Political Resistance and Citizenship Agency: Exploring the Experiences of Black African Zimbabwean and South African Women

Belinda Maswikwa
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6247-5130
Department of Political Science
Stellenbosch University
bmaswikwa@gmail.com

Amanda Gouws
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1260-3944
SARChI Chair in Gender Politics
Department of Political Science
Stellenbosch University
ag1@sun.ac.za

Sarah Frances Gordon
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5131-8519
Post-Doc for the SARChI Chair in
Gender Politics
Department of Political Science
Stellenbosch University
gordonsarah44@gmail.com

Abstract

This article addresses how marginalised black African women in South Africa and Zimbabwe understand themselves as citizens, express agency and practise political resistance. Little research has been done on this topic in Southern Africa, especially in Zimbabwe, making this study particularly relevant. Literature relating to citizenship, agency and the political resistance of women in non-Western society is also discussed. Focus is placed on a case study analysis of women who live in Zimbabwean and South African townships and who self-identify as members of the Ndebele and Zulu ethnic groups respectively. In-depth interviews, which consisted of closed and open-ended questions, were conducted with these women, and each participant also completed a form requiring them to provide socio-demographic information. Content and relational analysis was used to analyse the responses of the participants. The results indicated that these black African women participated politically in invented spaces that typically exist outside of the public political sphere. The women use everyday resistance strategies to negotiate their

relationship with the state. These resistance strategies were found to be framed in terms of the women's daily economic struggles and the structural challenges they faced.

Introduction: Constructing Citizenship

Citizenship is a highly contested concept that outlines the relationship between an individual, the state and society. Claiming citizenship and the outcomes of that process are seen as particularly important, especially when considering the challenges and structural constraints in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Contemporary citizenship theories combine liberal, communitarian and civic republican ideas to define citizenship as a set of rights of and obligations to a community of members. Theories that emphasise citizenship as a set of rights are drawn from liberalism and are based on the belief that civil, political and social rights are the means by which the state guarantees freedom and equality for all sovereign members of the community. Castles and Davidson (2000) and Marshall (1950) place particular importance on achieving and protecting citizenship rights. They argue that citizenship carries inherent responsibilities and duties, such as obeying the law and voting. Furthermore, liberal-democratic ideas of rationality, autonomy and abstract individualism are key to liberal constructions of citizenship. For instance, Marshall (1950) and Rawls (1971) contend that granting this minimum set of rights will improve social cohesion, whilst also reducing economic and political inequalities. Following this argument, citizens will act rationally to advance their own interests, and the state should protect an individual's ability to pursue these interests (Oldfield 1990). Communitarian citizenship theorists rightly critique this notion of self-autonomous, abstract individuals and instead choose to focus on individual's social relations and interactions with social structures (Isin and Wood 1999; Sandel 1998; Taylor 1985). They argue that cultures, ethnicity and group membership are important in shaping action in both the private and public spheres. Collective identity and group representation in the public realm are important parts of citizenship and form part of how an individual can bargain and claim rights in society (Sandel 1998; Taylor 1985). Communitarians also understand citizenship as manifesting through civic virtues such as respect for others, voting and public service.

Civic republican citizenship thought aims to combine liberal and communitarian ideas by arguing that basic resources help individuals fulfil their community obligations and they view these resources as more important than rights (Isin and Wood 1999; Oldfield 1990). Civic republican citizenship argues that the essence of citizenship is active participation in public life and it highlights the importance of an environment that enables and fosters citizen participation. Therefore, all citizens must participate in the political, economic and social realms of society in order to empower themselves and challenge their social structures. Although there is a focus on civic duties, the main emphasis in liberal-democratic states is on citizens' obligation to work and support themselves without recourse to welfare (Castles and Davidson 2000; Gouws 2008;

Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Lister 2001). However, civic republican citizenship can be problematic because it has a narrow perception on what constitutes political life through its rigid separation of public and private spheres (Lister 1997). Furthermore, it does not acknowledge the sexual division of time, which greatly disadvantages women and is uncritical towards universalism, impartiality and the common good (Lister 1997).

However, despite these differences, citizenship theories all associate rights with obligations, but differ with respect to the appropriate balance between the two, as well as the constitutive elements of each (Kymlicka and Norman 1994; Mouffe 1992; Nelson 1984). It is therefore not sufficient to simply be a citizen; one must act as a critical citizen as well (Lister 1997). Being a critical citizen involves critical thinking about and actively questioning the structures of society and governance. This involves holding institutions accountable for their actions and demanding better governance when needed. This active and critical engagement with citizenship helps advance the socio-economic development goals and human rights agenda of a society, ultimately benefiting all citizens.

Women and Citizenship

Feminists argue that women's exclusion from citizenship is institutional because there are inherent structural barriers that constrain them and perpetuate their exclusion (Kymlicka and Norman 1994; McEwan 2005; Young 1989). Feminists highlight the clear distinction between the formal possession of rights and substantive citizenship (Castles and Davidson 2000; Durish 2002). The public-private debate is arguably one of the most important contributions that feminists have made to the field of citizenship studies[1] (Durish 2002). The illusion of public equality exists in juxtaposition to women's subordination and inequality in the private sphere. The construction of the two spheres, their interconnectedness and the fluidity of their boundaries thus have profound implications for women's citizenship (Lister 1997). The main challenge for women is that their multiple responsibilities in the private sphere often determine the extent to which they are "active" or "passive" citizens (Gouws 2005; Lister 1997). Spending a disproportionate amount of time and energy on reproductive and care work not only places constraints on women's availability for public sector participation but may also, as a corollary, hinder them from building civic knowledge and learning civic skills through action. Unequal power relations and underrepresentation in the public sphere constrain the substantive rights that women can claim. Therefore, feminist theories of citizenship are focused on re-gendering and creating more egalitarian citizenship by understanding the construction of the private sphere and reconfiguring its interrelationship with the public arena (Gouws 2005; Jones 1990). In addition, a more

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[1] The private-public divide is a constant source of debate. Some academics argue that this divide is a theoretical fiction and is not applicable to non-Western contexts because all activities have both a public and a private dimension, whilst others maintain that it is vital to label the private sphere as a non-political space (Durish 2002, 9).

comprehensive theory of citizenship must embrace both individual rights (especially social and reproductive rights) and political participation and must also constantly analyse the relationship between the two (Lister 1997).

Women's Agency in Non-Western Societies: Strategies of Resistance

The challenge of how to recognise and account for non-Western women's agency is a difficult one, largely due to cross-cultural differences in autonomy, cultural ethos and socio-political structures. Furthermore, the context of the state is essential in determining how an individual expresses their citizenship and resists the state. Feminists argue that society needs to change before women can gain substantive citizenship. Feminist scholars have conducted a number of studies in an effort to document non-Western women's citizenship agency. This research helps us understand the different types of women's agency in non-Western societies by providing a series of categories. These are: covert resistance (Mullings 1999); active or overt resistance (Moghadam 1998; Tabari and Yeganeh, 1982); acquiescence (Gerami and Lehnerer 2001; Hoodfar 1996; MacLeod 1996); co-optation (Brink 1991; Gerami and Lehnerer 2001; Hegland 1995); subversion (Ebaugh 1993; Gerami and Lehnerer 2001); collaboration (Gerami and Lehnerer 2001); and patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti 1988).

Mullings' (1999) research is especially interesting because she draws on the role the private sphere plays in enabling covert acts of resistance among female data entry operators in Jamaica's public sphere. Although everyday acts of resistance such as pilfering, poor productivity, sabotage and feigned ignorance may seem insignificant, she argues that they actually have large-scale structural consequences (Colburn 1989; Mullings 1999; Scott 1986). However, one of the limitations in her research is that she struggles to distinguish between coping and resisting, with the former defined negatively as a lack of intent to subvert, or an act of compliance that does not embody conscious political action (Mullings 1999, 293). This is understandable as the two are intimately intertwined in this context because there is a general feeling of deprivation among impoverished households, which is related to the legacies of settler colonialism.

Similar research is that of Gerami and Lehnerer (2001) who studied the resistance strategies that Iranian women used to negotiate patriarchy, and societal and familial pressures in the midst of repressive state policies. They identify four strategies, namely, collaboration, acquiescence, co-optation and subversion. Collaboration refers to the concerted efforts some women make to follow the regime's laws, helping them gain power and influence in both the private and public spheres.

Acquiescence refers to submission to the regime's repressive policies, which can manifest in retreating into the private sphere. Co-optation refers to a method of actively manipulating laws, without deviating from accepted patriarchal norms, to achieve one's desired goals. Finally, subversion refers to acts of defiance and actions that undermine the regime (Gerami and Lehnerer 2001).

Several other scholars, such as Moghadam (1998), Tabari and Yeganeh (1982), Hoodfar (1996), Kandiyoti (1988), Brink (1991), Hegland (1995) and Ebaugh, (1993) describe similar strategies that highlight the different types of activism that women engage in at both the individual and local scales of action. Kandiyoti (1988) provides an interesting overview of how rural women in Kenya, Gambia and Ghana "bargain with patriarchy" through acts of everyday resistance. She stresses that these African women do not live under classic patriarchy as seen in the Middle East and Asia. Instead, they have existing spheres of autonomy that they safeguard or expand through negotiation, overt bargaining, vocal protests, refusal to cooperate with their husbands and even deserting them when all else fails. She contrasts these open acts of resistance to the subservience and manipulation (passive resistance) that she sees under classic forms of patriarchy in Western contexts (Kandiyoti 1988). Theorising agency as relational and multi-dimensional is thus an important step towards meeting the challenge of incorporating diversity.

Research Design of the Study

The study adopted an interpretive, qualitative paradigm and conducted semi-structured interviews with black African women in Southern Africa. It focused on how marginalised black African women in two countries (Zimbabwe and South Africa) actively participated in the citizenship process and how they actively resisted the state. There is not much research on this topic in Southern Africa, making this study unique. The study was cross-national and a cross-sectional collective case study of two townships: KwaMashu in South Africa and Nekta in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe and South Africa have different political conditions but also share similarities with regard to their pasts of colonialism and oppression. South Africa is a liberal-democratic regime that emphasises civil, political and socio-economic rights in its Constitution, but in recent years it has experienced political corruption and inefficiency and economic decline. Zimbabwe is an authoritarian state that underwent a decade of severe economic collapse and was ruled by the autocratic dictator, Robert Mugabe up until recently. During the time of data collection (2012–2013) Mugabe was still the leader, however, in November 2017, Mugabe was ousted by the former vice-president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, following a military takeover. In August 2018, Mnangagwa won a much-disputed presidential election, legitimising his rule (BBC News 2018). However, Mnangagwa is associated with some of the worst atrocities committed by ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe's ruling party, formerly led by Mugabe), and the country is still plagued by social challenges such as poverty, unemployment and food and fuel shortages (BBC News 2018; Burke and Nyasha 2019). Zimbabwe is currently embroiled in a brutal government crackdown (BBC News 2019). Civil, political and social rights are tenuous for ruling party supporters in Zimbabwe and still virtually non-existent for opposition party supporters, despite the change in leaders. Not much research has been done in Zimbabwe in recent years due to its autocratic government and the government's tendency to forcibly quash any negative criticism.

This study helped highlight the political culture in each country and contextualised how women constructed citizenship in these different and often volatile cultures. A comparative analysis of two groups of women who possessed many similarities but lived in two different political environments allowed for a deeper understanding of the underlying processes influencing marginalised African women's citizenship agency. The cultural beliefs, values and ways of understanding are interchangeable between the two groups, whilst the language remains mutually intelligible. A comparative case study of the Ndebele ethnic group in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe and the Zulu ethnic group in Durban, South Africa represented a unique opportunity for research. The Ndebele are an off-shoot of the Zulu empire, breaking away almost 200 years ago during Difaqane or "Time of Calamity." The choice of ethnic groups was influenced by the fact that one of the researchers is from the Ndebele tribe in Zimbabwe but has also lived intermittently in South Africa for the last 15 years.

Data Collection

Data was collected through the use of in-depth interviews during which closed and open-ended questions were asked with the aim of understanding both the content and context of responses (Babbie 1998; Hesse-Biber 2012). Each participant completed a socio-demographics form and was interviewed regarding their life experiences and political participation. Informed consent was obtained before all interviews took place and participation was emphasised as confidential and voluntary. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics board of Stellenbosch University before data collection began. Data was collected in townships where, due to poor living conditions and a general shortage of resources, women's developmental needs are more apparent, and community-based organisations, churches, and non-governmental organisations are generally more visible and active.

Two research assistants carried out the research—one lived in KwaMashu in South Africa and the other in Nekta in Zimbabwe. A convenient random sampling technique was used, where the interviewers visited every second house. Fieldwork in Zimbabwe occurred in December 2012 and January 2013, 75 households were visited, and 20 interviews (26% response rate) were conducted. The majority of the Ndebele participants were interviewed during normal business hours, that is, Monday to Friday between 9:00 and 16:00. South African fieldwork occurred in September and November 2013, and 53 homes were visited, generating 17 respondents in the allocated time (32% response rate). All Zulu participants were interviewed during weekends and public holidays between 9:00 and 16:00. Differences in interview times were seen as a result of higher rates of unemployment in Zimbabwe.

Participants

Participants self-identified as black Africans and as women, biologically as well as with respect to their gender identity. Only women who were 18 years or older were eligible to participate. Participants in South Africa had to be native-born South African citizens

and those in Zimbabwe had to be native-born Zimbabwean citizens. Participants needed to have lived in their country of citizenship continuously from birth until the age of 18. Participants in the KwaMashu township had to self-identify as members of the Zulu group, whereas those in the Nketa township had to self-identify as members of the Ndebele ethnic group. Only one household member was interviewed per house in an effort to allow for as much diversity as possible in the case study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis techniques consisted of content analysis, which incorporated using a coding process, conceptual analysis and relational analysis of the interview texts. The structured sections of the interview were coded beforehand and a pre-defined set of relevant concepts guided the coding for the semi-structured part of the interview. The coding process was flexible, and additional concepts that were indicative of the research questions were added as needed. Responses were classified manually in two phases. The conceptual analysis was used initially to examine keyword presence with respect to the research question. The relational analysis was then used to identify themes and sub-themes from the interviews. The unit of analysis was the individual, as individual experiences were analysed to describe the collective experiences of each group. Identifying information was concealed when reporting the results of the study to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Results and Discussion

Firstly, the demographics of the participants are discussed below to provide the reader with context. Secondly, the results of the study are discussed in relation to the relevant literature. The results revealed two dominant themes: political and community participation; and political resistance strategies. The theme of political resistance strategies comprised of the following sub-themes: avoidance protests, tax evasion, co-optation and motherhood. These themes are discussed in relation to the stories of the black African women in Nketa, Zimbabwe and KwaMashu, South Africa. The interrelationship between the women's political and community participation and political resistance strategies is also discussed.

Demographics of the Sample

The Zulu participants were slightly younger than the Ndebele participants. The median age of Zulu participants ranged from 25 to 29 years old, whereas the mean age was 35 years. The median age of Ndebele participants was in the 30- to 34-year age cohort, whereas the mean age was 36 years. The Ndebele sample included more women over the age of 45 years. Interestingly, marriage rates among Zulu women were significantly lower than among Ndebele women. In fact, three times as many Zulu women had never been married (76%) than Ndebele women (25%). The Zulu participants tended to have lower levels of education than their Zimbabwean counterparts. Half of the Zulu participants (50%) had completed at least high school, compared to three-quarters of

Zimbabwean women (75%). Three South African participants (19%) had had no schooling whereas all Zimbabwean participants interviewed had gone to junior school. The most common household structure in KwaMashu was one where two or three unmarried women and their children all lived together with an older female relative. The Zulu women generally lived in larger households with a mean of six and a median of seven people, compared to a mean and median of five people in Zimbabwe. Unemployment levels were high and social assistance was limited, so larger households pooled their resources to meet the costs of living.

Political and Community Participation

The researchers found out that national voter turnout, which is commonly considered a measure of public trust in government and formal political participation, was 88 per cent among Zulu women but only 60 per cent among Ndebele women. The comparable figures for South African and Zimbabwean women are 75 per cent and 62 per cent respectively. However, despite a lower voter turnout for Ndebele women, there were high levels of involvement in community and neighbourhood organisations, with a high mean, median and mode of four organisations per respondent (see Table 1). Almost all respondents were church members (90%) and many were part of recreational organisations (60%). Of the 14 women with children of school-going age, 11 were active members of child-centred organisations, such as the parent-teachers association. Jones (1990) and Lister (1997) argue that participation at the neighbourhood level often allows disadvantaged women to develop confidence and self-esteem, and may encourage women's engagement in formal political activity. Table 1 below depicts the community-based political participation of South African and Zimbabwean women.

Table 1: Community membership

		South Africa		Zimbabwe	
	Community membership	Number	%	Number	%
1	Church	9	52.9	18	90.0
2	Stokvel or burial society	9	52.9	12	60.0
3	Sports, artistic, recreational organisations	1	5.8	12	60.0
4	Children's school activities	4	23.5	11	55.0

		Number	%	Number	%
5	Professional or environmental organisation	0	0	7	35.0
6	Charitable organisation	0	0	7	35.0
7	Political party	2	11.8	4	20.0
8	Consumer group	1	5.9	3	15.0
9	Other	0	0	3	15.0
10	Labour union	0	0	2	10.0
	Frequency of attending meetings	Number	%	Number	%
1	More than once a week	0	0	7	36.8
2	Once a week	2	11.8	6	31.6
3	Two or more times a month	1	5.9	2	10.5
4	Once a month	1	5.9	4	21.1
5	Rarely	4	23.5	0	0
	Not applicable	9	52.9	0	0
	Total	17	100.0	19	100.0

Source: Data from 2012–2013 qualitative interviews in KwaMashu (Durban) and Nketa (Bulawayo) townships

The context of the Ndebele women in Nketa can be described as specific to the locality where they lived because of the marginalised nature of their communities and the fact

that their work often went unrecognised and unremunerated. For example, participants in Nketa reported supplementing the local teacher's salary so she could afford to teach and implementing a school feeding programme so all school children could eat at least one meal a day.

> Miss Sibanda [the teacher] stopped coming to work. She showed us her salary. It isn't enough for rent, food and ETs [public transport]. She was better off staying at home and trying to start a project [trading business]. So I spoke to the other mothers and now we help her with transport. It's difficult because we are all suffering. but we need her—our children have to learn! (Gogo)

> Miss Sibanda said many of the children are so hungry they can't concentrate in class. So I spoke to the other mothers and we try to give some maize meal every week. (Gogo)

The women in Neketa also reported that they started home-grown professional associations to pool resources. These women also formed an afterschool sports programme for neighbourhood children when the school could not afford to do so. These women's continual struggle to make ends meet meant that their recreational and professional memberships were also centred on income generation. For example, hobby clubs for women who like to crochet and basket-weave contained opportunities for them to sell their goods. The main professional organisation the women spoke about was a trading club, where a group of women pooled resources to buy goods, such as clothing and hair products, for resale at flea markets. Another example is that the women pooled money to fund a bus trip to South Africa to purchase agreed-upon goods from predetermined wholesalers for the entire group of women. This had the effect of lowering business and opportunity costs for each member, as the women rotated trips so that no one woman invested more money or spent significantly more time away from her family. The women in Nketa were engaging in a more radical conception of active citizenship, as outlined by Pahl (1990), in which local people work together in community groups to improve their quality of life, instead of waiting for the more privileged to help them, which constructs these women as active subjects rather than objects (Lister 1997). The women in Nketa seemed to gain collective self-confidence through their community participation (Lister 1997), which ultimately appeared to strengthen their communities. More value needs to be placed on informal politics as an expression of citizenship and the important role women play in empowering their communities (Lister 1997).

In contrast, churches and stokvels[2] were the most popular community organisations that Zulu women belonged to, but most women rarely attended meetings. Zulu women were also less likely to have occupied leadership positions at school, and none of the Zulu

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[2] Stokvels are an informal rotating savings scheme of 12 or more people who give fixed sums of money to a central fund on a regular basis. The collected money is invested to earn better returns, and a different member receives money from the fund every month.

women held leadership positions in the community, whereas seven Ndebele women held leadership positions and were the most politically active of all the participants. The women in KwaMashu constructed themselves as empowered and disempowered at the same time. They spoke of their civil, political and social rights, as well as their rights over their own bodies. Although they believed they had the autonomy to make their own decisions, many faced significant struggles. Many of the Zulu participants were single parents and faced many structural barriers on a daily basis such as unemployment, high levels of crime, endemic levels of violence against women, socio-economic marginalisation and systems of social relations that placed the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on their shoulders. This is demonstrative of one of the most serious legacies of apartheid, namely, poverty, whose main victims are still black women (McEwan 2003).

The Zulu participants were also less likely to engage in formal political activities or community activities in comparison to their Ndebele counterparts. This suggests that the relationship between social rights and citizenship agency is complex for subaltern women, and may extend beyond the mere granting of social rights or the development of a conscious sense of agency. McEwan (2003) argues that pervasive sexism in South Africa and the continued erasure of black women's accounts of their lives under apartheid undercut women's equal rights and may undermine their attempts to participate in formal political activities, influencing how they construct their own citizenship experiences in post-apartheid South Africa. The lack of political activities and community participation amongst the Zulu women in the study could also stem from the common expectation in South Africa that "the state will act to alleviate the consequences of the market – primarily, the creation of poverty" (Hassim 1999, 15). Conversely, the women in Nketa had a different understanding of citizenship and constructed the state as having a limited role in their life. They internalised their responsibility to their community, and principles such as Ubuntu were seen as central to how they expressed themselves as citizens.

Political Resistance Strategies

Scott (1986) argues that real resistance is organised systematically and cooperatively, is principled, has revolutionary consequences, and embodies ideas that negate the premise of domination. The women in the study demonstrated political resistance through avoidance protests, tax resistance, co-optation and motherhood.

Avoidance Protests

None of the Ndebele women in Nketa chose to collaborate with the government, and they were critically conscious of the state's transgressions against them. However, they demonstrated their political resistance covertly through avoidance protests via internationalisation and transnationalism. Internationalisation refers to how women improve their citizenship rights by expanding territorial spaces through human rights and refugee agreements. Scott (1986) argues that Zimbabwean women's approach to

transnationalism and internationalisation can be labelled as an avoidance protest. This can be seen in the current study as all the Ndebele women interviewed had relatives in the diaspora, half of them earned income from buying goods in neighbouring countries and selling them in Bulawayo, and one-quarter of the women had previously worked in neighbouring countries, particularly South Africa and Botswana. The Ndebele women viewed transnationalism as a viable alternative to repression and they reacted to tyranny, oppression and state failure by voting with their feet. They constructed citizenship in terms of being law-abiding and registering for official documents, such as passports and visas.

Another way that avoidance protests as a form of transnationalism movement was demonstrated in this study related to healthcare. To avoid participating in the Zimbabwean system, many women sought healthcare in South Africa and even had children in another country to gain citizenship for their offspring. A number of Nketa households had children who were born in a country other than Zimbabwe, either when the mothers were working outside Zimbabwe or in some cases when they travelled with the specific purpose of giving birth in another country, for example Botswana and South Africa. The latter's stronger commitment to its human rights obligations makes it a better alternative, as South African hospitals are not allowed to turn away pregnant mothers about to give birth, irrespective of their immigration status. Despite a few well-publicised media reports of pregnant Zimbabwean women being turned away and delivering in the street, there is clear evidence that some temporary Zimbabwean migrants have given birth in South African public hospitals.

> He [her grandson] was born in South Africa. It was the time we had cholera and the hospitals didn't have medicine. My youngest daughter was pregnant; it was almost time for her to give birth. We were very worried so we all agreed that she should go to her sister in South Africa and give birth there. (Gogo)

There are also other examples of large-scale movements of Zimbabweans (mostly women) seeking medical treatment for themselves and their children in South Africa. Gogo is referring to Zimbabwe's cholera outbreak in November 2008 when Zimbabwean hospitals did not have the required medication to treat patients. Although Zimbabweans were initially turned away from South African public hospitals, trans-border cholera outbreaks in the country caused public health concerns. In an effort to contain the outbreak, South Africa eventually provided free treatment to all Zimbabweans who were presenting with symptoms (Brand South Africa 2008). However, South Africa's own public healthcare system is overburdened and underresourced. Despite this, the movement of patients from neighbouring countries, including Zimbabwe, has prompted the South African government to formalise arrangements for medical travel, and a bilateral health agreement was signed in April 2009 according to which South Africa can now essentially bill the Zimbabwean government for Zimbabwean citizens who are treated in South African public hospitals (Department of International Relations and Communication 2011). In other words,

rather than have a direct confrontation with the state over untenable conditions in Zimbabwean hospitals, Zimbabwean women protested through avoidance and collectively claimed their right to adequate healthcare in a neighbouring country, namely South Africa.

As a result, there is a large number of foreign-born Zimbabwean children living and going to school in Zimbabwe. In an effort to combat this form of avoidance protest, the Zimbabwean government in 2001 passed laws placing significant barriers on claiming citizenship by descent and refusing to grant dual citizenship. This political move was designed to disenfranchise white Zimbabweans who were accused of backing the opposition party. The truth is that mobile citizens are not easily controlled and the Zimbabwean state has been passing legislation as early as 1993, such as Zimbabwe's amendment Immigration Bill of 1993, in an effort to strengthen the state's role in the lives of its citizens (Cheater and Gaidzanwa 1996). This strategy still continues today in Zimbabwe and demonstrates the government's dislike of mobile citizens.

These new citizenship laws also disenfranchise most foreign-born Zimbabwean children, resulting in many children being unable to claim citizenship rights in either Zimbabwe or their countries of birth. The government also forces all foreign-born children in Zimbabwe to pay exorbitant international tuition fees in an effort to extract taxes from parents.

> They [the primary school] said they charge international fees for foreign children. I tried to explain that he was my son. He came out of this body—the body of a Zimbabwean woman who has a Zimbabwean husband; so how can he be a foreigner? They refused and said the rules have changed. Can you believe that? We can't afford that foreign fees and even if we could, we would never pay foreign fees for our child! So we had to get a Zimbabwean birth certificate for him. (Phumzile)

Consequently, there is now a black market for Zimbabwean birth certificates and forged hospital records. Zimbabweans who give birth abroad usually pay a hospital clerk to register the birth in Zimbabwe so that their child can obtain a Zimbabwean birth certificate, which entitles these children to claim Zimbabwean citizenship and enrol for school in Zimbabwe. Phumzile's observation indicates that she knows her child is entitled to Zimbabwean citizenship but rather than risk confrontation with authorities, she chooses noncompliance, subversion and co-optation. These covert resistance strategies undermine the government and reconstruct the concept of citizenship in Zimbabwe.

Tax Resistance

Zimbabwe's manufacturing sector is reported to be suffering and being hampered by a lack of working capital, electricity shortages, antiquated technology and low domestic demand (Ndlovu 2013). The case study of Ndebele women illustrates the subaltern women's self-sufficiency amidst these challenges. For example, all the women in Nketa

had one to three fruit trees and small vegetable gardens at their homes. There was also product specialisation within networks of friends, where some women kept chickens and specialised in selling eggs to other people in their community. Some women had access to subsistence farms in Nketa and sold maize meal, melons and peanuts or home-made peanut butter. In other instances, groups of women regularly pooled money to buy an animal for meat, usually a goat, cow or chicken, from a subsistence farm. Clothing and foodstuffs that could not be made, such as oil and sugar, were generally bought in South Africa from traders at markets or friends who had contact with wholesalers in the diaspora. The findings suggest that the majority of these women's daily lives bypass the formal sector, and buying from supermarket chains and clothing stores was largely reserved for wealthier Zimbabweans. The women in Nketa essentially adopted free-market capitalist strategies of disintermediation and product specialisation in order to cope financially.

These strategies are used so widely by Zimbabwean women that the president of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries, Katsande, recently dubbed Zimbabwe a "nation of traders" (Irin 2013). This trade is mostly driven by subaltern women, whose collective self-sufficiency results in a low demand for domestic goods. The Zimbabwean government finds it difficult to monitor and tax the informal sector, and its attempts to collect tax on imports at the border have been thwarted by corruption. In some instances, women often bribe custom officials to allow them to bring more than their personal allowance of goods across the border.

> My cousin [in South Africa] also buys some things [goods] for me to sell [at the flea market]. But they gave her so much trouble at the border last time. It is so difficult these days—those officials now want more money [bribes] or they won't let you cross with your goods. (Mandisa)

Whilst big businesses find it difficult to resist tax in Zimbabwe due to the nature of their large-scale cross-border shipments, subaltern women have the capacity to resist tax because of the informal and unverifiable nature of their business. Their invisibility is their strength, and despite their lack of formal structures they still manage to collectively transform government policies towards healthcare, citizenship, taxation, and foreign currency. The case study reveals that women in Zimbabwe exercise a unique type of resistance that is not organised, systematic or particularly principled. These women are more concerned with survival and "working the system" than outright confrontations with a repressive and tyrannical regime. Their struggle does not require coordination or planning but depends heavily on cooperation within small cells of women. The Zimbabwean government still reacts swiftly and violently to any organised form of open resistance but does not have the ability to deal with subaltern women because of their covert mode of operation in informal networks. The state's attempts to renegotiate policies to control activities in the private sector in Zimbabwe have only highlighted its weakness, challenging its legitimacy and facilitating unprecedented levels of corruption.

Co-optation and Motherhood

All the Zulu women interviewed expressed their right to decide whether or not to use contraceptives, but they acknowledged that contraceptives were available in public health clinics. However, despite this, there are still high rates of single-parent and female-headed households in KwaMashu, suggesting that women are consciously deciding to become parents, perhaps in an attempt to access childcare grants and social assistance from the government. Bigombe and Khadiagala's (2003) study also found a high representation of single mothers and female-headed households in KwaMashu amongst Zulu women. The Zulu women's stories in the current study illustrate that motherhood involves co-optation, in which women actively manipulate laws, without deviating from accepted patriarchal norms and the expectations placed on women, to achieve a desired goal. Anecdotal evidence, such as interviews with social workers, suggests that some women boast about getting pregnant multiple times to get more money; however, the majority of studies do not find a causal link between child grants and the high rates of adolescent pregnancies and single-parent rates in South Africa (Kruger 1998; Ndlovu 2009).

As a result of the state-approved benefits of having children there is a significant black market in forged birth certificates, allowing women to claim for "phantom children." This issue came up during the course of fieldwork and is an example of co-optation. For example, Sihle lives with her daughter, an elderly aunt on a pension, two unemployed adult cousins and their two children. However, she reported that their total household income was R3 000 a month. This is a discrepancy because, at the time, a pension was R1 200 a month and child grants for three children totalled R900 a month, which would bring household income to R2 100. When probed gently and after being assured that we were not with Social Security, she admitted that each of the three mothers had a fake birth certificate to claim for a phantom child, thereby raising household income by 43 per cent from R2 100 a month to R3 000 a month. Such co-optation on the mothers' parts had an impact on poverty alleviation, increasing the per capita income from R300 per person to R429 per person, which is closer to the 2012 per capita poverty line of R620 per month (Lehohla 2014). In this form of covert resistance, these women deal with poverty by actively manipulating the state's laws to claim an income, which allows them to achieve a basic standard of living.

Despite these reports, child grants have had numerous positive effects on children. The child grant, which was implemented in 1998 in incremental stages, is now the largest social assistance programme in South Africa and benefits millions of children (Kruger 1998; Ndlovu 2009). Children who receive grants at birth are more likely to stay in school and not suffer from ill health than those who receive grants later on. All low-income caregivers are eligible to apply for a child grant, irrespective of whether they are the child's parents. This is an example of how, by living in multi-generational, woman-centred households with multiple caregivers and fluid boundaries, South African women have influenced a national poverty alleviation policy.

The Zulu participants were actively critical of the government and did not appear averse to participating in social security fraud to alleviate their poverty, establishing a complex link between political resistance, criminality and survivalism. In South Africa, social security fraud has received special attention with fraud hotlines, fingerprinting, voice biometrics and re-registration being introduced. However, this focus on low-level corruption instead of on high-level corruption tends to serve the interests of more powerful members in society. Furthermore, the Zulu women in the study appeared to understand their poverty within the context of apartheid and were critical of the perceived failures of the African National Congress (ANC) government. The anger and disappointment towards the state can be seen in the observations quoted below.

> We will vote for the ANC [ruling party] because there is no-one else to vote for; but they have to stop stealing money and start creating jobs! (Sihle)

> My life is the same as it was twenty years ago. I am still poor and I am still unemployed. The government promised us jobs and we want jobs! (Azola)

In conclusion, the experiences of the Zulu women in this study and their "willingness to bend the rules to survive" need to be understood within the context of post-apartheid South Africa and its significant social challenges.

Expressing Citizenship: The Relationship between Political Participation and Resistance

Both the Ndebele and Zulu women interviewed see the world through the cultural lens of Ubuntu. Ubuntu positions the self in relation to the community and advocates the ideals of volunteerism, honesty, trustworthiness and mutual respect as a way to manage power, privilege and social inequalities in the community. For example, many of the Zulu and Ndebele women offered financial assistance to family members in trouble and in turn received help when they were going through difficulties. However, Ndebele women were more likely to negotiate their structural barriers by participating in civic and cause-orientated activities in the external sphere. Both sets of women lived in underdeveloped and impoverished neighbourhoods with high unemployment and poor social facilities, infrastructure and economic opportunities relative to middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods. The dichotomy between the economic survivalist strategies of these women and their simultaneous representation as political resistance is situated in a legacy of colonialism and the political economies of these countries. Interestingly, Mullings (1999) presents findings similar to the findings of this study and argues that the economic survivalist strategies of marginalised black African women are motivated most likely by basic needs for food, shelter and safety rather than by politics. Thus, the actions of these women are informed by the social challenges plaguing the states of which they are citizens.

The study also found that both sets of women identified with more communitarian definitions of citizenship, with their group memberships and ethnic identities featuring

more strongly in their stories. The dominant orientation in Zimbabwe is membership below the state level, which is likely to be influenced by the fact that the minority Ndebele ethnic group has a historically tenuous relationship with the ruling party, which comprises mostly members of the majority Shona ethnic group. In contrast, Zulu women's dominant political orientation is towards the state, despite the apparent frustrations of the Zulu participants who believe their Zulu president (at the time of the study) is "doing nothing to help us Zulus." Amongst the Zulu women in the study there appears to be a rejection of local spaces of political participation because they deem them as highly politicised and corrupt and as overlooking the needs of women in the community. Interestingly, the majority of women in both countries have internalised civic republican ideas of citizenship as a set of obligations, which is problematic because civic republican ideas of citizenship do not acknowledge the kind of informal politics these women are engaging in (Lister 1997).

However, the majority of the women in the study, despite having internalised civic republican ideas of citizenship, were still critically conscious of their oppression and of state transgressions against them. For example, none of the Ndebele women in Nketa chose to collaborate with the government, and they practised political resistance by operating out of the realm of the state, expanding their citizenship rights across states. The women in Nketa practised covert political resistance through their systematic non-compliance with laws, thereby undermining the regime and challenging its legitimacy. Despite the declining economic situation in Zimbabwe and the authoritarian state's lack of support of women's rights, women in Zimbabwe are still carving out spaces and making meaningful and social transformations (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). However, for meaningful change to take place, economic and political stability needs to take hold (Ranchod-Nilsson 2006). The South African women in the study practised political resistance more overtly through categorically disengaging from local government's spaces of civil society participation and favouring invented spaces such as churches and stokvels. The use of covert and overt political resistance amongst women in non-Western societies is also reported in the research of Mullings (1999), Moghadam (1998), and Tabari and Yeganeh (1982). This everyday resistance paradigm represents a symbolic shift by feminists to not only understand alternative forms of struggle but also acknowledge the value of small-scale forms of political activism (Bayat 1997; Lépinard 2011).

Limitations to the Study

There are a few limitations arising from this case study. Firstly, it was designed as an in-depth case study of the women in the Zulu and Ndebele ethnic groups, documenting their experiences of citizenship in their own countries. The case study was context-specific and examined elements of each country's post-colonial history within the context of these women's lives, therefore making the research difficult to replicate in other contexts. Secondly, although the women in the study were relatively deprived, lived in impoverished areas and faced constant threats of food insecurity, they were not

the poorest urban dwellers in their country. None of these women would be classified as middle class in their respective countries; however, they all generated some form of household income, lived in formal homes with electricity and had access to water and toilets. The analytic framework was also largely descriptive and did not aim to determine or predict whether the women interviewed would have different locales of participatory citizenship than other groups in the same society, because the case study chose to rather document the stories of these marginalised women. Future research could possibly explore whether the women interviewed would have different locales of participatory citizenship than other groups in the same society. Thirdly, the framework concealed class, education and intra-household power differentials that existed between participants. For instance, older women were generally found to be the most powerful female household members in all the households, even if they were not the primary breadwinners, because of the wisdom and respect attached to elderly motherly figures in Bantu culture.

Conclusion

Little is known about how marginalised black African women in Southern Africa express themselves as citizens and negotiate political resistance. This article sheds light on this issue by highlighting how these women understand and experience citizenship, the structural challenges they face and the resistance strategies they use to claim their citizenship rights. The article highlights the political and social contexts of the study and the ways each woman's experiences are grounded in the context of their state. The article addresses these concerns whilst also challenging our understanding of alternative forms of struggle and acknowledging the transformative potential of black African women's resistance strategies. The women in the study perform covert and overt acts of resistance as a response to both their relationship with the state and their socio-economic context. These acts of resistance are demonstrations of the agency of these women as citizens given their structural constraints and self-determined "feminine" goals. The dichotomy between these survivalist strategies and their simultaneous representation as forms of political resistance is the crux of this article and captures the ethos of the economic and social struggles in impoverished areas in Southern Africa. Furthermore, exploring the experiences of women in Zimbabwe in recent times is particularly valuable as little formal research has been conducted in the area recently due to its autocratic government and the brutal government crackdowns.

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