my study argue that they are competent to take up influential positions, gender stereotypes and inequality are continuously reproduced inside the army, as well as outside it.

5.3 Power and the presence of the 'old guard'

As discussed before, just after independence, Zimbabwe's two liberation struggle armies, ZIPRA, and ZANLA were integrated into what is now called the Zimbabwe National Army (Chimedza and Chirimambowa 2014). Currently, the top ranks of the ZNA are exclusively filled by male veteran combatants who participated in the Zimbabwean liberation struggle. Most of my study participants argued that the continued appointment of male army generals in the post-independence army undermine the potential for women officers to advance through the ranks of the ZNA. My participants referred to these veteran officers as 'old cargoes'¹², who are rigid and stuck in nostalgia. Maringira (2017) emphasises that army generals in the ZNA influence both barrack and civilian politics in Zimbabwe. After the liberation struggle, these veterans were given most of the high ranks in the army, while the majority of women-combatants were reintegrated into mainstream civilian society (Kriger 2006). As a result, few women combatants remained in the military. Due to this state of affairs, military structures were exclusively filled by male combatants who had been part of the former armed revolutionary groups (See also Chapter 1, Sec 1.2). Soon after Independence, the majority of the former Rhodesian National Army (RNA) officers returned to civilian life as well (White 2007; Tendi 2003). In the new ZNA male ex-guerrillas stayed on in military service and began to consolidate both military and civilian power (Chimedza and Chirimambowa 2014). According to Masamba;

Most of the women soldiers who participated in the liberation struggle went back into society. Some ex-combatants reconnected with their families, and some start

¹² Old and rigid men army officers who participated in the armed struggle

their own families through the ex-combatant's rehabilitation processes. During that time, there were very few (women) who were integrated back into the new army.

All women officers interviewed claim that male veterans cling on to military and civilian power and extensively participate in politics inside and outside the army. Which is why Gibson (2010: 614) argued that militaries are “male-centred institutions”. One participant, Musana said:

To tell you the truth my brother these old *madhalas*¹³ make our life difficult in the army

According to my participants these ‘old cargoes’ publicly claim that military and civilian political power belongs to them because they had seen combat in the struggle (Maringira 2017). The ‘old cargoes’ “monopolise power” and render women powerless and ineffectual (Singerman 1994: 180). Only a handful of women soldiers who are connected to the ‘old cargoes’, attained positions of authority in civilian politics. Soko professed that;

Just after the liberation struggle small number of (female) former combatants were ‘retired’ (redeployed) to the lower structures of the government and the ruling party ZANU PF.

In the 1980s, former women combatants were increasingly retired, and only a few joined the ‘new’ ZNA as non-combatant officers (Chimedza and Chirimambowa 2014). In the Zimbabwean context of state-military conflation, most women combatants who had fought in the liberation war, as well as women officers who subsequently joined the ‘new’ ZNA, are not involved (even after retirement) in either state or civilian politics. Masamba claimed that;

This dominance by male soldiers in higher ranks was compelled by how ex-combatants consolidated power in the early years of the ZNA after the integration

¹³ A Ndebele word means old mem

of the three armies. The few women soldiers who were left in the military were less powerful, and they did not have much power or voice in the military.

Masamba's response is reminiscent of Harel-Shalev et al (2017) who argue that women soldiers feel less important in the military because they are not accorded the combat heroism status which is accorded to their male counterparts (even if they had also been fighters in the struggle). Gumbo further claimed:

The majority of male soldiers who remained in the army are the ones who were appointed to the position's high ranks in the newly formed army; some were promoted to party politics. A minimal number of women who remained were not recognised as most male officers.

The above narrative by Gumbo, as well as a great deal of scholarship, reveal that male veterans who remained in the military eventually gained power within the institution, the state (Maringira 2017) and in civilian politics. This arrangement replicates the patriarchal system with male soldiers dominating in the army (Shefer and Mankayi 2007). It further reflects the reproduction and propagation of hegemonic masculinities in this institution (Jarvis 2004; Shefer and Mankayi 2007; Gibson 2010; Ben-Ari 1998). In this context, male ex-combatants became the custodians and epitome of power in the army, ruling party ZANU PF and state in Zimbabwe. To substantiate this argument, Tembo professed that;

These 'old cargos' think that they own the military and keys to power processes in the army, and authority civilian politics in the country.

The narrative above shows that 'old cargos' employ an old-fashioned military¹⁴ style of running affairs in the ZNA. Carreira (2004) similarly argued that most old military men have a paternalistic attitude towards women soldiers. In the ZNA, veteran male officers discriminate against women soldiers and politicise power along gender lines. Foucault (1977) asserted that knowledge is

¹⁴ The military that is hyper-masculine and exclusively made by men

developed or constructed through everyday practices or by politics of the day and becomes common knowledge. This argument by Foucault (ibid) throws light on the reality of the claim of ‘old cargoes’ that they are ‘owners’ of military and civilian power in Zimbabwe. This seems to have been the practice since the formation of the new army after independence. The men rely on a profoundly patriarchal system to support their dominance in powerful positions, while simultaneously side-lining women soldiers. Sasson-Levy (2011:74) describes such a situation as a “perpetuation of essentialist perceptions of masculinities”. In the ZNA women soldiers have arguably normalised this knowledge, they have come to believe that these ‘old cargoes’ are the custodians of military and political power in Zimbabwe.

The continued presence and dominance of ‘old cargoes’ in ZNA structures makes gender transformation within ZNA and civilian structures almost impossible. The lack of a cohesive relationship between ‘old cargoes’ and the current Zimbabwe Women Services (ZWS) breed a lot of structural mistrust. From research narratives, it is clear that commissioned women officers in the ZNA find it hard to navigate such a hyper-masculine environment.

Sasson-Levy (2011) argues that the contrast between male and women soldiers in their endeavours in the military translate to gendered power struggles. Enloe (2000:1) described the multiple ways of subjugating women soldiers in the military as a “heady brew” of hyper masculinised practices. These practices are used to obstruct women soldiers’ progress in the military. The gendered relational complexity, which is experienced by women soldiers in the ZNA, is best explained by Foucault (1977) who postulates that power is relational. Foucault (ibid) further asserts that there are multiple relational processes which strengthen or weakens power for those in control or those who are subjected to it. In the ZNA the “entrenching of politics in the army” gave the military veterans power to control both civilian and military institutions (Maringira 2017:94). Male 'old cargoes' retain their special privileges and remain an untouchable clique in the army and civilian authority.

While women officers strive to be promoted and gain authority in the army, the resistance by ‘old cargoes’ define how power manifests through various “everyday practices” and “identifiable

institutional forms” (Niezen 2018:1). Most of my participants revealed that the ‘old cargoes’ have firm control of the army and all the civilian structures in Zimbabwe. That is, they determine whom to promote or demote in the army and civilian authority (Maringira 2017). In such situations, women soldiers remain victims of gendered power struggles in the military (Sasson-Levy 2011). This happens despite women being active actors in the army (Harel-Shalev et al. 2017). It is nevertheless stressful for women soldiers to work in such military contexts (Harel-Shalev et al 2017).

5.4 Women Soldiers and Power

The ambiguous position of women in the military has always been problematic (Hyde 2017). As discussed in the previous section, Zimbabwe's specific civil-military synthesis undermines the status of women soldiers in various ways. In most armies the performance of women soldiers is deeply entangled and obscured by hyper-masculine barrack politics (Sasson-Levy 2010) - this is also the case in the ZNA where power and opportunities are accessed in a gendered way (Zalewski 2000). The military “structure and its practices replicate stereotypes of maleness and femaleness” (Gibson 2010: 614). Sjoberg (2010) argues that men's exclusionary actions in the military symbolise a gendered military culture which is constructed and inculcated in male officers as they come into the institution. Such practices are “traditional conceptions” of masculinity (Connell 1995:123) with a “combat culture” (Kaplan 2000) that shapes power and masculinities in this context. This arrangement broadly turns the military into a hegemonic masculine institution (Kaplan and Ben-Ari 2000).

In Zimbabwe there is a single and synchronised chain of power and command (army/party and state) which is almost exclusively filled by men. It becomes difficult for women soldiers to navigate and attain crucial positions in both the military and in civilian politics. The civil-military nexus is a prohibitive and non-progressive system for women in the military (Vitelli 2018). Niezen (2018:2) argued that power and domination are “inseparable from the ideas” of those who are its custodians and who map it out. Hence, the hegemonic masculinities, on which military masculinities are modelled, fortify gendered identities within the institution (Peterson and True

1998: 21; Harel-Shalev et al. 2017: 500; Harel-Shalev and Daphna-Tekoah 2016). As discussed in the previous section, veteran officers undermine women soldiers' desire to rise through the ranks, thereby accessing power and authority in the army. Instead, 'old cargoes' claim and enforce 'ownership' of the processes of power in the ZNA and by extension in civilian authority. This happens because women soldiers are often deemed as a threat to the existing hegemony in the army, as well as in national politics (Mitchell 1989; Creveld 2002). Women soldiers' struggles in this regard can thus be understood as gendered and structural. These challenges are experienced from top leadership to the lowest parts of the ZNA, as claimed by my participants. The army commanders in the ZNA behave as if they are the 'fathers' of the army and civil politics (Maringira 2017). One of my participants, Shumba, said;

We feel that these 'old cargoes' are a hindrance to our access to power and progression in the army. They are rigid and act as 'Godfathers' of the country's army and politics. We cannot command some of them or change the situation because that how it is.

The above claim indicates a dilemma that confronts all women soldiers in ZNA. In this case, when military men present themselves as 'fathers', or are represented as 'Godfathers', it shows patriarchal culture which is operationalised and revealed in the ZNA. The claims above further reveal how women's ideas concerning political power, as well as their aspirations are thwarted within the army. This also reveals how women soldiers bear the brunt of patriarchy in this military and beyond, despite how they strive to become more like their male counterparts (Nguyen 2008), through military training and the roles they play in the institution. Shumba also emphasises that female soldiers remain 'women' and not soldiers in the eyes of military men.

Such practices and ideas are discriminatory for women soldiers and negate their efforts and capabilities (Stiehm 2009). In the case of the ZNA, institutional culture and practices create regimes of inequality that further the domination of military men and the continued subjugation of women soldiers. This resonates with Foucault (1977), who argued that power is a process that produces superiors and subjects because of its interactive nature between parties in contention.

Just as Foucault claimed, military men in the ZNA view women soldiers as ‘subjects’ whom they can control. This reality is confirmed by the lived experiences of women in the army. Male soldiers in general, and ‘old cargoes’ in particular, make their intention of maintaining their dominance as a highly gendered clique in the army and civilian politics known to women soldiers. Cheeseman and Tendi (2010) found that veteran male officers in the ZNA believe that they are the 'guardians' of Zimbabwe's civil-political leadership. Maringira (2017) also reiterates that male war veterans from the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe remain in the military and ultimately determine the promotion and demotion of all junior army officers (male and female) in the army. Unsurprisingly, the experiences of my participants reflect the "othering" of women soldiers in the military, which in turn, allow male soldiers to view women as an "un-essential" gender in the army (Wardell and Czerwinski (2001: 188). Such practices are not in line with military professionalism (Kohn 2009; Sarkesian and Conor 2006).

As Shumba alluded above, power seems elusive for the majority of women soldiers in the ZNA, except for a handful who are related to veteran officers. Van Breda (2016) also argues that the hegemonic culture in the military is not appropriate for women soldiers' progress in the military, while Niezen (2018:2) opines that gendered practices and politics are the “ideas that are formative with those who have interests in power”. Unsurprisingly Duncanson and Woodward (2017) argue that militaries epitomise extreme hegemonic culture. As my participants narrated, I could see that the marginalisation of women soldiers is visible in every practice within the ZNA. Nevertheless, the challenges women face in the army seem to be universal in most military establishments (Sjoberg 2009). Hence, the nature of comparative government in the military should be scrutinised through analysing the gendered subjectivities and positions of women in their contexts (Duncanson 2013). It is then vital to distinguish women soldiers' voices in such a context (Enloe 2000; Woodward and Winter 2007; Cockburn and Hubic 2002).

To talk about gender equality is not enough in a context such as the ZNA. Instead, a conscious drive towards gender mainstreaming and organisational transformation is needed (Heinecken 2020). In the case of South Africa, where a policy of gender mainstreaming has been implemented in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Heinecken and Van de Waag-Cowling

(2009) found that the number of women soldiers increased in top military leadership; from 11% in 1994 to 19.5% in 2007. The rise involved positions of Brigadier General and above, i.e. the top ranks in the military. Recently the Minister of Defence and Military Veterans in South Africa, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula¹⁵, confirmed this by saying 'the SANDF has six women Major Generals and 46 women in the rank of Brigadier General' (Defence Web 11 March 2019). Heinecken and Van de Waag-Cowling (2009) also established that most male combatants in the SANDF accept that women must be equally appointed and they must have full access to power or to any position in the SANDF hierarchy. Although the ZNA claims to be gender sensitive (The Herald 6 January 2016; The Chronicle 2 March 2020), findings from this study imply that women soldiers are not accorded equal opportunities within the military. Hence, the promotion of a few women soldiers in the higher ranks is based on connections with men who are in high command more than on governmental and institutional gender policy. This is why some scholars argue that gender mainstreaming and its strategies is not enough to bring transformation (Davids et. al 2018; Milward 2015), especially in hyper-masculinised organisations such as the military.

The above development in SANDF differs from the ZNA, where there are only two women Brigadiers General in the entire national army. Despite a public call by Brigadier General Justine Mujaji that the ZNA should be a 'professional army' which offers gender equality in all its regiments (All Africa, 8 June 2009)¹⁶, the reality is quite different. Most of my participants stressed that they had been left behind in as far as access to power in the army is concerned. However, one of the interesting observations made by study participants is that, the two women Brigadiers who had been promoted are ex-combatants, who participated in the liberation struggle. This indicates that power and promotion are likely more accessible to those who participated in the liberation struggle.

¹⁵ Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula is Minister of Defence and Military Veterans in South Africa, made these comments applauding how women have advancement in the SANDF structures, at an International Women's Day event

¹⁶ All Africa, 8 June 2009, ZNA to Prioritise Gender Equality - Brigadier General (Training) Justine Mujaji

However, some participants claim that young male officers are more tolerant of women in the ZNA as compared to the 'old guard' Soko claimed that;

There is a big difference between 'old cargoes' and other male officers who were recruited with us, especially those officers who came into the army in post-independence (21st century). These young male officers are like our brothers, and there is a clear difference in their level of tolerance, as compared to those senior officers from the liberation struggle.

Yet, in this case, tolerance does not necessarily translate into access to power and authority. At the same time, it is a hopeful sign that young and post-liberation male officers are 'tolerant' towards women soldiers. It is probably also the case that the younger male cadres are themselves constrained by the 'old cargoes' as the latter continue to cling to power. Support by younger male officers might help to clear a path for de-gendering access to power in the military (Hülagü 2020), especially for the ZNA, where the civil-military nexus is powerful. Although the 'old guard' in the ZNA has idealised and promoted an explicit patriarchal culture in the institution (and in civilian politics), my participants hope that the situation might eventually change with the support of a younger generation of male officers who partially support women's recognition in corridors of power. However, the explicit patriarchal system remains highly visible and evident in both military and civil politics in Zimbabwe.

Nevertheless, my study revealed that women soldiers' challenges and demanding experiences differ from one context to the other. In Zimbabwe, it represents dominant military and political and cultural systems (Cockburn and Hubic 2002), that exists in the country. Runyan (2014) postulates that the military has to civilise itself from its repressive culture, which inhibits women soldiers from accessing military power. In the case of the ZNA, my participants argued that the 'old guard' do not care about gender equality as long as they have power and authority. Nevertheless, in a study of SANDF, Van Breda (2016) found that the historical alienation of women soldiers in the positions of power in this army motivated women officers to fight for their

access to influential positions. Hence, robust gender mainstreaming regulations and policies further helped women to transform their position in the army.

5.5 The control of women soldiers in the army

Research indicates that men in the military have historically felt uncomfortable with the presence of women soldiers (Meyer 1992), and they generally mobilise power in the military towards other men (Lyon 2010). It is potentially a problem for women soldiers, especially in the ZNA, where they strive to rise in the army hierarchy. At the same time, women soldiers are under ceaseless surveillance by male officers who wish to regulate women through misogynist stereotypes and practices (Szitanyi 2020). Surveillance is a ‘tool’ used to steer people in a particular direction (Ochs 2011). Hence in this case, men in the military control and dictate roles for male soldiers in the army, but also for women, although in a different way. My study participants revealed that as women, they are under constant scrutiny from men in the military through different forms of practices within the ZNA. For example, the appointment of women soldiers to auxiliary units is also a way to keep them in check, Shumba claimed that;

Our male counterparts, sometimes discourage us (women officers) to taking up certain positions, especially in combat units in the army just because we are women. This happens even though, we are interested in power both in the military and in politics. However, most men in the military want to be in position of power in both the military and civilian politics because of economic benefits and they do anything to control our rise within the ranks.

This apparent discouragement of women soldiers also a form of male surveillance of women and of their bodies. In this case, it is crucial to understand surveillance as a deliberate process of “watching over” someone “routinely” (Lyon 2010: 108). Surveillance is an embodiment of any security system and it is highly utilised in disciplinary institutions such as military (Ochs 2011).

As women are perceived as a disruptive gender in the military (Carreiras 2006), their role is always under scrutiny from men, especially senior males, in the military.

The situation in the ZNA is reminiscent of Foucault's (2002:70) panopticism"

a type of power that is applied to individuals in the form of continuous individual supervision, in the form of control, punishment, and compensation, and in the form of correction, that is, the modelling and transforming of individuals in terms of certain norms.

Study participants emphasised a series of practices such as demeaning comments about their femininity, stereotypical chants, and other repetitive actions aimed to keep them in their subservient place as women (See Chapter 4 sec 4.3). These practices, as discussed in the previous chapter, psychologically affect women soldiers, and function to control and suppress women soldiers' capacities in the military. Such experiences are not only prevalent during training but remain constant throughout their entire time of service in the army. Katswe said:

My brother, it is surprising that these insults do not just happen when we are recruits only, but they continue even when we are commissioned officers like this. There are some instances when you want to give orders, and you will get comments like; *Hapana chatinoudzwa nemunhu anoenda kumwedzi*, please keep quiet there is nothing that we can be told by someone who goes to her monthly periods.

Katswe claimed that such comments are commonly hurled at women officers, even when they are in commissioned ranks. The everyday demeaning of women soldiers in such ways reveal the perceptions and behaviour of male officers who are socialised to think that women are less capable than men. It furthermore undermines women soldiers' authority in the military (Eagly and Karau 2002; Karazi-Presler et al. 2018). These mortifying connotations and conscious engagements by male soldiers who look down on women soldiers, thrive to discourage (control) women soldiers' capacities in the army. Thus, the military views power in a conventional and patriarchal way (Karazi-Presler et al. 2018)

Similar trends have been noted in the armies of other countries. Van Breda (2016), for example, found that male soldiers in the SANDF openly disrespect and dismiss women officers' commands. Such mortifying practices serve to psychologically control women soldiers' thinking and ambitions for power within the institution. Male soldiers rely on these practices, which act as tools of surveillance and control women soldiers' progression in the army hierarchy and eventually in civilian politics. Since this form of surveillance is executed through everyday practice in the military and these experiences will also become an everyday part of women's lives in the military (see Chapter 4 sec 4.6). It can be understood as a form of psychological violence against women soldiers (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004).

Enloe (2014) emphasises that men in most security organisations expect women to be passive participants (spectators) in the processes of power. Similar to the ZNA, Karazi-Presler et al (2018) found that the men in the Israeli military unobtrusively promote culturally heteronormative masculinist conceptions and practices to control the role of women. As a result, military men improvise and proliferate various ways to surveil women. Once again, this is reminiscent of the work of Foucault (1977) who argued that knowledge that is created in institutions such as, militaries and security institutions, is not to discipline others only, but also for self-discipline. In a sense, once women soldiers see how men view them in the military, they practice self-surveillance and -discipline in accordance with the patriarchal gaze of the army.

Fundamental proportions of hyper-masculine surveillance are deeply embedded in all structures of the military institutions (Kanter 1977). Therefore, this form of surveillance enables male officers, to both obviously and unobtrusively hedge against the rise of women soldiers in the military command structure. Foucault (1977) argued that power produces knowledge which informs resistance and subjectivity. That is, this knowledge is informed by a "complex and multitudinous" network of practices (Gayman 2011:64), which create embedded realities (power in the military). These multi-faceted and well networked practices are meant to restrict the role of women as in the case of the ZNA.

Combat units are the loci of power in the ZNA (See Section 4.5 in the previous chapter). Similarly, Huss and Cwikel (2015) found that, for example in the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF), women who were restricted in combat roles, were also constrained in positions of power and authority in the IDF. In the ZNA, assigning women to non-combat roles to all intents cut off their access or ability to participate in relations of power in the army. It is a gender sorting strategy used by men in the ZNA, especially to direct and redirect women soldiers' movement and ambitions within the army structures- as well as outside it. In Zimbabwe, the possibility for women soldiers to smoothly segue into civilian authority, like many current and former military commanders in Zimbabwe, is thus also contained or disciplined.

Nonetheless, most of my participants seemingly accept this as 'normal'. Once again, Foucault (1977) is helpful for my understanding in this regard. He argued that surveillance is often sophisticated to the extent that those who are being surveilled do not notice or understand it. In the case of the ZNA, women soldiers represented their appointment and relegation to non-combat units as somehow being in their interest, for their own (female) benefit, even as this situation limits them in the army. Mamdani (2002) argued that it is crucial to understand the nature of power at stake to be able to contextualise the nature and level of power struggles in an institution. Thus, looking closely at the appointment of women officers to non-combat units in the ZNA can be understood as the use of masculinity as a way to defuse potential power contestations in the army and in civilian politics.

Men in militaries build deliberate ignorance of and resistance to demands of gender equality within the institution (Stiehm 2009). In a study in the SANDF, Van Breda (2016) also found that some men do not respect the authority of women. My study participants reported a similar trend in the ZNA. They emphasised that men are consistently endorsed as a more potent and superior gender in the institution. Thus the military's aggressive nature inhibits the role of feminine identities in it (Peterson and Runyan 2010). This situation is not unique to ZNA only, but is prevalent to other militaries in Africa and elsewhere. It is rampant in military institutions because the growing

presence of women soldiers in the institution neutralises and shift power dynamics within the army (Greenwood 2017). In such contexts, where male soldiers feel that women soldiers are a threat to their power, gendered surveillance becomes an “everyday practice” (Lyon 2010: 107).

The “operational experience” of women in the military thus dramatically affects their role and position (Van Breda 2016: 26). It is accordingly important to investigate women soldiers’ issues in the light of masculinities and how such meaning-making affect women soldiers’ position (Enloe 2004). Cockburn and Hubic (2002), for instance, argued that women soldiers’ perpetual subjugation is a necessary violence for military men; such practices propel men into positions of power, at the expense of women soldiers. In a study in South African Infantry Battalions, Alchin (2015) found that most women soldiers in the infantry battalions had traumatic experiences during their time of service, mostly as a result of how male soldiers enact their ideas of masculinity.

5.6 Promotional courses: power and political hope

My participants emphasised that, when they pass promotional courses, they hope to advance in the hierarchy of the ZNA and, if possible, in civilian politics. Crucially, most commissioned women soldiers who I interviewed, were recruited as cadet officers. That is, most of them started their military careers appointed to the position of second lieutenants, which is the lowest rank for commissioned officers. Promotion is a critical exercise in the military, and it defines progression in it (Moore and Trout 1978). Hence my study participants regarded promotion as an avenue to gain power and attain a political role in the civilian politics. This system of promotion is a crucial lever for acquiring organisational autonomy (Huntington 1957). Usually, a professional army offers promotions based on merit, of acquired and tested skills (Lutterbeck 2013; Maringira 2017).

My research participants were all hopeful that internal promotional courses would enable them to reach higher ranks and status in the ZNA. They further revealed that they had attended several courses such as Platoon Commanders Course (PCC), Reserve Platoon Commanders Course (RPCC), Company Commanders Course (CCC) and other Staff Courses. All these courses require physical fitness, duty performances and decorations. That is, they draw on masculine performances

which are compulsory to all officers in the military. On successful completion, they are supposed to be promoted to advanced commanding positions in the ZNA, based on merit.

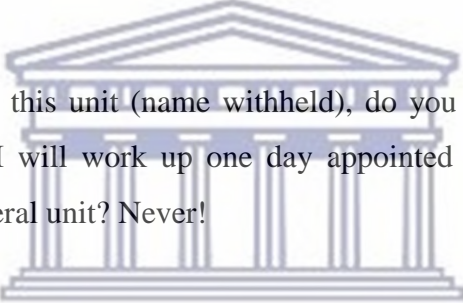
There are various theoretical explanations which seek to explain women's challenges in the military, and many scholars focus on the broader spectrum of gendered experiences of women in the army (Sasson Levy 2011, Enloe 2004, Heinecken 2017). However, it is also essential to pay much closer attention to its promotional system and how it empowers or disempowers women soldiers. It is also crucial to attend to the relational impact of promotions and how they affect the political intricacies and institutional undertakings in the military. Since the military is as a hyper-masculinised environment, it is of paramount importance to scrutinise how promotion processes act as tools that empowers or inhibit women soldiers' access to power in the context of military/party/ state conflation in Zimbabwe.

While most of my participants passed their Promotional Exams (PROMEX), their physical Battle Fitness Tests (BFT), as well as courses mentioned above, they had not been promoted to key positions in the ZNA. This is in line with Lutterbeck's (2013) argument that promotions and positions in the military are political; therefore, key positions are often awarded on patronage bases. In this context, patronage does not respect professionalism (Maringira 2017). Women soldiers in the ZNA find it challenging to navigate the masculine institutional barriers: they fail to access positions of authority in the army despite excelling in promotional courses, Mutaka, reiterated that:

To tell you the truth, my brother, since I was recruited in the army, I have never seen a woman failing these promotional courses.

Nonetheless, they do not get promotion. The continued 'invisibility' of women soldiers in the top leadership in the ZNA reveals a particular reality (see Sec 4.4). Some participants claim that despite scoring high marks in their ratings, their lack of success in promotion remains a mystery. Enloe (2000) argued that women who are promoted to higher ranks and who are recognised in the military, are also capable of working in civilian leadership.

Nevertheless, other scholars argue that, despite their success within the military, women often remain invisible in the corridors of power. Some scholars argue that the low number of women soldiers in positions of power might be because men are the majority in the military: their numbers translate to power (Kanter 1977). However, in the ZNA, it is not only about the disparity in numbers, but about the hegemonic and patriarchal culture in the institution. When women excel in all their promotional courses, they are promoted or redeployed into administrative and auxiliary services. These units are removed from where potential power is focused in the army. As discussed in the previous section, such re-deployments seem to control women soldiers' positions in the ZNA: and affect their civilian authority in the long run. Although most of my participants hoped that they would move through the ranks through excelling in institutional processes of promotion, Gumbo, revealed that:



My brother, I work in this unit (name withheld), do you think if I excel in all promotional courses, I will work up one day appointed a General or being a commander in the general unit? Never!

Moore and Trout (1978: 453) argued that “the ultimate yardstick of performance in the military is combat roles”. This assertion coincides with what I discussed in the previous chapter (section 3.5), where, I explain how combat units act as centres of power in the ZNA. Hence the promotion of women to non-combat units do not change their position in the army but instead maintains it. It further shows how masculinity is highly exercised and how power is coded with masculinity in the military. Nonetheless, my study participants made it clear that they would not seek advancement through sexual favours, Lizwe said:

As commissioned officers, we do not ask for sexual favours to fellow male officers for our promotions.

Commissioned women officers do have a certain level of protection against sexual abuse, mostly because of their rank and also because the areas of cantonment or units in which they serve are

somewhat 'sheltered'. Most of my participants expressed that they still hope that the promotional and testing processes in the ZNA will eventually allow them to rise through the ranks. This belief is in line with Moore and Trout (1978: 453) who argued that military promotion relies on "observation of individual performance" more than group performances. However, from an intellectual perspective, these promotional processes in the ZNA seem to be extremely gendered. Hong (2002) emphasised a similar trend in the South Korean Army, where men view women as 'unfit' to hold critical positions in the military. Women soldiers were given non-combat roles and less influential positions despite their capabilities and how they excel in the institutional promotional courses. One of my participants, Mutaka, said;

We have some women who are intelligent and who can command battalions and strategize better than most of these male soldiers.

Military identity is performativity constituted (Wadley 2010), and Mutaka draws on this when she argues that women officers could arguably perform in the same way as men in the army. Although military training ingrains a particular identity in soldiers, including aggressiveness and endurance (Sasson- Levy 2000), women soldiers in the ZNA are still perceived as somehow 'lesser' than male soldiers. Here I draw on Butler's (1999) performativity to interrogate how performance and power are related in structural and hierarchical institutions such as the military. Despite Mutaka's assertion in the ZNA, social as well as political discursive forces simultaneously construct and also normalise masculinist ideas and practices in the military. Butler's work helps to understand how hegemonic conceptions of power are modelled in ZNA and other militaries. It is common in many armies in the world to create informal ceilings that guide and limit women's rise in this institution (Carreiras 2004). In many ways, most courses taken by commissioned women officers in the hope of advancement subtly and oftentimes blatantly favour male soldiers (Manigart 1999). Hence, women are often rendered passive spectators of power struggles in the military (Brownmiller 1993).

5.7 Post military service, family-political complex

Women soldiers are confronted by the dichotomies of family and the military in their bid to pursue power in the military (Sharoni 2001). These “two institutions compete for the time, resources, and loyalty” from women soldiers (Wahl and Randal 1996:315). All my study participants professed that they find it challenging to be both a soldier and have a family. Crouch et al (2001) argued that women soldiers are caught between two genders and gender roles, while, Meyer (1992) argued that, in their quest to be heroes, women lose their femininity. As pointed out by these scholars, the situation of women in the military is problematic, particularly in armies which are highly politicised, such as the ZNA. Women often find it challenging to be mothers and soldiers at the same time, mostly because militaries are gender insensitive (Acker 1990).

Unlike men, women soldiers interviewed, claimed that they are not enabled by the ZNA to move into civilian politics after they ‘retire’ from the military. At the same time, women soldiers, including commissioned officers, are expected to take on stereotypical women’s roles at home, particularly if they wish to have a family. Being assigned to non-combat units seemingly enable them to deal with an array of potentially conflicting roles and expectations, and they often seemingly accept this *status quo*. Karazi-Presler et al (2018: 2) described this situation as the “ongoing trap” facing women soldiers. In this way, militaries rely on the complicity of those it subordinates (Rones and Fasting 2017). In the context of Zimbabwe, many male soldiers pursue a civilian political route during and after serving in the army because of the economic benefits which they get through various privileges such as tenders, contracts and also graft. Nevertheless, my study participants indicated that, even though they want to be politicians after they retire, the highly gendered politicisation of power in the army, affects most women soldiers after their military service. Hence, most of them become ordinary civilians and to pursue life as mothers to their families. Tembo professed in this regard;

My brother, even if we want to be leaders both in military and civilian politics, it is tough for us as women, I tell you, power in our national army belongs to men as I told you before. How then do you expect us as women to be active in politics or in any position of authority in Zimbabwe? It is tough, I tell you. That’s what you

see that when most women soldiers retire, they become full-time mothers, and we do not expect to be in politics, except a few who are connected *kumashefu*¹⁷

Enloe (1983) argued that military is inappropriate for the advancement of women's roles. In the abstract above Tembo indicates that in the ZNA, as in many militaries, hyper-masculinity dictates the roles of women soldiers while serving and also beyond their lives in the military (Drummet et al.; 2003). Also, the complexities of balancing motherhood (Drummet et al.; 2003) with the masculinist culture of the army, convinced many of the women in my study that they should leave power and politics in the ZNA to men. The “gendered manoeuvres” of the military substantially “creates patriarchal consequences” for serving women (Mertust 2000: 342).

In this context, the situation is different for male officers, especially the “old cargoes” who unapologetically hold on to power while in the army. When they ‘retire’ they move into the echelons of civilian authority via politics. Foucault (1977) argued that power is an embodied phenomenon which creates knowledge that fortifies structures of power within an institution. In this case, certain practices continuously done in the ZNA enforce masculinity and hegemonic culture within commissioned rank structures, which in turn suppress women soldiers’ ambitions. These are informed by everyday practice in the military, which coerce women into accepting that they do not fit into certain positions in the army or to political power in civilian politics. Subsequently, this reality probably affects the political thinking and aspirations afterwards. Although women soldiers arguably have a democratic right to be part of the military's political power processes (Kronsell 2012), it is, however important to critically scrutinise the complexities of women soldiers’ life in the army (Kelley et al 2001). While many male soldiers maintain their military identity (Maringira 2015), in civilian politics after retirement, my study participants revealed that most women soldiers find themselves in a ‘fix’ within the army. Hence why most women pursue a complete civilian life i.e. (out of the army and civilian politics) when they leave the army. Masamba alluded to this when she said:

¹⁷ It is a Shona word which means the bosses.

Most of us when we retire, we prefer going back to civilian life and start families or spend time with our families instead of going into civil politics, politics, it is for men, and they are the ones with the strength to participate in civilian politics; personally, I do not have that strength.

Masamba had to all intents acquiesced military and political power to men, especially the “old cargoes”. Her response also reaffirms the complexities experienced by women in the military. Apart from these challenges, the narrative reveals the “inseparability of womanhood and femininity” for women soldiers (Sharoni 2001:99). Masamba further claimed that being a mother and being a member of the armed services is particularly challenging because staff are often relocated, deployed and redeployed. Barret (1996) argued that militaries view and interpret soldiering using the lens of a conventional man. Usually, the responsibility of dealing with the upheaval of moving a family would be that of the mother. Being a woman soldier thus comes with a lot of psychological distress (Barnett and Baruch 1985). However, these decisions are also caused by how the military is hyper-masculinised. Although some feminists argue that women in the military provide opportunities to disrupt the military's hegemonic cultures (Enloe 2007; Stiehm 2009; 1989) commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA find it hard to destabilise the institution's hegemonic culture because of how power is viewed and exercised in this context.

The family institution as a social establishment has a significant influence on the role women soldiers can play in the military (Lebel and Rochlin 2009). Most of my participants claimed that it is a challenge for them to be a mother and a soldier. These are antagonistic roles both in practice and in demand. Hence, it is crucial to hear their narratives in such a context to understand how these experiences affect their lives (Enloe 2004; Cohn and Enloe 2003). My participants further affirmed that it is challenging to have a marriage while serving, although most of them claim that they want to have their own families. Segal (1986: 9) described the military and the family as “greedy institutions”, that is, these institutions are quite demanding for women soldiers. Marrying a fellow officer is a supposedly a punishable offence in ZNA, while civilian men find it difficult to live in the constraining circumstances of, for example, a military cantonment. Nevertheless, a number of my study participants were married to army officers. Mutaka said:

Yes, my brother, we know that it is not allowed to marry, but we do it because our fellow male soldiers understand us better because we are in the same profession, unlike getting married to a civilian man. Once we reach fifteen years of service when we are eligible to retire, we retire, and our husbands usually continue serving in the military.

Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) argue that the acceptance of such arrangements eventually extinguish women soldiers' autonomy in the military and make them subordinate to male officers. Similarly, in their study in the US Army (Wahl and Randal 1996) found 53.6 % of women in the US Army were married to their colleagues in the army. At the same time, my participants accentuated that their marriages were more important than their profession, an aspect also noted in militaries in other countries (Sasson-Levy 2000), where women soldiers often bend to the dictates of patriarchy and masculinity in the army (Sasson-Levy 2010). Women soldiers are more concerned about societal expectations of them being mothers than with their careers as soldiers. Accepting such arrangements was further inculcated and socialised into them in the army.

One of my study participants said that male soldiers, for instance, become incensed when women officers take maternity leave and afterwards denigrate their relevance in the military. Such behaviour is indicative of the patriarchal and masculinist political order of the institution (Enloe 2007; 2010). Such practices also further legitimise the domination of male soldiers over women in the military (Sharoni 2008). In the gendered politics of military power, the negation of women's reproductive needs and its portrayal as unfavourable can be understood as a strategy to claim power over women (Greig et al 2000). These relational experiences inform the gendered military and political power struggles which influence the position of women in most militaries around the world. It is a reflection of the conceptions of masculinity embodied in the military (Connell 1995). Listening to these kinds of narratives from my participants, it was also evident that the patriarchal and hegemonic culture in ZNA influences thoughts and decisions of women soldiers during and after serving in the army. That is, the military obscures the aspirations for power of women soldiers until they retire from serving in the ZNA.

Segal (1995) hypothesised that the more significant the family responsibility became for women soldiers, the less the representation of women in power in the military and civilian politics will be. At the same time, social constructions of normative roles of women influence these commissioned women soldiers' decisions to leave military and political power to men in the ZNA. That is, their male colleagues, or husbands who are serving in the army, will take up leadership positions in the military (Drummet et al 2003). After their 'retirement' these men will still be able to enter civilian politics, thereby continuing to serve the interests of the military. My study participants similarly professed that it is hard to concentrate on or spend time with their families because all soldiers in the ZNA are rotated from one province to the other after every three years. As a result, as Kanter (1977) indicated, women soldiers often prefer to give full attention to the family institution and other activities outside the military after service.



5.8 Conclusion

This chapter detailed and unpacked the experiences of women soldiers and their life in the army as full-time commissioned officers in the ZNA. It is revealed and analysed how power is politicised in the context of military/party/state conflation. It further detailed how the former revolutionary soldiers (old guard), view and amass power in both army and the state while also undermining women soldiers' progression and obscuring their role in the ZNA and beyond., I managed to unearth deeply embedded gendered practices which affect women soldiers' access to power in the ZNA. These discussions further revealed how the ZNA keep women soldiers in check, through various surveillance practices which control and limiting women soldiers' opportunities to access power in the army. The chapter also chronicled and gave a nuanced understanding of how women soldiers view power and how it leads to decisions they make while serving and in their post-military service life.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION

Power is everywhere in the military, yet certain gendered normative ideas and practices are so deeply embedded in the institution where it does not lead to significant benefits for women soldiers. Niezen (2018) argues that power is shaped, exercised and maintained by ideas and practices of a dominant group in any institution. This thesis unpacked and examined a host of challenges experienced by commissioned women soldiers in the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA), in as far as military and political power is concerned. In particular, the study underscored the reality that men in the military negate women soldiers' capacities to lead in and outside the barracks. Hence, the subjugation of women in the ZNA seems systemic, and it is reproduced through performative utterances, actions and practices which are embedded and promoted within the military system itself.

This study revealed intricate and hyper-masculinised practices (Gibson 2010; Heinecken 2017; Shefer et al 2014) in the ZNA. These practices are amplified through multiple gendered, sexualised, stereotypical connotations during training, such as '*simudza gumbo hauzi mukadzi iwe*' (lift your leg you are not a woman). Such attitudes negate women and the feminine. Ultimately women in the military institution are affected negatively. Commissioned women soldiers are subjects in such a highly masculinised and politicised terrain and have to negotiate it. Hence, there is a strong relation or connection between gendered stereotypes and subjugation of women soldiers in the ZNA, where the excessive of demeaning of women in the military affect women soldiers' ambitions and roles in the military.

Foucault (1977) argued that a cluster of continuous practices in any institution produces power (superiority and or inferiority), which will then affect the reality of the day. The study revealed that military and civilian power is organised and localised in the ZNA combat units, which produce military and civilian leaders for ZNA, ZANU PF party, and the state. These are institutionalised

structural arrangements which help men in the ZNA to create power and exercise certain practices which restrict women soldiers' capacities in the ZNA.

Most commissioned women officers are appointed and assigned to non-combat roles in the army. Stereotypically, women soldiers are viewed and represented as weak and incompetent soldiers who cannot take up combat roles or lead in the army. Thus, women soldiers in the ZNA can never be heroes, unlike male combat veterans. Because women are not deployed into combat, they are, in the long run, unable to gain the same eminence as their male counterparts (Harel-Shalev et al. 2017), especially since power in ZNA is idealised in relation to combat experience and maleness. As a result, most women in the ZNA find it challenging to be appointed into key positions not only in the military, but also in relation to civilian authority. It is consequently very difficult for women soldiers to negotiate for power in the highly masculinised and politicised terrain of the ZNA.

The study emphasised that hegemonic, hyper-masculinised, and patriarchal practices are deeply entrenched in the ZNA system. The problem in the ZNA is that patriarchy and hegemonic masculinities are practiced in some nuanced and refined ways. Practices such as stereotyped connotations or utterances which are rampant in the ZNA reveal truths or realities which produce power in favour of men in the military. Such everyday encounters by women soldiers helped me to understand various constructions of power, which are relational and experienced at the micro-level or at interpersonal level. The study revealed that the continued reproduction of such practices and discourses pervasively by men in the military create certain truths or realities which women accept as normal in the long run. Thus, the dominance of male soldiers in the positions of power, as well as the continuous internalisation of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy subsequently leads to women soldiers' acceptance of, and adherence to the hegemonic order in the military (Abma et.al. 1990b). The observation and conclusions made from this study concurs with Foucault (1977) who postulated that power not possessive, it is everywhere and it is diffused and produced through relational or inter-personal experiences in any institution.

The study further detailed how the presence of former revolutionary soldiers (old cargoes) in the ZNA, undermine women soldiers who try to rise in the ZNA rank structure. My research participants reveal that these ‘old cargoes’, claim to ‘own’ power processes in the military and the state. Due to the civilian-military nexus in Zimbabwe (Tendi 2013; Maringira and Masiya 2017), these ‘old cargoes’ claim and are largely able to determine who will be promoted, demoted and recalled in the army, party, and state (Maringira 2017). Such claims, but also the very real influence of such ‘old cargoes’ reveal why there is lack of deployment of women soldiers in both military and civilian authority, because these military men in the ZNA view power in patriarchal way.

The hegemonic culture in the ZNA creates gendered politics within the barracks, where women soldiers are under constant surveillance from military men. Such practices guard men’s privileges or power in the military and also in civilian authority. The gendered politics in the military spill into the civilian politics, since the army and ZANU PF are to all intents a continuity with the same Commander-in-Chief. I drew from Enloe’s (2000) work on power politics to understand that, even though women soldiers are present in the military, it does not necessarily mean that they are perceived or treated as equal partners in the institution. That is, gendered politics and how power is hyper-masculinised thwart women soldiers’ civilian political aspirations after their retirement from the military.

Since relations of power in the ZNA is patriarchal and hyper masculinised, women officers face a conundrum in relation to having a family. If they marry their colleagues in the ZNA and have children, they are perceived as wives and mothers and not as colleagues (equal partners) in the institution. Because, soldiers are expected to rotationally and regularly move to other bases and settings, most commissioned women officers in this study opted to marry fellow male army officers. Due to the patriarchal culture in Zimbabwe, this setup will latter complicate their workplace relationships and how women soldiers access power, because they will be moving from being colleagues to being wives, which will eventually affect their role in the army. Nevertheless, study participants intimated that, unlike male officers who, have the opportunity to become involved in civilian politics, they will concentrate on raising their families after they retire from

the ZNA. Due to the misogyny by men in the army, most commissioned women officers who leave the army prefer to completely retire from it and instead pursue a civilian life, where they can start their own small businesses or pursue new professions.

According to Enloe (1988:10) the army “is just another patriarchal institution” (Enloe 1988: 10). This is apparent in the system of promotion in the institution, which in turn is crucial for acquiring organisational autonomy (Huntington 1957). Yet the experience of women commissioned officers in the ZNA are negative in this regard since they do not rise through the ranks as expected. One of the reasons for this lay in the influence of ‘old cargoes’ in the ZNA who profess to be, and reportedly often are, the custodians of both centralized and decentralized promotions in the army (Maringira 2017; Tendi 2016; 2020). While men can reach the apex of the military command structure, commissioned women soldiers in the ZNA are side-lined and unable to gain key positions in the army or to afterwards move into civilian politics.

The ZNA, like many other militaries around the world, opted for less transformative and less inclusive policies (True 2003; Squires 2005). By not implementing such policies, power and political opportunities for women soldiers in the military and beyond are limited and male soldiers are empowered instead. Hopefully future studies may be informed by my own work and seek further insight, answers or mitigating measures in their quest to create robust and transformative solutions for women soldiers who experience difficult challenges in accessing power especially in militaries that are highly masculinised and politicised in general and in the ZNA in particular.

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