*ALTER*NATION

Mobilities and

Transnationalised lives

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Mobilities and Transnationalised Lives

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Maheshvari Naidu

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Acknowledgement of Reviewers

Editorial: Mobilities and Transnationalised Lives

Maheshvari Naidu

The articles in this issue of *Alter*nation reveal how fine grained and nuanced research in the area of migration and transnationalism has become. They direct our gaze to scholarship that pays critical attention to both deep theory and rich ethnography. They also attempt to capture the transnationalised lives and mobile experiences of the research participants. Even the most cursory glance reveals that the contemporary global condition is anything but inertial, and produces different articulations of transnational involvements. As the participants involved in the various studies reveal, lives are lived across borders marked by nation state boundaries. The nation state's borders have also become porous and lives are lived 'mobile' and *trans*nationally. This heightened and changing nature of movements, flows, and travels through permeable borders and boundaries positions us in various contexts, and to various degrees, as mobile, global subjects.

Likewise, numerous new theories of transnationalism and trans-national movements have arisen in an attempt to explain the changing nature of this 'back and forth' travel and human flow as people follow migration circuits (Kearney 1995). These theories allow us to engage with the ways in which people increasingly transcend borders, and forge 'transient-roots' of variable duration with 'place' and 'home' as both 'place' and 'home' are increasingly understood as fluid and shifting. Viewing migrant studies through a 'transnational analytic' allows us to understand that the mobility we speak of in spatial and ideational terms, embraces in a palpable way, both migrants and non-migrants, and cohorts together – those who travel to host spaces and those who remain in home spaces. Notional and spatial understandings of 'host' and 'home' plastically 'stretch out' both the specificities and boundedness of the 'here' and 'there'. When refracted through the lives and experiences of the people in the various circuits of

migration, space itself becomes dispersed with migrants positioned at various points and intersections on those circuits.

As far back as 1995, Glick-Schiller *et al.* (1995:50) put it rather succinctly, when they said that it was the study of 'migration', rather than mere abstract cultural flows or representations that allows us to discern that transnational processes are located within the life experiences of individuals and families. Also writing a little over a decade ago, Puar (2001) similarly quite rightly pointed out that while globalization studies directed our attention to transnational economic, political and religious processes, the dominant taxonomies operating here failed to fully capture and hold up the complexity of individual (transnational) subjectivities and practices. This is the point of insertion for this particular special volume which directs our gaze to the lived lives and experiences referred to as 'transnational lives' or as Guarnizo (1997) prefers, *transnational livelihoods*.

The valuable article by Peggy Levitt and Nadya Jaworsky (2007) critically unpacks the 'past developments' and 'future trends' in the conceptual and analytical frameworks and trajectories that inform seminal studies in the interdisciplinary field of transnationalism. Against this conceptual landscape, they suggest that the goal in transnational studies 'is a thick and empirically rich mapping of how global, macro-level processes interact with local lived experiences that are representative of broader trends' (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007:143). This issue is an attempt to on some level contribute towards such a mapping, by scrutinising some of the kinds of social spaces that are produced by transnational movements within a more specific Southern African context. Through case studies and narrative analyses, the contributors present us with rich empirical data. They unveil different circuits of transnational flows, and reveal how the host and home spaces at times thoroughly infiltrate one another. Their narratives show how 'home' and 'host' transcend specificities and actual spatial boundedness of the 'here' and 'there' compelling us, as Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) put it, to all but 'rethink our cherished assumptions about belonging'.

Victor Muzvidziwa's article examines how identity is formed and legitimated in the context of women's cross border experiences, probing issues of Zimbabwean women's shifting and multiple identities in the context of their mobility and engagement in cross border trade. Muzvidziwa's case studies reveal the cross border traders as a gendered, cosmopolitan, footloose

group of cultural and economic entrepreneurs. This transnational perspective shifts the analytical focus from country of origin and country of destination to the mobilities involved in sustaining cross-border livelihoods (Sørensen & Olwig 2002).

Rendered vulnerable by another kind of movement are the transnationalised lives of refugees. The article by *Okeke-Uzodike et al.* leads our gaze to both the corporeality as well as, as they put it, 'the real time' experiences of forced physical mobilities in the form of massive refugee flows into Southern Africa and situates the analysis of refugee flows and experiences in the context of Urry's mobilities paradigm.

In his article, *Detlev Krige* argues for a more 'historically-sensitive and ethnographically-informed analysis of consumption practices' which he claims will help recognize the role that consumption plays in mobility, identity construction and social class considerations.

Cognisant of a public health perspective, and shifting our gaze to the socio-medical implications of mobility, *Winfred Ogana* investigates perceptions on how migration is contributing to the rise of overweight and obesity among female staff and students of Zulu ethnicity at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

Joseph Ayee's article provides insight into another migration circuit by examining the movement of foreign academics in seeking 'greener pastures' in what is referred to as the 'brain-influx' or 'brain-gain', rather than the negative 'brain-drain' of expertise leaving the country. Ayee locates these movements within the dual typologies of 'functional' and 'dysfunctional' and asserts that the brain-influx can be construed as beneficial to the economies of the countries of the foreign academics by pointing our gaze to documentation that the brain-influx has boosted the economies of some African countries through their welcoming of the foreign academics.

Staying with the institutional space of UKZN but moving the discussion to (transnational) African scholars and African scholarship, *Monica Otu's* article highlights the role played by transnational and migrant academics as possible conduits in the expansion of African scholarship within the knowledge production circuit and provides an understanding of some aspects of the role that transnational mobility has played in the current thinking of foreign African academics around issues of African scholarship.

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Nicoline Fomunyam's article seeks to understand the experiences of Cameroonian migrants living in Durban. It pays careful attention to their patterns of adjustment, interpretation and adaption in their attempts to re-define their lifestyles and expectations as they engage with the host space. The migrants are 'followed' from the time of their decision to migrate through their settlement in South Africa, and the article explores the coping mechanisms that migrants create in their attempts to *adjust* to the new space.

Maheshvari Naidu uses social network analysis, as she attempts to draw attention to the cohesive aspects of the structural ecology of small groups of Indian migrants and their nodal ties within the networked community. She claims that the social network perspective starts with the individual (transnational) actors and the opportunistic ties and emerging patterns of arrangements within the group structure.

Christopher Isike and *Efe Isike's* article utilizes *Makwerekwere* as a theoretical framework for explaining *non-belonging* in South Africa within which African immigrants are imagined and treated as 'others'. They ask the critical question as to why South Africans engage in this selective ordering or othering.

Gina Buijs' article is a historical case study of Xhosa women migrants, mainly from the eastern part of the former 'homeland' of Transkei, who had moved to Durban in search of work and who found a refuge at the then only hostel for African women in Durban, Thokoza. She revisits her earlier (1993) ethnographic work which examined the reasons why these women were forced to leave their homes and their negotiation of a Xhosa identity in the context of migration and the apartheid reification of ethnicity in her follow-up work undertaken in 2008.

Keeping our eye on women's experiences within the socio-economic consequences of migrant labour out of rural spaces, *Ndwakhulu Tshishonga's* article examines women's internal migration, and the impact it has on providing socio-economic and educational opportunities for survival among the rural marginalised. The article reveals how faced as they are with the 'triple burden of taking care of the children, the home and the land', the women of Pfananani in the Limpopo Province have become mobile through out-of-home employment.

Janet Muthuki's research shows that as a result of migration, family members are increasingly finding themselves in social arrangements where

they have to conduct relationships across different countries. She points out that the impact of transnational migration on family relationships is however, often underplayed and even overlooked. Her article also examines the changing gender relations and the degree of autonomy, empowerment and/or disempowerment transnational students experience as they engage in the process of transforming the meanings of family relationships to accommodate spatial and temporal separations.

From the perspective of the migrants, *Vivian Ojong* reminds us that whilst in the host country, migrants forge and re-forge all kinds of relations with their new country of abode, with their country of origin, and with migrants from other African countries which sits alongside their symbolic and literal constructions of being 'at home, *but away from home'*.

The articles in this collection can thus be seen to stretch and 'play' with many of our understandings of the operational terms (host/home, here/there, local/global etc.) in transnationalism. These understandings however, while theoretically engaged with, are also placed within the context of the complex corporeal lives and empirical realities of the participants in the various studies. Perhaps the article that most stretches both our understanding of scholarship (more specifically scholarship on transnationals and migrants) and what scholarship and ethnography is meant to be doing, is the article by *Francis Nyamnjoh* who also utilizes the ideologically loaded notion of *Makwerekwere* as a theoretical framework for explaining non-belonging and exclusion in South Africa. However, *Nyamnjoh* connects and bridges fiction and ethnography and asserts that this brings out the polyvocal perspectives perhaps neglected by mainstream scholarship. His position is that 'African fiction provides an alternative and complementary ethnography of the everyday realities and experiences of Africans and their societies in a world of interconnecting local and global hierarchies'. His point is that quite often these are less than adequately captured by 'the ethnographic present' and suggests that fiction as a genre is well adapted to exploring such realities and can perhaps be seen as being complementary to scholarly ethnographic writing.

Thus on many levels, the collection of articles in this special issue bring to the fore the ever expanding intellectual landscape in transnational and migrant studies. The cliché that has received much intellectual mileage is that of the 'melting pot', or shall I say in the South African context, the

potjiekos within which different elements meld together to give us a newly combined 'something'. However, as many articles in this issue make quite obvious, migration has never been a one-way process of assimilation into a melting pot or a multicultural salad bowl but one in which the transnational migrants, to varying degrees, are 'simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live' (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007:129). Grewal and Kaplan (1994) tell us that, as an operational idiom within the processes of globalisation and cross-border movement, the term 'transnational' has come into vogue in a bid to move beyond the limited binary of local-global. Naming this special issue 'Mobilities and Transnationalised Lives' is likewise an attempt to bring to the fore scholarship that is about *both* the conceptual and theoretical landscape of transnationalism as well as about the people and their lives … this special issue is about the people we refer to as transnationals.

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A (migrant) mothers work …

Thirusha Naidu

My mother, she is not my mother

My mother she is not my mother.
She is the mother of a stranger.
She gave birth to me but
She does not live at my home.
She is seen here only at certain times.
It is when she brings us money.
It is when someone is very sick,
Or when that someone has already died.

My mother she is not my mother.
She is the mother of a stranger.
She carried me on her back but
Now I speak to her only on the 'phone.
She is not known by teachers at school.
She comes at the time of school reports.
Her head is heavy with food and gifts.
She goes when it is time for uniforms.

My mother she is not my mother.
She is the mother of a stranger.
She fed me at her breast but
I have seen her at that stranger's house.
He does not resemble my mother.
Yet he is my mother's child.
He is the one she cares for
On all the important days of life.

Thirusha Naidu

My mother she is not my mother.
She is the mother of a stranger.
She dried my tears once but
Now she comforts the stranger
When his mother who is not his mother
Leaves his home ….
To bring him money? To talk to him on the 'phone?
Maybe she is the mother of another stranger …

Maybe she could be mine ….

About the Poem

This poem brings to mind, through repetition, one of the less acknowledged consequences of women's migration for work. The intention of this work is to evoke emotive insight into this growing phenomenon which is not always easy to portray in traditional representations of research.

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Some Thoughts on the 'Brain Influx' in Africa

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Abstract

The mobility of people and societies is not only a global phenomenon but also part of social transformation. One of the forms of mobility is the movement of foreign academics to seek 'greener pastures'. This is normally referred to as the 'brain influx' or 'brain-gain'. Against this backdrop, the article examines some of the causes of the brain influx in Africa and its functional and dysfunctional effects. It concludes that the brain influx will not easily go away in an age of globalization and the desire of foreign academics to improve their lot in all spheres.

Keywords: Africa, mobility, brain influx, foreign academics

Introduction

The concept of mobility is a major factor in social transformation and an inherent feature of all societies that accompanies enormous cultural, social and economic flexibility. It is as old as society itself and has resulted in the movements of people, for instance, the 'exodus' of the Israelites from Egypt to the 'promised land of Canaan'. It denotes the ways in which people organize their livelihoods at any point in time and space and their rationales for various choices. It also entails recognition of a multiplicity of influences, actors and strategies and pushes people into new relations and redefines their sense of identity (Schlee 2002).

In Africa, mobility has always influenced societies; people have often moved and used space to carve out livelihoods and is seen as a major means of survival (Rain 1999; de Bruijn *et.al.* 2001; Tsikata 2005). Mobility encompasses all types of movements such as travels, explorations, migration, tourism, refugeeism, pastoralism, nomadism, pilgrimage and trade (de Bruijn 2007: 110). Howard (2005) has shown that mobility is not only an important factor in the creation of societies in his analysis of the spatial factor in historical studies in Africa but also the creation and modeling of time and space by social actors.

It is within the context of mobility that this article examines the movement of foreign academics to seek 'greener pastures' in what is referred to as the 'brain influx' or 'brain-gain', rather than the negative 'brain-drain', to which such movement has been referred and which has generated considerable debate[1].

Some of the Causes of the Brain Influx

One of the greatest challenges to capacity building in the public sector in sub-Saharan Africa is the inability to attract and retain professionals like health workers and academic staff mainly as a result of poor conditions of service. The attraction and retention of staff is more pronounced in universities which have not only lost staff as a result of poor conditions but also failed to attract new ones (Akyeampong 2000). The destructive influence of staff loss, attraction and retention has led Ali Mazrui to observe that African universities are being 'dis-Westernized without re-Africanization', calling the process 'the Bantustanization of African universities (Mazrui 1993: 4-7).

The causes of the brain influx have been categorized into 'push' and 'pull' factors. The 'push' factors include economic constraints, political turmoil or intolerance in developing countries and social and psychological

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[1] For some of the contributions to the debate over the brain drain, see Ajayi, Goma & Johnson (1996); Court (1999); Court (2004); Jaycox (1993); Logan (1992); Manuh, Budu & Sulley (2002); Mazrui (1993); Saint (2004); Samoff & Carrol (2004); Sawyerr (2004); Smyke (1994/ 1995); and Teferra & Altbach (n.d.).

pressures (Teffera & Altbach 2003; 2004; Tettey 2006). The 'pull' factors, on the other hand, include the attractiveness of some countries, especially the industrialized ones to many foreign academics, the promise of economic success, political sanctuary and increasing shortage of skilled labour in developing countries (Demers 2002; Nyamnjoh & Naatang 2002; Teffera & Altbach 2003).

An important dimension of the brain influx, which has received less attention in the literature is the internal brain influx, which refers to movements of academics away from institutions of higher education to other sectors within the same country largely because of economic reasons. In the words of Teffera and Altbach (2004: 42),

> academic staff are also lured away by a variety of government agencies, where salaries are often better and the working environment more comfortable. In many cases, the salaries and benefits in universities are lower than comparative positions in and outside of the civil service. For instance, a comparative salary analysis in Ghana in 1993 revealed that salary levels in sectors such as energy, finance, revenue collection, and the media were all higher than those of the universities.

In addition to this, the brain influx is also attributed to some weaknesses inherent in most universities in Africa. For instance, at the University of Ghana, Legon, some of the weaknesses which have given impetus to the brain influx include the following:

- Dependence on government for salaries resulting in inability to offer attractive remuneration packages;
- Overloaded and ageing faculty compounded by inability to attract fresh talent;
- Weak recognition and rewards systems addressing superannuation and home ownership schemes;
- Slow, over-centralized and bureaucratic decision making system;
- Lack of formal training in teaching and poor teaching aids/laboratory equipment;

- Inability to charge realistic fees that reflect at the minimum, cost recovery as a result of political pressure; and
- Inadequate funding for research partly attributable to poor marketing of research projects and weak proposal writing skills (University of Ghana, 2001: 13-14).

These weaknesses have been exacerbated by some key threats to the existence of the University. They include the following:

- Low morale and motivation which accelerated the brain-drain and the loss of high calibre of personnel to industry and new universities;
- Ageing faculty, high faculty turnover and the absence of mentoring combined to indicate a crisis in human resource supply which had invariably led to lowering of output quality;
- The establishment of new tertiary institutions, especially by churches, which increased the competitive pressures on the University;
- Woefully insufficient financial resources to enable investments in facilities to keep pace with student population expansion resulting in decreasing quality in teaching, research and quality of campus life (Ayee 2006).

Some of the Functional and Dysfunctional Effects of the Brain Influx

The brain influx has both positive and negative effects. It has been pointed out that the brain influx of foreign academics is not necessarily a bad thing and that for its own sake it is inevitably positive. In the words of Dee (2004: 593),

> some degree of turnover of academic staff is inevitable and perhaps desirable, (although) high rates of faculty turnover can be costly to the reputation of an institution and to the quality of instruction.

The effect of the brain influx can be viewed from two perspectives, namely, (i) functional; and (ii) dysfunctional (Park 1994).

Functional Effect of the Brain Influx

The brain influx has largely benefited both the new and former institutions of foreign academics. For the new institutions, they use the expertise and experience of the academics who assume higher positions with better conditions of service than they had in their former institutions. They arrive with a lot of expectations being demanded by their new employers, which must be fulfilled as a way of justifying their recruitment. The first year of their employment is usually an adjustment phase and therefore much cannot be achieved. However, in the long run, most of the foreign academics have proved their mettle by contributing to research, teaching and community engagement in their new institutions and injecting a sense of urgency in running their portfolios. Some of them, however, in their enthusiasm try to justify their recruitment and, consequently, make mistakes along the way, which are part of any learning progress.

For poor performing academics, when they leave, it becomes a blessing for their institutions as it gives them the opportunity to invigorate themselves by finding more capable replacements if it is possible to recruit-ment them. However, as a result of the scarcity of experienced academic staff on the African continent, it has become difficult for the institutions to fill the positions with the experienced staff thus perpetuating a vicious cycle leading to serious capacity challenges (Tettey 2006; Ayee 2006).

Furthermore, the brain influx is also beneficial to the economies of the countries of the foreign academics. It has been documented that the brain influx has boosted the economies of some African countries through the remittances of the foreign academics and other migrants. In Ghana, for example, conservative estimates put remittances at 8% of the GDP of the country (Quartey 2009). State interests and state obligations have also led to interventions from countries in Africa to engage with migrants including academics who have left their countries to contribute to socio-economic development of their countries (Camlen 2006). In Ghana two initiatives are important in this regard. First is the enactment of the Dual Citizenship Act (Act 591) and the Citizenship Regulations of 2001, which allow Ghanaians citizens to acquire a second nationality without losing their Ghanaian citizenship. This is expected to facilitate the engagement of Ghanaian professionals and other migrants in local politics and a more efficient

management of their investments in Ghana (Mohan 2008). Second is the hosting of the Home Coming Summit launched by the Government of Ghana in 2001 in an attempt to woo Ghanaians living abroad to come home and invest in the growth of the local economy. The Summit identified the contribution of Ghanaians in the diaspora including foreign academics in several key areas including the following:

> (i) as a potential market for non-traditional exportable items such as foodstuff and garments;
> (ii) as a source of finance capital for investment to develop the local private sector;
> (iii) as ambassadors for Ghana's culture – food, clothes, social life etc.;
> (iv) as a source of modern knowledge and technical know-how for development, particularly information technology; and
> (v) as a link between Ghanaian communities and local foreign-based communities (Ampomah-Asiedu 2011).

Dysfunctional Effect of the Brain Influx

The dysfunctional effect of the brain influx occurs when universities have lost good performing employees without appropriate replacements being found. This aspect results in the expertise base of the universities being eroded to the extent that there is not enough capacity to provide quality training for new generations of citizens. This has led to either low student intake in some programmes, suspension of admission of students into such programmes, shortage of graduates in programmes such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy, engineering, architecture and the performing arts because the diminished faculty is unable to train sufficient numbers of future professionals and gross understaffing.

A further dysfunctional effect of the brain influx is the xenophobia that it has generated in some African countries. Local professionals most of the time are not comfortable with the movement of foreign professionals such as academics to their countries either because of the generous conditions of service granted them because of 'exceptional skills' or that they have come to take their jobs and therefore make them (the locals) redundant.

Perhaps a personal dysfunctional effect is the adjustment of the foreign academics to their new environment. This has not been easy for them. Some of them experience cultural shock while it takes them time to enter into new relations and redefine their sense of identity. Some of them who bring their families to their new institutions either find it difficult to get good schools for their children or spousal job opportunities, which are not part of the conditions of service, are slim. These, no doubt, make some of them to sit up and question the essence of their taking up appointment in the new institutions. Some of them become disappointed and frustrated especially when they cannot do things like publishing and engaging in consultancy which they used to do when they were at their former institutions. In such situations, some of them resign especially when the terms of the contract with their new employers are not stringent.

Conclusion

This article has shown that the brain influx is not unique or a peculiar phenomenon but rather part of mobility and social transformation. Even though the causes could be attributed to 'push' and 'pull' factors, it is also the result of some weaknesses in most universities in Africa. There are functional and dysfunctional effects of the brain influx on the foreign academics themselves, their old and new institutions as well as their countries. In spite of its functional and dysfunctional effect, it is instructive to note that the brain influx is certainly going to be around for a long time in so far conditions that have created it have not changed much even though the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is arguably the most comprehensive initiative aimed at facilitating the region's socio-economic and political progress has explicitly mentioned a need to 'reverse the brain drain' in its framework document. There is no doubt that the processes of globalization have also heightened the brain influx as information communication technology (ICT) has created new avenues and opportunities for foreign academics to seek 'greener pastures' elsewhere. Above all, the brain influx is a phenomenon of mobility and social transformation and depends on time, space, rationale and choices that people make to improve their livelihood and standard of living. It is therefore

difficult to design policies and strategies to effectively deal with a phenomenon which is mainly determined by individual choices, time and space.

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The Changing Dynamics of Social Class, Mobility and Housing in Black Johannesburg[1]

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Abstract

In contemporary public debates regarding the significance of social mobility, new cultures of consumption and the black middle class, the point is often made that Africans living in urban areas before the onset of constitutional democracy were a homogenous group lacking in significant forms of social differentiation. The continued side-lining of long histories of social differentiation among urban Africans today has the effect not only of indirectly overstating the role recent policies such as affirmative action has played in the emergence of the 'new' black middle class, but also in limiting the public understanding of the historically constructed, multiple and complex meanings that practices of consumption has had in urban African municipal locations. In this article, I argue for historically-sensitive and ethnographically-informed analyses of consumption practices that move beyond the stereotyping of the black middle class as 'conspicuous consumers'. Looking at the history of public housing in Soweto helps us understand that 'new' cultures of consumption among citizens is often rooted in everyday experiences as subjects residing in social spaces – former urban African municipal locations – that were defined and designed as spaces of consumption and not of production or income-generation. The arguments contained in this article build on insights derived from my reading of James Ferguson (2002) and Daniel Miller (1988), especially around challenging interpretations of the renovations of municipal-owned housing in Soweto as a form of conspicuous consumption.

Detlev Krige

Introduction

The question of mobility and social class has perhaps not received enough attention in social science studies of southern Africa as it should have. The social theories that informed colonial-era sociological and anthropological analyses of society and culture have had the effect of, inter alia, fixing actors within circumscribed social, political and economic structures in which culture was treated as being fixed spatially and ecologically (Gupta & Ferguson 1992). Social scientists who took the categories of 'society', 'social structure', 'culture', 'tribe' and 'ethnic group' as starting point in their analyses tended to emphasise structure over flux, fixity over mobility and movement, patterned relations between kin and non-kin over chance meetings, and static roles and functions in a social and economic structure[2].

In contemporary South Africa the question of social mobility has also been placed on the agenda because of changes taking place in the social and class structure of society. With the onset of constitutional democracy and the greater incorporation of South Africa into global economic and cultural processes, we have witnessed for example the restructuring of classes at the same point at which class analyses have become unfashionable (Terreblanche 2003; Seekings & Nattrass 2000). Commentators now refer to the 'black elite' on the one hand and the 'black middle class' on the other,

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[2] There are important reasons for why the question of mobility has become an important theme in contemporary social science, least of which is the material changes brought about as the result of drastic changes in transportation systems and telecommunications technologies (Urry 2010). Recent work by urban scholars such as Abdou-Malique Simone, writing in the post-colonial era, can also be seen as a reaction against colonial-era analyses that sought to fix Africans (and others) within a series of social and economic structures and identities (Simone 2004). In his work then there is a focus on mobility and movement, on individual actors, and notions of identity that are characterised by negotiation, fluidity and contestation.

while 'white poverty' has again reared its head in public discourse while the 'urban underclass' has received less attention. Undoubtedly remaining relatively small numerically[3], the rise of the black elite and the black middle class has drastically altered the social structure of South African society and economy, and the way in which class is being talked about. In the public discourse more emphasis is placed on the ostentatious displays of wealth or conspicuous consumption by the black middle classes and elites than on growing inequality among Africans [4]. The point is often made that Africans living in urban areas before the onset of constitutional democracy were a static, homogenous group characterised by little internal social differentiation. Subsequent to the introduction of affirmative action and the transformation of the public service, the narrative goes, new avenues for upward social mobility opened up which has lead to growing inequality among the urban African population and the embrace of new cultures of consumption and practices of 'conspicuous consumption'. For strategic reasons, class differences that existed among urban Africans during apartheid were at the time underplayed by Africanist, liberal and Marxist academics alike. But today the fact that histories of social class differentiation among urban Africans is largely 'forgotten' has had the effect not only of indirectly overemphasizing the role of affirmative action and thus the state has played in the emergence of the 'new' black middle class, but also in limiting the public understanding of the historically constructed, multiple and complex meanings that practices of consumption has had in urban African municipal locations. In a global contemporary world in which it is said that identities are made through consumption rather than through production (Comaroff & Comaroff 2000), it has become too easy to 'read off' the meanings attached to practices of consumption and registers of social distinction without exploring these historically and ethnographically.

Soweto: From African Municipal Township to Suburb?

In the middle of December 2004 I attended, together with a few friends from the Sowetan neighbourhood in which I was residing, a ceremony in Thokoza

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[3] Cf http://www.sairr.org.za/sairr-today/news_item.2009-04-03.4114291811.
[4] See Ronge (2007); Bullard (2007); Sparks (2007); Newmarch (2006).

Park in Soweto. We had decided to attend this public event because there was to be a free concert during which some of the hottest and new local house acts were billed to perform. Moreover, events organised by the City was not really our cup of tea. But the event was significant because the City had decided, for the first time, to install Christmas lights and decorations in Old Potchefstroom Road (renamed the Chris Hani Road), the main arterial highway running from Main Reef Road through the heart of Soweto towards Potchefstroom. The purpose of the public event in the park, which is located adjacent to Old Potchefstroom Road, was to celebrate the public switching on of the lights at dusk for the first time. On stage a few officials spoke, and then the colourful Christmas lights which had been attached to the lamp poles on Old Potch Road were turned on, to much applause. And then we were swept away by the live music. In the days following that night, I came to appreciate the significance of the event as friends and neighbours who attended the ceremony explained it to me. As thirty year olds, they were acutely aware of how, historically, townships have been marginalised in relation to suburbs. Townships, they knew too well, were stigmatised places, spaces of poverty and crime, dusty streets and dirty children, and tiny, overcrowded 'matchbox' houses. That is why when you have the opportunity, you leave the township, because it is not a place to die in. The Christmas lights were significant, they said, because in some ways it signalled that which they already knew: Soweto has changed. As Hloni told me: 'With this, Soweto is now really becoming like a suburb'.

The turning on of the Christmas lights, a ceremony that in previous years were commonplace in the white suburbs, was then a celebration of the material changes that have led some Sowetan neighbourhoods to look much than suburbs than ever before. Such changes were not limit to infrastructure and material life: paved streets, upgraded public parks, etc. The City of Johannesburg no longer refers to Soweto as a 'township'. In policy documents and press statements, neighbourhoods in Soweto are no called 'suburbs'. This move gives voice to the City's vision of transforming Soweto into a thriving residential and economic hub of Johannesburg, and to overcome the historical opposition between 'township' and 'suburb' (in the process also increasing the market value of houses in Soweto). To some extent the City has been successful in this, but it has come after years of favourable treatment by the City, the political and bureaucratic leadership of

which is dominated by Sowetans. And this has happened to the detriment of other townships and informal settlements in Gauteng. It is evident to everyone that over the last decade, money has flown into Soweto like never before. Soweto is no longer a separate legal entity and now forms part of the larger Johannesburg Metropolitan Region. It is no longer treated by business and public authorities as a temporary labour camp for workers temporarily in the city 'naturally' belonging in some culturally defined 'homeland', even if Sowetans never fully bought into this framing (the dead were buried in the city, after all). But more than any other former African municipal township in Gauteng, Soweto has benefited from substantial household debt write-offs from the Johannesburg City, as was the case in the 1980s. Framed no longer by policy as a temporary African municipal township, but as consisting of a number of neighbourhoods forming part of the City of Johannesburg, Soweto has seen a rise in private and public investment[5].

Private business ventures have focused on the construction of new garages, restaurants and shopping centres in Protea, Baragwanath, Jabulani and recently the much feted Maponya Mall. At some point private consortiums were drawing up plans for a new R60 million upmarket townhouse 'lifestyle' complex to be built in Diepkloof Zone 3, complete with residential units and a shopping centre[6] while others wanted to develop a R500 million waterfront complex at Powerpark, Orlando[7]. Despite the recent increase in public and private investments, and the construction of new shopping malls, Soweto remains a place characterised by processes of extraction in addition to investment. Corporate South Africa regards the residents of urban townships as an important segment of their expanding consumer market, but corporate money that is reinvested in 'communities' rarely leaves the safety of the northern, richer suburbs. An example of the continued processes of extraction is the buying up and removal of mature indigenous trees, especially cycads, from now privately owned township properties by landscaping companies. Very few working class households can turn down cash offers of R5 000 for such trees. Many of the trees that were planted by the apartheid government on municipal residential stands

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[5] Cf. Thale (2002a); Madywabe (2004); Khupiso (2004); Thale (2002b).

[6] Cf. Chikanga (2004).

[7] Thale (2003); Mmope (2006).

now grace the gardens of newly developed townhouses or houses in the suburbs – at times, the gardens of the nouveau riche who grew up in Soweto.

In conjunction with these investments, two sectors of the Sowetan economy has benefitted from these material 'face-lifts' and changes in the perception concerning former African townships: tourism and property[8]. Newspaper reports also suggest that some estate agents believe a property boom is taking place[9]. The increase in house prices aside, commercial banks remain reluctant to finance home buyers in the older townships of Soweto, thus continuing their 'redlining practices' whereby they refuse to give home loans to prospective owners of houses located in so-called 'bad' areas or consumers with little formal credit histories[10]. Redlining practices by commercial banks effectively deny residents a possible source of income and a fixed asset that can be utilised as security against loans. And as former council-owned houses now have become economically valuable, over and above their social and spiritual importance, new struggles over properties have emerged. The transfer of ownership of township properties from the state to residents in the middle of the 1990s has been one of the causes of intra-family conflicts over houses and properties[11]. Many families in the middle class township of Protea Glen for example have defaulted on their bond payments and have met with evictions and the auctioning off of their houses. Some of the residents have mobilised themselves by joining some of the new social movements and numerous instances of members violently resisting eviction have been reported. At the same time, anecdotal evidence suggests that more and more ratepayers associations have been formed in Soweto[12].

Inequality is not new to Soweto, as I discuss in the following sections. In 1999, for example, one economist noted the surprisingly high

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[8] Cf. Van Rooyen (2004); Viljoen (2003).

[9] Cf. Piliso (2005); Robertson (2005); Van Rooyen (2004). See too, 'Three-bedroom Houses in Diepkloof Extension' which were valued at R300 000 in 2001 were reportedly selling for more than R1 million in 2005.

[10] Cf. Apps (2005).

[11] Rondganger and Aurelia (2005).

[12] Nkwanyane (2004) and Zungu (2004).

inequality within Soweto measured in terms of the Gini coefficient[13]. The roots of this inequality goes far back, but from the 1980s 'Era of Reform' the apartheid government actively sought to create a larger black middle class living in its urban municipal townships and started investing in such townships. This process intensified after the dismantling of apartheid, but has been an uneven process across cities and provinces. In the main it has been the educated and the skilled who has benefitted from the opening up of new employment opportunities in the services sectors of the labour market, boosted by an end to (formal) employment discrimination and the implementation of national labour and procurement policies such as Affirmative Action and Black Economic Empowerment. Moreover, the commodity boom period of the early 2000s has had a proportionally larger impact in urban areas than in rural areas. Many analysts agree that since the dismantling of some of the apartheid state policies and the post apartheid state's embrace of conservative macro-economic and fiscal policies, the economy has continued during the early 2000s on a path of relative 'jobless growth' despite the commodity boom period (Terreblanche 2003). For the growing underclass lacking in the sort of skills required by the growing sectors of the economy (finance, services, tourism), this has meant even greater levels of impoverishment and/or dependence on social security measures. A consequence of this has been a marked increase in income inequality between the new black middle class and the underclass within

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[13] A survey conducted by economist Piazza-Georgi (2002) in Soweto during 1999 – with a final sample of 908 households and 1 186 respondents – reported that the calculated Gini coefficient within Soweto is 51,3. While this measure of inequality suggests that inequality within Soweto is lower than the inequality in the society at large – which stands at 58,4 – it remains very high. Thus, out of 90 countries measured, only 14 countries have a higher Gini coefficient than Soweto. Moreover, Piazza-Georgi (2002:622) notes that 'the percentage share in expenditure of the top 10 per cent of the sample households is 40,3 per cent; this figure is again lower than that for South Africa as a whole (47,3 per cent) and leaves Soweto in exactly the same rank globally as its Gini coefficient, 15th of 90. South Africa as a whole is in fifth place with regard to its Gini coefficient, and in third place with regard to the share of the top 10 per cent of the population'.

former African municipal townships such as Soweto, even as middle class residents are relocating to the formerly white suburbs (Seekings & Nattrass 2000; Krige 2011). Thus we have seen the reported growth in the black middle class and the emergence of a category of rich black elites (the phrase 'Black Diamonds refer to market agencies' attempts to describe the consumer market of the new black middle class)[14]. All over urban South Africa it is reported that middle class residents of former urban African townships have left these townships and settled in formerly ('proclaimed') white suburbs. Such a 'flight' of the township middle class is evident also in Johannesburg, given the growth in townhouse complexes in the south and west of Johannesburg such as in Naturena, Mondeor and Ridgeway. Some newspaper reports and residents I interviewed suggest however that many residents who have left the township over the past decade are returning to buy property and live in Soweto (see Krige 2011; cf Van Rooyen 2005).

That inequality within Soweto is growing is evident to all residents, and it was an important theme in interviews and discussions with residents. When it comes to housing, for example, anecdotal evidence suggests that more and more of the new elites in the townships are buying up former municipal housing stock belonging to residents who can no longer afford municipal rates and services or who were evicted from their homes. This suggests that some council houses that were given to residents are now being concentrated in the hands of members of the new elite. The inequality is also evident in the growing support for local pro-poor social movements such as the Anti Privatisation Forum and the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee that seeks to fight Johannesburg City's policy decisions to privatise and commodify some of the basic municipal services notably water and electricity provision[15]. These alarming trends notwithstanding, there is much

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[14] See the UCT Unilever Institute of Strategic Marketing's *Black Diamond* reports, University of Cape Town.

[15] While some of these city-level policies have been forced on the city through inadequate funding from national government, the introduction of user fees and 'cost-recovering measures' seem to have impacted negatively on the poor, whom the city views as having a 'culture of non-payment'. These neoliberal policies have exacerbated the already high unemployment rate among poor households (Bond 2004).

in the established neighbourhoods of Soweto to celebrate: many residents exhibit a new-found hope, most are enthralled by their new-found political freedom despite the nostalgic longing for order and safety some older residents express (Dlamini 2009). They revel in their freedom to move around the city and to no longer be restricted to the township. Aspects of 'black culture' which was always treated by suspicion by the state and by the public culture are now celebrated in public, such as the appearance at Mandela's inauguration as President of a praise singer (*imbongi*) and the symbolic burning of incense (*mpepho*) when President Mbeki opened Freedom Park. What was a source of shame has in some instances now become a symbol of black pride (Bogatsu 2002).

In this context, debates about black wealth amidst growing inequality in former townships have become a commonplace if not comfortable fact of daily life. An important argument made by commentators is that black wealth as evidenced in expensive cars driving in and out of Soweto is a form of conspicuous consumption, which in turn is a symbol and interpretation of the underlying values of materialism that animate the new black middle classes, interpreted as the turning away from a mutualist philosophy of ubuntu. A closer look at the longer histories of social mobility, social distinction and consumption provides us with a more complex and nuanced reading of the possible meanings of consumption.

Histories of Social Mobility and Social Differentiation on the Witwatersrand Reef

The recent history of Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand is indeed the history of a series of movements and processes brought about, in the main, by the discovery of gold in the 1880s. Prior to the discovery of deposits of gold in 1886, Johannesburg was 'no more than an unwanted south-sloping remnant of ground lying between three highveld farms' (Beavon 1997). Only forty years later Johannesburg was heralded as a 'world city'. The discovery of gold not only resulted in the rise of an urban industrial region dotted with towns and mines along the gold reef, the Witwatersrand Reef. The migrant labour system that developed to make this possible has been the topic of many analyses (cf. Bonner 1995; Moodie 1994). In short, African migrant labourers were working on short-term labour contracts for between 6-18

months. Life in the mines was tough and men lived in tightly controlled single-sex barracks. African men had to leave their families behind in rural areas and were forced to carry an identity document which detailed their work contracts and enabled authorities to exert control over their movements.

The creation of the South Western Townships – later to be renamed Soweto – as a public housing estate or African municipal mownship was borne out of these processes. Its existence flowed from the need for unfree, cheap black labour to support the growing mining and industrial economies of the Reef region, owned by white capital. The need for cheap labour was partly fulfilled through the emergence of an exploitative migrant labour system that provided mines with cheap and unfree black labour. This labour system worked on two fronts: pulling poor Africans from rural lands to the City of Gold on temporary contracts with the promises of work while enticing wealthier Africans inspired by missionary education and ideals with promises of greater freedom, work and the opportunity to experiment with urban living (Bonner 1995)[16].

Recent scholarly works on consumption and intercultural flows of ideas and commodities have emphasised the interconnections that existed between Johannesburg and Europe, Harlem and Black America (Hannerz1994; Fenwick 1996; Nixon 1994), and indeed the ways in which the political economy of apartheid never entirely determined social and cultural life. In Sophiatown of the 1950s, however, the borrowing of global cultural products and styles and the movement across state-sanctioned social and economic boundaries amounted to a form of resistance. Those cultural *bricoleurs* and social bandits who thrived in the cosmopolitan space of Sophiatown effectively became local heroes as they defied the cultural Puritanism of apartheid sanctioned categories and discourse. Studies on African elites or the African bourgeoisie (Kuper 1965; Brandel-Syrier 1971; Nyquist 1983) is remarkable for their interpretive emphasis on practices of conspicuous consumption among black elites which in turn is a result of the silent, comparative dimension of their work – in particular, how black elites are always implicitly defined in relation to white elites. Furthermore, what

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[16] While much has been written about migration and the labour migration system, the literature on the immediate Gauteng region is less well-developed (cf. Rogerson 1996).

strikes me reading earlier micro-level studies such as Brandel-Syrier study *Reeftown Elite* (1971) is the extent to which their analyses resemble contemporary arguments about conspicuous consumption among black elite groups.

Revisiting Social Mobility and Conspicuous Consumption in Reeftown

In 1971 a sociologist of Dutch birth, Brandel-Syrier, published a monograph on social mobility among social elites in an African municipal township on the Witwatersrand. While some academics refused to cooperate with representatives of the apartheid state in their research endeavors, she worked closely with the native affairs officials of this township, which she called Reeftown. In *Reeftown Elite* (1971) Brandel-Syrier developed a descriptive analysis of the life histories and careers of 60 African men living in Reeftown. Reeftown is pictured as a community in transition from a small-scale society characterised by face-to-face relations that was the old (urban) Location in Reeftown to the new large-scale type of society which was the new municipal township. As part of this transition the structure of the new community had become more complex and the fields of social activity more articulated and expanded. New occupational groups produced new social groups so that a 'plurality of separate if not always entirely disjunctive elites were arising' (Brandel-Syrier 1971:xxvi). With such increase in social stratification came a greater division among the educated, greater inequality, and clear positions of superiority. The 'social elites' she described occupied a position of social superiority in the social life, social structure and pyramid-like prestige structure of Reeftown, a position attributed to their higher educational, occupational and financial status. They are local and not national elites. Following Nadel, Brandel-Syrier (1971:xxv) treats these elites as 'social' elites given that their status is that of a generalised nature, spanning domains and institutions across social, economic, religious and political fields. The category 'social elites' then is a result of their position in the social structure and not because of any particular behaviour patterns, domestic habits, social styles or moral values. Reeftown's social elites consisted of families constituting the first urban aristocracy as well as newer elite groups formed in the late 1960s with the growth of new occupational

groups. A similar process occurred in Soweto at the time (Bonner & Segal 1998:57-62), in part brought about by a booming post-War economy (Crankshaw 2005; Seekings & Nattrass 2006:106). The older Reeftown elites were typically stand-owners which owned several houses, acted as slum landlords, and were the wealthiest and best-educated in Reeftown (Brandel-Syrier 1971:18).

The decline of this older elite group was in part the result of the onset of 'high apartheid' at which point the state no longer differentiated the urban African population according to class, resulting in severe unhappiness among elite section of the African urban population as they lost some of their privileges. The onset of 'high apartheid' had the unintended consequence in Reeftown of assisting with the growth of new groups of social elites, fuelling in the process competition and conflict between these two groups. So whereas the older group consisted mainly of public servants, the new elites included managerial elites as well as entrepreneurial elites (Brandel-Syrier 1971:15-16). The *managerial elite* owed their existence to their competence as Africans, and their services were used entirely for the development and the service of the African market and. Reeftown's *entrepreneurial elite* on the other hand was stronger and much feted by black and white commentators as the only evidence that the so-called African middle class could become a 'true' middle. Both the business elite and the government of the time praised and welcomed this entrepreneurial group of elites, as they saw in this class as an important factor in making the homeland strategy work as such urban entrepreneurs were expected to transfer their capital, experience and skills to the 'newly independent homelands'. Furthermore, Brandel-Syrier shows that the economic lives and careers of these 60 men in Reeftown were characterised by 'extreme occupational mobility' between different employers and kinds of occupation, between employment and self-employment, between private and public employment and between different public employments (Brandel-Syrier 1971:28). Such mobility was furthermore enhanced by changes in state policies which, given low levels of income and the little assets and savings resident had, over and above their reliance on formal employment in order to reside legitimately in urban areas, drastically impacted on their lives.

Brandel-Syrier's work offers us important descriptive material pertaining to the lives of these social elites. However, her approach and

analysis raises several questions relevant to our discussion today. For one she did not problematise the residential area of Reeftown as the outcome of a series of political and economic processes (cf. Frankel 1981). Instead she ignored the politics of relocation, spatial development and segregation as she emphasised the cultural continuities and discontinuities between social life in Reeftown and what she imagined came before. Moreover, by framing her research question in the way she did, she reinforced some of the very notions on which apartheid's cultural politics were constructed. So instead of analysing Reeftown as part of an emerging urban region or South African society, she treats Reeftown as an organic community. In explaining some of the aspect of Reeftown culture, she juxtaposes Reeftown with the Old Location and with a rural, village life she neither observed nor experienced. Brandel-Syrier is likely to have overstated the differences between what she observed and the earlier phases in the life and culture of Reeftown residents. Both the old Location in Reeftown and the imagined rural village are portrayed in terms which are overly idealistic. While referring to changes in the labour market, she paid scant attention in her interpretations of the economic behaviour of her subjects to the influence of the political and power structures that existed in the society at large, which lead *inter alia* to overemphasise competition between social classes and groups within African communities. For example, she noted that 'the only factor' uniting the residents of Reeftown was the overriding desire to prevent at all costs the European 'finding out how bad we are' (Brandel-Syrier 1971:53).

Brandel-Syrier probably overstated her point and idealised the Old Location and rural village life when she wrote that social life in Reeftown was characterised by shame and status concerns and that,

> this township consisted of people who, hardly yet freed from the bondage of a kinship-dominated, custom-bound society, had suddenly been thrown into the unmitigated status struggle and the relentless competitiveness of the modern world in the *milieu* of the ghetto .... The emancipation from tribal restraints had engendered an extreme individualism (1971:62).

It seems that her description of 'extreme individualism' is not measured against the forms of individualism that existed among other urban

environments in Johannesburg at the time but against her idealised notions of 'community' and even collectivism she imagined existed in the homelands. She did not consider the possibility that shame and status, social processes of the first order, may be social styles through which to express social belonging and even collectivity, rather than evidence of isolated, atomized ways of being in the world. Rather than analysing Reeftown in relation to *other* urban residential spaces within the regional industrial complex she invokes an idealised past to explain change and then explains the meaning of upward social mobility only in relation to the immediate social context in Reeftown. Her reluctance to explicitly theorise the actions of social elites of Reeftown in relation to wider South African society stems from the fact that she was not interested in imagining a *national* middle class that could span racial groups as they were defined at the time. Thus, she writes, 'the term 'African middle class' can have no meaning in terms of association and social interaction with the European middle class' (1971:xxviii)[17]. In this singular passage Brandel-Syrier' makes explicit, for a second, the silent comparative dimension of her framing of the black middle class, and how her conception of the middle class is implicitly racialised.

Her reluctance to theorise Reeftown's elites in relation to white elites – the silent, comparative Other – means that every form of visible consumption is taken as evidence of a status war between individuals in a local African community rather than as practices potentially signifying something else. Hence the practices of consumption of Reeftown's social elites are related to an idealized rural culture and inward-looking urban community and thus these practices are taken to be symptomatic of status anxiety and severe competition between elites[18]. For example, Brandel-Syrier analyses Reeftown's social elites investment in their houses as evidence of Reeftown society's obsessions with status anxiety and conspicuous consumption. What if, on the other hand, we read such investments in houses not as an example of local prestige economies, but as directed at the wider

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[17] The fortunes of Africans under apartheid were intimately tied up with the state policies and state practice on both local and national levels.

[18] In similar vein, Nyquist (1983:224) argued that the upper stratum of the African communities in Grahamstown in the 1980s was characterised by similar status competitiveness.

society: as statements about people demanding or even proclaiming their right to belong to the city and to belong to the wider society[19]. Following an argument made by James Ferguson (2002) elsewhere, I read these not as imitations of a white ruling culture, and evidence of an inward-looking local culture, but as claims to membership of wider society and the city. In my analysis I also build on Daniel Miller's work on how residents of council estates in northern London appropriate the kitchens of such estate homes, effectively re-socialising the artefactual environment (Miller 1988) into their social lives. Despite such houses not being the product of their own labour, and thus potential a source of alienation and estrangement, Miller shows how some residents develop a sense of self and household through the active, creative consumption of these houses (treating kitchens as canvasses). The arguments contained in this article build on insights derived from my reading of Ferguson and Miller, especially around challenging interpretations of the renovations of municipal-owned housing in Soweto as a form of conspicuous consumption.

Houses and Social Class: Social Mobility and the Politics of Consumption

The history of Soweto, and many such former African Municipal Townships, cannot be told without writing about houses. Such urban townships were, in essence, public housing estates constructed for Africans but run by local white authorities. These local authorities were not interested in using the money of white taxpayers to build and develop such housing estates into permanent and decent residential areas. As a result, there has always been an incredible housing shortage in Johannesburg (cf. Car 1990; Kane-Berman 1978; Bonner & Segal 1998). This shortage not only inflated rents, but resulted in legislation such as the Native (Urban Areas) Act which gave local authorities a monopoly on the brewing and selling of African beer, all of which had to be placed (together with all fines and rents raised in the

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[19] Similarly, in 1965 Leo Kuper (1965:90) wrote that among the then emerging African bourgeoisie in Durban the 'style of houses in urban areas provides some opportunity for conspicuous consumption, as a display of wealth and a claim to prestige'.

townships) in a 'Native Revenue Account' which was used to finance housing schemes (Carr 1990). The City's reluctance and failure to provide housing for urban Africans and the resulting high demand for housing has also lead to the issue of housing becoming a site for political mobilisation, as was the case with James Mpanza and the independent black city of 'Masakeng' he had tried to create in the 1940s (Stadler 1979; Bonner & Segal 1998:22). In the freehold areas in Johannesburg where Africans could own land, such as Sophiatown, the relationship between landowners and tenants were structured by the high demand for housing. It was home ownership which Lodge saw as the primary marker of an emerging class conflict in Sophiatown which local authorities cleverly exploited in the context of the destruction of Sophiatown (Lodge 1981, 1983) and which Coplan (1985) saw as influencing the social and cultural life of Black Johannesburg. In Soweto, the construction of back rooms and shacks on council properties has always been an important source of income for many township dwellers (Crankshaw *et al.* 2000), in addition to providing accommodation for sons who could not establish independent households or who were not in line for inheriting a house, given the expectations that daughters would marry out of their parental home into another (Crankshaw *et al.* 2000:850). What this means is that the structural shortages of housing in Black Johannesburg had led to cultural, social and economic valuing of houses. Moreover, houses, whether owned or rented, became material and symbolic sites for the expression of social class *and* membership to the city. And, as I have argued, expressions of social class were not only directed at fellow township residents but were also expressions of belonging and an expression to the state about Africans' right to the city and to the wider society. How did I arrive at this interpretive position?

It was the many discussions I had with Sowetans about houses and the value and practices of 'renovating' houses that generated this insight and which led me to read the literature in a different light. In these discussions I had with residents, arising from the opportunity of residing in a backroom on a former municipally-owned yard in a Sowetan neighbourhood for two years, it became evident to me that houses are carriers of social class and play an important part in local configurations and practices of social distinction. While residents were reluctant to label or 'class' people in discussions they found ways of talking about status. The reluctance of some to explicitly label

others according to social class is most likely a leftover of the political ethos that were dominant in the townships during the 1980s and which stressed workers' unity and racial solidarity over and above ethnic and class differentiation. This reluctance notwithstanding, residents articulated an acute awareness of local registers of social status hierarchies and distinctions in wealth[20]. As elsewhere, such hierarchies were never only about income but were often peppered with perceptions around residential locale (even within Soweto), and type of residence, 'upbringing', schooling, type of marriage and forms of association marking off different status groups. Certain types of employment, such as teaching, nursing and civil service positions, were traditionally regarded as typical of 'the middle class'. Talk about the kind of 'upbringing' an individual had, and whether this took place in a 'broken' family or not, were often remarked upon as markers of social status. Such talk was not completely irrelevant or limited to gossip or without consequence – it could influence, for example, calculations of value during bridewealth negotiations.

When residents spoke to me about social class, they often started off by talking about houses. Residents of municipal-built houses spoke to me of the importance of replacing the government issued wire fences that surrounded their yards, and replacing it with prefabricated waist-height fences, aptly called 'stop-nonsense' fences. These walls were intended to keep playing children, their makeshift soccer balls and stray dogs out of the yards. Such solid fences also prevented neighbours from jumping over them or it from being pulled down by the prolonged leaning of bodies. Importantly, it promised to keep at bay the 'nonsense' of township life – thugs and *tsotsis*. The construction of such fences was a first step leading to the higher and more private walls evident in Soweto today, typical of course of most suburban residential areas[21].

Renovating the house, as opposed to the fence, presented other challenges and required much more of an investment even if the house did not belong to you. But for a few houses built in Dube in the 1930s, most

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[20] 'Classing people' is an actual phrase used to denote the labelling of people as belonging to specific status groups. In fact, when Sowetans use the term 'class' they are referring to the Weberian notion of status group.

[21] Cf. Makatile (2005) and Power (2004:5).

houses built in Soweto between the 1940s and the 1980s were municipal-owned. Renovating, or appropriating (cf. Miller 1988) a house you did not own, was risky, given the way in which the township was defined by the political economy of the time as a temporary space. In the late 1970s, as part of a broader 'Era of Reform' that included granting rights to black trade unions and introducing some privileges to urban black workers, the government of John Vorster (after lobbying by the Urban Foundation) reintroduced 99-year leaseholds that allowed Sowetans to buy rather than rent municipal township houses. Residents were allowed to renovate their houses and, as Bonner & Segal (1998:104) points out, 'a new class of residents, concerned with the safety and value of their property, began to emerge'. But some residents had started renovating their homes long before this regulation was introduced. Apart from improving fences, better-off residents started extending their houses by building extra rooms, replacing government-issued steel doors, plastering the original face brick walls and painting them, and eventually constructing back rooms and garages with tiled or paved runways. Some residents imported water features and glass ornaments into their walls and gardens, leaving enough space for flower gardens and paved walkways, and thus ensuring coverage in the *Sowetan* and the local gossiping circles. Very important too was the construction of an 'inside toilet' if your stand only had an 'outside toilet'.

It is important to note that the construction of extra rooms, for example, was obviously not merely about showing off. Monies secured from the renting out of brick or zinc backyard structures to young, unmarried men or recently married couples or migrant workers from outside of South Africa has been an important source of income for landlords (Morris *et al.* 1990), even though middle class households were often reluctant to populate their yards with poorer tenants. The numbers also do not suggest that small-scale landlords could get rich from it (Crankshaw *et al.* 2000). And, as mentioned, sons could establish semi-independent households in the backward of their parents' municipal homes. The possible income households could generate from the construction of backyard structures aside, much of the effort that went into the renovation of houses were either an investment gamble, with households hoping to secure rights to these houses in the nearby future. Brandel-Syrier (1971:56-57) argued that these were investments into the 'prestige economies' that flourished in Soweto and Reef townships since the

1960s. She thus writes how 'improvements' and 'renovations' to houses were often unproductive and inspired by considerations of status and 'when finances threatened to run out, the interior had to remain unfinished and the last available money was spent on external features and embellishments' (1971:57). But are these really examples of a 'prestige economy'?

The first point to make is that historically the South Western Townships have in the first instance always been public residential estates, with nearly no industrial zones. In the industrial areas of the cities and on the mines and in the hostels, residents of the South Western Townships emphasised their identities as workers and organised themselves accordingly, sometimes along ethnic and linguistic lines (cf. Moodie 1994). In the interactional and social context of the South Western Townships, however, urban Africans consider themselves and their neighbours firstly as residents of specific townships before they regarded each other as workers or as belonging to a specific ethnic group. Up until today when you meet someone you are likely to enquire about which township (or *kasi*) they are from, but not how they earn a living. Residents of the South Western Townships did – and continue to do so today – underplay questions of work and income in the interactional and social context of their everyday lives. This is in part the result of a generation that had to earn income in illicit ways because of growing joblessness amidst more and more jobseekers (Glaser 2000) and in part the stigma attached to certain types of employment. Thus, all forms of income-generation (whether legal or illegal) are typically lumped into broad categories of 'business' or 'hustling' (*ukupanda*) while potential embarrassing questions about income are avoided (cf. Peterson 2003). Unless you worked for the state as a teacher, policeman, clerk or nurse, or work in some other professional public capacity, you typically did not broadcast the way you earned your money. In fact, middle class-ness was to some extent defined by the fact that everybody knew where those who form part of the middle class worked and how they were earning their monies. When talk about the generation and sourcing of money is avoided, talk of how it is spent takes on a great social significance. As a result, residents did not stress their identities as money generators and producers in the context of their everyday life in the townships: rather, they stressed practices of spending and consumption. Long before theorists proclaimed the importance of consumption as a means of creating and expressing identity, Sowetans

experimented with spending and consumption as a form of social distinction and a statement about their place in the city and society.

What possibly were asserted by Sowetans when they purchased and displayed consumer items or renovated their houses? More historical research has to be conducted to answer such questions properly. My own ethnographic research suggests that practices of consumption – and appropriation as consumption (Miller 1988) – have much to do about them as being markers of modernity (cf. Leclerc-Madlala 2003). Given the ways in which urban municipal townships have been framed as spaces of consumption rather than production, it is unlikely that consumption as appropriation and as statements about belonging to wider society is a new phenomenon. Sowetans were explicit in how the appropriation of consumer items as symbols of modernity was one tactic through which one could subvert and struggle against the homogenising and negative representations of black people by a dominant white political system and media industry. In this context houses also symbolized households' relationship to the city. Under apartheid there existed little political space for black Africans to assert their claims to their right to the city, and their place in it. The mainstream representations of the public housing complex of Soweto under apartheid stressed the undifferentiated nature of the houses and its people and the displaced nature of its residents who do not belong to the city. Residents were reduced, discursively, to faceless and nameless black bodies who were similar and equal in their poverty and subordination, waiting for their time in the city to come to an end. In this context, practices of differentiation articulated through the appropriation of consumer items taken from the dominant culture or elsewhere had potent symbolic and political meanings. The adoption of consumer items and styles from the dominant system served as a vehicle for the expression of social claims in the township neighbourhood *and* political claims in relation to the city and the wider society. In other words, consumption has always had a political dimension in Black Johannesburg in that it expressed a claim of belonging to wider society. And the desire to communicate something about power and agency, even under today's conditions, remains to be expressed, *inter alia*, through buying, owning and displaying consumer items. Put differently, we should analyse it not only in terms of its horizontal meaning, but also vertically.

The Changing Dynamics of Social Class, Mobility and Housing

It is important to recognise that the state was not a bystander in the process of social differentiation among urban Africans. It was not the case that 'the market' naturally produced these class differences based on the innate qualities of individuals who made use of opportunities to improve their own lives. The colonial and apartheid state was active in the construction and management of social class differentiation among urban African populations[22]. During the pre-apartheid and early apartheid period, occupational class differences among the African population were reinforced by state policies that recognised these class differences. However, during the 1960s and the 1970s, the time of high apartheid, the state increasingly ignored class and occupational differences among Africans and instead sought to differentiate Africans in terms of whether or not they were born in Johannesburg (Crankshaw 2005). Under high apartheid the African middle class had no legal rights that distinguished them from the working class, with whom they lived side-by-side in the municipal township areas. By then end of the 1970s, the apartheid state under siege, it began to offer piecemeal reforms that did away with many of the laws restricting urbanisation, employment, education, home-ownership among Africans. By the middle of the 1980s the apartheid state was actively promoting the development of an urban black middle class in order to keep black elites from becoming radicalised. This is not to say that the state was completely successful in its efforts to engineer class difference, but to acknowledge the role it played in shaping the conditions under which social mobility became a reality for some residents[23].

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[22] With the enactment of the 1923 Native Urban Areas Act, government explicitly recognised social class differences among Africans. Prior to the Native Urban Areas Act of 1923 the government did not distinguish between urbanized African families and rural migrants – the pass laws made no reference to place of birth or urban status (Bonner & Segal 1998; Crankshaw 2005).

[23] The encouragement of the growth of a black urban middle class did not take place without any contestation and conflict, and had interesting consequences.

Concluding Remarks

Consumption has become an important theme in social science studies over the past years (Leclerc-Madlala 2003; Comaroff & Comaroff 2000). In much of the literature the renewed interest in consumption is explained with reference to changes in the constitution of global capitalism and the 'condition of postmodernity' and how processes of consumption rather than production lie at the heart of *contemporary* expressions of selfhood and identity. The earlier literature on Black Johannesburg and Soweto – and urban Africans in South Africa more generally – did not consider the ways in which the urban African township was discursively and politically framed as a space of consumption and how consumption allowed Africans to participate in city life to which they had no political right.

I have argued that a consideration of the history of Soweto and Black Johannesburg tells us that Africans living in former African municipal townships have for long been practicing with different styles and registers of social distinction. It tells us that the state has played an active role at various points in discouraging and encouraging the emergence of an African middle class. The shortage of housing, for example, has meant that houses have become valued, socially and economically. Improvements made on municipal-owned houses could be interpreted not merely as a form of conspicuous consumption, but as an expression of residents' 'right to the city'. Thus, while signifying practices of consumption were important in local registers of social distinction within urban townships, they were also expressions of the desire to belong to wider society. Practices of consumption today are too easily read as evidence of 'conspicuous consumption' and the local variant of 'people making themselves with things'. This is not to deny the role that consumer items play in shaping identities. Rather, we should be cognizant of the fact that the urban spaces in which Africans were forced to live under apartheid were discursively and legally framed as spaces of consumption and not of production. And that a consideration of both vertical and horizontal lines of symbolic expression through consumption shows that consumption is both social and political processes. This should inform hasty interpretations that explain the display of consumer items as a form of conspicuous consumption voicing underlying dominant values of materialism, and evidence of a turn away from the principles of solidarity and mutuality expressed by ubuntu.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the same interpretation may be made with regards to motor vehicles. For a younger generation of Sowetans, investing in a motor vehicle has become the equivalent of their parents' investment into their municipal home. As with housing, transport has been one of the most regulated aspects of the lives of urban Africans. Furthermore, in the context of the incredible costs that Sowetans historically had to carry in terms of transport to their places of work, and dependency on unsafe public forms of transport, it is perhaps not surprising that ownership of a motor vehicle and physical and spatial mobility have been and remains a potent symbol of individual success. And given the history of state monopoly on the brewing of beer it is perhaps not surprising that the consumption of beer has been so closely tied up with definitions of African masculinity (Krige 2011). In other words, three important material objects that have been and are still today deployed in the popular economies of Soweto as symbols of agency, mobility and identity come from sectors that have a long history of state involvement and control if not monopoly: housing, transport and alcohol. More research is needed that will address the historical relationship and contemporary meaning of between specific commodities in relation to local practices of social differentiation and social class and political claims to participation in the wider economy and society.

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The Role Played by Transnational Mobility in the Renegotiation of African Scholarship at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

At the dusk of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty-first centuries transnational mobility is increasingly becoming an important space through which many of our human activities are defined. Virtually all aspects of our modern world–our jobs, culture, educational systems, ideologies, identities and even our relationships with one another are highly negotiated and inadvertently transformed by the profound forces of mobility. Through in-depth interviews conducted with transnational academics of African origin in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) this paper posits to critically provide an understanding on the role that transnational mobility has played in challenging the current thinking of foreign African academics pertaining to the issue of African scholarship. Given that UKZN is branded the 'Premier University of African Scholarship' the paper demonstrates how foreign African migrants are taking advantage of their mobility into this space to interrogate and scrutinise the core substance of African scholarship in this institution. Highlighting the role played by these academics as possible conduits in the expansion of African scholarship within the knowledge production circuit, this study discusses how these migrants are galvanising their transnational experiences in an attempt to amplify and drive this concept beyond the confines of UKZN.

Keywords: African scholarship, transnational mobility, foreign African migrants

Introduction

The dusk of the twentieth and the dawn of the twenty-first centuries have witnessed unprecedented flows of transnational mobility of global proportions. We live in a globalised world of transnational interconnectedness and competitiveness marked by the rapid flows of practices and people, ideas and institutions, visions, and capital (Inda & Rosaldo 2002; Meyer & Geschiere 2003) which have continued to impact on the ways in which we relate to our socio-cultural and political institutions. The knowledge economy is one major area which has been affected by the profound forces of transnational activities. Institutions of higher learning in Africa because of their increased international stature are becoming repositories of global transformation which is accentuated by the increased mobility of human, information and material resources around the globe. In this era of rapid globalisation and skyrocketed flows of transnational mobility, it has become imperative for one to investigate the positionality of African scholarship at the interface of transnationalism.

With the view that African scholarship is 'work in progress' this paper provides critical insights into the trajectory of transforming knowledge(s) located within the African context and shows how transnational African scholars are at the same time preoccupied with the need to utilise models that can more readily take advantage of the challenges and opportunities offered by their transnational experiences. Using the University of KwaZulu-Natal as the locus, this study set out to investigate the positionality of foreign African academics in response to the ongoing efforts towards establishing UKZN as the 'premier university of African scholarship'. The paper demonstrates how some of these foreign scholars are striving to galvanise their transnational experiences in the renegotiation of African scholarship within and beyond UKZN. The article focuses on the different perspectives held by this group of scholars in their articulation of this concept as they interact with the structures and mechanisms that could propel the vision beyond the confines of UKZN.

Methodology

The study is drawn from a sample of twenty participants in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (FHDSS). Qualitative in-

depth interviews guided the methodology of this study. The snowball referral method was used in which participants linked me to others they knew would be suitable for this study.

This paper discusses how foreign African academics at UKZN are utilising the transnational South African space of UKZN for the (re)negotiation of African scholarship in the institution. With UKZN being the 'the premier university of African scholarship', foreign African academics in the institution believe that their role as transnationals is crucial in the expansion of the vision beyond the confines of UKZN and South Africa. The concept of transnational academics here is inclusive of those who have taken permanent residency in South Africa either as permanent residents or citizens through naturalisation and those who are on temporary residence permits. As I interviewed participants, I found that migrants regardless of their status, whether permanent or non permanent do not completely server links with their home countries. It is for this reason that I use the concepts of 'transnational mobility' and 'transnational academics' to denote anyone who is not originally South African.

The paper is positioned within the debate of understanding what African scholarship is. It scrutinises the perceptions held by foreign African academics concerning the application of African scholarship at UKZN and highlights various possibilities that this concept could be expanded to other universities in Africa.

Defining African Scholarship – A Theoretical Framework

The concept of African scholarship is divergent and increasingly becoming complex in ways that it has become difficult to establish a cross-cutting articulation of what the African experience really is. African scholarship has been defined in multiple ways using a multiplicity of interpretations experimented on in various contextual experiences.

These multivocal interpretations of what constitute the African experience are promoted by what could be seen as a hybridised continent. The African continent has passed through marked transitions that have had tremendous repercussions on the construction of social reality by nation-states. From the historical epoch of colonialism to postcolonialism and to these modern times of globalisation and increased transnational activities

Africa has developed a hybrid identity which has perpetually subjected the continent to a position of negotiation and renegotiation in trying to grapple with the dynamics that constitute African identity.

The transnational mobility of African scholars is among the different contexts through which this paper attempts to scrutinise the concept of African scholarship as applied in UKZN. Some scholars such as Zeleza (2005) and Thiong'o (2005) have strongly argued for the instrumental role that the African diaspora and pan-Africanists could play in advancing the agenda of African scholarship. As pertinent as these roles may appear to be, these writers however have failed to provide empirical data that could validate this truism by practically engaging with particular pockets that demonstrate an interest in partaking in this conversation of African scholarship. African scholarship is an elusive category with multiple voices that have not yet been able to engage with practical issues that may in a way try to address the elusiveness of this concept. Although Zeleza (2008: 6) attempts a classification of the diasporic intelligentsia from Africa into three categories of Pan-Africanists, Northenists and the globalists he has done that on a less problematised manner. This is because he does not provide the national and social backgrounds which could be instrumental in providing more nuanced understandings about these different approaches.

In this era of accelerated growth in globalisation and increased transnational activities, western paradigms have continued to dominate the knowledge economy. Africa is one continent which has been much more affected by these processes of globalisation and transnationalism as cultural heterogeneity is fast being eclipsed by one civilisation trying to enforce cultural homogeneity across the world (Moore 1996; Quinlan 2000). However not everything about the west is dismissive. Some African transnational scholars at UKZN who migrated from some western countries are ready to utilise models from those countries that could be useful for the generation of African scholarship.

Perspectives of African Scholarship as Defined by Foreign African Academics

The University of KwaZulu-Natal is a multicultural university with African academics and students constituting a significant part of the international

membership of the institution. As far as the vision of the institution is concerned, some transnational African academics are striving towards making the concept of African scholarship meaningfully engaged within their different areas of expertise. In trying to bring about meaningful transformation in respect to this vision, foreign African academics are in the first place preoccupied with the very debates of trying to provide some understanding as to what the term 'African scholarship' really means. Their different views in themselves have further rendered the concept of African scholarship even more complex.

Some of the participants have defined African scholarship in relation to experiences of Africa – that is the material, existential, and experiential circumstances of people living in the continent of Africa. Others have defined it in terms of its relationship with other forms of scholarship based on a competitive approach – that is in respect to its being recognised as a legitimate space where scientific knowledge can be verified and given credence. Yet some others have seen it as a means of educating upcoming scholars of African origin and to radically instil in them the values and ways that the African reality could be foregrounded and eventually establish itself as an authoritative knowledge space within the globe of knowledge production. The knowledge economy plays a quintessential role in providing intellectual capacities that in the first place attempt to position higher education institutions as formative centres necessary to develop critical thinking and reflective inquiry (Ntshoe 2010). Some foreign African scholars are taking advantage of their presence at UKZN to extend the mandate of critical thinking to their respective countries through the recommendation of relevant pedagogic structures that could advance African philosophies and development.

This study reveals that for UKZN and the African university in general to pursue this vision of African scholarship to the point of making it an authoritative voice among other forms of scholarship, there is a need for African scholars to develop an African cosmology that would override the notion that the African situation can only be studied as an object. An African cosmology supposes that knowledge about Africa should not only be limited to experiential and empirical ways of producing knowledge but rather that such knowledge should also be accompanied with African subjectivities to their belief systems. In other words over and above the experiential and

existential things that you see defining African scholarship, one would need to add the fact that there is in African scholarship the respect for permeability of space between the subjective and the objective, such that there is belief in the broader ontology or cosmology of knowledge. As one of the research participants put it, *'what you see with scholarship from elsewhere is this fundamental belief of objective reality of tangible things as if it is religion and to itself that they actually believe that nothing else exists other than what you see'*. What is implied here is that in trying to establish 'the objective', the subjective should be understood as playing a fundamental role in establishing a natural and holistic picture of what is being studied as objective knowledge.

Africa is a heterogeneous continent replete with diverse socio-cultural and linguistic experiences. Some of the foreign African academics interviewed for this study have expressed a strong desire to take advantage of this vision at UKZN to expose students to scholarship from their home countries and other parts of Africa they have knowledge about. A diversity of transnational experiences it is believed would expose students to a wealth of information about the variables and dichotomies that are embedded in socio-cultural practices that may appear to be the same everywhere in Africa. As one participant put it:

> What is viewed as African traditional religion for example is a way of undermining our religious diversities .… I think African religions are many even within the same state, region, ethnic group …. the world must start to understand that there is a sense of uniqueness for each of the so-called African religions as African scholars we should be able to give meaning to such uniqueness.

Concerns Over the Utility Value of the Vision of the University

The new changes following the collapse of the apartheid regime have ushered in a myriad of reforms in which professionals from other parts of the African continent are increasingly taking advantage of by looking for employment in the different institutions of South Africa. The influx of foreign African skilled professionals into South Africa is promoted by the

issues of brain drain and shortage of skills. The brain drain issue is accentuated firstly by the fact that many white South Africans are not ready to subject themselves under the bureaucratic scrutiny laid down by the policies of affirmative action and the law of equity relating to job application and acquisition. Secondly, because of South Africa's reconnection to the global economy, it has become relatively easy for South Africans with skills to access meaningful and better paying jobs in the industrialised nations of the West (Matte *et al.* 2000).

Although UKZN as a government entity adheres to the policies of affirmative action and law of equity, these policies do not 'run counter to the overall motive of breeding excellence in the institution' (Otu 2011:136). The employment of foreign African academics at UKZN is par excellence with a good number of them occupying headship and strategic offices at various levels including departments, schools, the deanery and the chancellery. Most of these academics have had previous working experiences in other institutions in their home countries and other parts of the world. Their prior working experiences bring them to a level where they strongly believe they can make significant contributions to the transformations that are taking place in the University of KwaZulu-Natal. With the recent reconfiguration plan that has been birthed in the university, foreign African academics feel this is a moment where they need to showcase their transnational experiences and contribute meaningfully to curriculum development and research in the institution.

The reconfiguration that is about to take root in 2012 is a significant moment in the history of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Some foreign African academics view this reconfiguration as a meaningful period which they believe the university could take advantage of to make significant inroads in its attempt to have the vision streamlined. In this regard they strongly suggest that the agenda of African scholarship be incorporated not only in research, but also in the teaching and learning segments of producing and disseminating knowledge in the institution. This is a historic moment in which some of these foreign scholars believe the multicultural diversity of the institution should be illuminated so that students may interact with other cultures from across Africa.

Most of the academics interviewed for this study from across the different national backgrounds, expressed their worries about the limited

exposure of South African students to other African socio-political landscapes. They bemoan the fact that it is easier for a local South African student to relate much more with Euro-American history than the history of their continent. Moreover, participants were unanimous in their opinion that the local South African students both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels present the South African experience to mean the African experience. As much as a local South African student may be able to correctly identify, interpret and articulate a specific social problem, their examples are mostly located within the South African context. This is elucidated by the following observation made by one of the research participants who has been a student since 2005 and is now currently doing her post-doctoral research in the faculty:

> For me much of what I see here as African scholarship is actually South African scholarship. I find a lot of emphasis made on South African examples as one attempts to interrogate social issues for the purpose of scholarship. When this happens one would begin to question what African scholarship really is. Again the term is complex – I don't understand the branding slogan – premier university of African scholarship. So engaging with that slogan it becomes somehow problematic for me because I don't know if it encapsulates all of the African experience or the university has its own kind of knowledge it wants to produce which we are not told. So it is basically like left up to you to define what should constitute African scholarship. It is like a 'free for all' so long as you are African. For me at this point the concept becomes more complex to promote. To me in this particular context then, African scholarship actually becomes South African scholarship, for the purposes of this context – because this is South Africans wanting to tell their own story – which is also part of Africa. This therefore brings to mind that African scholarship is context-specific. It depends on which part of Africa you are talking about.

This kind of understanding came up as I interviewed the various participants on the question of how much Africaness is reflected in the teaching and learning environment of the institution. According to this participant and

many others, students at UKZN are not adequately exposed to the socio-cultural diversities that exist in other parts of the African continent. For UKZN to be mandated as the premier university of African scholarship, it is imperative that the curricular and pedagogic structures be realigned in such a way that 'the African experience' takes lead in informing the production of scholarship across disciplines in the university. Some of the participants reported that they are making some efforts to integrate their *home-groomed* orientations with the South African ones to equip students with more fortified approaches to cultural diversity.

For some participants, the reconfiguration which is about to take stage come 2012 is viewed as a benign opportunity that these participants anticipate should be able to ignite new flames of academic performativity re-oriented and focused towards patronising and promoting the vision of the institution. A culture of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity is one major way that some foreign African scholars believe could help (re)enforce or (re)align the vision of engineering and pioneering the African scholarship agenda in research and curriculum. According to Kotter and Balsiger (1999: 102) an interdisciplinary approach is,

> only used for those forms of supradisciplinary collaboration where various disciplines, keeping their own autonomy (i.e. without becoming a serving discipline), solve a given problem which cannot be solved by one discipline alone, in a joint way.

A transdisciplinary approach arises as soon as a problem is raised outside the scientific context and has to be unravelled in the form of a joint collaboration between scientists and practitioners (ibid.). Through an interdisciplinary approach these scholars appear to have the conviction that an atmosphere of collaborative research and curriculum development among disciplines within the faculty of humanities and social science not only at UKZN (to begin with) would help translate the vision of African scholarship into a veritable scientific knowledge matrix with the view of exporting this scholarship to other universities in Africa.

The supradisciplinary approaches of interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity could become useful tools through which the African academe could provide intellectual spaces for systemic intervention for

development and a meaningful advancement of the African philosophy in the global knowledge economy. The university is not just a breeding place for intellectual growth, but is also a significant space where developmental agendas of nation-states are being nurtured. It is the university that equips people with different specialised skills such as medical doctors, state nurses, environmental practitioners, historians, political analysts, lecturers, archaeologists, journalists etc working in various departments. With the new reconfiguration programme, some of the foreign African academics are readily looking forward to how best they could utilise some of the new pedagogic units introduced by UKZN. The newly created multidisciplinary Centre for African Studies for example is an area where some of the participants are gearing a vested interest in creating synergies with other colleagues on the continent. For many of them such a centre is a potential force towards the expansion of African scholarship across the continent. Using their multiple backgrounds these transnational scholars are engaged with curriculum transformation at UKZN and some of them are actively liaising with colleagues in the promotion of afrocentric approaches to research and curriculum across the continent.

South African institutions of higher learning such as UKZN are appreciated by many foreign African scholars as innovative and illustrative of democratic principles. South Africa is a vibrant and buoyant economy with relatively stronger economic muscles that could empower and have certain developmental agendas meaningfully engaged with. The agenda of African scholarship at UKZN is a force provocateur that is creating a tremendous effect on the minds of various scholars in the faculty of humanities and social sciences to indulge in the intellectual game of 'playing Africa' in the area of knowledge production. Pockets of think tanks are being imagined and earmarked for scholarship among foreign African scholars at UKZN in collaboration with some local South African colleagues in an effort to promoting the vision of African scholarship for global competitiveness.

UKZN could be viewed as a pan-African institution hosting scholars from different nations of the African continent. Evidence of pan-Africanism in this study is based on the fact that interviews were conducted on people from over ten nationalities including; Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Eritrea, Malawi, Kenya and Uganda. For some of these scholars the advancement of an African course

has been their long awaited dream. Their mobility to this space is therefore a *fait accompli* to what has been their burning desire of forging collaborative links that would forage the terrain of African knowledge(s) with the idea that such knowledge(s) would be able to promote Africa as a place, home and idea.

Creating Networks

For an international institution such as UKZN, networking becomes one of the crucial ways through which policies are advanced and standards of scholarship sustained. The University of KwaZulu-Natal is anchored on a knowledge-driven culture that attempts to position the institution at competitive levels of research and innovations with other higher education institutions in South Africa, Africa and the world at large. Over and above this, UKZN seeks to prioritise and reposition the African experience at the centre of global scholarship. The slogan 'premier university of African scholarship' puts UKZN on spotlight as a referral space where the advancement of an African course in terms of scholarship and development could be negotiated. For UKZN to forge her way ahead as a premier university of African scholarship there is a need for the university to create collaborative links with other universities and agencies on the African continent in line with its vision. As earlier mentioned UKZN harbours African academics from different regions of Africa with diverse social, professional and cultural experiences. These diversities provide a stage upon which the various African experiences could be articulated to encapsulate an all-encompassing sense of dissecting African identities in knowledge seeking approaches.

As an institution that has a long tradition of aligning itself with international standards, it has become the prerogative of UKZN to focus on agenda that could set it apart from other universities in the world by developing models that uniquely speak to its vision of being the premier university of African scholarship. In this regard if the focus is about African scholarship then the emphasis has to change to embrace new epistemological, theoretical and methodological dimensions that would bring the whole of the African experience to the forefront of knowledge production in the institution. As members of the humanities and social science faculty, foreign

African academics claim that for the purpose of advancing an agency it is important that these new paradigms should in the first place attempt to present Africa as a borderless space. For UKZN to move beyond borders does not however ignore the fact that the African experience is heterogeneous and that its complexities can only be understood through a nuanced outlook of what constitutes the African experience.

Scholarship beyond borders at UKZN in respect to its vision means a display of totalising the inconsistencies that demarcate the African experience into different pockets of social progression in ways that such inconsistencies and demarcations would collapse into an overall agenda of promoting afrocentric approaches to the production and dissemination of knowledge within and beyond the institution. As already mentioned, African scholarship has been involved in a long struggle of trying to unyoke itself from imperial domination and is striving to authenticate itself as a legitimate space of scientific inquiry. Some transnational African academics at UKZN in their individual capacities are striving to re-orientate their students to start viewing reality through afrocentric lenses.

Considering the instrumentality of the university as a key player in the nation-building process, the university in Africa has become a pivotal area of response to the external forces such as globalisation and transnationalism whose agendas continue to be part of the discourses that inform the developmental concerns of national institutions. The University of KwaZulu-Natal being an international institution and coupled with the fact that it functions within certain parameters predicated on the designs of the South African state is also affected by these global forces. This paper however is not out to delve into the 'blame game' politics of globalisation, but it rather seeks to provide a sense of proactive understanding on how the concept of transnationalism could be meaningfully utilised in producing networks of mutual benefit between UKZN and other universities in Africa.

Transnational movements provide an enabling environment for emerging diasporas whose members are ever trying to create links with people back in their home countries (Kearney 1995). Foreign African academics in the faculty of humanities and social sciences at UKZN are agents of transnationalism who are forever processing their thoughts and forging links of collaborative scholarship with colleagues in what they consider as their homelands. As transnational academics, the idea of

advancing collaborative links with colleagues does not necessarily limit these scholars to home as a place of origin, but such collaboration is also extended to other universities in the world that they have previously worked in. With respect to promoting the vision of African scholarship, foreign African migrants believe that their transnational mobilities expose them to a position where they believe they are better placed to assist UKZN in embarking on a crusade of spreading the gospel of African scholarship to the different parts of the continent. The following commentary by a senior academic in the faculty illustrates how the transnational experiences of African academics at UKZN could contribute to the expansion of African scholarship to other African universities:

> I believe that as Africans from other countries, our presence here is significant. I think we've got a contribution to make… and indeed if one has to look at the overarching agenda of the institution – the premier university of African scholarship, I think our role as brothers from other parts cannot be ignored. I say this because coming from different backgrounds, there is something that we have to learn from one another. UKZN is representative of what I should call a pan-African institution. So if we claim to be the premier university of African scholarship, it is important to give voice to the experiences of people from other African countries. I believe it is a blessing that we are here, so we can be used as crusaders to carry this vision to our respective home universities. Wherever in Africa that UKZN has established memoranda of understanding, academics from those countries and others should be used. For the purpose of agency, I strongly support this vision and I would recommend that it doesn't just stay here at UKZN, but be taken to other African universities – after all it is the premier university of African scholarship.

Due to the heterogeneous backgrounds (in terms of nationalities) of African academics UKZN can be seen as a pan-African institution as highlighted in the above excerpt. As a pan-African institution it is imperative that the experiences of other African countries should be highlighted in the transformations that are taking place in the institution. The curricular and

pedagogic activities should not only focus on the South African experience but as some foreigners say they should be able to incorporate a global African experience with multiple voices. This however does not mean that scholars do not make use of other African identities in problematising social issues. The problem is that even though African issues are evoked in what these scholars teach, it is almost left at their discretion to decide what they teach. If UKZN has to live up its dream of becoming the premier university of African scholarship, it has to up its game by creating compelling schemes that would allow lecturers to develop curriculum and research projects that would give room for Africa centeredness. The vision of African scholarship is a lofty and laudable venture which should be taken seriously. While UKZN has a multiplicity of partnership with different African universities in the areas of research and student exchange programmes, the various people who participated in this study doubted if the vision is emphasised in these programmes. Foreign African scholars believe that their presence in this institution should facilitate the forging of collaborative links with various African universities illuminated by the burning mantle of African scholarship.

While the vision of African scholarship is a salutary one the cloud is still hanging as much that is desired is yet to be done. Interviews with various participants revealed that while UKZN brands itself as the premier university of African scholarship it lacks formal structures that could enhance the marketability of this brand in ways that it would make it appear as truly 'The Premier University of African Scholarship'. In wanting to know how engaging UKZN is with its vision one of the participants a lecturer and an academic coordinator, commented:

> I would not make a meal of that. I think at policies level it is engaging enough in the sense that we've branded ourselves as that kind of institution. I don't know… the implementation of such policies could be questioned. You would find that they could be questioned to different extent across disciplines. There are people who are taking to heart African scholarship and they are dealing with African issues in particular disciplines, while there are people who couldn't be bothered so that the overarching policy statement is about African scholarship the practice of it could, may be strengthened.

Most of the people interviewed resonated with such a commentary. As evident in the above excerpt, if there are any endeavours made in line with the vision it is actually individual efforts. Some participants reported that their engagements in collaborative research with colleagues within and outside the university are not necessarily guided by the maxim motto of the university. Even though these partnerships focus on African issues, their articulations of these issues are done rather in an ad hoc manner. If individuals happen to produce something that aligns with the vision, it is not because they are compelled to do so, but rather they are driven by their own curiosities to provide some understanding to certain social phenomena while using paradigms that show evidence of afrocentricism.

Engaging with the vision of UKZN is becoming a mechanism through which some foreign Africans are attempting to create research agendas with colleagues within and outside the institution. Think tank communities of afrocentric research based initiatives are being imagined and formulated here and there across the faculty as a way forward in valorising this concept of African scholarship. While the concept has not yet taken significant roots in the institution, various scholars are mobilising in their individual capacities by starting to look into issues that are African-centred and by producing scholarship that is free of Eurocentric influence. While many of these initiatives have not yet left the drawing board, some have already been put into action; even though they are still at an infancy stage. Better still the various forms of research partnerships in the faculty have not been able to come to a position of pronouncement as afrocentric knowledge sites, because, at the moment, there exist no official structures at the university that specifically reward such knowledge orientations.

The preceding statement however does not attempt to dismiss the fact that those whose research outputs are remarkable are rewarded. Those whose research articles are published in the reputable SAPSE accredited journals are given substantial incentives that enable them to carry on with further research. One of the major challenges that African scholars face in the knowledge economy lies with the publication enterprise. Most people who have succeeded in establishing themselves as scholars from Africa are those who have been able to find spaces in the already orthodox spaces which are indeed western dominated. The idea of African relevance which some may attempt to highlight in such spaces is often suffocated by broader

circumstances. For African scholars to avoid this tragedy of suffocation, it is important that African institutions and governments should embark on the creation and standardisation of publishing houses in the continent. The academic space at UKZN is one which is spurring anticipated growth in afrocentric scholarship. Some of the participants did acknowledge that their taking up employment at UKZN has tremendously shifted their perspectives as they go about generating knowledge to the point that they are able to form scholarly dockets that are meant to streamline the African experience in their research and what they ought to teach. Many of these endeavours are however at a perennial stage hoping to take off as soon as the university makes provision for that. Some have already started to act, for example, the introduction of a journal named Afrika – Journal of Politics, Economics and Society – a biannual publication of the newly formed Forum for Constructive African Scholarship (FCSA) (Otu 2011:180) which focuses on investigating African problems using an African knowledge lens in dissecting those problems.

Engaging with an African perspective in the production of knowledge however does mean ignoring other forms of knowledge. Generally many would agree that in the present world of advanced technology, rapid globalisation and transnational fluxes, attention to local practices and discourses on knowledge production are situated within paradigms of interrelated knowledges all of which are simultaneously viewed as local and global. Theories such as post-modernism and post-structuralism have provided alternative accounts by others through an acknowledgement of diversity and plurality in knowledge seeking approaches (Moore 1996). African scholarship is existing in competition with other forms of scholarship (particularly western scholarship) which has continued to undermine the mainstreaming of an African perspective in the scientific space (Moore 1996; Makgoba & Seepe 2004; Thiong'o 2005).

This form of discrimination against the intellectual integrity and propriety of African scholars has been a longstanding battle which most scholars in Africa are striving to get rid of. With the view that African scholarship is marginalised, foreign African academics are not saying that models from elsewhere should not be employed. In fact some of these scholars believe that because they have been to several places in the world their transnational experiences from those places could be utilised for the

advancement of the discourse of African scholarship at UKZN. Having studied and taught in Euro-American and Asian universities, these transnational migrants believe that some models from these countries could be relevant and therefore there is a need to appropriate and indigenise them to the extent that they would be constructed to suit our realities as Africans.

Conclusion

The term African scholarship has been defined in various contexts. This paper has been able to do a literature review of theoretical and philosophical frameworks that have attempted to provide some understanding of the concept African scholarship. I have shown the different perspectives held by foreign African migrants at UKZN in their response to the vision of the institution which is branded 'the premier university of African scholarship.' Findings of this study revealed that while the vision is a salutary effort, there is still much desired for UKZN to earn the mandate of being truly the premier university of African scholarship. The fact that there exist elements of African scholarship reflected in the kind of research and curriculum developed by individuals, for the moment there are no tangible structures in the university with a compelling agenda that should be highlighting issues to do with this vision. For an institution with a continental vision it takes more than individual capacities to have such a vision actualised. In this regard a culture of surpra-disciplinary collaborations in research and curriculum is not just a need for UKZN but a need for other African universities.

In a rapidly changing world of today, scholars have become interested in showing the extent to which various social issues have been affected by the forces of transnationalism and globalisation. Transnational African academics at UKZN believe that their presence could advantage the institution to facilitate the forging of collaborative links between UKZN and other African universities in connection with expanding the vision.

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Intimate Strangers: Connecting Fiction and Ethnography

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how connecting fiction and ethnography can help bring out the perspectives of those neglected by mainstream scholarship. I illustrated my argument of fiction and ethnography as intimate strangers with *Married but Available* (Nyamnjoh 2009), a novel based on a dataset I used in scholarly journal articles (for example, Nyamnjoh 2005). Here I reproduce excerpts from several chapters of *Intimate Strangers* (Nyamnjoh 2010), an ethnographic novel constructed from the same dataset that contributed to the writing of the scholarly book, *Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa* (Nyamnjoh 2006). This argument builds on my discussion (Nyamnjoh 2011) of the negotiation of identity and belonging in fiction and ethnography. African fiction provides alternative and complementary ethnography of the everyday realities and experiences of Africans and their societies in a world of interconnecting local and global hierarchies, not often adequately captured in its complexities and nuances by 'the ethnographic present' (Wolfe 1999) and its propensity for frozen and stereotypical perceptions such as those Chimamanda Adichie criticises in 'the danger of a single story'. In addition, the paper draws attention to the intricacies of being an intra-African migrant, perplexingly not often considered diasporas in their own right (Bakewell 2008; Zeleza 2011).

Keywords: fiction, ethnography, *makwerekwere,* connectivity, mobility, intra-African migrant

Introduction

Scholarship influenced by politics of exclusion has presented intra-African migrants – in search of a productive and meaningful existence – as an unbearable burden to those fortunate enough to be recognized and represented as locals, nationals or citizens (Peberdy 2009; Neocosmos 2010). Locals feel resentment toward African 'Others', whose presence is perceived as a threat, a danger or an infection needing urgent attention. Almost invariably, African migrants in African cities are perceived as epitomizing backwardness and the limits of humanity, which must be contained if civilization and modernity are to carry the day. Citizens are almost instinctively expected to rally ranks and fight off this 'attack' – by an influx of barbarians who do not quite belong and who must be 'exorcised' so 'insiders' do not lose out to this particular breed of 'strangers', 'outsiders' or 'demons', perceived to have little but inconvenience and inhumanity to contribute (Landau 2011). This attitude is in contrast to fairer skinned migrants from within and outside the continent, believed to be higher up in the hierarchy of 'purity' of humanity that often takes the form of belonging to racial, cultural, geographical, class, gender and generational categories (Gupta & Ferguson 1992; Stolcke 1995; Geschiere 2009).

The perspectives and experiences of migrants themselves are absent. Studies reflecting them would require getting to know them as human beings, spending time with them in intimate circles, and developing research questions not of a slash and burn or rapid appraisal nature, but of an ethnographic type, with a focus on the complexities and contradictions of what it means to claim and deny belonging. The predicaments of migrants 'complexify' once they arrive in their host country or community. Their reality is not as simple and straightforward as often suggested in the catalogue of stereotypes with which they are portrayed.

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how connecting fiction and ethnography can help bring out the perspectives of those neglected by mainstream scholarship. I illustrated my argument of fiction and ethnography as intimate strangers with *Married but Available* (Nyamnjoh 2009), a novel based on a dataset I used in scholarly journal articles (for example, Nyamnjoh 2005). Here I reproduce excerpts from several chapters of *Intimate Strangers* (Nyamnjoh 2010), an ethnographic novel constructed from the same dataset that contributed to the writing of the scholarly book,

Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa (Nyamnjoh 2006). This argument builds on my discussion (Nyamnjoh 2011) of the negotiation of identity and belonging in fiction and ethnography. African fiction provides alternative and complementary ethnography of the everyday realities and experiences of Africans and their societies in a world of interconnecting local and global hierarchies, not often adequately captured in its complexities and nuances by 'the ethnographic present' (Wolfe 1999) and its propensity for frozen and stereotypical perceptions such as those Chimamanda Adichie criticises in 'the danger of a single story'. In addition, the paper draws attention to the intricacies of being an intra-African migrant, perplexingly not often considered diasporas in their own right (Bakewell 2008; Zeleza 2011).

In opting to contribute excerpts from several chapters of *Intimate Strangers* to the current volume of collected essays on global and local connections and interconnections, I am demonstrating that fiction has its place in social science scholarship. Additionally, I use these chapters to argue that mobility, connectivity and connections by individuals are best understood as emotional, relational and social phenomena captured in the complexities, contradictions and messiness of the everyday realities of those we study. In conventional scholarly writing, even when such dimensions are recognised, the standard expectations of what constitutes a scholarly text do little justice to the multilayered, multivocal and multifocal dimensions of everyday negotiation and navigation of myriad identity margins. I suggest that fiction as a genre is adapted to exploring such realities and complementary to scholarly ethnographic writing.

My study of connections is a study of insiders and outsiders not as essences, birthmarks or permanences frozen in time and space, but as 'intimate strangers' or as 'frontier realities' (Kopytoff 1987). Being insider or outsider is permanent work in progress, always subject to renegotiation, and is best understood as relational and situational. Hence the need to understand the interconnecting global and local hierarchies – be these informed by race, place, class, culture, gender, age or otherwise – that shape connections and disconnections, and that produce and reproduce insiders and outsiders as political and ideological categories that defy empirical reality. To substantiate this point, my study documents the interconnection, interdependence, tensions and conviviality among people with competing

claims to places and spaces in contexts of accelerated and flexible mobility. I argue that fiction and ethnography are also intimate strangers. They complement each other in their flexibility, interdependence and conviviality. The social scientist should be married to science but available to read and be informed by – and write – ethnographic fiction.

What do we gain in connecting ethnography and fiction? Deeper social science for one thing. The lived lives of those who are not of the dominant race, place, culture, class, place or age are often swept to the side lines of scholarship – and given voice in alternative spaces, such as music and literature (see Nyamnjoh 2011 for further development of this argument). Thus relying on ethnographic fiction as a legitimate source to inform investigations of social phenomena allows the researcher to embrace a wider variety of perspectives and provide more nuanced and most often more accurate accounts and explanations – instead of uncritically reproducing dominant social constructs. As historian James Giblin (1999) – who has his history students read novels by African authors – explains:

> Historians 'realized that many of the European writings which they use to reconstruct the African past – such as accounts by nineteenth-century missionaries and travellers, for example – are... tainted by … notions of African inferiority …. This realization … led historians to seek out alternative sources of information less influenced by European preoccupation with racial difference. These alternative sources include writings by Africans … oral tradition …, the vocabularies and structures of African languages themselves … physical artifacts [sic] uncovered by archaeologists. African art … [l]ike the other alternative sources … helps us … understand African history not from the standpoint of Europeans, but from the perspective of Africans themselves'.

For sociologists and anthropologists, dipping into fiction can bring voice to silenced spaces and help science bridge rather than reinforce socially constructed difference. Poverty stricken, flat and linear scientific explanations can become more multidimensional, more reflective of the complicities, contradictions, and compromises of everyday life.

Relating the results of ethnographic research in the form of fiction can make the work – in which society at large has certainly invested in various forms – available to readers beyond scholarly circles. I have found that even scholars, when they read research results delivered in a novel as opposed to a scholarly paper, relate to the results in a more visceral way. Realities that might be difficult to explain in scholarly logic are felt and understood – through the lived experiences of characters in the novel. Intertwining these two different ways of writing is a way of bringing together worlds and worldviews often keep apart by 'scholarship' and its gatekeepers.

The ethnographic novel, parts of which I share below to demonstrate the above points, is set in Botswana in southern Africa. In the 1990s and early 2000s, when I did my ethnographic research, Botswana was widely regarded as an island of prosperity in a continent of economic and political upheavals and uncertainties (Nyamnjoh 2006). Like neighbouring South Africa following the end of apartheid, Botswana provided place and space for mobile Africans, big and small, marginal and otherwise, seeking fulfilment (Nyamnjoh 2006, 2010; Neocosmos 2010; Landau 2011). Such migrants encounter and compete, for the attention of employers, resources and other opportunities, with those at local mobile margins who feel more entitled as nationals and citizens. Animated with the burning desire to survive and succeed, however, border-crossing migrants from Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Cameroon, and a host of other African countries seem more desperate and willing to be used and abused for much less than their local counterparts. This situation plays into the hands of employers quick to recognise the advantages of playing marginal insiders against migrant marginal outsiders, and both against the possibilities and limitations of the law and the state. These relationships are simultaneously distant and intimate, rewarding and alienating, material and immaterial, and enhanced and contested by technologies. Connecting methodologies of fiction and ethnography enhances the possibilities for investigating, comprehending and reflecting these interconnections with greater complexity and nuance.

The thrills and tensions, possibilities and dangers, rewards and frustrations of social, cultural and physical boundary-making and boundary-crossing are narrated in *Intimate Strangers* through the experiences of

Immaculate, an outsider, a stranger or '*makwerekwere*'[1] from a fictional African country – fictional because I stress the universal in the particular, and the particular in the universal. Immaculate follows her fiancé to Botswana, only to find him off in the United States of America and refusing to marry her. Immaculate however is determined to outwit victimhood. Operating from the margins of society, through her own ingenuity and an encounter with transnational researcher Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny, she is able to earn some money as a research assistant. Immaculate learns how maids struggle to make ends meet and madams wrestle to keep them in their employ as intimate strangers. Resolved to make disappointments blessings, she perseveres until she can take no more repeated efforts by others to define and confine her. Through the relationships she forges with insiders, locals or citizens, and with other outsiders within, the reader is introduced to the realities of what it means to be an intimate stranger in a foreign land, competing with nationals and citizens and compounding their predicaments. Hers is the story of the everyday tensions of being and belonging in ways that bring together different worlds and explore various dimensions of servitude, mobility and marginality.

The story provides an ethnographic entry point to understanding mobility, identity and belonging from the perspective of migrants struggling at the margins of their host communities to exist comfortably. It invites the reader to experience some of the challenges Immaculate faced living in Botswana, from acknowledging and questioning herself as *makwerekwere*, finding work, love relationships, and troublesome existence to missing home and wanting to reconnect physically without necessarily disconnecting from her new – however precarious or tenuous – home.

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[1] The term *makwerekwere* is generally employed in a derogatory manner to refer to African immigrants from countries suffering economic downturns. Stereotypically, the more dark-skinned a local is, the more likely s/he is to pass for makwerekwere, especially if s/he is in articulation Setswana. BaKalanga, who tend to be more dark-skinned than the rest, are also more at risk of being labelled makwerekwere. In general, the le-/ma- (sing./pl.) prefix in Setswana usually designates someone as foreign, different or outside the community. It is not used just for ethnic groups but for any group or profession that seems to be set apart from average folks.

Immaculate makes friends, draws on social networks past and present, and finds good but tedious jobs which allow her to make ends meet at the margins. As an outsider, however, she is forced to acknowledge her own negative identity as a devalued foreigner and others like her realizing that their being different is an unfortunate cause for them to be treated differently. Finding herself in a stressful and at times horrifying love affair makes her long for her native Mimboland despite her extended stay in Botswana. The ambivalence with which she carries 'home' is evident as she considers herself a stranger to her supposed homeland of Mimboland, having spent time and invested significantly socially and even economically in Botswana to be considered an insider as well, however tenuously. But she does not feel wholly like a human being in Botswana. Dealing with one challenge after another, as a lowly regarded foreigner and a woman, builds character but also takes a toll. Despite her ambivalence Immaculate eventually decides to go 'home' to Mimboland. Just how naïve is it to expect to reconnect effortlessly? Does one underestimate how much one has changed through prolonged stay away from home? These are open questions that question many a simplistic indicator of being (human) and belonging.

We can also think of anthropologists venturing out, as did Immaculate, to a new land, say of fiction. The Anthropologist becomes more of a stranger to anthropology and more intimate with fiction. After thrilling and troublesome encounters, the Anthropologist returns 'home' changed and connected to new realities and enriched. But she feels like a 'stranger' to her home discipline. Should she expect to reconnect? These are open questions that question many a simplistic indicator of being (a scientist) and belonging.

Excerpts

Chapter 3: Being Makwerekwere

I don't know how it started, but a few days after losing my job, I was talking with Angel, when the word Makwerekwere became the centre of our talk.

'The term Makwerekwere leaves a bitter taste in my mouth', I told her, adding how often I had been reduced to tears by Batswana who called me this. 'Could you tell me why Batswana tend to use this word in ways that stab and hurt?'

'One is Mokwerekwere, two or more Makwerekwere'. Angel started in her soothing voice. She spoke like a Reverend Sister leading the Prayers of the Faithful.

She continued, 'It is a shame we use the word the way we do, to refer to a particular type of foreigner from distant parts of Africa. Our neighbours from South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, they are not Batswana, but they are not called Makwerekwere either'.

'Why not', I asked, bubbling with curiosity.

'Batswana seem to feel more comfortable with them than with other people from farther north – Zambia, Malawi, central, east or West Africa', Angel replied, searching the floor with her eyes.

'And so, if ever there's a Nigerian and someone from Lesotho, I'll find a Mosotho to be more like a cousin, more like family than I would the Nigerian', she went on.

'I think the whole thing goes back to this issue where we think you are here to take our jobs. We just tell ourselves, 'Oh! They are here to take our jobs'. We think these people are here because where they come from, things are bad. They came here because of our money, the Pula, and now they live more comfortable lives than we do, and so that's why conflicts erupt'. Angel had an apologetic look.

'What about Zimbabweans, your immediate neighbours to the north? Are they Makwerekwere too?' I pretended not to notice the guilt in her eyes.

'With Zimbabweans, it touches my heart because I thought Zimbabweans are more of our sisters and brothers', confessed Angel.

'But Batswana, the way they treat them is like they are outcasts', she sighed.

'It touches my heart because Zimbabweans, we know why they come here illegally. They come here because of the situation in Zimbabwe. You can't stay in a place where there is no food while you know on the other side you could find food'.

I nodded.

'The way I look at our border with Zimbabwe and other neighbours, there is something we can do about that because borders are man-made'.

I again nodded, repeatedly, like a lizard.

'Take a look at the water sources for example. They used to unite us. But now, we say that side of the river is Zimbabwe, this side is Botswana,

and so we shouldn't even share food and the water we drink', Angel shook her head in shame.

'Yet most of them come here not because they want to stay. They come here to do piece jobs and go back home. So why can't we allow them to do odd jobs that we often think are beneath us as locals?' I could see her face glowing with compassion.

'You tell me', I said, 'Why can't you Batswana?' I wanted her to go on, as I found her words soothing, peaceful and promising of the world without borders I have always dreamt about. 'Borders are our greatest killer,' my uncle used to say, going down memory lane and detailing example after example of border conflicts that had eaten up sons and daughters of the soil.

Angel threw up her hands in resignation, before adding, 'Normally in June, I think it's twice a year – June and December –, the Immigration Police do what they call 'Clean-Up-Campaign'',

She could see I was surprised by the expression. Telling me with her eyes that this was not what I thought, she proceeded to explain.

'This does not mean they collect litter like plastic bags, papers and tins. Oh no. They move from house-to-house, from workplace to workplace, to check all these Zimbabweans whom they see as litter. They deport them back to their country the way a person disposes of litter blown over the fence by wind'. Angel covered her face with her hands, as if she was even then hearing the sound of human litter drop at the Zimbabwean side of the border.

I encouraged her to continue. It wasn't often to come across a local who was sympathetic and supportive, and when she told me she too was Catholic, I felt proud of my religion.

'Last year, the person who was supposed to supervise the teams doing the cleanup campaign was not in and my boss, the deputy director, called me in and said, 'Madam, the person who is supposed to do this and this is not in'. I said, 'What is this and this?' He replied, 'You know there is a cleanup campaign, we send all Zimbabweans back to Zimbabwe'.

'I said, 'What do you clean up?' I knew what he was talking about but I just said, 'What do you do? Am I to understand that all the litter we see in the streets is because of Zimbabweans, so we should dispose of it?'

'He explained, 'No, we move from house to house collecting all Zimbabweans everywhere – maids, garden boys and the like –, and sending them back where they belong'.

'I said, 'I don't think I'll be able to do that'.

'He said, 'Why?'

'I said, 'It's not because I want them to be here illegally. It's the way you people are handling this issue. And the people I'm supposed to go and supervise and work with, I'm going to have problems with them before I have conflicts with the law itself'.

'He said, 'Why?'

'I said, 'You can't talk of these people as if they are trash. We know they are here illegally and we know why. Maybe the best thing is just to say let's go out there and not clean up. Let's just check people who are here illegally and try to send them back home, and those who we know it's possible for them to have jobs here, we advise their employers to help them obtain papers to stay legally'.

'And the guy said, 'Are you Zimbabwean?'

'I said, 'Why do you ask? If I look at myself and you, you are more of a Zimbabwean than me'.

'He said, 'Why?'

'I said, 'Because you are a Kalanga'.

'He said, 'What are you talking about?'

'I said, 'I'm not going to lead this operation'.

'He said, 'You are going to do this job today. When you leave this office, you are going out into the field to supervise those people'.

'I didn't like the menacing tone of his voice. I told him, 'I'm not going. I'm going back to my office to do my day-to-day job. I can't imagine pushing people around and piling them into one congested lorry as if they are water melons'.

'He threatened sanctions, but I didn't budge. He could sanction me to hell. I didn't care. I just didn't care …'.

After her moving story, I stayed with the good Angel for a year. She taught me Setswana and initiated me to the ways and values of her land. She made me feel proud to be human, and living with her was like a year-long schooling in the dream that being different was no cause to be treated differently. I saw in her the embodiment of the gospel I had drunk all my life, of how we, regardless of race, place, creed or sex, are all children of the

world, called upon to reflect the goodness of the Lord in the ways we live our lives.

If we had more people like Angel, I think the world would be a better place for us all.

Chapter 17: Madam and Maids as Intimate Strangers

Miss Amy Candlestick wore jean trousers and a blue T-shirt on which figured prominently 'If Everything Was Everything'. Following her after she opened the office door for us, I saw on her back, 'HIV/AIDS: Save Africa'.
...

'Have you ever employed a Motswana?'

'As maid, yeah'.

'A Motswana or a Zimbabwean?'

'I think she is Motswana. She is the cleaning lady. She comes once a week. We don't have a live in maid, and we don't have a gardener'.

'What's her name?'

'Priscilla'.

'And what's her surname?'

'I don't know'.

'It's not unusual. Most people don't know the second name of their maid'.

'She doesn't know my name either. She came to us through another Canadian woman'.

'How do you find her?'

'She is wonderful. She is a wonderful little girl. She is a young woman'.

'And what is that?'

'I guess I am just comparing her. We've had two and the first one took advantage and made several hundred telephone calls when we went home, to the tune of P400. So I am just comparing her. She is friendly, she is trustworthy and she is hard working. She is just very pleasant'.

'The first one, if you recall, was she Motswana or Zimbabwean?'

'I think she may have been Zimbabwean, but I'm not sure. She was miserable and not happy'.

'But she was hardworking'.

'Yeah, until she figured out she could just make phone calls all morning', Miss Amy Candlestick said laughing. 'And that's how we figured out that we couldn't just trust her. I had never figured somebody would do something like that'.

'So what did you do when you found out?'

'Well, I confronted her and I said, 'I can't trust you anymore, and I am afraid I will have to ask you to please pack and that will be the end of our relationship'. I'm such a soft touch and she begged me to stay, promising she would deduct P50 a month until she had paid me back, and bla, bla, bla. We just paid the phone bill and were very careful not to leave money or our valuables lying around. You don't also want to tempt people by leaving money around. And then she found another job'.

'It's interesting this issue of phones. It comes up repeatedly when I interview people'.

'It never dawned on me because in Canada you don't pay for local phone calls. So it never occurred to me that it's a big deal, that you have to prevent people from using the phone. And I never figured that once they use it, they will want to use it ten times'.

'Did you notice other things missing?'

'Well, we don't have a lot, and I never paid particular attention. But we have friends who employed her as well. And they noticed things like clothes going missing and her using things like cosmetics when she was there. Instead of working, she just took advantage of her work. In my circles if you employ people like that, we try to follow the Labour laws – try and make sure I pay Priscilla over Christmas and give her a Christmas bonus, make sure I give her sick leave – and she only works once a week –, which is pretty generous. I find when people don't work in that situation, when they aren't familiar with that situation where they have those rights, they will take advantage of the employer. They will think you are a soft touch'.

'You just mentioned a while ago that Priscilla is young and you live with your boyfriend or your husband. Doesn't it bother you that eventually the maid could become very comfortable and begin to look for ways of ousting you and taking over the ultimate object of your desire and love – your boyfriend or husband? Maids come in, they appropriate the kitchen, they appropriate the house and they clean everything and sometimes they

even cook, and so they take everything from you except your husband, and even the bed they make it up and they lie on it and have their imaginations. They imagine themselves ultimate owners of what you hired them to take care of. Does it not occur to you as a woman who hires and fires the maid to watch out against losing the ultimate object of your attention and love? Does it worry you? Does it worry any people you know? If not, why not?'

Miss Candlestick was categorical. 'No! It never actually crossed my mind and for a number of reasons. I feel my relationship is very solid, that it would never even cross my partner's mind. But he also has never really had much contact with her. She comes once a week for half the day. She often comes when we are at work. For the longest time, Wobble'd never met her. He leaves for work earlier than I do. And she is not an aggressive woman. Not that I have seen, but I think she just comes in, does her cleaning and hasn't been eyeing around and setting her imagination on fire. There's little we do that we would feel embarrassed about if a maid found out about it. We do our own laundry, we cook, all those things. If we hire someone, it is not like we fight over the house. We hire someone to do the mopping, the sweeping and that is it. I don't like the colonial attitude of coming in with a servant who appeals to me, but I do like the idea of having someone to mop'.

'You say that she is not aggressive, but you know that the stereotypical presentation of the secretary is someone who is not aggressive, until the day the employer has a domestic problem and she offers him a shoulder to cry on'.

'It never crossed my mind'.

'I interviewed a maid recently who lived with a British family in a similar situation, where the husband did everything to have her'.

'I think that has a lot to do with him rather than her and I think in my situation Wobble would never do anything like that because I believe he is not that kind of man. I've always gone for guys who are more interested in football and family than in playing hanky panky behind my back. It's a different kind of man who wants to exploit that kind of situation, who would take advantage of someone who works for him. The kind of man who sits with the secretary, this is the same kind of man who sleeps with his maid. I would be very surprised if I had that kind of situation from Wobble'.

'What about you and say Batswana men? If you were to really find one who is decent in his approach, to what degree would you be tempted to pursue your fantasies?'

'I think the commitment that I have made in my relationship is such that the likelihood is virtually nil. It doesn't matter whether it is a Motswana, or a Ugandan or an American. It is not something I would do at this point'.

'So not having a relationship with a Motswana would have nothing to do with the fact that Batswana are unfriendly?'

'No, I just wouldn't'.

'What about with a Namibian?'

Amy Candlestick hesitated. 'I wouldn't'.

'And do you think there are other people here, in the Canadian community, who are interested in having relationships with Batswana?'

'I think the ones that I know are disinterested. They are yet to find the man who will make them interested'.

'Of all of these dimensions, I think the greatest test of attitude towards people is the extent to which we go in creating and sustaining relationships with them'.

'Just romantic relationships or … ?' Amy Candlestick wanted clarification.

'Relationships in general, but the greatest test are romantic relationships for any community. The test of the relationship pudding is in the eating', Dr Nanny explained.

'But I think for anything that came to me in that direction, it would have to be on a personality basis and not solely on their approach, the feelings you got and the culture they come from. No, I don't think I would have a problem. But knowing the HIV/AIDS rates here can be a deterrent.

'And if we go back to your previous questions, about husbands becoming not just comfortable but even close with maids, I wouldn't say those kinds of relationships represent necessarily open attitudes about how far one would go in venturing into another culture, because the husbands may just be seeing the maid as a sexual object and stopping at the bed … hmmm just like the maid might go after a husband just because of the size of his pocketbook'.

…

'Are you looking forward to leaving Botswana? Or are you looking forward to coming back?'

'No, I am not looking forward to leaving. But I am looking forward to being home in Canada. I am looking forward to travelling. It is nice to have a change. I just switched to this job in September and I really wish I had more time here with Aidswatch Network. I did not enjoy my time with WAP [Women Against Patriarchy]. It was a struggle from day one and I stayed longer than I should have. That tainted a bit my perceptions of work. I am not really anxious to leave, but I am looking forward to get home'.

…

Dr Nanny desperately wanted to interview Miss Amy Candlestick's boss, especially as, like Johanna Salmon, Mrs Birgit Rattlesburg was married to a Motswana. But she also didn't want the interview to take place the same day, partly because she was tired, partly because she wanted to take time off to digest the material she had gathered for the day, and more importantly, because she didn't want Miss Amy Candlestick to sit in and follow the interview with her boss next door. So she took an appointment with Mrs Birgit Rattlesburg for The Queen's Arm, a popular bar with a touch of working class Englishness, for Saturday at 6 pm.

Chapter 36: Making Ends Meet as a Research Assistant

Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny was away for a long time. I had fulfilled my contract with her, by transcribing and sending via email the interviews, just as I had promised before she left. Satisfied with the work, she had paid me handsomely via the Western Union electronic money transfer service. It was the biggest amount of money I had ever handled. I proceeded to see how best I could invest it, only to run into difficulties, with my Zimbabwean boyfriend, Noway, and with a Motswana guy. I'm too scared to mention his name.

Exactly four years and six months after she left, I got a surprise phone call from Dr Nanny, saying she was in Gaborone on a restitution visit. She had an autographed copy of her book for me, and could I meet her at the Gaborone Cactus Hotel at 6 pm? 'Of course,' I screamed with excitement. I wanted to see her new baby, the one I had helped to midwife.

Indeed, I was overjoyed to receive a signed copy of *Burdens of Womanhood: Being an Underling at the Margins*, which I couldn't wait to read, curious as I was, to see what she had made of my and the other accounts I had dutifully helped her gather and painfully transcribed verbatim. Although Dr Nanny had told me that repetitive questioning was 'the soul of ethnography,' I was dying to know what she had been able to make of material collected through the boring practice of having everybody reply to the same set of questions.

Dr Nanny could see excitement inscribed on my face when she handed me 2000USD as my share of what she termed 'the generous royalties' she had been paid in advance for her book by her publishers. I didn't understand much about royalties, but I was pleased with the doors of possibilities that the money instantly opened up for me.

'With this money, I'm heading straight for Mimboland', I told her, amid hugs of appreciation.

'With Noway, I hope', said Dr Nanny, hungry for news.

'Noway is history'.

She took a seat. 'Tell', she said, like a master gossip.

'Story long, and time short', I tried to wriggle out.

But Dr Nanny was her old stubborn self. 'I'm in a hurry to go nowhere', she said, with a concrete look of you-seem-to-have-forgotten-the-patient-researcher-that-I-am on her face.

I gave in. 'Then be ready to stay up all night', I told her.

She asked me to come with her to the poolside, where she ordered drinks, switched off her cell phone, and asked me to do the same.

'Now tell', she said, switching on her tape recorder.

'No taping this one', I warned.

She switched off the recorder.

And I began…

As I remember telling you several years ago, I met Noway on my way to Zambia. And the reason I was going to Zambia was to look for second-hand clothes to sell in Gaborone. But I didn't know that in Botswana, foreigners are not allowed to do that line of business. On going to Zambia, I forgot my residence permit, and at the border I had problems with the immigration authorities. I tried to phone some of my friends to copy my permit and fax it to me, but I couldn't reach them in time to continue my

journey. One of the Immigration Officers took me to a lodge where I could stay the night. I hadn't a budget for that, so I had to use the money I brought for buying things from Zambia.

I was looking for somebody to phone back to Gaborone, when I met Noway. I asked him where I could phone, and he offered to take me there. I phoned Paul who faxed me the papers.

I was supposed to report to the Immigration Office in the morning at 8 o'clock. But Noway said, 'No, don't go back because those people there are going to give you hell, better just avoid them'. And I followed his advice.

The next day Noway came with a young boy, and they invited me for braai, but I said I was too tired to eat. They came again the following day. He asked me to sleep to be in a state to return to Gaborone, having advised me against continuing to Zambia, and against going back to the Immigration Office.

Anyway, that's how I came to know Noway. We travelled back to Gaborone together, in the company car they were using, and they dropped me off and we exchanged phone numbers.

From time to time he was coming to check on me, and eventually this led to a relationship.

In the beginning, he was a nice person, but he was staying with another lady I didn't know about, but we will come to that. He would come and check on me. I was staying with Christians, and they would not allow me to see him, so we usually talked over the fence where I was staying.

After some time, Paul advised, 'Why can't you just talk to him and just try to see?'

So I tried to see, and from the beginning he was fine. Relationship-wise he was ok, but his problem was financial management. He was also married, which he didn't disclose to me. Instead, he told me, 'I was married but I am divorced'. He let me know about his kids. We used to visit them in Zimbabwe. And I didn't know he was communicating with the wife all the time, although they were not living together.

…

Then I said, 'Papers or no papers, if you want to be with me, divorce and marry me. If you want to be with your wife, then go out of my life'.

He kept on saying, 'I will, I will, I will'.

One day he told me, all of a sudden, 'I am quitting my job'.

I said, 'Why quit your job? That job is so secure. Why do you want to leave the job?'

What he said did not make sense to me. But he didn't listen. He went ahead and put in a resignation letter and resigned and they gave him a package of twenty three thousand Pula. The cheque came to me and we went and cashed it together.

I told him, 'You keep this money because houses are cheap in Zimbabwe. You can buy a house for five thousand and then with the rest of the money you can do business, since you don't want to work'.

So I left him with the money, but it didn't take long before the money was finished. He didn't buy the house when he went home to Zimbabwe. All he returned with was a van of mangoes.

I asked him, 'You bought mangoes for twenty three thousand Pula?'

He was tongue tied. 'I don't know what happened to the money,' he said, expecting me to believe him.

I let it go.

He kept saying we were still together, but there was nothing in his behaviour to show it. I would go to an auction and buy things, and he would take the things and sell them. I told him I didn't like the lifestyle where he sells house things. 'It's not my way'.

He did little to change.

…

The next day in the morning he said he was going to Zimbabwe. He went to Zimbabwe with the ten thousand Pula. He didn't give me a Thebe.

He was in Zimbabwe for a full month and when he came back, the ten thousand was finished. I told him I was moving out. Everything we had in the house – two fridges, beds, wardrobes, a stove, and you name it. I said, 'Ok, I don't mind, I will give you all those things. I will start life afresh'. And I just took my clothes and my shoes, and left.

'Good riddance', interrupted Dr. Nanny.

It's not finished. My O and A Level certificates, he took them and threw them away and I didn't realise it until much later.

I went to the house where I was going to stay on my own, feeling bitter but relieved. After a week, one girl from near where Noway lived saw

me and said, 'Eh Miss, ah how come you throw your certificates away? I saw them in pieces'.

I couldn't believe it. Certificates are not things to handle carelessly – even mad people know that.

The girl said Noway was seen throwing my certificates, and some kids took the plastic paper and were playing with it, and she only saw them after they had been torn.

I had taken time to laminate my certificates as the best way of protecting them, having grown up where it was all too common for one to lose years of hard earned qualifications to rats and white ants. I went there and everything was in pieces, all gone. No problem, I told myself, there is nothing I can do about it. I phoned Noway and said, 'Noway, you decided to destroy my certificates. Why?' 'To hell with you,' was what I got in reply, and he hung up on me.

…

And that is the end of my story with Noway.

There is no doubt he wanted me, but he was somebody who suffered from indecision. He didn't know how to put things together. He was a genuine person, though his financial management was not good. He was somebody who can really assist you well, but I couldn't forgive him for hiding from me the fact that he was married, and for not deciding whether he wanted a future with me or with his wife.

I told myself, 'I am not going to have another man. I am not going to have a relationship because it is too depressing'.

…

My money was disappearing. My will was weakened. Yet I grew in determination.

Chapter 38: Unbearable Comforts of Love

One day, I realised I slept but without sleeping. All my heart was about this guy. But it wasn't at all natural infatuation. No, it was not like that.

…

I still have the message on my cell phone, and it still gives me goose pimples when I read it. I store every SMS he sends me. I value my cell phone. I appreciate it, I love it, and I want to have it nearby at all times. I don't want to stay for one hour away from my cell phone. Even in church where we are forced to switch off, I will put my phone on vibration mode and place it somewhere sensitive enough to feel it.

My cell phone is my greatest companion, but it is also my greatest terror. The pain, the bad words, they come through my cell phone. When somebody feels like saying something and he can't face me, he will say it through the cell phone. It has made me experience too much abuse. Without my cell phone, I think I would have suffered less. All the messages, all those things he has been telling me, they are there in that place, in that phone.

When he said that, I told myself, 'This is where my life is going to end. If I take this thing hot, hot, I'm a dead person. I will go to Mimboland as a corpse'.

I said I must change my attitude. So I changed to save my life.

His anger was very abnormal.

I don't think he can stay with a woman, and I remember there was a day the sister said, 'Immaculate, I don't know how your relationship with my brother is, but I have come to realise you are the bravest woman I have ever seen, because even we cannot stay with him'.

Even in their house he stays in the room most of the time. If you see him going inside the mother's house, he is going to bathe or to take food from the kitchen.

There are times he will come to my house and tell me, 'The day you misbehave you are a finished'.

I went to talk to Evodia Skatta. I told her what I was going through, and how I needed to protect myself. 'I don't want to die here. I don't have a boyfriend. I don't eat anybody's money. I don't see somebody's husband. But this is what I am going through'. Evodia Skatta said, 'What?'

As long as he kept using whatever he was using to charm me, he got my money if he wanted it. I never refused. If I didn't have any, I looked for it. I could even borrow and give to him. He was always saying he was borrowing the money, but he would never pay me back.

He doesn't take me around in his car, but when he took the car to the garage and it cost two thousand and thirty nine Pula, he took the money from

me, and I don't think I'll ever get it refunded. He drives from work to check on me and see whether I am working with a person, but he never picks me up after work. He is there only to make sure I am not with somebody.

He uses that charm when he wants something from me. If he wants something with me, he can use it the whole night before he comes the next day to ask for it. And I won't refuse. He owes me nearly six thousand Pula.

…

When he came the first time to have sex with me, I said, 'I want a condom. If you don't use a condom, I'm going to make shout and make so much noise. We are really going to fight'.

I think he used that condom because he was scared of the mother. He doesn't come to me when the sisters or the mother can see him. He is so scared of the mother. If it wasn't the fear of his mother, he could have raped me and slept with me without a condom.

If I haven't moved from where I am staying, it is because I know that if I go and stay on my own, he is going to come there and do anything. Even now, I will be sleeping and I won't know that this guy is coming. He has never come to my house me knowing. If he says I want to come there he is already at the door, making me startle.

…

After we have sex, he can go for three months without talking to me. If we meet, if I meet him face to face, he will just say, 'Dumela'. Now I understand what it means to say Botswana men can use women. How can he sleep with me yet treat me like shit?

Not once would he give me a lift in his car. He wouldn't even buy me Fanta or give me water to drink, yet he borrows all my money and refuses to pay back, and gets drunk on Chibuku every day.

I have never eaten anything from him for almost two years. The only thing he sent to me was one day at work when he most surprisingly sent me units for P100, only to turn around and say it was a mistake, and that I should pay him back.

Botswana men can really make a woman feel cheap.

When the mother discovered that Philip was interested in me, she started with her own medicine, but I didn't know.

…

I decided to talk to Angel, the generous friend of mine we used to visit, whom you interviewed at length.

Angel was pleased to see me after so many years. I had lots of explaining to do, about why I had kept away for so many years. How I could have been in Gaborone all this while and not passed by to say hello. I was a wicked person, she said, half jokingly, refusing to accept what she termed my 'flimsy excuse' that I had dumped my problems enough on her doorstep.

When I accepted my mistake and apologised, she opened the door of her generous heart to the problem that had brought me back to her.

I told her everything, from A to Z, from Noway to Philip. 'I don't know what to do,' I concluded.

She said she didn't know anyone who could help. She used to know a Sangoma from Malawi, but that was years ago, and the man had since moved on.

I had come full circle, to be contemplating visiting the very Sangomas I used to reject when I first came to Botswana.

Even without a Sangoma, Angel was a great help. Listening and doing her best to console me was soothing. I could buy units for a hundred Pula for my cell phone, and I would talk to Angel and cry until the money finished. Every day I spoke with her, but I didn't share my troubles with any Mimbolander, apart from Evodia Skatta and Paul Mufon. Nobody else knew what I was going through.

Every morning I was crying, daytime I am crying, even my workers at times would say, 'Are you sick? What is wrong?'

I said, 'No, I'm just missing home'.

How did I come to know for sure they were using medicine on me? Although Angel said she couldn't help me when I took my story to her, she couldn't bear me crying the way I did when I was on the phone. So she remembered this other lady she had heard about from someone at work. Upon finding out, she got this woman's number.

The lady was an herbalist. Angel explained to her what I was going through, and the woman said she would check and get back to Angel with her findings.

After a couple of days, the woman came back to her. 'I can see this guy's mother doesn't want that girl, but the guy wants her bad,' she told Angel. 'He is using medicine to make sure she doesn't go to another man. Why I don't know. I can see the guy is not really a serious person, so why he is doing this, I can't say.

'But unfortunately I can't help. I am just an herbalist. I can't help'. She can see, but she doesn't throw bones. She can dream something, but she can't cure beyond her herbs. She said, 'I won't lie to you. I can't help that girl. Her problem is a big problem'.

…

One day Angel called me to share something positive. The woman herbalist had called to say a patient had come her way who needed a serious traditional doctor and was ready to pay for her to invite somebody from Mozambique. The man had come and was treating that person and others. If Angel liked, she could ask her friend to come and meet this powerful traditional doctor who could heal what was beyond herbs. So Angel called to let me know.

I went to see this doctor, who asked for the details of the guy using this thing on me. I wrote down the names, phone number and residential area of Philip, everything, and described his build and workplace and handed all this to the doctor, who asked me to go and wait for him.

As luck would have it, word went around Gaborone about this important medicine man in town, and people flooded there seeking his cure, magic and blessings. Amongst them, Philip. When he came, the medicine man was able to identify him from the details he gave of himself.

He was coming to fortify his grip on me.

The doctor asked him to go and bring his mum.

The mother came.

The doctor consulted his bones, looked at them and said, 'I can see you are bewitching a foreigner in your yard. Why are you sending your daughters to be throwing poisonous things in her house? They go there and pretend they love her but they are eating with her only to eat her up. Why are you bewitching her?'

The mother said, 'I didn't want to kill her. I was just trying to separate her from my son'.

The doctor said, 'Why are you trying to separate her? If your son doesn't want the girl he will leave her, but your son too is using something on her. The same person you are using things on to get her away, your son is using things to keep a hold on her, and she can't do anything. She can't go to any other person. Your son makes that girl sit there the whole day, even weekends. She can't go anywhere. She goes to work and comes back or to the shops, but nothing more. Is that the life a human being should live? Why are you being wicked to this foreign girl? What has she done to deserve a fate worse than death?'

Then the doctor tried to talk to Philip to stop using this thing he was using on me. 'Why are you using this thing? You are not ready for marriage the way we see you. You are not even a friendly man. You are not a jovial person. You don't want to sit with that girl your mother doesn't want, why can't you leave her to go her way in peace?'

That, my sister, is what I have been going through. I have never had a good life. I don't know the cause of this curse.

Maybe it's my weakness that when I am with you I feel I should treat you the way I want myself to be treated. I don't know whether it is because of that, that men tend to take advantage of me or what.

Angel and the herbalist have been a great support. Last week I told them I would love to go home for a while to renew communion with family, friends and the land of my birth.

I told them I needed a breath of fresh air, a sign of life from this strange and stifling condition of living like a dead girl walking.

They encouraged me and prayed for the means to come my way to make this journey possible. 'Greet your parents and eat lots of herbs from the tropical rainforest,' the herbalist told me, smiling her satisfaction with knowledge of the charming natural environment of my country. 'You'll need all the energy you can muster to overcome the forces that hinder the good life for you'.

Now that you've surprised me so delightfully when I least expected, I am going right after this to book a flight and buy a ticket to Mimboland.

After thirteen years of a life tortured by worries, I want to rediscover what it means to socialise without having to look behind my back. I want to

be able to talk freely and feel like a human being again. At 33, I feel the joys of womanhood passing me by.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't be wishing this, given the brutal pride of power gone wild back home, but my traumas here have drained me. I have gone through too much. As my mother would say, if you see a rat running towards fire, know it is being chased by something even more terrifying.

I need time to regain my dignity, even if it means my hands and legs are going to be broken by the blows of excited rifles and batons. I need family, friends. I need people and places I knew. I need to reconnect to feel human again.

Conclusion

Migration is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, involving various dimensions of human mobility in claiming and negotiating inclusion and belonging. It challenges rigid and bounded distinctions between insiders and outsiders, in favour of more flexible understanding of belonging in tune with the frontier reality of Africans as bridging intimacy and distance. Immaculate's story highlights the thrills and challenges of forging relationships in host countries, host communities and beyond, in the pursuit of success and self-fulfilment. The story addresses the perplexing question of what it means to be a person of African descent living as a stranger in another African country. Life away from a place called home is informed by memories of home and by social networks and relationships at home and away. While a single perspective is neither desired nor sufficient, Immaculate's story emphasizes the significance of sociality and relationships in how being and belonging are translated from abstract claims into everyday practice. Mobility, connections and, interconnections are emotional, relational and social phenomena best understood as complex, contradictory and messy realities that defy prescriptiveness, predictability, insensitivities and caricature. Through Immaculate we are introduced to the predicaments of being mobile, but also to the inadequacy of the legal mechanisms elaborated and employed by states to regulate inclusion and exclusion in a world of accelerated and flexible mobility. Hers is a complex story that calls for complex approaches.

Immaculate and her story invite us to focus on the lived experiences and web of relationships that shape and are shaped by intra-African migrants in and beyond their host states and communities. Personal and collective success is critical to migrants, as are their social networks and cultures of interdependence and conviviality. Choice and chance are good bedfellows in the construction and management of social networks and relationships (Owen 2011). This is hardly surprising in a world where agency and contingency are like Siamese twins. By choice or chance, Immaculate successfully draws on her relationships with others and on the cultures of interdependence and conviviality that have shaped her from childhood, to maximise her opportunities as a young, mobile African woman. Her story takes us through the relationships she forges in her efforts to navigate, negotiate and contest various constraints and practices of belonging imposed by the logics, histories and politics of hierarchies, dichotomies, boundaries and exclusions. The story stresses the need for conceptual flexibility and empirical substantiation. It equally challenges social scientists to look beyond academic sources for ethnographic studies or accounts of how such flexible and nuanced understanding of mobility and interconnections in Africa play out in different communities, states and regions of the continent.

Hierarchies in Immaculate's world are not that dissimilar to hierarchies in the world of knowledge. To what extent, if at all, is science superior to literature? When is literature entertainment? And when is it an insight into human nature? To what extent could science double as entertainment? These questions have preoccupied many. Eggington (2011), for example, argues that fiction plays 'a profound role in creating the very idea of reality' that science seeks to explain. He cites the example of Cervantes, in *Don Quixote*, who 'crystallized in prose a confluence of changes in how people in early modern Europe understood themselves and the world around them'.

In the twenty-first century, ethnographic fiction or 'anthropological novels' may have a role in revealing the 'fiction' behind multiple forms of discourses of dominance. While the idea of the ethnographic novel is gradually gaining suffrage in anthropological circles (Gupta & Ferguson 1997), Greenwood (2010) and Shule (2011) believe respectively that works such as *Intimate Strangers* 'traverse the boundary lines between fiction and ethnography' and suggest 'new possibilities in African literature'. This

augurs well for the disciplinary, conceptual and methodological intimacies and flexibilities suggested in this paper.

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A Socio-cultural Analysis of African Immigration to South Africa

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Abstract

Since the advent of a democratic South Africa in 1994, it has become a new destination for African immigrants, thus adding to the increasing trend of South-South migration globally. African immigration to South Africa has increased not only through the regular immigration of skilled professionals and other economic migrants, but also through refugees fleeing from conflict areas in the continent.

This article utilizes the ideology of *Makwerekwere* as a theoretical framework for explaining *non-belonging* in South Africa within which African immigrants are imagined and treated as despicable 'others'. It also gains useful insights from a survey of 92 South Africans and African immigrants in KwaZulu-Natal. Some of its findings show that African immigrants in South Africa have stimulated interest and fostered knowledge of other African cultures amongst South Africans and Africans living in South Africa.

Keywords: African immigrants, Makwerekwere, African Cultures, South Africa, Africa

Introduction

Migration is a global phenomenon which is as old as human existence on earth. For instance, early men and women moved from region to region in search of better livelihoods and some times for the pleasure of discovery. Since then, human movement from areas of social and economic distress to those with better prospects for survival and self-actualization have continued

unabated. Logically, in contemporary global geo-political parlance, this has meant high South-North flows of people seeking greener pastures and self-actualization in the more developed regions of the world. Tellingly, amongst the world's regions, Europe, North America and Western Asia have the highest migrant populations of 64 million, 45 million and 22 million respectively (UN 2006a; 2006b). However on the flip side, there has been an equally and increasingly dynamic movement of people across borders in the global south; a phenomenon known as South-South migration (Ratha & Shaw 2007). According to them,

> while the policy debate and research on migration has focused on South-North flows, South-South migration is almost as prevalent; nearly half the migrants from the South may be living in other developing countries (Ratha & Shaw 2007: vii).

They contend further that there are approximately 14.5 million migrants who originate from sub-Saharan Africa out of which 10 million have migrated to other sub-Saharan African countries (Ratha & Shaw 2007: 6). South Africa is notable in this regard.

Since the end of apartheid and the advent of a democratic South Africa in 1994, it has become a new destination for African immigrants thus adding to the increasing trend of South-South migration globally. African immigration to South Africa has increased not only through the regular immigration of skilled professionals and other economic migrants from distressed economies, but also, through refugees fleeing conflicts areas such as Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe. While it is also a sending country, post-1994 South Africa has become a major receiving country of African migrants including those from outside the Southern African region. For example, Ngwenya (2010) contends that while migration within contiguous borders remain dominant in the case of migration to South Africa, a significant percentage of African migration originate from outside the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. In alphabetic order, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan are notable examples of countries outside SADC that have significant migrant stocks in South Africa. According to Ngwenya, the attraction to South Africa

'may be attributed to South Africa's economic strength on the continent' (Ngwenya 2010: 11). Similarly, Ambassador Mathema, cited in Nwonwu (2010: 152), contend that

> while there may be many destination options for Zimbabwean emigrants, South Africa attracted the majority of them because of the country's peculiar attraction to all sorts of professionals, technicians, skilled and semi-skilled people and workers.

And according to Khan (2007: 3), 'at a time when European asylum policies are becoming more and more restrictive, South Africa is viewed almost as the only answer' especially given its sound legal and democratic structures (Willand 2005). On the other hand, it has been argued that South Africa is an attractive transit country for Africans wishing to emigrate to Europe and the United States. However, beyond *push and pull factor* explanations of why Africans are increasingly migrating to South Africa, what potential does the country hold as a possible replacement for African immigration to Europe, the Americas and Asia? How do South Africans view African immigrants in South Africa? What are some of the socio-cultural implications of African immigration for promoting cultural understanding and unity in Africa? More specifically, in the virtual sense of mobility, how has the Nigerian movie industry facilitated transnational ties between Nigeria and South Africa, as well as between Nigerians and other African migrant communities in South Africa? And lastly, what is the role of the state in all this?

In grappling with these research questions, this article utilizes the ideology of *Makwerekwere* as a theoretical framework for explaining *being*, *belonging* and *non-belonging* in South Africa within which African immigrants are imagined and treated as despicable 'others'. Indeed, migration raises all kinds of socio-cultural issues. For instance, it can lead to cultural advancement for host country given the diversity of cultures it hosts. And on the other hand, it can also lead to cultural confusion and persecution depending on how cultural issues emanating from migration are managed. In South Africa for example, there are two kinds of foreigners based on psychological differentiation; European foreigners are perceived and accepted as 'tourists' and 'investors' who have everything positive to offer South Africa, while African foreigners are perceived and rejected as

'Makwerekweres' and 'throw-aways' who have nothing good to offer South Africa (Gqola 2008; Matsinhe 2011). The 'smelly', 'hungry', 'poor', 'illiterate' and 'uncultured' Makwerekwere from 'poor' Africa is judged as guilty for 'crime, taking our jobs and our women' (Gqola 2008), and as such should be resisted. The question which we seek to answer in our explanatory framework is: why do South Africans engage in this selective ordering? We contend that answers can be found in a historical psychosocial process of self-loath, self-colonization and inverted racism against those who resemble the self, and which must be deconstructed.

The article also gains useful insights from a survey of South Africans and African immigrants living in urban areas in KwaZulu-Natal. These include Empangeni, Durban and Pietermaritzburg as well as a peri-urban area; Ngwelezana. In attempting a socio-cultural analysis of African immigration to South Africa, the article through questionnaire surveys and 2 focus group discussions in Durban and Empangeni[1] specifically explores how Nigerian movies has fostered international friendship and cultural understanding between Nigeria and South Africa on the one hand, and between Nigeria and other African countries on the other hand. Concisely, these instruments provided informed insights on some socio-cultural implications of African immigration in terms of building towards a united states of Africa. Based on the analysis of its theoretical framework and empirical findings, the article in the end, makes some policy suggestions that could be useful in arresting the present trend of *afrophobia* (Africa's fear and hatred of itself) in South Africa, and possibly xenophobia and *ethno-phobia*[2] in the future.

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[1] The focus group in Durban consisted of 20 African immigrants including medical practitioners, teachers, students and small business owners from Cameroun, DRC, Ghana, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zimbabwe. The Empangeni group consisted of 16 with similar occupation profiles as those of Durban but were from the DRC, Ghana, Nigeria, Swaziland and Zambia.

[2] We conceptualize this as the fear and hatred of one ethnic group by another. Following the literature on the dynamics of colonial group relations in Africa (see Fanon 1967; Elias 1994), and in the context of apartheid in South Africa (Hopper 2001; Matsinhe 2011), *ethno-phobia* is a grim possibility in post-apartheid South Africa.

Matsinhe's Ideology of *Makwerekwere* as an Explanatory Model of *Non-belonging* in South Africa

In his seminal book which reconsiders the role of theory in African politics, arguing instead for political thought to be driven by the need to address the immediacy of everyday life/death in the continent, Chabal (2009) contends that the *politics of belonging* has had a very strong influence on African political realities since independence. According to him, a defining characteristic of this *politics of belonging* is that it logically raises the question of the *politics of non-belonging*; the issue of who is a 'native' and who is a 'stranger', who is a 'citizen' and who is a 'foreigner' in any context of place in Africa. For Chabal this is a very important question in neo-colonial African socio-political existence because it is at the centre of the struggle for power at both local and national levels of statehood (Chabal 2009). And in the context of this paper, it is at the centre of the struggle for *being* (modern state citizenship), survival and integration at the continental level in Africa. For example, Chabal argues that questions of identity in Africa are directly linked to the colonial-era politicization of ethnicity and its subsequent impact on socio-economic and political existence in the continent today.

It is in this context that Matsinhe (2011) develops and deploys the ideology of *Makwerekwere* to explain the phenomenon of *Afrophobia* famously expressed in 'blacks against blacks' violence in May 2008 in South Africa. According to Matsinhe, the ideology of *Makwerekwer*e in South Africa is a fantasy of the foreign body which has its origin in the socio-emotional dynamics of colonial group relations in South Africa[3], and which today informs the relations between South Africans and African foreign nationals in South Africa (Matsinhe 2011: 302). In his words:

> In South Africa's imagination, the word 'foreigner' is an emotionally charged signifier for African foreign national or *Makwerekwere*, whereby African bodies become 'literal texts on which some of the most graphic and scrutable messages of aversion are written'. Bodily

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[3] According to Mr. N. Shandu, the deliberate under-education of black South Africans under apartheid system which effectively delinked South Africans from the rest of the continent was part of this dynamics (Personal communication, 13/07/11).

> looks, movements, sounds and smells are legible as evidence of imagined citizenship and foreignness (Matsinhe 2011: 302-303).

In this way, deviation from bodily ideals of citizenship or conformity to fantasies of strangeness warrant strip search, arrest, detention, deportation, humiliation, torture, rape, mugging and killing of the so-called African foreigner in South Africa. Matsinhe explains how looks (body size and configuration)[4], performances (language, accent and sound patterns such as clicks) and body smells[5] are used as signifiers of non-South African nativity or citizenship. According to him, these signifiers are used as markers of group as well as individual identity, mediating the 'we-they' differentiation between citizens and non-citizen (Matsinhe 2011: 306). Quite rightly, for Matsinhe, this is a manifestation of the narcissism of minor differences[6] caused by the colonial/apartheid creation of the South African social unconscious and of the social habitus that goes along with it (Matsinhe 2011). And this is what underlies the anti-African orientation of South Africans which is now been expressed through mistreatment, violent attacks

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[4] South Africans imagine that African foreigners are different from them because they have big noses, big lips and round heads …. they are 'too dark' or 'too black'; they dress funny, walk in certain different ways and have inoculation marks (Matshine 2011: 303). This much was confirmed in a class discussion on the subject conducted by one of the authors with 300 political science students at the University of Zululand on 05 October 2011. The new additions from the students were 'big bodies', 'huge shoulders', and 'smell different'.

[5] African foreigners are imagined as primitives who emit foul body odours. For example, it is documented that the South African Police Service use sniffing methods to identify their suspects and victims (usually illegal African foreigners) because they believe these foreigners smell terribly (see Harris 2002; Matsinhe 2011).

[6] This is a Freudian term that is used to describe individual or group sensitivity to small differences between them and others like them. According to Hazell (2009: 97) such differences are highlighted to achieve a superficial sense of one's own uniqueness, a sense of otherness which is only a mask for an underlying uniformity and sameness.

and killing of Africans. He explains that the dynamics of colonial group relations create power asymmetries between the 'established groups' (whites) and the 'outsider groups' (blacks) who often are culturally persecuted and economically deprived to a point of self-dehumanization. With time, such asymmetries produce in the weaker outsider group an inferiority syndrome 'wherein members of the former measure their personal and collective self-worth according to the social standards of the latter' (Matsinhe 2011: 299). A consequence of this is that members of the weaker group develop self-contempt that often manifests itself in self-destructive behaviour, including contempt and destruction of those who resemble them the most (Matsinhe 2011: 299).

In the context of South Africa and *Afrophobia*, the dynamics of colonial and apartheid group relations altered the social consciousness and unconsciousness[7] of blacks, creating in them a colonized self as in their 'social unconscious, 'South African' and whiteness became synonyms, whereas blackness symbolized 'evil', 'sin', 'wretchedness', 'death', 'war', 'famine' (Fanon in Matsinhe 2011: 301). In his words,

> Such social unconscious enabled the colonized to idealize themselves in the image of the coloniser – a fantasy that finds expression in the ideology of South African exceptionalism, out of which is born the bizarre idea, among others, that South Africans have lighter skin complexions than Africans from the greater continent (Matsinhe 2011: 301).

In this way, the ideals of the oppressor white became the aspiration of the oppressed black, wherein the oppressed black became a cultural clone of the oppressor white. Therefore, Matsinhe hypothesizes that to a greater or lesser extent, the ex-oppressed in South Africa have taken on the character of their ex-oppressor as they now oppress the 'African Other' (*Makwerekwere*) who are imagined as different from and inferior to the 'South African us'. Thus in

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[7] Matsinhe summarizes the social unconscious as 'the sum of prejudices, myths and collective attitudes of a given group; the stock of common sense knowledge and mundane methods of reasoning which structure people's lives without necessarily being reflected upon' (see Matsinhe 2011: 300).

reality, African foreign nationals are feared, hated and distrusted not because they are really different but because they resemble the former victims of apartheid which typifies narcissism of minor difference (Matsinhe 2011: 302). The fear and anxiety of African foreigners is worse in cases where they look and sound like South African citizens such as those from the Southern African region whose cultures and language are same as those in South Africa[8]. According to Matsinhe 'this cultural and linguistic similarity renders the outsiders (*aMakwerekwere*) invisible and stimulates anxiety in the South African imagination' as 'it signifies the enemy who looks like us, the enemy who is us' (Matsinhe 2011: 309). Matsinhe therefore concludes that in the context of South African history of colonialism and apartheid, the violent aversion towards African foreign nationals in post-apartheid South Africa can best be described as *Afrophobia*. This is aided by an invented concept and ideology of *Makwerekwere* which is used to make visible the invisible object of fear in order to eliminate it. Its use to render Africans from outside the colonial-invented borders of South Africa orderable as the nation's bogey man is a process that will ultimately lead to self-annihilation (Matsinhe 2011).

This is the crux of our deploying Matsinhe's ideology of *Makwerekwere* as an explanatory framework in this paper. Going by widely reported outbreaks of afrophobia in South Africa since 1994 as chronicled by the International Organization for Migration, it appears that most so-called black[9] South Africans see themselves as different from and better than other Africans from the continent. They have become the 'established groups' in Africa who must necessarily stigmatize, deal with and if possible annihilate the 'outsider groups' who they have framed as *aMakwerekwere*. In their imagination, the *Makwerekwere* from underdeveloped Africa is

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[8] Ndebele, Shangaan, Sotho, Swazi and Tswana are South African languages and cultures which are spoken and practiced widely in Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana respectively.

[9] We say so-called because in reality, no human being is black in the same tone as the colour black just as none is white in the same tone as the colour white. It therefore begs; who decided that some will be called black and others white?

different[10] and does not belong in an exceptional (developed) South Africa. This ideology is so strongly ingrained that even when the *Makwerekwere* eventually meets all the legal requirements for citizenship and is bestowed such, he/she is still counted as 'foreigner' and never fully accepted and treated as a South African[11]. This is an imagery that must change not only at the people level, but also at the top level of governance[12] in other to prevent our collective self-annihilation as a race. This is more so as the differentiation between South Africans and other African nationals is not based on any real difference between them. Rather it is an imagined difference which is a result of long years of systematic psychosocial dehumanization that 'blacks' suffered under the apartheid era. In many ways, this is supported by findings from our survey of South Africans in our study areas who agree that from watching Nigerian movies and other African movies, they can see that Africa's numerous cultures are more similar than they are different. For instance, 74% of our sample affirmed this (see table 4) with a cumulative 90% highlighting areas of similarity in dressing, family values, marriage, ancestral belief and worship (see table 7).

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[10] One of the authors has on numerous occasions personally experienced this misconception of difference on account of her skin colour. She is very light-skinned and has as such been assumed to be Zulu or 'Coloured' based on the imagination that a Nigerian cannot be so light skinned.

[11] In May 2010, one of the authors requested a list of all academic staff from the Human Capital Management (HCM) department of the University of Zululand with a view to determine the percentage of African foreigners. In helping to identify the African foreign nationals on the list, the HCM staff also ticked those who were appointed as citizens and others who had become citizens over time as 'foreigners'.

[12] Contrary to popular opinion that afrophobia exist mainly in the lower echelons of society, it is happening at the top as well. It is being expressed daily by educated and affluent South Africans at top-level state institutions such as the department of Home Affairs, the South African Police Service and the media (Neocosmos, 2006; Gordon, 2010). Ironically, universities that ought to be citadels of knowledge are not spared as, for instance, eminently qualified African foreigners are routinely denied positions because they are not South Africans.

Trends of African Immigration to South Africa since 1994

Historically, South Africa has always attracted immigrants from different parts of Africa. During the dark apartheid years, the Aliens Control Act of 1963 was largely the legislative and policy instrument used to regulate immigration into South Africa, and as the name suggests, it was effectively used to control the entry of foreigners, especially Africans, into the country. According to Crush, the act was a blatant and unashamed instrument of white racial domination or supremacy[13]. For example, Section 4 (1) of the Aliens Control Act stated that a person could only immigrate to South Africa if that person's habits of life are suited to the requirements of South Africa. As Khan contends, 'the official definition of an immigrant was therefore that he or she had to be able to be assimilated into the white population', impliedly, 'Africans were not considered for immigration' (Khan 2007: 2). However, African mine and farm workers from neighbouring states such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe were given special exception and allowed to enter South Africa solely as undocumented migrant labourers and with severe human rights restrictions which made them no worse than indentured slaves (see Adepoju 1988; Kenneth 1997; Zlotnik 2003; Khan 2007).

Since the advent of popular democracy in 1994, immigration policy and trend has changed from one of selective restriction that was racialised to one of guided accommodation that is non-racialised. This is so because although post-1994 immigration policy and practice is open to and accommodative of anyone who can contribute to developing the new South Africa, it is a guided accommodation as it only encourages skilled workers, capital-owning entrepreneurs and wealthy retirees to emigrate from their countries to South Africa. For example one of the stated intentions of the extant Immigration Act No 13 of 2002 is 'to permit an easy flow of highly skilled foreigners and investors into South Africa'. In this light, the act is intended to promote economic growth by:

(a) Ensuring that businesses in the Republic may employ foreigners who are needed;

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[13] Jonathan Crush: South Africa: New Nation, New Migration Policy? http://www.queensu.ca/samp Accessed 10/05/11.

(b) Facilitating foreign investments, tourism and industries in the Republic which are reliant on international exchanges of people and personnel;

(c) Enabling exceptionally skilled or qualified people to sojourn in the Republic;

(d) Increasing skilled human resources in the Republic;

(e) Facilitating the movement of students and academic staff within the Southern African Development Community for study, teaching and research; and

(f) Tourism promotion (Immigration Act No 13, 2002: 14)

According to Khan (2007:4),

> Generally, immigrants who are in a position to contribute to the broadening of South Africa's economic base are welcomed to apply for residence. Similarly applications by skilled workers in occupations for which there is a shortage in the country are encouraged but particularly applications by industrialist and other entrepreneurs who wish to relocate their existing businesses or establish new concerns in South Africa. Anybody who intends to retire in South Africa may do so if they can show a Nett worth of an amount to be determined by the Minister of Home Affairs.

And although unlike the apartheid control act, the immigration act of 2002 does not preclude temporary visitors of varying categories, in many ways, it excludes some class of people. It excludes unskilled workers, petty traders with little or no start-up capital and even refugees fleeing from economic deprivations and or conflict in their home countries in spite of the rights that refugees have by reason of the Refugees Act No 130 of 1998. In spite of this, the trend of African migration to South Africa since 1994 has remained an economic survival strategy used by members of poor households in Southern African countries (see Adepoju 2006). For example, largely because of its political instability and economic malaise, Zimbabwe since 2000 has now overtaken Mozambique as the country with the highest number of migrant stocks from the SADC region in South Africa as table 1 shows.

Table 1: Migrant stock of top sending African countries to South Africa, 2007

Country	Migrant stock
Ghana***	208, 226
Ivory Coast**	24, 849
Malawi	10, 662
Mozambique*	269, 918
Swaziland	80, 593
Zimbabwe*	5, 109, 084

Source: Ngwenya (2010: 15).
* Represents countries with the highest number of migrant stock
** Represents countries that fall outside the SADC region
*** Represents countries both with the highest number of migrant stock that fall outside of SADC.

Ghana and Ivory Coast from outside SADC show a relatively strong presence in post-1994 African migration flows to South Africa. Others in this category that are not listed in this table include Cameroun, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius, Nigeria and Tanzania. Together, they form a new pattern of African immigration characterized by a

> large scale and diversity of origins of present-day immigrants, bringing their skills, enterprise and drive, and eager to explore prospects in Africa's most buoyant economy (Adepoju 2006: 40).

Clearly then, South Africa because of its economic position in Africa tends to attract a lot of African immigrants fleeing economic decadence in their countries. However, beyond economic push and pull factors, are there other factors that make South Africa an attractive migration destination for other African nationals? As aforementioned, apart from South Africa's stable political environment, strong rights-based constitution, and sound legal

framework for protecting and enforcing these rights, it emerged from our FGD that its low potential for natural disasters and Africanism are important factors. For all 16 participants in our FGD in Empangeni, all the non-economic factors enumerated were also significant pull factors in their decision to migrate to South Africa. For example, of the 16, 5 said, given the high propensity of countries of the north to natural disasters, South Africa was a better choice. For them, while the decision to migrate had to do with push factors (unemployment and lack of self-actualization prospects) in their home countries, they also did not want to lose their lives to natural disasters which plaque the developed north more in the search for greener pastures (FGD 01/05/11). On Africanism, 6 of the participants who first came to South Africa as students, have finished their studies and have been working for over 5 years now felt very strongly about studying within Africa and giving back to Africa rather than to the rich north. For them, in spite of afrophobia, living amongst a predominantly African population was more comforting than living as conspicuous racial minorities in a predominantly European population. A similar sentiment was expressed in the FGD in Durban. The group agreed that African cultural similarity which made for easier assimilation was a driving factor in their choice of South Africa as a migration destination (FGD 09/07/11).

However, much as the impetus for migration is largely economic, what remain unappreciated are the cultural implications of African immigration for promoting transnational friendship and peace in the continent through cultural appreciation. As Africans increasingly travel within the continent, they get to know their continent and appreciate the fact that the things that divide them are largely artificial if not imaginary. This has implications for both regional and intercontinental integration especially at the people-level. For example, in the context of this paper, Nigerians living in South Africa have increasingly stimulated ordinary South Africans and other Africans living in the country through their clothing, food and music cultures to take more than a passing interest in what Nigeria is about. One avenue through which this interest is consummated is watching Nigerian movies on the Africa Magic channel (114) on Multi Choice digital satellite television (DSTV), Top TV and DVDs. From our survey findings, it appears that beyond their entertainment value, Nigerian movies are engaging in cultural enlightenment on Nigerian peoples and cultures. Indeed, they and

other such African movies are fostering friendship, transnational ties and unity between Nigerians and South Africans as well as other African nationals in South Africa. This certainly has positive implications for regional integration, peace and development in Africa if the ordinary people of the continent are to buy into the idea and fruition of a United States of Africa.

Case Study Analysis of Nigerian Movies in Promoting Cultural Unity in Africa

Method of Data Collection and Presentation of Findings

A total of 92 persons, 40 males and 52 females across Empangeni, Ngwelezane and Pietermaritzburg were randomly sampled for this study. They included 3 Batswana, 6 Congolese, 8 Cameroonians, 5 Mozambicans, 55 South Africans, 7 Zambians and 8 Zimbabweans. The respondents were sampled at the entrance of shopping malls in Empangeni (Sanlam centre), Ngwelezane (China store) and Pietermaritzburg (Scottsville).

As table 2 shows, 52% of the respondents felt that the presence of Nigerians in South Africa stimulated their interest in watching Nigerian movies which has further improved their knowledge of Nigeria, its peoples and cultures.

Table 2: Nigerian presence in South Africa stimulated interest in movies Interest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	48	52.2	52.2	80.4
	No	26	28.3	28.3	28.3
	Do not know	18	19.6	19.6	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Approximately 83% of the respondents felt this way as shown in table 3. This is a positive socio-cultural outcome of African immigration within the continent if the vision of a united Africa or United States of Africa is to be realised.

Table 3: Increased understanding of Nigerian peoples and cultures
Understanding Nigerians and their culture

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	76	82.6	82.6	82.6
	No	11	12.0	12.0	94.6
	Do not know	5	5.4	5.4	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

As aforementioned, 74% of the respondents are now more convinced after watching Nigerian and other African movies that most African cultures are similar. A further subjection of this descriptive statistics to quantitative analysis reveals a significance difference of $P<0.05$ in the perceptions on similarity between African cultures in the continent.

Table 4: Convinced most African cultures are similar
Similar

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	1.1	1.1	1.1
	Yes	68	73.9	73.9	75.0
	No	13	14.1	14.1	89.1
	Do not know	8	8.7	8.7	97.8
	5.00	2	2.2	2.2	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: One-sample statistics
One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Similar	92	1.3913	.83806	.08737

Table 6: One-sample test
One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Similar	15.924	91	.000	1.39130	1.2177	1.5649

As table 7 shows, the perceived areas of similarities in African cultures for the respondents include dressing, marriage, family values and ancestral worship. In terms of the frequency distribution of multiple responses, 58% of the total number of respondents ticked either 'dressing', 'marriage', 'family values' or 'ancestral worship' while 31% ticked 'all of the above'. The other frequencies are shown in the table.

Table 7: Perceived areas of similarities in African cultures

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Dressing	13	14.1	14.1	14.1
	Marriage	13	14.1	14.1	28.3
	Family values	15	16.3	16.3	44.6
	Ancestral worship	13	14.1	14.1	58.7
	All of the above	29	31.5	31.5	90.2
	Dressing and marriage	1	1.1	1.1	91.3
	Marriage, family values and ancestral worship	3	3.3	3.3	94.6
	Family values and ancestral worship	2	2.2	2.2	96.7
	Marriage and family values	2	2.2	2.2	98.9
	Dressing, marriage and family values	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	92	100.0	100.0	

Synthesis and Discussion

As aforementioned, South Africans view and treat African immigrants in the country as aMakwerekwere based on an imagination of difference between them and other Africans aptly described by Matsinhe (2011) as the narcissism of minor difference.

Whether real or imagined, the so-called differences between South Africans and other Africans, especially those from outside the Southern region are frequently highlighted to achieve a superficial sense of South African uniqueness. And as Hazell (2009) contends, it is a sense of otherness which is only a mask for an underlying uniformity and sameness. This much is reflected in our study where respondents including South Africans themselves agree that African cultures are more similar than they are different. While similarity in culture does not necessarily imply or confirm similarity in physical traits, it does point to an underlying sameness or similarity in origin especially considering that blacks known today as South Africans migrated[14] from west and central Africa some 2, 000 years ago in what is known as the largest human migration in global history[15]. More ever, the minor variations in physical traits can be found all over the continent and should therefore not be treated differently from the way we would treat physical variations amongst all peoples such as 'short', 'tall', 'slim', 'fat'. Concisely, in the context of this study, the notion of difference between South Africans and other Africans which fuels the invented ideology of Makwerekwere is false.

Second, it has been argued that regional integration and pan-African governance is the key to sustainable development and unity that can bring about lasting peace and stability in Africa (Miyanda 2001; Uzodike 2010). In the same vein, the literature on the barriers to its realization is well documented (Miyanda 2001; Ndi-Zambo 2001). However, we contend that if regional and continental integration is to be a reality in Africa, the African masses who would become instruments of such integration must first buy

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[14] South Africa is indeed a country of migrants as historically both the Caucasian and Indian populations are products of migration hundreds of years ago.

[15] See http://www.ezakwantu.com/Tribes%20-%20Southern%20African%20Tribal%20Migrations.htm. (Accessed 17/08/11.)

into it. One way to facilitate this buy-in is through immigration within the continent which has the potential to foster common cultural understanding, acceptance and unity of Africans. That way, their buy-in will easily eliminate some of the social barriers to regional integration which is a result of intolerance based on ignorance (Miyanda 2001). Our study shows that African immigration can have a positive effect on the process of regional and continental integration. This is especially so in South Africa which was previously delinked from the rest of Africa and whose peoples as a result have very little knowledge of the peoples of the rest of Africa. For example, 48 (87%) of the 55 South Africans who took part in our survey say that from watching Nigerian movies, they now view Nigerians in more positive light because of the similarities in cultures/worldviews, and the fact that they now know more about Nigeria beyond the popular stereotypes and narrow views about Nigeria and Nigerians[16]. Similarly, 83% of all respondents expressed this sentiment. This is connected to Nigerian immigration to South Africa as 52% of all respondents said the presence of Nigerians in South Africa stimulated their interest in watching Nigerian movie (see table 2).

Concluding Remarks and Policy Suggestions

We have tried to show that xenophobia, and in the context of this study, afrophobia is a socio-cultural outcome of African immigration to South Africa which impacts negatively on the unity of Africa and Africans. We have also argued that this afrophobia is based on an invented ideology of Makwerekwere which itself is a cumulative result of the dynamics of psychosocial group relations during the apartheid years. If not properly managed, this dynamics has the potential to snowball into new forms of discrimination and violence that would engulf South Africa with negative

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[16] Nigerians in South Africa are generally stereotyped by both government officials and the masses as criminals and drug dealers (see Harris, 2001: 74). However, in reality, the number of Nigerians involved in criminal activities in South Africa pale into insignificance compared to the number of Nigerian doctors, professors, engineers, architects, mathematics and science teachers and entrepreneurs working legally all over South Africa and contributing significantly to its economic growth and development.

implications for the region given that crisis is exportable (see Ayoob 1995). The question we now turn to is: what is the role of the post-apartheid South African state in all this? This is where the concept and practice of citizenship; being and belonging in South Africa as constructed by the post-apartheid state come in.

The notion of citizenship in Africa based on indigeneity of modern states remains problematic. This is because the state in Africa is an artificial creation of colonialism that has very little if anything to do with the cultural and lived realities of the African peoples. It therefore becomes a narrow conception and practice of citizenship which not only excludes but also facilitates afrophobia. This is the case in South Africa where the post-apartheid state constructed and implemented a narrow definition of citizenship based on the traditional state-nation-territory discourse (Gordon 2010). According to him, South Africa's nationalist discourse of immigration policy depicts (African) foreigners as a threat to the social and economic rights of citizens, and as such should restricted (Gordon 2010: 52-58). This is what Neocosmos (2006) described as state hegemonic conception of citizenship to which 'all in the public domain, from the Left to the Right of the political spectrum, have been in agreement that the benefits of South African citizenship should be restricted to those who could prove some form of indigenous link with the country, and that the others should be kept firmly out' (Neocosmos 2006: 125). In this way, xenophobia, according to Neocosmos is a structural feature of state discourse and practice, not an accidental occurrence as claimed by the state and its ruling party; the African National Congress (ANC).

This post-apartheid state exclusivist conception and practice of citizenship, evident in immigration legislation and a selective regime of state benefits that is reminiscent of apartheid oppression, has enabled the masses' conception and use of the *Makwerekwere* ideology to engage and ostracize African foreigners. The point is if the post-apartheid state had conceived a pan-Africanist notion of citizenship (progressive, egalitarian and as such more inclusive) and put the required structures in place to implement it, the ideology of *Makwerekwere* would have been contained early on and the stigma and development costs of afrophobia and xenophobia avoided. As things stand, the cultural richness which South Africa stands to benefit from African immigration has not being fully harnessed because of the state's

exclusivist politics of nationalism and the afrophobia it brews[17]. At the level of continental integration, Tadjo (2008) puts the issue into perspective thus:

> We Africans are not talking to one another. The difficulty of travelling inside the African continent, unworkable currency exchanges, linguistic barriers and the age-old divide between Francophones, Anglophones and Lusophones are all factors that have turned us into strangers living side by side (Tadjo 2008: 238).

Apart from South Africa's pan-Africanist responsibilities in the continent as espoused in its African Renaissance project, the state's inability or unwillingness to proactively engage with the question of pan-African citizenship in South Africa will not end at the afrophobic divide between South African 'natives' and African 'strangers'. As Tadjo contends, 'the discourse of 'othering' can always be displaced into other modes of expression' (Tadjo 2008: 235) as was the case in the Ivory Coast where the notion of 'foreigner' became dual. According to her,

> the 'Other' is not just the one who does not belong to the national territory. The 'Other' has also become the one who is not from the local territory (Tadjo 2008: 236).

The lesson for South Africa is that today it is African foreigners; tomorrow it would be South Africans turning on themselves in ways that could precipitate a civil war between the different ethnicities (ethno-phobia) in this beautiful rainbow nation-state. The state and its ruling class must therefore act proactively. In this light, and based on our analysis and findings, the following suggestions suffice:

- The South African government should change its political discourse on citizenship by encouraging debate around constructing a new notion of citizenship that is more pan-Africanist, inclusive and tied

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[17] Xenophobia or afrophobia blights South Africa's human rights profile in the world, a phenomenon that may not bode well for foreign direct investment in the country.

to an overall vision of South African development. This does not imply opening up the borders for the continent to flood South Africa. Rather, it is an inclusive conceptualization of citizenship that makes special provision for skilled Africans to earn South African citizenship periodically. Such recognition of Africans by the state will effectively discourage South Africans from caricaturing Africans as the problem of South Africa.

- Based on this, Government should formulate and implement a clear immigration policy that encourages brain gain for South Africa in critical areas of need without aiding brain drain for the rest of the continent. In this light, the state should collaborate with African states to effectively manage the drain effects on their economies. Similarly, the state should support democratic consolidation and good governance in Africa to forestall opportunistic immigration to South Africa.

- Government in collaboration with civil society, especially the media must make conscious efforts to educate the South African public about Africa, its history and connections rather than reproducing stereotypes and clichés. In this vein, African history should be introduced in secondary schools. Also, universities should be given incentives to have functional African Studies centres that would teach 'Introduction to Africa' which all undergraduate students will be required to take for credit points at first year. These centres can also incorporate optional courses on major African languages as part of their teaching brief.

- As part of the African enlightenment campaign, Government should encourage the SABC 1, 2 AND 3 to show films from Africa which showcase and educate on African cultures and ways instead of focusing on only South African soaps such as Generations, Muvhango and Isindingo. Our study show that South Africans are very interested in watching African films as all 92 respondents said they watched Nigerian movies and other African movies frequently (54% answered 'frequent' while 46% answered 'Very frequent').

> The challenge for them is that African movies are only shown on satellite television which most people cannot afford.

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Impact of Male out-Migration on Rural Women's Livelihood in Limpopo Province

Ndwakhulu Tshishonga

Abstract

This paper examines women's mobility and internal migration, and the impact it has on providing socio-economic and educational opportunities for survival among the rural marginalised. The livelihoods of the women in Pfananani are dependent on migrant remittances from husbands, sons and families working in the urban cities of Pretoria and Johannesburg. However, with the advent of rapid urbanisation, those who depended on agriculture and livestock breeding saw their incomes dwindling as land is being 'grabbed' to build rural townships. Faced with unemployment, poverty and the triple burden of taking care of the children, the home and the land, the women of Pfananani in the Limpopo Province have become mobile in order to uplift them, through out-of-home employment.

Introduction

The focus is on internal migration and its impact in terms of providing socio-economic opportunities or acquiring education for survival among the rural marginalised and unskilled women who are left on their own to fend for their families. In addition, the paper examines the socio-economic challenges confronted by women in the rural areas in their endeavour for integration and adaptation. There is a growing proportion of rural female headed households

in the Pfananani community who, in the absence of males, endeavour to secure their livelihoods by engaging in sewing, art and craft. The author argues that a woman's status is not simply one of a dependent as she can offer contribute to the family. The paper argues that there is a direct link between rural-urban migration, poverty, economic development as well as social and political change. Cornwell and Inder (2004: 2) argue that urbanisation go hand in hand with industrialisation and development. Consequently, this movement promised 'a better life' for both the old and young people on one hand. However, the other hand, such migration enormously depopulated the rural areas and therefore robbed, impoverished peripheral areas its able bodied people (men) more particularly to take care of their wives and families.

The debates in this paper are located within 'push and pull' factors especially when deliberated during the apartheid as well as in the new political dispensation. It is argued that during the apartheid regime, due to legislation such Group Area Act, Land Act and the whole 'separate development' model embedded within the apartheid and homeland systems people especially the blacks were restricted to homelands or so called reserves. Most interestingly, the dawn of democracy since 1994, has expedited free movement of people within and across provinces and beyond South Africa. Despite the freedom brought through democracy, the poor remain marginalised. The bottom line is that for the majority of people, especially the young; the city centres become centres of frustrations and disillusionment without socio-economic opportunities to make their dreams come true. Women in the rural areas are the hardest hit by the lack of economic opportunity, hence the rates of high unemployment and soaring poverty. This situation compels women to venture into illegal activities such as prostitution, crime, drug and alcohol abuse.

Migration, Internal Migration and Male Out-migration

Migration, according to Marshall (1994: 415) involves the (more or less) permanent movement of individuals or groups across symbolic or political boundaries into new residential areas and communities. From time immemorial people have always been moving either within or across borders. In Africa as elsewhere around the world, both internal and external migration

are essentially a response to a wide range and complexity of economic and social conditions, but the main driving force is the search for economic well being of the migrants and families left behind. Both internal and external migration has been recorded mainly in countries or communities where people are unable people to satisfy their economic, social and political aspirations within their region (Adepoju 1998). While it is important to understand migration in Africa, it is important to remember that the history of migration cannot be understood in isolation from previous colonial and post colonial regimes. In Africa, the inception of colonial regime which brought along the capitalist system, with forced labour migration and the dispossession of the land resulted in inequalities within and between countries and communities (Human Science Research Council, 2006). In response to these economic and political conditions under which people in Africa were subjected to, they engaged in mass migration to urban areas in search of new opportunities that have been created by the colonial regime. In this context migration became a means of livelihood for many households in developing world and mainly in Africa (Adepoju, 2000).

According to Zeleza (2002), a central defining feature of both internal international migrations is that the migrating people are doing so mainly to sell their labour power, suggesting that migration patterns, and labour procurement and utilization are shaped largely by the capitalist ideal. For instance colonial economic activities in Francophone, mainly in West Africa and its forced labour migration legislation sparked internal and cross-border clandestine migration of unskilled labour force which was required for infrastructural development mainly in transport network and plantation agriculture for sugar cane, cocoa, and peanuts (Adepoju 2000). Placing migration into the South African context, one would argue that, the migration patterns during apartheid and before the discovery of mines, internal and regional migration dynamics were different from the rest of the continent (Human Sciences Research Council Report 2006). The apartheid government with sealed border control and racial discriminatory laws and the Aliens Control Act of 1963 made it impossible for internal and external movements (Shindondola 2002). With the discovery of gold and diamond, despite restricted migration laws, South Africa was compelled to open up its borders and also allowed rural to urban movement of people to meet labour demand by mines (Human Sciences Research Council Report 2006).

There is a reason to believe that the increase in labour demand warranted the movement of people into South Africa from Southern African countries (Adepoju 2000). As aforementioned, both internal and cross borders migration seems to be a response to economic and political challenges in the country or the community of origin. Migrants' remittances to their homes played a very critical role in the upliftment of the economic condition of many poor households (Adepoju 2000). For instance, countries like Lesotho and Swaziland, whose National economy depend on South Africa, the migration to South Africa remain the main form of livelihoods and survival for many households in these region (Adepoju 2000). Households benefiting from relatives who migrated to South Africa were often much better off than non-migrant households (Sechaba 1997 in Human Sciences Research Council Report, 2006). In rural South Africa, in 1986 as result of economic hardship due to the colonial taxation laws and which were inherited by the apartheid regime resulted into an influx of males migrating to urban areas in search of work opportunities and many South African work seekers from rural areas preferred to leave their families behind in rural areas (Human Sciences Research Council Report 2006).

However, migration of males from rural areas into urban areas, presented a number of challenges to both migrants and families left behind. Given the economic conditions in urban areas and the new form of 'culture' these migrants were subjected to, resulted in a situation where many of the migrants were not able to return home. Thus out-migration of men resulted in considerable social costs to households and communities, as families were fragmented and women and children left behind had to bear additional burden of traditional male work (Human Sciences Research Council Report 2006).

Research Methodology

This paper used participant observation and in-depth interviews with a small group of ten (10) women. The interviewees' experiences contributed to a more balanced understanding of women's struggles in accessing resources to generate incomes. The paper illuminates the fact that rural women, the elderly and children lead a precarious existence without assistance from male supporters. The choice to focus on the Pfananani community centre was motivated by the authors' search for information that could shed light on the

changing landscape in rural areas in terms of women's mobility and employment statuses. The interviews were conducted for six consecutive days with the author spending a maximum of 3 hours in each visit. The interviews took place between 12 pm and 14h00 pm in order to allow women to get on with their work without disturbances.

The interviews were conducted in the Venda language and then translated into English. The transcripts were then analysed by content analysis of various themes which provided the structure of the paper. In addition quotes from the interviews were incorporated to highlight and enable a deep understanding of some of the key issues on the impact of out of home employment and female mobility.

Linking Pfananani Community Centre to Rural Women's Livelihood

Pfananani Community Centre is a community based centre situated at former Venda in the Limpopo province. This establishment came into existence through the missionary and philanthropist initiative of the Roman Catholic nuns based at the village of Tsianda way back in 1972. One of the respondents said that:

> The centre has been established from the need to facilitate the development and consolidate livelihood strategies through the income generating projects for rural women. It started with a group of women coming from villages such as Tsianda, Tshakhuma, Ha-mutsha, Tshifulananani and Lwamondo.

In 1987, with the help of Wilgespruit Community Centre, the group was transformed into a co-operative community based centre promoting co-operative ideals and principles with specific mandate to create job for rural women. Faced with rising unemployment, soaring poverty coupled by the triple burden of taking care of the children, the home and the land the women of Pfananani envisage the centre as the symbol of hope and new dawn for economic prosperity. In the Limpopo Province with the aid of nuns from the local Catholic Church embarked on a project that saw their livelihoods being uplifted.

Table 1: Projects housed at Pfananani Community Centre

Name of Project	Economic Activities	Project members
Hulisani	Knitting & sewing-school uniforms, jerseys, traditional Venda clothes	9 members
Khwathelani	Weaving and Sewing	6 members
Thusanani	Pre-school-teaching project members' children including those from those community	2 Pre-School Educators

It can be argued that the establishment of the centre was to explicitly respond to the plight of women in the area due to socio-economic vulnerability and marginalisation amongst rural women. The centre adds to the tradition of collective self-help in which Hart and Macfarlane (1999: 41) state such activities are either meant to increase household income or reduce household expenses. Among its objectives, the centre was established to:

> 1) Ensure the mobilisation of rural women with the aim of forming them into an income generating project.
>
> 2) Empower people particularly women with technical skills, knowledge and competency in order to sustain their meagre income.
>
> 3) Promote the co-operative principles by encouraging community people to form themselves into income projects (Pfananani Constitution 1987).

From the above mentioned objectives of the Centre, it is clear that the Centre ends to become a mobilising force behind the unemployed, unskilled and illiterate women. Broadly, the Centre through the involvement of the women and its engagement with community economic development endevours aimed

at advancing local economy and thereby addressing women economic exclusion, marginalisation and vulnerability. The centre's commitment to address socio-economic vulnerability through fostering diverse, resilient and more localised self-reliant economic demand the optimal utilisation of human capabilities and natural assets and resources. For Pfananani to be self-reliant in promoting community economic development (CED) Seyfang (1999: 126) argues that it should aim to:

> deliver economic benefits to the whole community, but also to strengthen social capital by re-stitching the social fabric, ethical capital by nurturing a sense of civic responsibility and community spirit.

Interviews conducted with women at Pfananani showed that even though these women come from different families, what bonded them together was their commitment to secure livelihood and therefore mitigate the hard reality of poverty and marginalisation and their courage to break down cultural norms by engaging in out of the home paid employment. The establishment of the centre was out of the desperation foe a woman like Tendani to contend that:

> It has been more than two years since my husband left and he has not yet found a permanent job. He does temporary work here and there and he tries to send us some money whenever he has enough to spare on top of the bills he has to pay for his accommodation, food and clothing. I heard of Pfananani co-operative from my neighbour's mother in-law. I decided I had to join the club because things were bad at home and I desperately needed to learn a skill in order to clothe and educate my children. It has been hard bringing up school going children on very little and who at many times have gone to school without eating anything. However ever since I joined the club I learnt to sew school uniforms and now I can earn a little without having to depend on the little that my husband sends.

Despite their efforts to supplement the remittances from their de jure husbands, the reality dawns for the women that the money obtained from the

sales was not enough for them to meet all their needs. In the case of Trifinna (43 years old), her situation deteriorated immediately when her husband got retrenched from work in Pretoria. She lamented that:

> At home things became bad that I had to be resourceful in finding ways to feed my children. As a result of our misfortune the children had to be withdrawn from their good school and had to enrol them to the government public schools. With the money we had saved I began to buy and sell second hand clothes. In the beginning I managed to make a decent living, however the trade was flooded by cheaper but new clothes from China. It was luck for one to even make R300-00 a month. Being part of Pfananani community centre therefore meant I could supplement the little I was making selling clothes. I ended up assisting in cooking for the children at the crèche.

Though their economic benefits are minimal Oberhauser and Pratt (2004: 210) argue that:

> ... through their collective efforts community projects have the potential to expand women's livelihood opportunities. In an area where employment prospects are limited, women are earning some cash income, acquiring skills, and developing a sense of ownership through community economic groups ....

In order to remedy this dire and desperate situation, women make a decision to take turns in taking care of the centre's work. Part of the plan was that those interested in communal gardening got involved in ploughing vegetables for their consumption and selling to the community members, other women were deployed to advance the spirit of credit union where they do bulk buying and selling basic commodities to community members in order to supplement their meagre income. In summer especially when closed for December holiday, women encouraged each other to till their private fields (maize, groundnuts, etc.) in order to supplement food at their respective homes. In this regard (Carney 1998) posits that livelihood depends on the capabilities, assets and activities and in the case of the rural women, the

improvement and maintenance of livelihood was further enhanced by the pragmatic application of co-operative principles such as open membership, democratic member control, member economic participation, autonomy and independence, education, training and information, co-operation among co-operatives and concern for community (Davis and Donaldson 1998: 133-134, The International Joint Project on Co-operative Democracy 1995: 10-11). Their vision was based on expanding and enhancing their livelihood thereby optimal utilisation of their inherent abilities, capabilities and the available resources.

Challenges and Opportunities of Rural-Urban Migration among Women

The mobility of people in South Africa is similar to other former colonies. The colonial set-up of the city was meant only for male labourers who were forced to migrate from the rural areas in order to earn real money to pay for hut and land tax to the chief. However, democracy promises of bringing opportunities closer to rural areas have not been realised since the post-apartheid era in 1994. Rural areas face particular constraints as employment in industry and mining have declined and households increasingly depend on diverse sources of income (Oberhauser & Pratt 2004: 209). In Limpopo much of the land reserved for farming which normally provided much of the rural employment have been bought by real estates for either game parks for tourism, or other types of development. This has led to many able bodied men to become mobile in order to survive. Their mobility does not necessarily mean the survival of the women and children left behind. Many men find themselves moving from one city to the other seeking employment. A good example is of thirty eight (38) year Ellison who moved far as Upington in the Northern Cape to seek employment. According to Azwidhowi, Ellison's wife, he has been gone for almost a year moving from city to city until he got a contract job at a vine farm working as a driver. Azwidohwi adds that in that year he has been gone, he has been unable to assist his family financially.

This scenario forced Azwidohwi to join the Pfananani craft project in order to acquire skills while generating an income so that she could take care of her three children and aging in-laws. According to Florence:

> Pfananani is one of the economic strategies in Limpopo that provide economic opportunities for rural women, however due to the impact of the global recession business has been very slow.

Pfananani is on the Limpopo tourist route and generates much of its income through the sale of its curios to foreign tourists mainly from Europe and The USA whose countries have been hard hit by the economic meltdown. As a result, the centre has been hard hit by the decrease of tourists in Limpopo and it is proving hard to sell products as there is a trickle of visitors and buyers which does not significantly improve the centre's financial situation. Azwidohwi and the women at the centre are now faced with a dire situation, historically their economic opportunities were embedded in cultural practices and material realities have always historically marginalised them but now they are being forced to join their men folk to move from one place to the other. The difference here however, is that men's mobility pattern is different from women's mobility because the latter is bound within Limpopo.

The changing landscape of the socio-economic situation of the women at Pfananani has thus led to the feminisation of migration. The socio-economic impact and failure of tourism is forcing women to challenge cultural practices that demand that women should stay at home regardless of the problems they face; they are the custodians of the community and culture. Women at Pfananani are moving around Limpopo seeking seasonal jobs on the remaining farms and some as chambermaids in bed and breakfast motels in the game reserves while some are absorbed in the domestic informal sector in the suburbs of Thohoyandou, Makhado and others. Women like Florence and Azwidohwi have become mobile, a trend that is unheard of particularly among the Venda. The historical and cultural marginalisation of women in Limpopo and indeed the rest of South Africa are linked to cultural norms and patriarchal institutions which denied women employment opportunities and access to land and financial resources (Lipton *et al.* 1996; Fairhurst *et al.* 2000) have put women in a cultural predicament. From the study it clear that women at Pfananani are negotiating their mobility around traditions without upsetting culture significantly by seeking work within their ethnic spatiality. Similarly to a study by Buijis (1999: 187) on stories of indentured Tamil men and women to immigrate to South Africa, agents found it harder to recruit women. This shows that cultural norms hinder women's mobility the reason

why Limpopo women prefer to stay in the province where they have an understanding of the culture.

Mobility and Internal Migration: Financial Deprivation or Women Economic Empowerment?

Pfananani Community Centre among women engenders community mobilization for collective action due to changing socio-economic and political landscape; women's migration become an empowering force as women are able to move were compelled to collectively to mobilise themselves and their assets from within and sometimes with a little help from local businesses and local institutions. Despite the challenges explored previously, through the women's courage and commitment to use their skills and knowledge to make a difference in their villages. Even though the centre benefited few financially, it has transformed itself to be resourceful for their entire communities. It was through the centre's initiative that surrounding communities were mobilized for technical skills training. Consequently, this stimulated and instilled the spirit of working together in tackling socio-economic challenges of poverty and unemployment.

In the presence of dwindling socio-economic opportunities due to the absence of industries and formal sector employable skills and competencies, women have to improvise and rely on their talents and skills in sewing, clay pot making, bead making and gardening, thus acknowledging their indigenous knowledge and using it for socio-economic survival. In the areas of knitting and weaving, the knowledge already possessed by the women serves as the prominent base for the centre to operationalise its project mandate. In addition, new skills such as sewing, beadwork and managerial skills have helped in sustaining the projects. From their financial hardships and deprivations, women who could not dream of providing for themselves had to learn the hard way especially in strengthening and valuing cultural and traditional values and norms of Ubuntu. In 1987, with the help of Wilgespruit Community Centre, the group was transformed into a co-operative community based centre promoting co-operative ideals and principles and the women with no or little managerial skills and leadership found themselves at the centre of managing the centre on their own. One of the senior woman interviewed commented that:

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> As new leaders we learn that we do not denigrate people but involve them in the running of the local associations and institutions where every citizen has a right of veto. By standing on its own, the centre plunged us in a situation whereby we have do things for ourselves with little help from the outside (Wilgespruit, Akananani, Kagiso Trust, etc.) more in areas such as information exchange and excursion as well as capacity building. The women's willingness to get involved has further increase their awareness of the strengths as well as the weaknesses. Through adhering to the collective leadership inspired by co-operative philosophy and principles, the centre managed to build centre as well as the community leadership at large.

It is relationship driven in particular between local dwellers, local associations and institutions. In the case like Pfananani where the majority of the staff survives on limited business or management skills and competencies, women did not only rely on their skills and knowledge, but also on the support and solidarity coming from local associations and traditional institutions. From the centre and the financial difficulties encountered, women were determine to stick together thereby tapping into a varied of menial jobs as part of discouraging dependency on their husbands by instilling interdependence among each other. Empowerment in the case of women at Pfananani as Kaplan (1996: 53) argues is grounded on struggling through their dependence on their meagre remittances from their migrant husbands to move towards independence based on acquisition of both technical skills and management know-how. The migration and mobility of women did not only render women interdependent of each other but also enable them to take on more responsibility, especially in decision making both at home and at work. Their interdependent phase of their empowerment meant that women could rely and count on natural, human little financial resources at their disposal for sustainable use. The socio-economic survival of women was dependent on the exploration and optimal utilisation of their human capability (Sen 1995; Nussbaum 2002) which is mainly concerned with comparisons between quality of life and living standards. The approach recognises the multidimensional nature of human beings and appreciation role of information in development and consideration of human beings as

both participants and agents. It is also concerned with equality and group disparities. According to the approach, the objective of development is to take people not as a means but an end within the process of development that is contributory towards expanding people's capabilities or freedoms to pursue quality lives. For the centre to survive it has to rely on its inner strengths and further strengthening of its social and economic ties particularly in working in partnership with local as well as international associates and networks.

Concluding Remarks

This paper specifically explored the effects of migrant labour in Pfananani and showed how some of the women are surviving in the absence of male and family support. The paper examines economic livelihood strategies women engage in, in the face of adversity and the challenges they face in sustaining their knitting and weaving co-operative projects. The paper is based on a case study of women's co-operative projects. Despite the multiplicity of socio-economic challenges faced by rural women, the findings from this case study demonstrate that women's co-operative projects provide potential for social and economic livelihoods and women's mobility has contributed in supplementing their meagre income. The findings also reveal that rural women are becoming more economically independent compared to older women who solely depended on migrant remittances. Although male out migration (migrant labour) has a negative impact on many rural women, this paper has highlighted that it was not all doom and gloom. The community centre has provided an income through indigenous knowledge, learning process and skills that assisted in uplifting some women lives in Limpopo province.

It is true that research on social mobility has previously excluded women from its purview. In older literature, women's mobility has always been placed on a secondary level to that of men even though they contribute as much as men in the household. The paper illuminates that the exclusion of female should be included in research debates as highlighted by the Pfananani women, who despite the taboos associated with female mobility, have managed to negotiate their work and home duties.

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The Politics of Relocation and the Negotiation of Family Relationships across Transnational Space

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Abstract

Expeditious global changes such as urbanisation, international migration, increasing educational opportunities and socio-economic change have led to shifts in contemporary family relationships. As a result of migration, family members are increasingly finding themselves in situations where they have to conduct relationships across different countries. These kinds of transnational relationships entail negotiating communication between spouses, the distribution of household tasks and living arrangements among others. The impact of transnational migration on family relationships and intimate relationships is however often underplayed and even overlooked. Though some researchers are committed to exploring the changing dynamics within transnational families, they have not paid attention to the consideration that transnational family ties cannot function across different worlds without the recognition of family members in different countries. The examination of the complex processes whereby family relationships are cultivated and negotiated transnationally is therefore crucial. Through the use of in-depth interviews, this study analyses how foreign African students residing in KwaZulu-Natal navigate the complex process of renegotiating family relationships across transnational space. It also examines the changing gender relations and the degree of autonomy, empowerment and/or disempowerment these students experience as they engage processes of transforming the meanings of family relationships across space and time.

Keywords: Transnational space, family relationships, gender relations, gender identities, foreign African students

Introduction/ Background of Article

The early nineties have seen a change in migration studies from migrants' assimilation or integration into host societies to maintaining multi-stranded links between two or more countries. This transnational perspective shifts the analytical focus from country of origin and country of destination to mobilities involved in sustaining cross-border livelihoods (Sørensen & Olwig 2002). Initially, the transnational paradigm focused on the movement of commodities and capital, communication and transport of people and people's movements across borders with limited focus being given to family dynamics (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002). Likewise within diaspora studies, the focus was mainly on dispersed communities (see Brah 1998; Clifford 1994; and Cohen 1997) and their relationship with the nation-state. It is only within the field of gender and migration studies that family relations have emerged as a subject of critical enquiry.

The concept of family is highly contested in anthropological studies and is seen as suggesting western notions of nuclear, extended or patriarchal ties that do not take into consideration diverse forms of family structures in different cultures (Harrell 1997). Within social theory, the concept of family usually denotes a domestic group comprising of individuals related to one another by blood, sexual mating or legal ties. Feminist theory has conceptualised the family as a gendered unit of reproduction and cultural transmission or a space for gendered relations (see Anthias 2000). In migration research the identification of the family with the domestic group has given rise to notions of family disintegration as a result of family separation due to migration as well as negative consequences as a result of migrant women leaving their children and husbands behind (Hochschild 2003).

Pribilsky (2004) however argues that the focus on disorganised households or family relations misses out the nuances surrounding men's and women' mobility, their reactions to it and the various ways in which migration challenges, reconfigures and transforms family relationships in transnational space. Levitt and Schiller (2004) in rethinking migration approach transnational family life as a 'socio-economic strategic unit' for whom familial connections are 'worked and reworked over time and space'. This is in alignment with Bryceson and Vuorela (2002:3) who define transnational families as, 'families that live some or most of the time

separated from each other but yet hold together and create a feeling collective welfare and unity'. These families maintain transborder kinship relations that span over two or more states. Grillo and Mazzucato (2008) advance that there are three main areas in which kinship and family relations have been directly affected by transnational migration namely: the separation of family members, gender relations and the role of non-kin relationships.

Research on transnational families however remains limited with few studies focusing on areas such as transnational partnering (Pribilsky 2004), transnational motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotello & Avila 1997) and transnational childhood (Parreñas 2005). These studies are interested in the gendered aspects of transnational family life and transnational parenting. The focus of these studies has however been on transnational families especially in the European context with limited attention being given to transnational African families. This paper aims to contribute to the limited research by examining ways in which migrants of African origin are articulating family relationships as a result of migrating to South Africa. With the opening up of South Africa to the outside world as a democratic country in 1994, there has been a steady increase in the number of international students seeking access to its higher educational institutions. Recent data indicate that over two thirds of international students at South African universities originate from the African continent (Rouhani 2002). The findings of the paper are based on a qualitative study which sought to examine the discursive and social practices through which the foreign students of African origin come to perceive South African gender norms and how these new gender norms either challenged or supported their own gender norms. Contesting gender roles and relations in transnational families come under scrutiny when people leave their home country and move to a different country which may have a different gender regime (see König & de Regt 2010; and Muthuki 2010).

In conducting in-depth interviews over a period of one year from March 2008 to March 2009, I used open-ended questions to enable the students to reflect on and give detailed accounts and perceptions of the myriad contradictions and complexities of their experiences of renegotiating their family relations across transnational space. The study sample comprised of twenty two foreign African students (both men and women) hailing from Kenya, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Cameroon, the

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Liberia. The study employed a geographical scales concept which captures the understanding that gender operates on a multiple spatial, social and cultural scales such as the family and gender hegemonies *inter alia* across transnational spaces. It is within the context of these scales that gender ideologies are either reaffirmed, reconfigured or both. This concept enabled me to examine how gender identities and consequently family relations are constituted in various geopolitical and social contexts.

This paper examines the changes produced by migration on gender relations in the family structure by examining the role of information communication technologies in transnational family relationships; the impact of the transnational space on gender role renegotiation in the areas of sexual division of labour; wife/husband relationship and parenthood.

Virtual Family Relations

Transnational families though living in different countries converge in one social space by emotional and financial ties and they stay in touch with one another through the use of information communication technology and by occasional physical movement between sending and receiving societies. Information communication technologies which were previously only available to the rich elite have now become more accessible enabling migrants to maintain transnational ties with their families across borders. These technologies include social media such as *Facebook, Twitter, LinkeldIn, You-tube* as well as audio communication tools such as *Skype*. Much research has however focused on the potential negative impact of the modern technologies on the 'normalcy' of a healthy family rather than the benefits of these technologies in enabling transnational families to maintain connections and negotiate barriers posed by distance and time. This phenomenon can be observed in the cases of Maina, a forty five year old Kenyan man and Pauline a thirty five year old Tanzania woman both of whom are doctoral students in the faculty of Humanities.

Maina highlights the role of communication technology in conducting the relationship with his family transnationally. He recalls that when his father went abroad in the seventies they had to wait for weeks before they could receive any mail from him. In his case however, he can

communicate with his family daily on mundane as well as key issues via e-mail, cell phone and skype. Through these forms of communication technology Maina coordinates his business interests with his wife back in Kenya while he is in South Africa. He has also entrusted his mother with some of the family businesses. As a result of this Maina expresses that borders are artificial and that the only thing absent in his family set up is physical contact. He further says that his family probably appreciates him more because they do not see him often. Maina appears to concur with researchers such as Baldassar (2008), Castro and Gonzalez (2009), and Vertovec (2004) who advance that information communication technologies can connect family members in a way that facilitates virtual closeness.

Pauline also appears to concur with this notion by expressing that communication with her husband who is currently working in Sudan has improved greatly. She says that her husband was not open while they were living together in the same space in Tanzania and would only tell her what he felt was necessary for her to know while keeping some personal information to himself. For instance Pauline's husband would not disclose to her his financial status as well his concerns about his career. He felt that it was not proper for a husband to share such information with his wife. This was frustrating to Pauline who preferred an open style of communication. Pauline's husband displays what Tannen (1990) characterises as 'report talk' associated with 'public' speech contexts, a masculine communication style. This is in contrast with 'rapport talk' which is associated with 'private' speech contexts a feminine communication style which Pauline seems to resonate with. Being in different countries and conducting their relationship transnationally had however served to change their communication dynamic. Pauline advanced that her husband, who is in Sudan while she is in South Africa, had become more open and expressive communicating with her almost daily via *Skype* and *Facebook.* This mode of communication extends to their ten year old daughter who lives with their relatives in Tanzania.

From these examples it appears that information communication technologies can be used to connect thus challenging the notion that constant physical presence is the only way one can maintain family relations. Whereas these technologies do not replace face to face interactions, they provide new ways of maintaining family relations transcending geographical proximity and hence creating 'virtual co presence' (see Horst & Miller 2006) where the

real and virtual are integrated in the lives of these families. Of great significance however is the kind of impact that this spatial arrangement has on gender role renegotiation within the transnational family.

Gender Dynamics in Transnational Spousal Relations

The transnational space is a site which provides migrants with opportunities for exploring and redefining their ideas, perceptions and understanding of gender roles and expectations. Gender roles refer to behaviours, expectations and role sets defined by society as masculine or feminine. These behaviours consist of personality aspects such as aggressiveness and gentleness and social roles such as domestic roles, conjugal roles and parenting roles (Pleck 1981). Sociocultural norms that prescribe what men and women should or should not do are inculcated through the process of socialisation. Within the transnational space, circumstances of necessity and opportunity may force a shift of traditional gender roles for immigrants. The reorientation as a result of spatially fractured family arrangements impacts on the division of labour within the household, the husband-wife relationship and the parent- child relationship.

As a result of migration some men migrants assume some traditional gender roles such as cooking while women take over tasks previously performed by their husbands. This kind of shift highlights the gendered nature of work that might have otherwise been considered natural. This can be observed in the case of Phillip a thirty four year old man in his final year of his doctoral degree in Culture and Media studies whose wife remains in Zimbabwe. Phillip advances that since coming to South Africa he has changed his view on gender roles and he has embraced some female traditional gender roles. For example, in South Africa he has learnt how to cook a task which he never used to perform in Zimbabwe and one that men from his community are discouraged from carrying out. However after interacting with various people from diverse cultures in South Africa and observing how they handled food, Phillip said that he has become a very good cook and he even surprised his wife with his culinary skills when he visited his home in Zimbabwe. He has also further discouraged his wife from playing the subservient role of serving food to guests and instituted the practice of guests serving themselves while visiting his family. Phillip

however said that women should not abdicate the cooking role by saying that gender equality did not mean that women should not cook but that men must also learn how to cook. This position was a reaction to the pervasive perception that embracing gender equality implied that women 'abdicate' their designated gender role of cooking.

The process of negotiating their relationship transnationally has also led to Phillip's wife taking over the roles that he used to perform while he was in Zimbabwe. Prior to his coming he would consult his wife on major family decisions but would make the final decision himself. Since moving to South Africa he entrusts his wife with decision-making and has realised that she executes tasks previously assigned to him them more effectively in comparison to him. For this reason he said he had come to respect her much more and now regards her as an equal and in some cases superior to him. This change of attitude was encapsulated in the following relevant statement:

> I have changed in the way I view gender roles because my coming here (South Africa) made my wife take over the roles I used to play such as taking care of my parents and other roles 100%. We could consult but I made a choice to let her take control and I have come to see that she has a lot of potential. It is not that I thought that she could not do it but I have come to see that she has certain qualities. So in a sense my view of women has changed. As I was growing up my father used to tell me that women are more intelligent than men and coming here has proven that to be true. My wife as so much potential, for example when I go home I find that she has initiated some projects and I just let her continue with them without my interference because she can do it better than me. Sometimes the workers come to ask me for something and I tell them to go ask my wife and they do not understand why. I would say that we now treat each other as equals. It is not that I never used to treat her like an equal but I used to find myself more equal than her. We are now treating each other like colleagues; we consult on a lot of issues. Sometimes she takes a decision without consulting me for example this time I went home and found out that she had decided to make a granary without asking me whereas if I was there she would have consulted me or listened to me if I told her that we should not

construct it. I however told her specifically not to ask me and when she would sometimes ask me and I would not answer. She then has to make the decisions and hence I respect her more (Phillip Zimbabwe).

Phillip continues to say that his wife currently manages all their resources including paying the farm workers and sending him money on a monthly basis. The fact that he trusts his wife with the family resources including his salary surprises many men in his community who perceive him as having abandoned traditional gender roles as a result of becoming too 'westernised' on account of his education and coming to South Africa. His community members further view him as having allowed himself to be dominated by his wife since he now spends time in the kitchen with his wife and cooks with her whenever he is in Zimbabwe. Phillip however explained that he would not relent on his newly acquired perspective on gender roles.

Interestingly, whereas Philip felt that the transnational space had given his wife room to be involved in management of family resources, his wife while on a visit to South Africa expressed that he had 'absconded' family responsibilities especially raising the children. It then appears that while Phillip respects his wife's abilities more and she on her part enjoys more autonomy, the transnational negotiation has left her with the greater responsibility of raising their children. While women may be celebrated for effectively managing households, it raises the question as to whether this is empowering or it is a form of re-constituted subordination. It is significant to note that Phillip's wife had to postpone furthering her education so that she could take care of the children while Phillip pursued his doctoral studies in another country.

Jasper a thirty nine year old man from Botswana taking his Masters in Music expressed that though the transnational space had brought about a shift in the gender role dynamic in his family the change was temporary unlike in Phillip's case. Within the transnational space, Jimmy has also found himself having to cook a task he did not have to perform while back home in Botswana. Upon returning home however, Jasper intended to revert to traditional gender roles as elucidated below:

Actually it is not a question of changing because if you change it

means forever but what I have done is to alter my personality and behavior to suit the situation while I am here. Back home as a man I do not have to cook because according to my culture that is the women's department but here I find myself cooking washing for myself. When I go home I adjust back to the situation because there are some gender role expectations that I am expected to fulfill. It will be funny for the wife to see me taking over her roles. Okay, these days we know that there are some changes but you can only assist when you are asked and when it is necessary but you cannot take over the women's department. I have to be careful and that is why I say I have not changed but I have adjusted to the situation to survive so to speak (Jasper, Botswana).

Jasper continued to hold onto traditional gender roles and engaged in what I would call *situational transformation* in order to negotiate his current circumstances without the intention of changing completely. In so doing, Jasper displays the dialectic between maintaining traditional gender roles and addressing necessity. Even while at home in Botswana, Jasper invokes culture and tradition to legitimise his minimal support of his wife in household chores since culturally, household chores are perceived to be a woman's responsibility and he could only assist his wife but not 'take over her role'. Interestingly, Japser advances that men and women are the same in terms of thinking and performance in their academic pursuits and should be accorded equal opportunities in terms of education. At the household level however, he maintains that gender difference should be reinforced because traditional gender roles bring a semblance of order in the household.

According to Jasper ambiguity in terms of gender roles or reconstructing gender roles would lead to chaos in society. Even though at some point Jasper acknowledges the unjust dual work role for women, that is at the work place and at home, his greatest concern is the loss of power on men's part if gender roles are to be re-structured. Jasper is clearly opposed to restructuring of gender roles which he construes as loss of power for men. Men such as Jasper are opposed to gender equality because for them it implies the loss of the patriarchal dividend which Connell (2002) defines as the benefit to men as group from maintaining an unequal gender order. This benefit includes economic advantage, prestige, authority and access to

institutional power among others. The patriarchal dividend is universally distributed among men though this distribution is not uniform but is mediated by economic class, social status, race, ethnicity, sexuality and age.

Women migrants also gave accounts depicting the dialectic between maintaining traditional gender roles based on their culture and modern roles occasioned by their western education. Mariam a forty four year old lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam pursuing her doctorate in History highlighted that her coming to South Africa had provided her with an opportunity to inspire other women to fund their own education rather than rely on government support. Mariam had accumulated some savings and with additional financial assistance from her husband she was able to fund her studies. She asserted that women should aspire to advance in their studies since they were capable of performing much better than men.

> Most of the women in Zanzibar for a long time did not think that it is okay to pay for their own studies. They think the work of educating them belongs to the government but when they saw me going to pay for myself at the university level they asked themselves, 'Why not pay for myself?' They are confident of themselves now and as I said before our island is very small and a lot of people know that I am paying for myself. I think for me I can say that women can do as much or much better than men. So women should continue with their studies. What can be helpful for a family woman it can help if they plan together and even apply to go and study together (Mariam, Tanzania).

Though Mariam expresses that the best case scenario is for spouses make plans for study migration together, she did not hesitate to leave her husband and four children in Tanzania while she pursued her doctoral studies in South Africa. On negotiating between her educational achievements and traditional gender roles, Mariam maintained that upon her return to Tanzania she would still carry out her traditionally prescribed gender roles while at home. While Mariam in line with her belief that women should pursue education to the highest level has pursued her doctoral studies, she is quick to assert that education has not changed her and that she still carries out her traditionally

prescribed gender roles while at home. Ngcongo (1993) advances that African women experience a dilemma as a result of the cultural upbringing of an ideal of a 'good' African woman who is subservient to male authority and is a home maker versus being an ambitious, independent career woman as a result of western education.

The perception of educated women as strong-headed and independent minded and the possible consequences of being alienated in a patriarchal society maybe a contributing factor to Mariam's assertion that education has not changed her much. Though Mariam upholds traditional gender roles, in practice she knows that she cannot meet the requirements of a demanding career and of homemaking at the same time and so she is willing to delegate the latter to paid help. Mariam is also being strategic in not depicting herself as not having changed as a result of her education because in this way she can be able to interact with her research participants in the rural areas for purposes of data collection. Mariam engages in traditional gender roles in a way to portray herself in positive light with the people in her community but she does not let this interfere with her career aspirations.

Transnational Parenting

According to Pribilsky (2004), it is not only relations between husband and wife that change when negotiated transnationally but parental relationships to children are also altered. Transnational parenting is however gendered in the sense that society's treatment of transnational mothers and fathers varies to a large extent. As Pribilsky (2004) points out, since fathers are expected to be absent, their migration abroad is in many ways a continuation of their absentee role. The independent migration of women in pursuit of further studies however goes against the norm of the present mother, domesticity and passivity. The following narrations show the experiences faced by both men and women in negotiation their parental roles transnationally.

Jasper, whose views as earlier mentioned has changed out of necessity rather than actual transformation, expressed that his role as a decision maker and father to his son had been adversely affected. This in turn affected his son's development. Jasper was concerned that his son would not grow up in the way he wanted while he was away and he further expressed

doubt that his wife would raise him properly. Jasper said that though he would phone his wife in Botswana and delegate his decision making role to her, he preferred to be there in person to make decisions especially those one's that concerned his son. Unlike Phillip who had grown to trust his wife's capabilities, Jasper felt that his wife could not cope with the decision-making and childcare responsibilities in his absence.

Maina on the other hand asserted that his wife carried out the role of a disciplinarian and was even more of one than Maina since she was the one who spent more time with the children. This is despite the fact that Maina had undergone circumcision, a traditional rite of passage to adulthood, and was appointed a junior elder in his *Kikuyu* community which served to affirm his position as the head of his family. As the family head he was supposed to be the disciplinarian but the transnational negotiations had led to his wife carrying out that responsibility. While Maina drew from his ethnic identity in terms of affirming his masculinity in the transnational space he also in some cases presented himself as transcending traditional gender roles within the same space. Maina consequently presented himself as a bearer of a hybrid identity of oppositional discourses of modernity and tradition.

Purity a forty five year old student from Malawi and currently pursuing her Masters in nursing opined that as a result of having a first degree she was empowered enough as a woman to make the decision to come to South Africa. She had previously accompanied her husband to the United Kingdom where he had gone to pursue his Masters degree. She now felt that it was her husband's turn to offer her support in terms of her pursuit for further education. Purity also expressed that as an empowered woman she could not just depend on her husband but she needed to be able to fend for her family incase anything happened to her husband. With a higher level of education, she felt that she could be able to get well paid employment and take better care of her family. Dei (1994) and Pellow (1997) attest to the fact that having access to money and complete control over it is very important because it contributes to a woman's empowerment. Education is therefore seen as a cornerstone of women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to opportunities, to challenge their traditional roles and to change their lives. This educational empowerment and hence economic empowerment extends the role of a mother from just being a nurturer to being a provider previously considered a man's responsibility.

On conducting her family relationship transnationally, Purity highlighted that though the transnational space had brought about reversal of roles with her husband being the children's caregiver while she pursued further education, she expressed that she felt part of the home when her husband consulted her on the phone concerning the children's medication. It is significant to note that she highlighted that her husband consulted her on matters to do with children health while she did not mention other family issues they may have consulted on. It was possibly her way of affirming her identity as a mother even though she was in another country and away from her children. The fact that she did so transnationally however denoted a different kind of mothering known as *transnational mothering*.

Sylvia a thirty two year old woman from Uganda who came to South Africa to pursue her doctorate in Community development explained that her relationship with her husband had fallen apart though she did not attribute this to her coming to South Africa. There had been indications that it would happen even before she came to South Africa. It appears that her partner may not have been as supportive of her as she was of him in terms of their individual career aspirations. She first came to pursue her doctoral studies while she was eight months pregnant with her second child leaving her first born and husband in Uganda. She had to exercise great resolve in holding on to her decision to come to South Africa despite discouragement from friends and some family members. She however expressed that her mind was resolute with or without her husband's support. Sylvia asserted that the transnational space has enabled her to detach from the various roles she played back home as a wife and a mother. She described her life in Uganda in the following manner:

> At home things become roller coaster, just spinning, you have children, and you have a man, a job and other community obligations. You are like a spinning machine, you never stop to think about your life but when you step out of that space you are like wow. I want to be my person apart from a mother and a wife then this fulfillment can filter into other areas of my life. Of course this takes a lot of time away from my children but it has been good for me. A stressed mother near children is not good. I do not want to look at my child and say 'If only I did not have you I would have achieved so

much'. I would like to say 'Yes I had you but look at what I have achieved'. My child should not have a reason not to achieve because I have achieved even after having them' (Sylvia, Uganda).

Coming to South Africa had given Sylvia space to disengage from familial obligations and to focus on her own career and the direction she would like her life to take. She expressed that though this was selfish she had decided to live her life on her own terms and not according to other people's expectations. Other people such as members of her community and her relatives would then have to accept her on her own terms and not the other way round. Though Sylvia described her decision as selfish, a quality contrary to the traditional definition of a good mother which emphasises self-sacrifice, she does not detach herself from her role as a mother. She expresses that being selfish is beneficial in the sense that her children would be proud to have a mother who had attained her level of education as a role model. Sylvia like Purity also depicts a kind of *transnational mothering*.

From the above, the transnational students in negotiating between challenging and reinforcing existing gender relations ended up acquiring new forms of gendered identities. Ojong (2005) notes that the freedom of constructing new identities is made possible by the less rigidly defined social and cultural conditions these students encounter in post- apartheid South Africa. From the findings of the study it can be observed that as the foreign African students encounter multiple levels and forms of social and cultural contradictions which act to challenge, shape and transform their ideas, thoughts and sense of self they end up brokering new gender identities. Gender identity and relations are then framed as a social and cultural constructions which are negotiated through social behaviour and performance (see Butler 2001, Freeman and McElhinny 2001). The struggle and tension between challenging existing notions of gender on the one hand and the reinforcing the same on the other hand ended up enabling the transnational foreign African student to acquire the mark of cultural hybridity thus brokering new gender identities. Gender identity then as opposed to being a fixed identity can be observed to be a fluid and contextualised process of 'unfolding' and constant 'reconstitution' (Hall 1996).

Conclusion

This paper set out to interrogate the politics of relocation on conducting family across transnational space and the impact on gender relations and identities by examining how foreign students of African origin were interpreting and re defining their gender roles and expectations in a new cultural space. The paper examined the renegotiation at various levels namely; communication, household division of labour, spousal relations and parenting. This paper has also examined the possibilities and constraints occasioned by these negotiations.

By the using information communication technologies, these transnational families demonstrated new ways of doing family without actually being physically present but by being virtually present. This kind of negotiation served to alter a gendered communication dynamic for instance with men who may have been previously closed in communication style opening up to their partners so as to accommodate the temporal spatial arrangement. The transnational space provided an opportunity for both men and women to traverse gender roles with men ending up performing traditional female gender roles such as cooking and childcare while women's role in decision–making home became much more valued in some cases. The above mentioned experiences illustrate cases in which traditional gender roles have somewhat been reconfigured as a result of conducting family relationships within the transnational space.

Though the foreign African women students in this study still upheld some traditional notions of gender roles, the fact that these women have migrated to South Africa in pursuit of education autonomously and were conducting family relationships across transnational space indicated that they were traversing gender roles and creating new ways of doing gender. For instance the concept of mothering had undergone considerable change in the context of transnationalism where women could mother across transnational space creating a type of *transnational mothering.* Westwood and Phizackelea (2000) advance that the subjective mark of a transnational would be cultural hybridity that is the ways in which transnationals challenge the notion of a fixed identity. From the narrations of these women, one can observe a hybrid of gender identities in one person such as a *mother, a home maker, a leader, a professional, risk taker and independent minded*.

Connell (2002) contends that a great majority of people combine

both masculine and feminine characteristics in varying blends rather than being all one or another. Thorne (1993) in resonance observes that gender difference is situational and that it is created in some situations and ignored or over ridden in others. As can be observed in the foreign African migrant students' gender difference was least emphasised in the area of educational attainment with both men and women expressing that women were as intelligent as men and were as capable as men if not more capable. Connell (2002) further advances that men and women display similar traits but that it is not an individual decision, it is socially regulated. In this study, it is at the household level where gender difference was emphasised though the transnational negotiations provided a space for the reconfiguring of gender roles and relations.

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'Home is where the heart is':
Negotiating the Construction of Identity for Xhosa Women Migrants in
Thokoza Hostel, Durban, circa 1985

Gina Buijs

Abstract

This paper is a historical case study of Xhosa women migrants, mainly from the eastern part of the former 'homeland' of Transkei, who had moved to Durban in search of work and who found a refuge at the only hostel for African women in Durban, Thokoza. Various studies have been written of black men's lives in hostels in apartheid South Africa but little of the lives of female hostel residents who were migrants.

The fieldwork for this paper was undertaken in 1984 and 1985 as part of a larger project which focused on migrant agricultural workers who came from Pondoland to the sugar cane fields of Natal to eke out a living in the absence of relatives who could provide for them in Transkei (see Buijs 1993). In 2008 I moved to Mthatha and revisited the earlier material I had collected which has resulted in this paper.

The paper examines firstly the reasons why these women were forced to leave their homes, as none said it was by choice and their negotiation of a Xhosa identity in the hostel in the context of the apartheid reification of ethnicity. While the mid-1980s were the height of what is known as 'grand apartheid' with constant regulation of movement for African women by officials of the regime, it was also a time of extreme poverty in the rural 'homelands' where peasant farming was debilitated by drought and the death of livestock. For these women whose adult men folk had either died or deserted them, even when sons had grown up mothers placed little or no reliance on assistance from them. Despite the absence of

this assistance from men, the women insisted on the importance of their ties to their rural birth homes and the remittances they sent from their meagre incomes for their homesteads to be looked after, elderly relatives cared for and school fees paid.

The second part of the paper examines the social and cultural divisions among the hostel residents, among them those based on age (post-menopausal women as opposed to younger, sexually active women), divisions based on ethnic origin (mostly between Zulu and Xhosa women who formed the two main groups) and divisions based on different levels of education, although most of the hostel residents worked as domestic servants for white families in the middle class English speaking suburbs of Durban and relatively few were hawkers of traditionally brewed beer or bead sellers. Despite having left their rural homes by necessity and not through choice, to earn a living in an urban area, most of the women interviewed claimed a strong attachment to their rural home and said they intended to retire there 'one day'. This, despite many being long past retirement age and with few or no family members to take care of them in the rural areas. 'Home' therefore became effectively the hostel surroundings, and 'family' the fellow residents who collected money to bury deceased hostel dwellers when family members from the rural areas failed to turn up to collect the bodies and who also cared for sick residents who were sometimes bedridden. The rural birthplace became a source of proclaimed identity rather than a reality to which any of the women would return.

Keywords: Xhosa, women, migrants

Introduction

Most of the literature dealing with migrants from Transkei during and before the apartheid era has been mainly concerned with men (cf. Mayer *et al.* 1981) and has given the impression that the wives, sisters and daughters of these men remained behind in the countryside, living presumably mainly on the remittances sent to their rural homes by their migrant kin. However, research has shown that while there were 349,026 male migrants from Transkei in 1983 there were also 50,476 female migrants, a sizeable

proportion. Leslie Bank (1995) notes that research in the 1990s by Moodie and Ndatshe (1992) and Saphire (1992) highlighted the collapse of rural production in the Transkei in the late 1980s following extensive droughts which killed off livestock and prevented the harvesting of crops. These droughts, and the increasing failure of male kin to send remittances drove rural women to urban areas; the Witwatersrand, Cape Town, and in the context of this paper, urban Natal, namely Durban.

In the final years of apartheid African women from the Bantustans such as Ciskei and Transkei formed a significant proportion of those migrating elsewhere in South Africa in search of a livelihood. In an earlier article (Buijs 1993) I discussed the plight of a number of Transkeian women employed as agricultural labourers in the then Natal province. In this paper I discuss women who managed to find employment in Durban and accommodation at the largest hostel for African women, located in a central part of the city, called Thokoza. Among the issues I investigated were the reasons why the women left their rural homes (for instance, widowhood, the need to provide for dependents) and why they chose to come to Durban as opposed to other possible destinations, their methods of finding employment and accommodation in the city. It is important to remember that at this time in the history of South Africa the infamous influx control regulations made such women 'foreigners' without an automatic right to live and work in the city, and thus much of their time was taken up with attempts to either circumvent the regulations or obtain the much coveted Section 10 endorsement on their identity documents which allowed them to live and change jobs in the city. Those without a Section 10 endorsement had to work for one employer for an uninterrupted period for ten years before applying for the endorsement. The apartheid authorities spent much time and effort attempting to 'endorse out' men and women and send them back to the homelands before the ten year time limit elapsed. Once 'endorsed out' a returnee had to begin the ten year period of working for one employer all over again.

Methodology

I was introduced to the women I interviewed at Thokoza Hostel through a fellow staff member at the University of Natal who herself lived in the

hostel. Dumisani R. (not her real name) and I would arrive at Thokoza at about 5.30 pm, when most residents had returned from work. Dumisani then approached those women she was acquainted with (she was on the residents' committee and thus well known to most women living in the hostel) who were from the Transkei and asked if they would agree to being interviewed. In most cases Dumisani acted as interpreter although most of the women understood English and could speak it well. My sample was limited by the exigencies of time and finance available and thus could not claim to be representative of the approximately 30% of the hostel population who were from the Transkei. The sample was also opportunistic since it was composed of women who happened to be in the hostel at the time I was there.

The average age of the women interviewed was 48.3 years, the eldest being a widow of 85 and the youngest an unmarried woman of 28. 45% of the women were widows while another 45% had never married. Only 5% were married at the time of the interview and only 10% had never borne children. The majority of these women, therefore, had no formal links to a man through marriage and most had no informal ties women, 70% had passed Standard Six or a higher grade, and 25% had passed Standard Eight or Nine, the equivalent of the old Junior Certificate which allowed holders to train as teachers or nurses. Only 5% had no formal education at all and only 20% had passed Standards Two or Three, the equivalent of four years of primary schooling. These percentages are comparable to those found by Behardien, Lehulere and Shaw (1984) where a majority of the 104 domestic workers in their Western Cape sample had more than six years of schooling. The women I interviewed were therefore comparatively well-educated compared to male migrant workers from the same areas of eastern Transkei (see Beinart 1993 for an overview of the lack of formal education of most male migrants). Their ability to earn an income in the city meant that they were able to contribute to the rural ideal of 'building the homestead' by sending regular remittances to support children or the elderly or for ploughing or other agricultural expenses. By supporting the homestead in this way, the women reinforced a claim to be accepted, responsible members of the community, albeit more absent than present. It was this contribution that allowed the women to speak of the importance to them of 'home' and their homesteads, with the connotations of personhood and ethnicity which being a member of the extended family or *umzi* contained (McAllister 1993).

Leaving Home

Leaving Transkei was always a matter of necessity, according to my interviewees (cf. Cock 1980), usually precipitated by a crisis such as the death of the breadwinner, whether husband or father. Sarah H. aged 45, was left without any means of support when her husband died suddenly in 1970. Typically, when a crisis or death occurred in a family forcing a woman to migrate in search of work, employment was found in the first instance through the recommendation of a kin member who was already working in the city. Sarah said she decided to come to Durban to look for work as it was the nearest large urban centre to her home in Umzimkulu (about 200 kms away) and her husband's uncle's wife was working in Durban at the time 'so she brought me to Durban'. This relative also obtained a job as a domestic worker for Sarah. The necessity of having a kin member who could 'smooth the path' for the incoming migrant was because Section 10 of the Bantu Areas Consolidation Act made it illegal for African women to enter so-called 'white areas' to look for employment. Job seekers who wandered the streets of cities in search of work were in danger of being rounded up by Bantu Affairs officials and 'endorsed out' or sent back to the homelands. It thus became important for job seekers to have someone in town who could recommend them to prospective employers and thus circumvent the apartheid regulations.

Sometimes parents were able to offer a widowed daughter a home when her husband died, but a number of women were forced to move out of the parental home when their parents in turn passed on. Amy M's husband died when her son was six years old and she returned to her parents' home. She came to Durban in 1956 after her father died. 'There was no one at home to look after my child and myself' she said. 'My brothers had no means of helping me, they had their own families to support'. It would appear that the position of sister in a married brother's home is an unenviable one, and that women prefer to migrate rather than live with a brother and his wife, or are asked to leave.

While in the late 19th and early 20th centuries the Transkei was regarded as a bountiful arable and pastoral farming area, supporting many African peasant families who were able to sell surplus produce and earn a reasonable livelihood (Bundy 1979) by the 1980s the proclamation of the Transkei and Ciskei as labour reserves or 'homelands' by the apartheid

regime had resulted for a majority of their inhabitants in near famine conditions exacerbated by drought and the death of livestock. Greenberg notes (2003:114) that lack of land and resources did not even allow agricultural production in the Bantustans to meet subsistence requirements.

The collapse of rural farming contributed to the inability of extended families to provide for family members who had fallen on hard times as tradition dictated should be the practice. Maria M never married and after passing Standard Eight at a government school in Tsolo, taught privately for two years. She came to Durban at the suggestion of a cousin after her parents died. In this way, the cousin said, she would not have to embarrass her married brothers by asking for support. Gloria Q. was able to live with her two illegitimate children at her parents' home in Libode until her children reached school going age when she was forced to migrate to Durban to earn cash to pay for school fees, books and uniforms.

In some cases, death forcing migration was repeated in the following generation. Evelyn M was 60 years of age at the time I interviewed her in 1985. After her husband died, leaving her with one daughter, a cousin found her a job as a domestic worker with an Indian family in Durban. She left her daughter to be brought up by relatives in the Transkei. The daughter married and had three children. In 1985 the daughter's husband died and she in her turn was forced to leave her children with an aunt and come to Durban where she worked as an unregistered domestic worker for an African family in the Umlazi township. Evelyn said her daughter's late husband's family are all dead and thus cannot assist in caring for the children.

Some women were supporting grandchildren in the Transkei when their own children were unable to do so. Beauty M was 70 in 1985. She came to Durban in 1950 after her husband died in order to support her children who were left behind in Transkei. One of her sons (who has since died) had four children, while another son became ill and thus unable to work. Beauty said she was therefore paying for the education of six grandchildren in the Transkei. Her daughters-in-law were unemployed. Beauty's history suggests that those women who obtained paid employment in the city were morally bound to support kin in the rural areas who could not survive on their own. Many of the women I interviewed had children who were unable to find any sort of paid work when they left school, a situation that is unchanged today thirty years later. Caroline H said her eldest son, aged 25, could not find

work because he was paralysed as a result of a fight and did not receive a disability payment. Her second son, aged 19, had visited Durban to look for work but because he did not have any 'papers' (identity documents) he was forced to return to Transkei. The R20 or R30 which Caroline managed to send home each month out of her salary of R50 went to support her two sons and a daughter who was still at school. Ina S. aged 62 supported her aged mother, her own daughter and three grandchildren in the Transkei. She claimed to send between R60 and R100 of her R118 monthly salary back to the family in Transkei each month. Ina's daughter, aged 36, looked after her grandmother and her own children. She was unable to be registered as a worker in the city and therefore the burden fell on Ina who was registered because she had been working in the city since 1956 when her husband died. A number of women in my sample were prepared to take the risk of being fined or imprisoned and sent back to Transkei after coming to Durban and working illegally. There seemed no other way to prevent their families from starving in the rural areas.

Some women came to Durban without any helping hand. Goodness Q said she had no relatives or friends in Durban but decided it was cheaper to come to Durban than migrate elsewhere when she was forced to leave Transkei. When she arrived she said she 'looked for Indian families for work'. She had heard 'there is work among Indians. They take anyone' (meaning unregistered work seekers) but this comes at a cost, 'they can pay less if we are not registered'. An unregistered domestic worker was less likely to leave an employer if she could not find work legally elsewhere and this led to frequent exploitation with some women willing to work for very low wages (R50 per month in 1985) because they felt they had no alternative. Living conditions for these women were also harsh. Harriet M lived in her employer's flat for ten years, sleeping in the kitchen, until she was able to be registered and to move to Thokoza hostel, not far from her place of work.

While most of the women interviewed had little or no assistance from male kin or boyfriends but in turn looked after men, some of the younger women in the sample were able to get work in the city through male contacts. Veronica M came to work in Durban with her boyfriend in 1980 in order to support her small children in Transkei. She and her boyfriend initially stayed with friends in the large township of Kwa-Mashu outside Durban and Veronica worked for a Coloured family in the nearby Coloured

township of Newlands East. When the boyfriend was forced to leave the household 'because he wasn't working' Veronica managed to find lodgings with an *induna* (Zulu headman) who found her a job working at a beachfront hotel in Durban. The hotel manager wrote a letter to the Thokoza hostel management enabling Veronica to get accommodation there, much nearer to her work than Kwa-Mashu. Veronica and other mostly younger women, who managed to find work as cleaners or tea-makers in businesses were better paid and had shorter working hours than those who worked as domestics for white families.

Most of the women interviewed displayed considerable resourcefulness and initiative in their efforts to find work in the city. Domestic work was (and is) notoriously badly paid (Cock 1980:28) but there were few alternatives available to black women who, under apartheid laws, were classed as foreigners in South Africa because they were born in labour reserves designated as 'homelands' for African people which were granted a spurious 'independence'.

One alternative which some women tried was work as a nurse aide. Mary H, aged 57, decided after 15 years of working as a domestic helper for a white family to train as a nurse aide. She applied to the St John Ambulance society and completed her training while working at a nursing home for the elderly. Mary said that while her pay at the nursing home used to be good in comparison with domestic service, it was less so with the present high rate of inflation. Mary felt that working conditions for nurse aides were poor, and said she might have to work for 14 days continuously in order to get one day off and that she was not given any food at work. Dorcas, who trained as an enrolled nurse in the Transkei, came to Durban because of the appallingly low wages paid in Transkei (only two or three rands a month in 1960). Dorcas worked at a hospital in Durban and also at a centre for mentally handicapped children but left in 1983 'because there was no free time', only Fridays and the nursing assistants were refused a free weekend. Significantly, Dorcas said nursing was not something she chose to do, it was a means of earning a living.

Cock (1980:307) described domestic service as a 'strategy of survival' for her informants in the Eastern Cape, 'they are propelled into domestic service in order to support themselves and their families'. Yet she also writes that 'push and pull factors are closely intertwined' and that

among the 'pull' factors 'the most obvious are the opportunities for earning money in towns, and a desire for a degree of independence and prestige not available in the rural context'. The desire for independence, financial or otherwise was not mentioned by women I interviewed. None said she had come to Durban willingly. A similar attitude is evinced by migrant women elsewhere in Africa. For instance, Bryceson (1985:144) writing about Tanzanian migrant women says 'events of a personal nature in the lives of women migrants, reinforced by social pressures within the village, provided the final impetus'.

Although only 5% of the women in my sample were married at the time of the interviews, 90% had children and a number had grandchildren. These family members had to be left behind in Transkei in almost all cases and could only be visited during the annual holiday of a few weeks around Christmas time. 'I like Transkei but I have to come here, they got no work there, nothing' was a typical response to the question whether the interviewee preferred living in Transkei to living in Durban. Another respondent said she could only go 'home' when her youngest child was able to work, 'otherwise there is no one to support the others'. Several respondents made remarks such as 'I don't know when I will go back (permanently) but I want to go'. However, Bank's research in East London among male migrants revealed that those migrants who were most vociferous about wanting to return permanently to their rural homes were in fact the least likely to do so and often those who returned least often on visits. 'Home' was a marker of ethnic identity, a reference point of who one was, rather than a realistic point of return.

The link with the rural home was mainly made by my women interviewees through the money they remitted to Transkei. In most cases, but not all, the monthly sum was intended to pay school fees or buy food and clothes for children, grandchildren or siblings' children. In some cases elderly parents were also supported. Again, this appears to be the case elsewhere in Africa. Bryceson writes that in Tanzania, 'in the case of the death of a parent, especially a father, responsibility is thrown on the adult offspring to ensure the economic well-being of a widowed parent … daughters as well as sons are solicited by their parents' (1985:144). Eva S. aged 54, came to Durban after her father died initially to earn money to support her mother. Her elder brother was disabled and unable to work while

the younger brother had absconded and the family did not know his whereabouts. During her stay in Durban Eva acquired a boyfriend, a Xhosa man, by whom she had three children. However, he later deserted her, 'he just ran away' as she put it. Thus even after Eva's mother died she was forced to continue to work in Durban to support her children who were being brought up at her home in Mount Fletcher. Eva found a woman there to care for the children, 'not a relative but someone who was living at the family homestead as part of the family'. Eva's two elder children passed Matric and trained as teachers in Mount Fletcher, the youngest is still at school. Although not obliged to send as much money home now as formerly, Eva said she still does so when it is necessary 'for instance when they are ploughing'. Bank (1995) noted that for migrants with stable jobs in East London, being able to contribute to a ploughing team in the rural area was an indicator of commitment to the rural extended family more than about the extent of the migrant's resources, 'those who claimed that they hired tractors (or had stopped ploughing altogether) usually did not visit their homes very frequently'.

Despite the many years of working in Durban, 95% of the women I interviewed said they intended returning to their homes in Transkei at some unspecified future date – 'when I get a pension' or 'when my children are working'. It was apparent, however, that residents of Thokoza did not retire to Transkei but ended their lives in Durban.

Dumisani confirmed that the women finally returned to Transkei only for burial 'their relatives always come to collect them' she said. The women were reluctant to admit that their position as elderly women in a rural homestead would be more precarious than at the hostel in Durban. Dumisani noted that in the rural areas, the elderly have to pay others to collect firewood and water for them when they can no longer do so themselves. Phumeza, a married woman living in a rural part of Transkei had this to say when interviewed by Leslie Bank in 1994:

> I can forget the rural areas. If it was my choice I would sell the livestock and give up the homestead for a life in the city. There is always a shortage of food in the rural areas. There is nothing a woman can do except send requests to her husband and hope that he will respond. It is truly a miserable life.

David Coplan writing of Basotho migrants notes that upon marriage a woman passes from the jural control of her father to that of her husband or agnates. While a man's identity derives from the chief who controls the land where he homesteads, as Chief Jobo said in 1873 'a woman has no chief but her husband' (Duncan 1960:5, quoted in Coplan 1994). Similar sentiments were expressed by Pondo king Ndamase Ndamase at his wedding in September, 2011 'I love my wife very much but MaDosini ought to know that here there is no democracy. As a man I am the head of the family and my wife is to play a supporting role'[1] Coplan comments that while to Basotho men migration meant wage bondage, to a woman paradoxically South Africa represented something like freedom, ' … town is the only place where a woman's chief might be herself, rather than her husband' (1994:171).

The women I interviewed did not say that they could count on support from their children in their old age. Annie N was still working as a domestic at the age of 67 to support herself and a daughter still at school in Transkei. Her married son had supported her for three years some time before when she was ill and unable to work, but she said she would not automatically expect him to do so, although he does give her money if she asks for it.

Edna H, aged 50, was perhaps typical of these middle-aged women when she said 'I do intend to go home one day because I need my own house' but she was not sure if her children would support her. One was studying to become a lawyer, although she did not know where, and the other was a teacher. Out of her meagre earnings of R70 per month in 1985 Edna continued to send money home for food for her children in their holidays and she had paid for their education. Wages were so low in Transkei that even if an adult child did manage to find employment, the wage was often not enough to support a parent as well. Flora J was a widow of 59 with a son who worked at a general dealer's store at Bizana in Pondoland. From her monthly earnings of R120 Flora sent home R50 to an aunt whom she supported. She said she would prefer to live in Transkei but that there was no one there to support her and that she would have to continue working in Durban as long as she was physically able to do so.

Despite their apparent inability to retire to Transkei, most of the

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[1] *Daily Dispatch*, 5.9.11 p. 3.

women I spoke to did manage to spend their annual leave of two to three weeks there which was their main way of maintaining their links with their rural homes and families. Evelyn M, for instance, sent R60 each month to maintain her property at Qumbu. The money went towards paying for the dipping tank for the cattle, for hiring a tractor, for ploughing and for taxes. Evelyn said she owned four cows. Maria H said she sends between R100 and R50 each month out of her wages to her son in Lusikisiki to maintain her home there. Although she described her son as an assistant manager at a store in Lusikisiki, Maria did not expect him to support her if she went home and said she would apply for a disability pension, 'then I will go home, I like it better at home'.

Catherine Cross has suggested that agriculture in the homelands often acted as an emergency backstop for the rural household economy but that it was not a viable alternative to wage employment because of the high risk involved in the unpredictable environment. There was a relatively high demand for working capital, an irregular and inconvenient demand for labour, difficulty in marketing crops and unpredictable cyclical returns instead of a regular cash income. Cross commented 'even for a person with the necessary skills, either wage work or many forms of informal activity were seen as preferable to farming' (1985: 6). This comment is supported by Maria M's observation that she would like to be a hawker in Transkei when she got her pension and returned there. She felt that that would be a good way of making money to supplement her pension which was barely enough to live on.

While for most of the women interviewed their rural homes were viewed as 'safety-nets', they were clearly not a refuge they hoped to have to use. It was clear from the little they knew of their children's circumstances that they had not seen them recently or had rare contact with them and their real support lay with the women they worked and lived among in the city. At the same time, the Transkei was their birthplace and they were keen to impress on me that they thought of their rural homes as their only 'proper' home and felt they ought to be there, circumstances having propelled them to the city. These views were associated with the city being seen, even in 1985, as a potential place of moral ruin where young women from the countryside could easily be led astray and fall victim to men who would impregnate them and then disappear. Some of the women said they would not allow their

unmarried daughters to come to Durban, because the city was not a suitable place for unmarried girls.

Life in Thokoza Hostel

Fourie (1976: 55) noted that the older, more conservative women were more dependent on the hostel and its activities, than the younger women residents. In the case of women over 55 their ties with their rural homes had faded, and even when they had adult children they had to remain in the hostel as their children 'did not want them'. These women had either never married or were widowed. Thokoza was essential to their lives, and they found friends and entertainment mostly inside the hostel. Prayer meetings were held every night in the hostel, attended by the older residents, and there was also a branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) which taught members to cook and sew and also was engaged in fighting the Natal Code for African Women which aimed to force black women to carry the hated pass books.

My interviewees said that church attendance took up what little free time they had. Annie M said she attended Church of England services in Montclair, 'the same church as at home (in Transkei)'. Other denominations included Methodist, Roman Catholic, Baptist and Presbyterian. Such established or mainline churches have a long history in Transkei (cf. Mayer and Mayer 1961). Given the 'school' background and comparatively high level of education of the women in my sample *vis-à-vis* most domestic workers of the time, it is not surprising that the women maintained their church affiliation on moving to Durban. Sunday and weekday services provided an opportunity to meet friends in a congenial atmosphere while choral singing was considered an enjoyable recreational activity. Most of the women were also members of the various mother's unions, known as *manyano,* run by their churches and employers were expected to give their domestic workers Thursday afternoons off to attend these meetings. Only one woman interviewed was a member of a Zionist (syncretistic) church where services were held 'around the corner (from Thokoza) in the park', although Zionist churches are known to recruit their members from the poorest paid workers such as domestics (Kiernan 1976). There was also only one respondent who said she did not attend any church as she was 'red' or *iqaba.*

This designation was applied to Transkei men and women who rejected western ideology and education and who could be recognized by the red clay they used to smear on their faces and bodies. Clara N said neither she nor any of her five siblings was sent to school because her father disapproved of western education.

The companionship of friends met either through church or at the hostel was obviously very important to the women I interviewed who came from the Transkei. Only a few women who were under forty said they had boyfriends in Durban. A typical response from the older women was 'I don't have a boyfriend. I don't like them'. There was certainly an impression that sexual relations were inappropriate for older women but in almost all cases these women had been abandoned by the fathers of their children or widowed. They were therefore forced to become not only self-supporting financially but to support members of their own or extended families. The hardships and trauma suffered in their lives made them understandably wary of men and inclined to turn to women friends for emotional support and friendship. Ethnic affiliation did not seem to play a role in the choice of friends as a majority said they had both Xhosa and Zulu friends, although, as I describe later there were many examples of women stereotyping each other at the hostel recorded by Fourie.

Age was a different matter. Fourie described attending the annual Christmas party organized by the Matron and hostel committee each year. Only the older women, together with children who stayed in the hostel during the school holidays, took part in the singing and dancing. Fourie records (1977: 57)' Not many young women were present at the Christmas party, and none of them actively participated in it. Some said 'It's for the older people' and 'why are men not allowed?'' Younger women, under thirty, had a very different view of the hostel to the middle-aged residents. They spent a major part of their leisure time with their boyfriends, and since they were not allowed to bring the men to their hostel rooms, (men were allowed in the foyer area of the hostel and into the main lounge) they often slept with them in nearby Indian hotels, the boyfriend paying for the room. For these women, the hostel was only a place to keep their possessions, and do cooking and laundry.

The ability of my Xhosa informants to make friends with Zulu women may have been aided by common residence in Thokoza hostel. Fourie

records that in 1975 a third of the hostel residents were Xhosa speaking and two thirds Zulu (1977: 30). Thokoza is not only the only hostel for African women in the magisterial area of Durban, but its location within walking distance of the city centre, near Indian shops (which sold goods more cheaply than white owned ones) and close to a large vegetable market, made it a desirable place to stay for women who worked in the 'white' areas of Durban. Records suggest that Thokoza hostel was first occupied in 1927 and that it was built on the site of a school for African children run by St. Faith's Anglican Church.

Thokoza was not the original name of the hostel, which was the Native Women's Hostel. Fourie records that the matron at the time she conducted her interviews (and who had been matron for 25 years) encouraged residents to vote for a new name. Thokoza (meaning 'happiness') was chosen and submitted to the Durban Corporation. Thokoza was managed by the Durban Corporation for most of its history, although in 1984 it was administered by the Port Natal Bantu Affairs Administration Board.

Deborah Gaitskell, writing on church hostels for African women in Johannesburg between 1907 and 1970 (1979) notes that these hostels 'were in a sense attempts to set up Christian compounds for girls, centres of accommodation which would limit the free movement (especially at night) and supervise employment of African females, most of whom were domestic servants'. Key differences between these church hostels and those of the mine compounds were that the former were intent on providing not only safe accommodation but constructive use of leisure time under the supervision of a 'kindly Christian matron' so as to avoid the temptations of sexual corruption prevalent in the cities. These Christian hostels, replicated in Cape Town and Pretoria, aimed to assist in replacing African male domestic servants with females for white families. Accommodation in the hostels avoided the 'backyard shacks' which were believed to expose young girls from the countryside to the temptations of men and drink. These Christian hostels were modelled on the late Victorian 'Girls Friendly Society' in Britain which aimed to function as a domestic workers employment bureau in addition to keeping working class women 'off the street' (Harrison cited by Gaitskell 1977: 47). African leaders such as Sol Plaatje, responding to questionnaires regarding the 'Black Peril' of African men working in close proximity to white women responded by alleging that white women on

occasion assaulted black men 'There are more Potiphar's wives than we care to believe in Johannesburg tho' not many Josephs' (ibid. 49). Olive Schreiner drew attention to the peril to black women of working in close proximity to white men, a different sort of 'White Peril'.

One of the early hostels for African women in Johannesburg was the Helping Hand Club for Native Girls in Fairview, started by the Congregationalist American Board which provided accommodation and general recreational facilities for young African women. Efforts to build more hostels for African women in Johannesburg's suburbs nearer to where the women worked were met with fierce resistance from white homeowners, who, despite employing the very same women who would be accommodated in the hostels held rowdy meetings where members of Rate Payers Associations opposed such plans and shouted 'Not in Norwood'. Similar opposition occurred in Orange Grove and elsewhere (Gaitskell 1977: 55).

The similarity of Thokoza to these mission hostels lay in the vision of the white matron to have the residents of the hostel 'treat it like a home'. This unlikely eventuality she tried to promote via instituting a residents' committee to oversee personal interactions in the hostel, formulating rules 'which are oriented to help the crowded living conditions', fund raising for the annual Christmas party and the invitation to members of the Inkatha Women's Brigade to speak at the hostel, resulting in the formation of a branch of the movement at the hostel (Fourie 1977: 18). The Women's Brigade was the female section of the Inkatha Freedom Party, a Zulu nationalist organization founded and run by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi which promoted conservative Zulu values and was a valuable associate of the Nationalist apartheid officialdom through dominance in the mine hostels by male Inkatha supporters. The dying years of apartheid saw a virtual civil war, centred around the mine hostels but extending into the countryside between Inkatha traditionalists and supporters of the still banned African National Congress.

Despite the matron's wish that Thokoza be regarded as a home rather than an institution by its residents, it was an unremarkable grey painted three storied building in the so-called 'Indian' area of Durban, Grey Street built around an open courtyard with one entrance for the occupants and a separate one for the matron's car, which she parked inside. The matron occupied a flat on the premises but her interaction with the women was

limited to members of the 'committee' whom she occasionally invited to her flat and, somewhat incongruously, from time to time to go to the races with her.

In 1975 Thokoza had 677 beds in dormitories and some rooms, with three beds in each, but women also slept in the courtyards and passages. In 1975 women paid 5c per day to live in the hostel but this had risen to R17.50 per month for a bed in a room in 1984 at the time of my interviews. Facilities at Thokoza, the numbers of bathrooms, showers, toilets and kitchen hot plates, Fourie found were considered generally inadequate for so many people but they were kept clean by residents and the management committee of residents, and fourteen staff supervised by the matron.

Two of the residents prepared food in the kitchen for sale as a means of making a living and there was also a shop on the premises. Any resident who was caught consuming alcohol in the hostel or who swore or fought with other residents was evicted or 'asked to leave' as the hostel regulations put it. Apart from dormitories and rooms the hostel also had a lounge with tables, chairs and a radiogram. This was the place where meetings, either religious or of various clubs, and concerts were held.

The overcrowding had one positive advantage as far as the residents were concerned, which was that pass books were seldom checked as that 'would have been an impossibility for those in authority, considering the number of residents in the hostel' (1977:13). It was thus possible for unregistered women to live at Thokoza and not worry about being deported back to Transkei as was often the case for those living in their employer's back yard. Some of the women I interviewed were brought to the hostel by kin already living there, but most gained admission after their employers had written letters to the Matron asking for them to be admitted. Fourie records that 'a woman may enter the hostel if she has a job in Durban or surrounding areas and has no other place to stay, either in Durban or the African townships' (1977: 12). The major advantage of being able to live at Thokoza was the relaxed atmosphere of the hostel with the only formal rule being 'no fighting or swearing allowed' according to one resident (1977:32). Residents could come and go as they wished at any hour of the day or night and did not need passes to leave the hostel. Fourie noted that this relaxed form of administration contrasted strongly with that of the mine hostels.

While overcrowded, the neatness of the spaces inhabited by the

women appears to contrast strongly with Ramphele's account of municipal hostels for migrant workers in Langa in Cape Town (1993: 30). In Langa the prevailing impression was of a sordid existence with pervasive garbage and dirt as well as overcrowding indicative of squalid, degrading facilities. Ramphele notes that hostels may be seen as one example of what Goffman has called a 'total institution', erected to fulfil the demands of the apartheid state for a compliant labour force. While most of the hostels in the Cape and the Witwatersrand catered for a male migrant work force, a large proportion of the inhabitants of these hostels were women and children. This was not the case at Thokoza, where, although men were allowed to visit residents, they were not allowed to stay. Children, on the other hand, were allowed to stay with their mothers for short periods in school holidays. Thokoza was, in effect, a female world, and in this aspect resembled the Helping Hand Club in Johannesburg and other church hostels, forerunners of the YWCA and YMCA hostels, and evidence of a Victorian belief in the necessity of separating unmarried persons of different sexes.

Ethnic Hostility among Residents of Thokoza

Fourie records that in 1975 a third of the hostel residents were Xhosa speaking and two thirds Zulu (1977: 30), with the Xhosa women originating almost entirely from Pondoland and the Mount Frere area, those closest to Natal. The Xhosa women I interviewed also came from similar areas west of the Umzimkulu river. The matron spoke fluent Zulu and conducted all her dealing with residents in Zulu. Rules were also written in Zulu. Despite the use of Zulu, Fourie noted that the matron strongly disapproved of 'inter-tribal animosity' which was forbidden (1977:35).

'Inter-tribal animosity' seems to have been a code for physical fighting and the random allocation of beds was supposed to prevent ethnic groups forming which could have led to fights. The conclusion to the set of rules handed to residents was 'Help the Matron and Committee to make this hostel a place of happiness and think about others and be respectful and behave yourselves well and be clean'. Despite this injunction, Fourie records that the perpetual overcrowding in the rooms, along with competition for hot water and space on the washing lines led to friction which was often expressed in ethnic terms. One Xhosa informant said 'there is apartheid even

among the Africans' while both Zulu and Xhosa women characterized the other as being 'very fond of fighting'. Zulu residents characterized Xhosa women as 'very clever', while being at the same time snobbish, noisy and inconsiderate, while Xhosa women saw Zulus as 'savage' and believing too much in *abathakathi* or witchcraft. One Zulu long term resident who was a prominent member of Inkatha expressed the hope to Fourie that with the 'independence' of Transkei Xhosa would not be allowed to register as work seekers in Durban and they would all have to return home (1977: 65). It seems in the light of such remarks that the comments of the women I interviewed that they had both Zulu and Xhosa friends may have been an unwillingness to admit to me that ethnic stereotypes abounded in the hostel and that friendships were formed mainly along ethnic lines.

Conclusion

The migrant labour system in South Africa drove women as well as men from the labour reserves to seek a livelihood in the towns and cities of South Africa. Rural life in Transkei was hard at best, but in times of drought and famine such as the 1980s unsupportable. My Xhosa female informants were comparatively well educated at government and former mission schools but unable to find any work near to their homes. Their journey to Durban ended with employment mostly as domestic servants in white households in the suburbs although sometimes as nurse aides or shop assistants. Challenges which the women faced included the notorious influx control regulations which obliged African women from the rural areas to have worked for one employer continuously for ten years before being able to obtain a 'pass' or permission to look for work in an urban area. Residence in Thokoza, the only hostel for African women in the magisterial area of Durban, allowed for some evasion of the pass laws and companionship among fellow migrants. The rules, restrictions and overcrowding of the hostel, while unpleasant, were clearly preferred to the poverty and harshness of rural life. Yet 'home' for these women was part of their identity, giving meaning to their construction of who they were in the context of a majority of speakers of different ethnicities. The opportunity to earn a wage, however small, in the city, enabled these women to 'build the homestead' in the sense of supporting relatives back home and contributing to what would normally be a

male preserve. The insistence of the women I interviewed on their commitment to financially supporting dependents in the homeland was accompanied by what appeared to be fragile ties between them and their children or relatives there, to the extent that many said if they went home they would have to depend on a pension as they could not rely on relatives to support them.

Thokoza hostel provided a place of safety for these Xhosa migrant women in a Zulu-speaking city, who had been extruded from the labour reserves by the death of a husband or father or the need to provide for children. The company of women of similar age and interests in the context of the hostel took the place of the family life they should have been able to enjoy among their relatives. Thokoza hostel was clearly modelled by the matron on similar institutions in Johannesburg and elsewhere run on similar lines to Victorian evangelical Christian institutions with the aim of keeping girls and young women away from the moral dangers of the city. At the same time the hostel's emphasis on divisions of age, education and ethnic groupings bore witness to the role of re-imagining rural tradition in town which has been commented on in most writings on the role of hostels in maintaining the labour migrancy system in South Africa.[2]

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[2] Thokoza hostel no longer exists. With the ending of apartheid and the formation of a democratic government in South Africa the laws and regulations which maintained the labour migrancy system and consequent demand for single sex hostel accommodation ceased.

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'Forced to flee': Conflicts and Mobilities in Africa's Great Lakes Region

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Abstract

Natural disasters and violent conflicts trigger physical mobilities. In Africa, the Horn of Africa, West Africa and the Great Lakes Region (GLR) constitute prominent flashpoints of internecine conflicts but, arguably, the GLR is the most tempestuous. Violent conflicts in the GLR often lead to forced physical mobilities in the form of massive refugee flows into Southern Africa (and Europe). In view of the thematic concerns of this journal issue, the paper situates the analysis of refugee flows and experiences in the context of the 'mobilities paradigm'. Two dominant forms of mobilities – corporeal and real-time – were applied to the explication of the refugees' migration trajectories. Using data derived from a questionnaire, this paper explores the modes of movement and transnationalised experiences of conflict escapees with specific reference to refugees based in the South African city of Pietermaritzburg. The paper presents the articulation by refugees of their everyday challenges and coping strategies, and concludes that the 'foreign spaces' within which conflict escapees find themselves may not necessarily obviate the vulnerabilities that engendered their flight in the first place.

Keywords: mobilities, mobilities paradigm, violent conflicts, Great Lakes Region, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Introduction

People are always on the move. They move for various reasons. People com-

mute to work, many travel for leisure, others for business. Then there are those who run away from adversity in search of places of safety. All of these point to human displacement or physical movement. Movement from one location to another takes several forms: by foot (walking), and by car, bus, boat, ship, train, and aeroplane. These means of travel enable humans to move from one place to another. They are integral to physical mobilities, which occur in the contexts of voluntary and forced migrations. This paper examines physical mobilities from the perspective of forced migration in what is arguably Africa's most volatile region.

In Africa (as elsewhere), natural and man-made disasters induce human displacement. For instance, drought, famine, volcanic eruptions, and tsunami force people to move. Political instability and conflicts cause human dispersal and social dislocation. Violent conflicts force people to flee in search of safety. Conflict escapees are categorised as internally displaced persons or refugees. Given the relative profusion of violent and intractable conflicts in Africa, the continent's share of the world's internally displaced persons and refugees is significant. The Horn of Africa, West Africa and the Great Lakes Region (GLR) have been prominent flashpoints of internecine conflicts, with concomitant human displacement/forced mobilities.

In many ways, the Great Lakes Region (GLR) is the most tempestuous region in Africa. It has been plagued by genocide (Rwanda) and conflicts (Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda), leading to forced physical mobilities in the form of internal displacement and massive refugee flows within the GLR and into South Africa. This paper explores the dynamics, manifestations and effects of conflict-induced/forced migratory patterns drawing from qualitative interview data on the experiences of refugees based in the South African city of Pietermaritzburg. In view of the thematic concerns of this journal issue, the article situates the analysis of human displacement (i.e. refugee flows) from the GLR in the context of the 'mobilities paradigm'.

This article is divided into six sections. Since it interrogates refugees' migration trajectories and everyday experiences, section one provides an overview of the GLR and addresses the question: 'who is a refugee'? Section two discusses the conceptual framework (i.e. the 'mobilities paradigm') and its utility to the study of conflict-induced migration. Section

three outlines methodological issues pertaining to data collection and the study participants. The paper highlights the pattern of human displacement, and presents the migration trajectories of refugees in section four. Section five focuses on the respondents' articulation of everyday challenges that refugees grapple with in Pietermaritzburg while section six explains their coping strategies.

The Great Lakes Region and Refugees: The Politics of Definitions

Conflicts are a major source of human displacement. Spouses walk away from each other over disagreement; children run away from home; friends walk out on one another; alliances break up over disagreement. Walking away, as in walking out in anger or to avoid a fight, is a way humans deal with conflict at the personal level. An idiom says 'he who fights and runs away may live to fight another day'. This is what refugees do: they run away to live to possibly return alive to their countries of origin after a conflict might have come to an end rather than stay back and possibly die in the conflict. In the grid-crises of the GLR, running away is involuntary to those who flee. According to Reverend Samson Matabaro (Interview 08.08.2011),

> some of them were out of their houses when conflicts erupted and they didn't even go into their houses to take their documents or belongings. They came by themselves and they found that they are in Zambia or Tanzania.

They leave all behind and take off from wherever the crisis catches up with them. They run without any destination in mind. This was the situation with the majority of participants in this study. They found themselves in South Africa on fleeing from the GLR.

But what is the Great Lakes Region (GLR)? There are different understandings of what constitutes the GLR. A definitional perspective draws on the lakes in the region. As Kainkwa (2010:214) notes, some analysts posit that the great lakes of Africa comprise lakes Victoria, Albert and Edward all of which empty into the White Nile while other observers

include lakes Tanganyika, Kivu and Malawi as part of the great lakes system. Lake Victoria is shared by Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya. Both Lakes Albert and Edward are on the border of Uganda and the DRC. So if the great lakes comprise only lakes Victoria, Albert and Edward, then the GLR refers to Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, and the DRC.

However, if the six-lake system is adopted, the region will extend to the countries bordering lakes Tanganyika, Kivu and Malawi. Lake Tanganyika is shared by Burundi, the DRC, Tanzania and Zambia. Lake Kivu is on the border between the DRC and Rwanda. Lake Malawi is shared among Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania. Thus, the countries bordering one or another of the Great Lakes of Africa are Burundi, the DRC, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. But the great lakes system comprises not only the great lakes of Africa but also the system of rivers which drain or interconnect them to one another. The key rivers in this regard are the White Nile into which lakes Victoria, Edward and Albert empty themselves; the Congo River system which drains lakes Tanganyika and Kivu; and River Shire which drains Lake Malawi into the Zambezi River. So conceived, the GLR extends to South Sudan, the Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Chad.

Mpangala (2004:2) highlights five different perspectives of what constitutes the GLR. The widest of these defines the GLR to include core countries and parts of countries. The core comprises 'Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda' while the parts of countries include parts of 'Congo Brazzaville, the Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan and Zambia'. The common feature of the various perspectives identified by Mpangala (2004:2) is that they all constitute the GLR on the basis of land forms. Thus, the Great Lakes of Africa 'are a series of lakes in and around the geographic Great Rift Valley' (Kainkwa 2010:214) comprising Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika, Lake Albert, Lake Edward, Lake Kivu, and Lake Malawi. The GLR refers 'to the zone around lakes Victoria, Tanganyika, Albert, Edward, Kivu, and Malawi' (Kainkwa 2010:214). From this perspective, the GLR includes 'the entirety of the nations of Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda as well as portions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, and Kenya' (Kainkwa 2010:214), as well as Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.

But the GLR is also issue defined. The key issue in recent times that

has given the region one of its most definitive characteristics is closely linked to the range of political crises (especially the genocide in Rwanda and its immediate aftermath), massive human displacement, and the exodus of people from their regions of origin – the refugee problem. While the definition issue does not completely ignore or do away with the landforms, the basis of inclusion into or exclusion from the GLR has underpinned the political crises and their impacts. Against this backdrop, Lunn (2006:3) espouses a definition in which the GLR comprises the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania (see Figure 1). This paper adopts an issue focus definition of the GLR and a trajectory of refugee displacement to the South African city of Pietermaritzburg.

Who are refugees? Refugees comprise people in search of refuge from violence, threats, insecurities, deprivations, crises, fears; people attempting to escape from threats that have come to so reside in their imaginations and imageries as to have a physical co-presence with them. They are a people on the move; a running people. They are not defined by law but by their mobilities in search of safety and peace. Their fears are co-present with them: fears of being found out by the long arm of the governments of their countries; fears of being rejected by their host communities and being confined to prison-like situations; fears of being attacked by their host communities; and worse, fears of refoulement or being turned back and returned to their regions of origin. Their fears are physical and always present with them.

The dictionary defines refugees as exiles fleeing for safety but national legislations call them asylum seekers. They become refugees only after they have been accepted to stay in a country as such. But this is not the position under the *United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (1951) and the *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa of the African Union* (1969) which define a refugee as a person who

> owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the

> protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it [Article 1(2) of UN Convention and Article 1(1) of AU Refugee Convention].

The African Union Refugee Convention adds that,

> The term 'refugee' shall also apply to every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in *order to seek refuge* in another place outside his country of origin or nationality [Article 1(2)].

In other words, once a person is forced to flee outside the borders of his/her country of origin, that person is a refugee. According to these Conventions, being a refugee is not contingent on acceptance of such a person by a country of refuge but by the fact of being 'compelled to leave his place of habitual residence *in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality'*. A person is a refugee because he is seeking refuge. Thus, international conventions largely agree with the dictionary meaning of the concept of refugee. However, national legislations often hold a different view. For instance, Refugees Amendment Act, 2008 which regulates refugee processes in South Africa defines a refugee as 'any person who has been granted asylum in terms of this Act' (S.1 [xv]). The person fleeing for safety; the person seeking refuge is not defined as a refugee. S/he actually lacks a description until s/he officially applies to a relevant government agency for recognition as a refugee. Then s/he becomes an ''asylum seeker' … a person who is seeking recognition as a refugee in the Republic' (S.1 [v]).

Findings from interviews with refugees in Pietermaritzburg show that differences in definitions have repercussions for conflict escapees who have crossed a national border. Differential definitions of a refugee create a gulf between refugees' expectations (in terms of how they should be treated) and the actions of government officials. Most of those interviewed regarded

themselves as refugees after they crossed their national borders and embarked on their journeys to South Africa. They viewed and referred to themselves as refugees even before the South African government issued them with any form of refugee identification. However, until they were accorded refugee status by the government, they could not enjoy the rights statutorily mandated by the Refugee Act. For conflict escapees, divergence between international conventions and domestic legislation exacerbates the problems that they face in new, often unfamiliar and hostile, environments.

Conceptual Framework: Urry's 'Mobilities Paradigm'

The 'mobilities paradigm' aims at,

> establishing a 'movement-driven' social science in which movement, potential movement and blocked movement, as well as voluntary/temporary immobilities, practices of dwelling and 'nomadic' place-making are all conceptualized as constitutive of economic, social and political relations (Buscher & Urry 2009:100).

This paper situates the analysis of human displacement and refugee flows from the GLR in the context of Urry's 'mobilities paradigm'. Urry (2007:7) notes that there are multiple aspects of mobility or different mobilities. The paradigm uses mobilities 'in a broad-ranging generic sense' (Sheller & Urry 2006:212), including physical movement, movement enhanced by technologies, movements of images and information in the media, one-to-one and many-to-many communications. Urry's paradigm speaks to the different forms of mobilities, some of which lend themselves readily to the explication of forced migration arising from violent conflict. Therefore, we extrapolate relevant aspects of the paradigm to illuminate the discourse on conflict-induced migration. The mobility forms that this article adopts are *corporeal mobility* and *real-time mobility*.

Corporeal mobility involves human displacement, which Cresswell (2006:2) defines as 'the act of moving between locations'. It refers to the actual movement of people from one place to another. Such movement takes

different forms, including 'walking, travelling by train, car-driving, and air travel' (Urry 2000:4). Corporeal mobility pertains to human displacement or migration which could be voluntary or forced. In this context, Urry (2007:8) describes mobility as 'semi-permanent geographical movement' from one country or continent to another 'often in search of a "better life" or to escape' from adversity. Mobility in this context encapsulates 'asylum, refugee and homeless travel and migration' (Urry 2007:10). Such migration involves 'often very risky, complex and expensive travel to get to certain rich places around the world which might offer a contingent 'hospitality'' (Urry 2007:263).

This conceptualisation of mobility or human displacement captures the fundaments and manifestations of conflict-induced migration. Violent conflicts engender massive human dispersal and social dislocation. Often, people are forced to flee from conflict zones to (relatively) safer areas within their own countries (such as in the case of internally displaced persons [IDPs]) or to other countries (in the case of refugees). The flight from conflict zones is usually perilous, as 'mobility escapees' (refugees and IDPs) often have to cross battle lines or risk abuse by combatants. Political strife, civil wars, genocide and inter-state conflict in the GLR have led to massive population displacements. Those interviewed for this study described their migration trajectories and modes of movement encapsulated by the mobilities paradigm. Respondents' modes of movement include fleeing on foot, travelling by boat, canoe, car, bus, train and airplane.

Real-time mobility includes movements of images and information through communication technologies such as the computer, telegraph, fax, telephone and mobile phone (Sheller & Urry 2006:212). These communication technologies are used to transmit ideas, images and experiences about imagined and actual 'destinations' which may be places of leisure and tourism (in the case of voluntary migration) or safety zones (for persons displaced by conflict). Schapendonk (2009:299) notes that communication technologies produce and give substance to imaginative, virtual and communicative travels. Imaginative travel presupposes that daydreaming and imageries influence the actual migration process while virtual travel enables migrants to create new aspirations based on information obtained from the internet, television and other media.

Information obtained through communicative travel prior to or during journeys also influence migration trajectories (Schapendonk 2009:299). These travel forms often resonate in the migration stories of leisure seekers, economic migrants and backpackers, and 'mobility escapees'. The significance of communication technologies and these travel forms to the circumstances of refugees and IDPs is largely limited to a search for peace or safety.

The migration trajectories of some of those interviewed were influenced by reports of safety in the would-be 'destinations'. For instance, respondents relied on information and images from countries in southern Africa for their journeys. The images and information then influenced some mobility escapees' decisions as to routes, transit areas and destinations. Furthermore, the interface between corporeal mobility and real-time mobility is evident in the impact that these communication technologies have on the escapees' decisions. It should be stated that communication technologies and the images/information transmitted via them could facilitate or inhibit movement from conflict zones to potential destinations. Findings from qualitative interview data suggest that these travel forms did not apply to the majority of those who fled the conflicts in the GLR. They were forced to flee and did not make a conscious decision as to routes, transit areas and destinations.

We found that the dynamics of forced migration from conflict zones in the GLR to South Africa (and elsewhere) exemplified aspects of the mobilities paradigm, including escapees' material conditions in the host communities and countries. For instance, Urry (2007:263) notes – with reference to migration across borders – that mobility escapees face the problem of 'profoundly 'unequal access to foreign spaces''. Such 'unequal access to foreign spaces' has a decisive impact on mobility escapees; it impinges on their very survival. For migrants (including refugees), access to 'foreign spaces' (and opportunities) is determined by an assortment of factors: linguistic ability, possession of official documents (and their acceptance by private and public agencies), possession of skills (and their recognition thereof by host communities), and dominant popular and official attitudes towards migrants. Those interviewed lamented the lack of opportunities, popular and official discrimination, and threat to their personal

safety. For most of the interviewees, 'foreign spaces' which offered the potential for 'a better life' have become an arena for daily struggle for survival. In the section on transnationalised lives, we highlight some of the everyday challenges that refugees grapple with in Pietermaritzburg.

The relevance of Urry's paradigm to this paper lies in its assumptions about push and pull factors in migration trajectories, the modes of movement in corporeal mobility, the significance of communication technologies, conditions in host communities and their impact on mobility escapees. Accordingly, this article utilises Urry's paradigm in the analysis of human dispersal from the GLR while the description of refugees' experiences in Pietermaritzburg takes cognisance of the journal issue theme of 'transnational lives'.

Methodological Issues: Data Collection and Participants

The data for this study was derived from a short questionnaire administered in July 2011 on a small sample of nationals of the Great Lakes Region states who are refugees living in Pietermaritzburg. The study does not cover mobility escapees from all the countries of the GLR in Pietermaritzburg; rather, it includes only individuals from the core conflict countries -- the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Burundi. These countries are the largest sources of mobility escapees, mainly refugees, in the GLR. The questionnaire focused on the experiences of refugees in South Africa, the nature of their integration into South African society, their decision to emigrate to South Africa, and their mode of movement. The sample was selected by the snowballing sampling technique. In the course of our interaction with refugees from the GLR, we were directed to the leadership of some diasporic/national associations of the region in Pietermaritzburg. The leadership subsequently referred us to three faith-based organisations involved with refugees in the city. Due to time constraints, we were able to engage with two of these organisations in Pietermaritzburg: Key Ministry International based at Project Gateway at the Old Prisons Building, and Christ Winning Church on Church Street. The leadership of these two organisations assisted with the task of distributing the questionnaires for completion by their members. The use of the snowballing

technique meant that most of the respondents are from the DRC. This is representative of DRC's refugee population in South Africa, which is significantly higher than those of other countries in the GLR (UNHCR 2011).

The instrument was developed by the researchers for this study and face-validated by officials of Key Ministry International (KMI) who themselves are refugees and have diverse experiences in dealing with refugees with a view to minimizing the trauma that the participants could experience in recalling some of the information required for the study. The questionnaires were administered as interview schedules by an official of Key Ministry International (KMI) on refugees associated with that organisation. It was necessary to use this official for three main reasons. First, there exists a level of trust between him and the respondents. This, it was expected, would allay participants' fears with regard to the purpose of the interviews, especially, as some of the items on the questionnaire were similar to those on forms issued by the Department of Home Affairs to refugees for documentation. Secondly, many of the respondents were not proficient in the English language but in French and kiSwahili and therefore we needed someone proficient in those languages. Thirdly, the official has significant experience as an interviewer. At the outset of the interviews, two of the researchers sat in to observe and clarify items that presented difficulty in interpretation to minimize loss of meaning. The questionnaires issued through Christ Winning Church were completed by the respondents.

Altogether, fifty questionnaires were distributed. Of this number, 45 were returned. However, 16 of the questionnaires were completed by non-targeted refugees who were from Zimbabwe (11) and the Horn of Africa (4) along with one respondent whose nationality was not indicated. Therefore, our report is based on the remaining 29 participants who are from the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda.

The nationality distribution of the participants is as follows: the DRC – 23, Burundi – 5 and Rwanda – 1. Our participants were evenly distributed in terms of gender: 15 men and 14 women. Their ages ranged between 17 and 62 years. Overall within the target group, 11 participants were aged between 20 and 29 years and another 11 between 30 and 39 years. Only three (3) participants were aged between 40 and 49 years and two (2) participants

each were over 60 and under 20 years respectively. Also, 12 of our participants were single, one was divorced and three were widowed. The remaining 13 participants were married. In terms of education, two (2) had no formal education, three (3) attended primary school and six (6) attended but did not complete high school. A total of nine (9) respondents completed high school and another nine (9) had tertiary education.

In addition, the researchers conducted an in-depth interview with Reverend Samson Matabaro, the President of KMI, which is a faith-based organisation involved in refugee assistance and rights advocacy. Matabaro, a Burundi national and a refugee, works closely with refugees in Pietermaritzburg to alleviate their plight. He also executes community outreach projects to educate locals including local government officials about refugees and why they are in South Africa. Our interview with Matabaro clarified and provided insights into respondents' articulation of challenges that refugees face in Pietermaritzburg.

The findings are presented as refugee stories. The stories are presented as told by the refugees. We follow their movements from their countries of origin to South Africa, sometimes directly, at other times through other countries, focusing primarily on capturing their mode of transportation.

Conflicts and Human Displacement in the Great Lakes Region

Population displacement and dispersal within the GLR predated the political independence of most of the countries in the region. According to Erlichman (2004), 'during the period between 1959 and 1967, 20,000 Tutsi died, and another 300,000 fled Rwanda as refugees with a small number of elite Hutus and Twa into neighbouring countries' and '[i]n 1964, estimates of Rwandan refugees in asylum countries were 40,000 in Burundi, 60,000 in Zaire (now DRC), 35,000 in Uganda, and 15,000 in Tanzania'.

The displacements intensified in many ways since the post-independence period. The UNHCR (1997) reported that in 1993, 700,000 Burundian Hutus fled into Rwanda, Tanzania and the DRC (then Zaire). On 28/29April 1994, 'nearly a quarter million Rwandans fled across the Rusumo

bridge into Ngara, Tanzania, in 24 hours' in what was described as 'the largest and fastest movement of refugees in modern history' (UNHCR 1997). Earlier in the same month, Rwandan soldiers and Interahamwe (Hutu paramilitary group) had begun house-to-house searches in aid of a 'genocide in which between 500,000 and one million people [were] slaughtered' (UNHCR 1997). On July 14, 1994 over a million Rwandans fled to Goma in the DRC over a period of four days (UNHCR 1997).

Fast forward to 1996: In July, about 15,000 Rwandan refugees in Burundi were forcibly repatriated to Rwanda and by August the United Nations Refugee Agency assisted a further 65,000 to return home (UNHCR 1997). In October, all refugee camps in the DRC were destroyed, generating new population flows in diverse directions. The UN Refugee Agency evacuated Goma in November 1996 but its

> staff then return[ed] as refugees [began] to flee Mugunga camp west of the town. In the next few days 600,000 Rwandans [went] home, but many former Rwandan soldiers and Interahamwe head[ed] west, deeper into Zaire. One month later, the first of 500,000 refugees in Tanzania [were] sent home by Tanzanian troops (UNHCR 1997).

The GLR has thus experienced dramatic population flows arising from political conflicts and crises since the late 1950s. These involuntary population flows and transnationalisation of populations have, in turn, exacerbated the conflicts in the region.

According to Erlichman (2004),

> [t]hroughout the 1970s and 1980s, Rwandan refugee communities created secret political and military alliances in exile. The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) was formed from such groups. New directions of displacement began with the RPF invasion of Rwanda from Uganda in October 1990. Internally displaced people (IDPs) within Rwanda, mainly Hutu fleeing RPF attacks, regrouped into camps of hundreds of thousands ....

Figure 1: Map of the Great Lakes Region[1]

Source: United Nations (2004).

Although the end of first decade of the 21ˢᵗ century saw the emergence of relative calm as the GLR states endeavour to address their social and political issues by transforming their conflict environment and working to build peace, the refugee numbers and flows have remained amongst the largest in the world. For instance, by the end of 2010, the six countries of the GLR generated among them 691,780 refugees (UNHCR 2011). The DRC alone generated 476,693 refugees or about 69 per cent of the total number of refugees from the region with Rwanda coming a distant second with 17 per cent or 114,836 refugees. The GLR also plays host to large numbers of

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[1] This is based on the definition adopted in this paper.

refugees. In 2010, this stood at 891,091 with the largest concentration of refugees of 402,905 in Kenya. Again, the DRC itself hosts a large concentration of refugees with 166,336 persons in 2010. The majority of refugees from the GLR remain within the region. Thus, the largest concentrations of DRC refugees are in the Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Burundian refugees head mainly to the DRC and Tanzania as those from Rwanda flow into the DRC and Uganda. IDPs and refugees are sheltered in several camps in the GLR.

Refugees within the GLR are susceptible to attacks on their lives and to forceful repatriation to their countries. The fear of murder and forced repatriation from refugee camps is a major reason for the continuous flow of mobility escapees from the GLR (Interview with Matabaro 08.08.2011). Refugees keep running away from the volatile situation in the GLR until they are stopped. As Matabaro (Interview 08.08.2011) puts it, what stopped the continuous run of the GLR refugees are South Africa's ocean boundaries. If the Indian and Atlantic oceans were land areas, the refugees would have continued running so as to be beyond the reach of the fears that compelled them to escape from their countries in the first place. This is how some of the refugees from the GLR found themselves in South Africa: continuous running.

There were 57,899 refugees and 171,702 asylum seekers in South Africa by the end of 2010 (UNHCR 2011). Nearly 13,000 of the approximately 58,000 refugees at the end of 2010 were from the DRC[2]. There are over 2,000 refugees in Pietermaritzburg (Interview with Matabaro 08.08.2011). How did these refugees get to South Africa? This section draws on responses by interviewees' to two of the questions in our instrument on mode(s) of movement to South Africa: (i) 'What means of transportation did you use (land – foot, car, bus, train; sea – canoe, boat, ship; air – plane) to come to South Africa'?; and (ii) 'Did you come directly to South Africa from your country or did you pass through other countries (that is, settle for some time in some other countries to check out how things are before moving on)'?

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[2] Estimates of Rwandan and Burundian refugees in South Africa are not available in the 2011 Global Trends Report published by the UNHCR.

The majority of respondents used a combination of different modes of movement involving foot, cars, buses, trains, and boats. The most dominant mode of movement is land travel. Only six respondents travelled by boat. Figure 2 depicts refugees' modes of movement:

Figure 2: Refugees' modes of movement from the GLR to South Africa
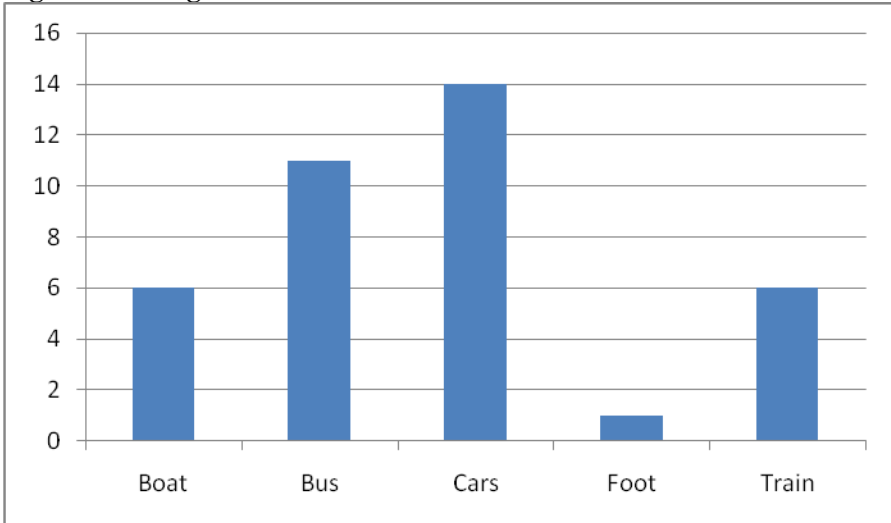
Source: compiled by researchers (2011).

With reference to physical mobilities, especially the refugees' migration trajectories, a surprising but interesting finding of this study is that foot travel (walking) is mentioned by only one respondent. This is quite curious as it is inconceivable that many of them did not experience that mode of travel, particularly during parts of their escape from the conflict zones. It is possible to surmise that conflict escapees may be incognisant of walking as a mode of travelling; or, that time and distance have a way of muffling some aspects of the refugee experience. Of course, there is also the possibility that the decision to flee was premeditated and planned by many of the respondents.

In response to the question 'Did you come directly to South Africa from your country or did you pass through other countries (that is, settle for

some time in some other countries to check out how things are before moving on)'? 14 respondents, all from the DRC, answered in the affirmative. A total of 11 respondents reported passing through other countries before coming to South Africa. Three DRC refugees moved through Tanzania and Mozambique to get to South Africa; another DRC refugee moved to South Africa after spending four years as a refugee in Tanzania. Two DRC refugees passed through Zambia and Zimbabwe; one through Malawi and Zambia, and one through Malawi-Zambia-Zimbabwe-Tanzania-Mozambique-Kenya-Uganda-Somalia on his way to South Africa. Three Burundian refugees reported passing through other countries but did not specify which.

In some cases, the refugees' migration trajectories were influenced by imageries and information that they obtained about potential destinations. Some respondents were influenced by information presented on the internet, television, in movies, and news reports. Others explained that families and friends informed them via mobile phones about conditions in South Africa. Respondents were also influenced by the experiences of those who returned from South Africa. The perception that South Africa was a safer destination determined the migration trajectories of some respondents. As one interviewee noted,

> South Africa is a safe country. DRC is near Zambia and Zimbabwe like you know; both of the country [sic.] are not safe. That's why I decided that South Africa was a suitable destination (26, female, Congolese).

This respondent had obtained information about South Africa from the mass media and the internet. Conflict escapees' articulation of their migration trajectories illustrates facets of both corporeal and real-time mobilities.

Transnationalised Lives? Everyday Experiences of Refugees in Pietermaritzburg

This section focuses on some of the experiences and coping strategies of refugees from the GLR regarding aspects of life in Pietermaritzburg. This section, and the one after it, draws on interviewees' responses to two

questions relating to the extent of their integration into South African society: (i) 'Are there things that make life difficult for you here in Pietermaritzburg?'; and (ii) 'How do you cope with these difficulties?' Respondents mentioned several challenges associated with their status as asylum seekers or refugees. They also articulated the various ways of navigating the 'foreign spaces' permeated by a deep sense of anti-foreigner attitudes. In what follows, we highlight the commonalities in the situated experiences of refugees in Pietermaritzburg.

Identity Documentation and Exclusion

> Not having the green ID [identity document book] limits you from doing a lot of things … such as [accessing] opportunities … it is like a wall (22, female, Congolese).

Virtually all refugees interviewed mentioned the lack of an identity document – the green bar-coded identity book – as a formidable challenge. The Department of Home Affairs issues a Refugee Permit upon successful application for refugee status. In principle, this Permit confers the right to study, work and access government services but respondents' everyday experiences belie these statutorily-mandated rights. According to Matabaro (Interview 08.08.2011), most street level bureaucrats and certain private service providers (such as bank staff and landlords) do not recognise the Refugee Permit as its presentation by a refugee is often met with equivocal ignorance: 'what's this'? In such instances, it is impossible for refugees to secure accommodation or employment or open bank accounts.

The lack of *recognisable* or authoritative identity document prevents or limits refugee access to an assortment of opportunities (Interview with Matabaro 08.08.2011). Sometimes, refugees are denied medical treatment and their children excluded from schooling. This is at variance with Article 27 (g) of the Refugees Act 130 of 1998 which states unequivocally that 'refugees as well as refugee children are entitled to the same basic health services and basic primary education which the inhabitants of the Republic receive from time to time'. Respondents interpreted actions which preclude

refugees from enjoying the rights mandated by the Constitution of South Africa and the Refugees Act as emblematic of official discrimination. Many of those interviewed felt that 'proper' documentation would attenuate discrimination. For most respondents, the South African ID book is the only 'proper document'. In fact, there is a shared perception amongst most refugees interviewed that the possession of the green bar-coded ID opens doors to opportunities while the lack of it limits access to, or signals outright exclusion from, those opportunities. It is instructive to note that the lack of 'proper identification' makes refugees susceptible to brutality or extortion by police officers who occasionally target migrants as 'mobile ATMs' (Templeton & Maphumulo 2005).

The striking challenge relating to identity documentation generates another corollary. A number of those interviewed (especially those who were able to secure accommodation through the assistance of KMI) explained that they were unable to pay rent due to the lack of employment. Given that there are no refugee camps in South Africa, the lack of shelter or the inability to pay rent (where a refugee finds accommodation) is one of the formidable challenges that refugees face (Interview with Matabaro 08.08.2011). Inability to secure shelter is, in part, a function of unemployment. Almost all respondents mentioned unemployment as a major problem[3]. For instance, as one interviewee noted, 'the fact that I do not have a green ID, it makes life very difficult for one [sic.] to obtain a job, bursaries etc.' (19, male, Congolese). This view is captured in the responses of other refugees: 'I cannot apply for a secure job due to [the] lack of that document' (37, male, Congolese). 'To find a job or to study is difficult as a foreigner. They need only South African ID book but [it] is not easy to get it' (30, female, Congolese). From respondents' perspectives, unemployment was attributable to the lack of proper documentation, non-recognition of their skills/ qualifications, and popular and official discrimination.

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[3] It should be noted that unemployment is not unique to refugees. Therefore, refugees' articulation of the problem should be tempered with the recognition that large numbers of South Africans are also affected by it. South Africa's unemployment rate was 25.7% in the second quarter of 2011 (Statistics South Africa 2011: vi).

The Politics of Discrimination

Interviewees touched on different forms of discrimination that they are subjected to because of being foreigners. Refugees' situated experiences depict a sense in which 'not being from here' increases their vulnerability (and indeed that of other migrants). Many of those interviewed eke out a living through odd jobs in the informal economy: roadside trading or hawking, hair-cutting and gardening. Refugees' precarious everyday experiences in the quest for survival are accentuated by discriminatory practices in the informal economy. Locals sometimes accuse refugees who run businesses by the roadside ('pavement shops') of selling products at cheaper prices or 'snatching our customers'. Occasionally, frustrated locals tell refugees to 'go back home', 'go back to your country'. As a refugee noted, 'locals prevent us from doing business' (36, female, Burundian). Respondents explained that local competitors use threats, intimidation and scare tactics to 'chase away' refugees and to prevent them 'from doing business' within the city. Anti-foreigner utterances and attitudes by locals constitute an aspect of generalised attempts at excluding refugees from the informal economy: either by preventing new entrants or forcing out those inside.

For refugees, discrimination and vulnerability in the informal economy are also closely linked to encounters with municipal workers whose actions are said to have anti-foreigner undertones. One interviewee explained that municipal staff destroyed her husband's 'container' (a metal boxlike shop) which he used for his haircutting business. She emphasized during the interview that the *containers owned by locals in the same vicinity were left intact* (25, female, Congolese). The destruction of her husband's container had ramifications for her own business as she explained that the tent she used as a pavement shop was taken away by municipal staff. She lamented:

> until now the tent hasn't been returned … we tried to make a follow-up to the mayor but we haven't yet get [sic.] any reply … we see that the government is neglecting the plight of refugees (25, female, Congolese).

Her experience illustrates that refugees' recourse to senior municipal gov-

ernment officials for redress or assistance may not alleviate (the effects of) discrimination.

Refugees' experiences of discrimination in the informal economy are replicated in formal establishments including the Department of Home Affairs and government hospitals. Those interviewed complained that application processes for refugee and permanent residence permits are cumbersome and less than transparent. It appears that refugees are wont to interpret seeming incompetence by officials of the Department of Home Affairs from the prism of discrimination. A number of respondents feel that some Home Affairs staff harbour a disdainful attitude (and are generally lukewarm) towards refugees and their plight. Refugees are sometimes unaware of, or do not appreciate, the reasons why their applications are rejected by staff of the Department of Home Affairs (30, male, Congolese). A refugee who has been living in South Africa for twelve years explained that he has had to lodge two applications for a permanent residence permit after he did not receive any feedback from the Department of Home Affairs regarding the first application. He sums up his frustration: 'My life is on hold. I cannot move forward with my business. I just keep waiting' (42, male, Congolese). In most cases, 'official' discrimination is met with acquiescence and fatalism on the part of refugees. There is a realisation that 'not being South African is a problem because you don't get the same privilege as South Africans' (17, female, Congolese). To these refugees, acquiescence was somewhat necessary, as they will always be foreigners.

Refugees also experience discrimination in the workplace. Some respondents have 'accepted the situation' and are prepared to 'live with it' as illustrated in the case of a professional nurse who complained about discrimination in the work place. She explained that fellow workers give her problems, 'especially when it comes to promotion … I am often left out … I do not get promoted. I feel that if I were to be a citizen … I should be well' (42, female, Rwandan). Respondents' articulation of 'official' discrimination bespeaks the lack of a sense of belonging, which is informed by sentiments such as 'I am not wanted here' or 'the local people don't love me' (36, female, Burundian; 40, female, Congolese). In the view of those interviewed, 'popular' discrimination against (or stigmatisation of) refugees is typified by reference to them (and other foreigners) as '*kwerekwere*' (a derogatory label

for African migrants). Remarkably, '*kwerekwere*' – as a conceptual and descriptive apparatus – became a contrivance for mobilisation, brutality and violence against African migrants in several South African cities in 2008, when there was a groundswell of deadly xenophobic attacks in different parts of the country. The (scale of the) violence directed at the '*kwerekwere*' epitomised 'popular' (and partly 'official') discrimination against foreigners. The basis for discrimination surrounds the identity of refugees, which is defined as 'not being from here'.

A number of those interviewed expressed the desire to be fully integrated into their host communities. However, everyday challenges that refugees face regarding identity documentation, exclusion, discrimination and experiences of violence make it difficult for them to 'fit into society' (25, male, Burundian). At the same time, refugees are unable or unwilling to return home in view of the volatile situation in the GLR. Thus, they have to invent or adopt strategies to navigate difficult terrains or 'foreign spaces' characterised by the politics of exclusion and discrimination. We now turn attention to some of the coping strategies of refugees.

Adjusting to 'Foreign Spaces': Coping Strategies of Conflict Escapees

Narratives of everyday refugee experiences also depict the different ways through which they cope with or attempt to surmount the challenges identified above. For instance, the majority of those interviewed deal with the problem of lack of jobs through a mechanism of self-employment in the forms of roadside trading ('pavement shops'), hair-cutting business, and gardening services. Self-employment enables refugees to acquire basic necessities such as shelter, food and clothing, thus reducing their reliance on humanitarian actors for subsistence.

Moreover, most of those interviewed explained that the recourse to spirituality helps them to cope with an assortment of problems. Some respondents mentioned that they 'trust in God' and/or 'pray to God' to help them deal with everyday challenges. Others referred to the pivotal role that KMI plays in the alleviation of their suffering. The humanitarian assistance that KMI renders mitigates some of the effects that the lack of identity

documentation has on refugees. Respondents mentioned KMI's provision of shelter and food parcels to refugees as a case in point. We deduced from interviewees' articulation of KMI's role in their lives that the organisation provides a space where refugees connect and seek solutions to their everyday problems and challenges. In effect, KMI helps refugees to nurture and feel a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, certain virtues (such as endurance, forbearance, forgiveness, and hope) underpin the attitudes and responses of some refugees towards discrimination and other challenges. This point is borne out in the following responses:

> Some of the local people who are educated have manners to live with [other] people and I understand things in this way and making myself able to live with them…I am doing all my best to take it easy and understand that many of them didn't go to school and they don't know about foreigners (31, female, Congolese).

> 'I try to be good with people of the local community' (23, male, Congolese).

> 'I accept [discrimination] because I don't have [a] choice. Hopefully things improve back home so I can go back' (24, male, Congolese).

These comments evidently point to the acceptance by mobility escapees of everyday challenges as part of life's lessons. The presumption that locals who discriminate against foreigners are uneducated or otherwise ignorant about foreigners seem to be additional ways that refugees rationalise and explain away what they see as unacceptable attitudes and behaviours towards them. As the last comment shows, refugees may be prepared to endure discrimination in the meantime because it is preferred to the deadly conflict situation from which they have escaped.

It is clear from the interviews that refugees regard faith-based organisations and diasporic associations as important spaces which provide an element of insulation from adverse experiences such as discrimination by

locals. Cases of popular discrimination described by the refugees were situated in the context of everyday interaction with the locals. The logical imperative is to 'avoid the locals' (17, female, Congolese). Therefore, minimal contact with locals was thought to obviate discrimination or reduce its likelihood. This form of adjustment mechanism underpins the deep attachment refugees feel and have for diaspora associations in Pietermaritzburg.

Conclusion

This article has examined the migration trajectories of refugees through the prism of the 'mobilities paradigm'. As we have demonstrated in the paper, the paradigm lends itself to the explanation of conflict-induced migration. Two dominant forms of mobilities – corporeal and real-time – were applied to the analysis of human displacement from the Great Lakes Region. Corporeal mobility furnished insights into the actual movement of conflict escapees and their modes of movement from the GLR to South Africa. We drew on the elements of real-time mobility in the analysis of refugees' perceptions and imageries of South Africa as a safer place of refuge than countries in the GLR and their immediate neighbours. The paper also presented refugees' articulation of their everyday experiences in Pietermaritzburg: non-recognition of refugee identity documents, lack of access to employment opportunities, as well as popular and official discrimination. The coping strategies of respondents provided insights into the ways that refugees navigate unfamiliar and hostile foreign spaces. As shown in this paper, the 'foreign spaces' within which conflict escapees find themselves may not necessarily provide them with the ideals they desire most – peace and safety.

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Interviews

Reverend Samson Matabaro, Pietermaritzburg, August 08, 2011.

Interviews with refugees from GLR (all interviews conducted in July 2011; respondents are identified by age, gender and nationality):

26, female, Congolese.
22, female, Congolese.
19, male, Congolese.
37, male, Congolese.
30, female, Congolese.
36, female, Burundian.
25, female, Congolese.
30, male, Congolese.
42, male, Congolese.

17, female, Congolese.
42, female, Rwandan.
36, female, Burundian;
40, female, Congolese.
25, male, Burundian.
31, female, Congolese.
23, male, Congolese.
24, male, Congolese.

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Caught between Two Worlds:
The (re)Negotiation of Identity among Cameroonian Migrants in Durban

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Abstract
This paper seeks to understand the experiences of Cameroonian migrants living in Durban. It interrogates how they are adjusting, interpreting, adapting and re- defining their lifestyles and expectations as they engage with the host space. Migrants are followed from the time of their decision to migrate through their settlement in South Africa. The paper is based on research conducted among 50 Cameroonian migrants in Durban and produces insights into the different adjustment strategies, identifies common factors affecting the process of migrant adjustment and explores the coping mechanisms that migrants come up with in a bid to facilitate the adjustment process.

Keywords: Migrants, Adjustment, Adaptation, Cameroonians

Introduction
Migrant communities have developed in migration discourses and anthropologists in particular are keen on mapping out these spaces so as to engage in a more critical analysis of the nature of the migrancy of a particular migrant community. Migration is a catalyst which challenges people to deal with cross-cultural issues. Adjustment and adaptation are the challenges that migrants face, especially at the initial stage of migration

(Massey *et al.* 1993). Adaptation involves long-term change whereas adjustment is short term change (Al-Ali & Koser 2000). Regardless of who they are, all migrants go through a process of acculturation in varying degrees and forms (Harris & Moran 1991). 'Adjustment' 'acculturation', 'adaptation', 'assimilation', 'integration', and even 'coping', are words or terms that are used to describe how individuals respond to their experiences in other cultures.

Adjustment begins with the process of migration, as when people migrate, they have to adjust to a new culture, and they have to survive. Leaving family, friends and a lifestyle behind can be a traumatic experience. Lack of stable employment and proper documentation regarding their stay aggravate feelings of anxiety, alienation and loneliness. Migrants have to adapt to a new country, a different language, a novel way of life, build a new social circle and establish a means of earning an income. Nooy *et al.* (2005) have argued that, such movement and adaptation to new unfamiliar spaces are facilitated by social networks which are used to inform the migratory process in both the sending and the receiving countries. The paper focuses on the adjustment process experienced by Cameroonian migrants in Durban as they strive to adapt to various aspects of their new surroundings. The adaptive strategies used almost certainly mean that the migrants will have to make changes in their thinking, attitude, speech, and social conduct. It looks into how they negotiate their stay, whom they identify and associate with, and what strategies they use to integrate themselves into the South African society. The paper is based on research conducted among a sample of 50 Cameroonian migrants in Durban, South Africa and produces insights into the different adjustment strategies, identifies common factors affecting the process of migrant adjustment and explores the coping mechanisms that migrants come up with in a bid to facilitate the adjustment process.

Conceptualizing Migrant Adjustment and Adaptation

Migrant adjustment as defined by Goldscheider (1983) is the process by which a migrant responds to a change from one place into another in the physical, economic and social environment. Migrants are faced with having to adjust in different ways and different aspects, particularly at the initial stage of migration. Two broadly competing views of the process emerge. One

stresses the difficulties the migrant has to overcome in the host society and the negative consequences of migration both to the receiving society and to the individual migrant. The other view emphasizes the continuity of life in the sending and the receiving areas, the opportunity for the migrants and the positive gains resulting from migration (Goldscheider 1983). Common to both views however is an underlying process of adjustment to new economic and social realities deriving from the migration. According to Richmond (1998) the migrant adjustment process is influenced by pre-migratory conditions, the transitional experience in moving from one country to another, the characteristics of the migrants themselves and the conditions in the receiving country such as economic factors and government policies. Richmond (1998) further reveals that some other determinants of migrant adaptation are age on arrival in the new country, and education and qualification of the migrant concerned.

Cameroonians migrants in Durban faced with a new environment, new way of life, new language and a novel social setting are left with no other option but to adjust and adapt to this new setting. The findings from this research reveal that the process of adjustment begins not only when the migrants get to the receiving society but right from the time the individual migrant makes a decision to migrate. This is so because from the time they make a decision to migrate, they begin adjusting by making contacts with people in the country they hope to migrate to. Those who have friends or relatives in their destination will try to always be in contact with them for the travel arrangement and those who do not have friends or relatives begin to ask questions around their neighborhood in an attempt to get the contact of someone in the country they hope to migrate to. This is exemplified in the following excerpt:

> Before I came to South Africa, I had made arrangements to live with one of our family friends who was resident in South Africa. My relationship with this family friend was not very intimate until when I had secured a visa to come to South Africa since I then began to call her very often and ask her questions such as, is South Africa a nice place and what kind of things can I bring from Cameroon when coming? This is something I had never done before ....

The data excerpts provided above indicate that the process of migrant adjustment does not only begin whilst the migrant is in the host society but rather the process begins from the time they make a decision to migrate. In so doing, they begin building their networks and creating a new circle of friends for themselves.

Adaptation is understood in terms of the acquisition of the culture-specific skills required not only to survive but to also thrive in a new and foreign environment (Bochner 1972). According to Bochner (1972:14) adaptation 'reflects a person's capability to acquire or adapt behaviours appropriate for a new culture'. Migrants learn to adapt to their changed circumstances in the host country environment, finding new ways of handling their daily life. In the process, they may unconsciously modify their cognitive proficiency in expressing themselves, understanding the host cultural practices and aligning thoughts and actions with those of the local people. All these translate to an internal growth in the migrants (Kim 1988; Kim and Ruben, 1988). As will be discussed below, one significant element, their language proficiency or otherwise, will be central to how quickly they adapt to the host country. According to Kim (1988), immigrants and sojourners will discover that the adaptation process is achieved mainly through communication.

According to Berry (1980), as individuals acculturate, various changes occur, a number of behaviours are modified, together with attitudes, beliefs, and values. Berry (1980) proposes that migrants undergo a process of change in at least six areas of psychological functioning: language, cognitive styles, personality, identity, attitudes, and acculturative stress. Further, Berry (1980) posits that after some initial changes the individual reaches a stage of conflict, at which point an adaptation strategy is used. Berry (1980, cited in Padilla & Perez 2003) identifies several varieties of adaptation which are assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation. Berry's (1980) work takes into consideration the importance of multicultural societies, minority individuals and groups, and the significant fact that individuals have choices, such as what they wish to achieve in the adaptation process. Most noteworthy in Berry's study is the author's contention that a migrant and/or minority person could reverse their acculturation process to the dominant group and return to their former cultural heritage. Support for this statement is found in Fishman (2001, cited in Padilla & Perez 2003) who states that

there are many cases of migrants who managed to revive their ancestral language and culture in the host society.

Research on migrants has yielded insights into the problems of adaptation, issues on discrimination from the host society, racism, and issues relating to identity management and cultural change (Eriksen 2002). Eriksen asserts that groups who look different from dominant groups may be less able to be assimilated into the majority than others, even if they wish to, for it can be difficult for them to escape from their ethnic identity. In this case, as well as in the case where migrants have an inadequate command of the dominant language, their original identity becomes an important and distinctive status and an ascribed aspect of their personhood. For migrants, even though the speed of social and cultural change varies from person to person and for some the change occurs quickly, people tend to retain their home country identity despite having moved to a new environment (Eriksen 2002).

Contrary to Eriksen's (2002) argument above, this study found that migrants acculturate (learn) new cultural practices and deculturation (unlearn) at least some of their old cultural norms. The quality and quantity of communication that migrants have with the host environment critically impact on the different levels of their adaptive change, since all the learning and unlearning occurs via communication interfaces between the migrant and the host environment. Migrants' ethnic backgrounds also influence their cross-cultural adaptation process by impacting on the ease or difficulty with which the person is able to develop the communication competence in a given host society and participate in its social communication activities (Kim 1994b). However, language competency is not the only challenge faced by migrants. There are also other differences that set them apart. This difference may impact on the preparedness of host nationals to embrace them into their social networks (Kim 1994b). These differences may impact negatively or impede the progression of the adaptation process. Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001, cited in Berry & Ward 2006) argue that there are broader factors that predict socio-cultural adaptation and these include previous intercultural experience, training, length of residence in the new culture, amount of contact with host nationals, and cultural distance. Regardless of their heritage and culture, migrants must adapt to their new cultural environment in one way or another. Migrants are said to have fully adapted

in terms of their well-being and level of satisfaction with the host society.

The migrant's ability to meet and connect with other migrants from their home countries and from other African countries has enabled them to succeed in adjusting to life in South Africa. Richmond (1998) argues that the migrant adaptation process is influenced by pre-migratory conditions, the transitional experiences in moving from one country to another, the characteristics of the migrants themselves, and the conditions in the receiving country, including economic factors as well as government policies. Richmond (1998) further notes that, some other important determinants of migrant adaptation include age on arrival in the new country, and education and qualification of the migrant concerned. This is quite true for Cameroonian migrants in Durban. Migrants who had family members or relatives and friends in South Africa prior to their migration had minimal problems associated with adjustment as opposed to those who had no relatives or friends. Also their individual characteristics either impaired or enhanced the adjustment process.

This is exemplified in the case of Larissa; a Cameroonian who came to South Africa for the purpose of furthering her studies expressed her difficulty to adjust to the South African culture. She asserts that even her bubbly personality was not enough for her to easily make friends as her classmates found it difficult to understand her and her accent was different from theirs 'when I came to this country, I encountered a few difficulties in associating with the people especially in school, because they found it difficult understanding whatever I said'. She adds that when they couldn't understand her, she would say the same thing again and again till they'll get it and they would laugh about it. She was not used to the South African system of education so she kept barging her peers with questions trying to get them to explain whatever was not clear to her. Once she had made friends, she started telling them stories about the Cameroonian lifestyle which they found quite interesting and they spent time together.

In another case, Justine related that when she moved to SA it was quite difficult for her and the situation was made worse by the fact that she had no friend no relative, she often felt lonely and it took about a year and three months though she couldn't say precisely when she became comfortable with the new milieu and the people around me. She narrated that

her worst nightmare was when she had to do presentations in class; she would feel so nervous because she is a shy person and was not accustomed to the culture of talking in public. She scarcely spoke to people either because she was not sure how they would react to what she would say or because she was afraid of making errors. What made it even more difficult was that she had no friend no relative, to support or encourage her.

These two Cameroonian migrants Larisa and Justine though they are both students, have differing personalities and different character traits. Larisa is the bold, outgoing and sociable type while Justine is a very shy person. These differing characteristics place them at different levels in the adjustment process as one has fewer problems associated with fitting in than the other. The transitional experiences in moving from one country to another become minimal for one and not the other since they are propelled to depend on their own initiatives. One's personality might determine the level of assistance one gets in order to facilitate adjustment. The outgoing person is able to extend his or her network within a shorter time thereby increasing the number of people who can assist the migrant at this early stage of adjustment but the shy one has to depend on pre-migratory networks for a longer time in order to establish themselves at first.

Adjustment is a two way process. While the migrants adjust as they struggle to fit in, the nationals, that is, people from the host society also adjust in order to incorporate the migrant. The reaction of members of the new community towards migrants will have diverse influences on how the new migrant settles in and adapts. It cannot be ignored that the local community feels the impact of the newcomer, for his or her presence modifies the group structure, can throw doubt on the community's moral, political or scientific groundrules and can destabilise the existing group organisation. Therefore though a difficult task, the community have to incorporate the presence of a stranger in their midst. This was particularly glaring in the study in instances where some of the migrants reported that they belong to a particular group, mostly religious groups in their various churches. Members of these groups include both South Africans and foreigners. Usually the medium of communication among the group is IsiZulu but because of the presence of foreigners the group has to adjust by adopting English as a medium of communication so that these foreigners can understand any discussion that is going on. In a particular instance, Annabel

narrated that she belongs to a choir in her church because she loves singing; all members of the choir are Zulu speakers except for her. They usually speak in isiZulu. Every time she has to draw their attention to the fact that she does not understand Zulu and they would apologise and switch to English, but sooner or later they will again switch back to isiZulu. Annabel said she does not complain anymore because she has however become accustomed to it. The other choir members try to speak in English, though most of the time they unconsciously get carried away. Annabel recounted that during one of their rehearsal sessions, she complained a lot because the subject matter of the discussion that day was very crucial and she felt left out. Though she was angry, she noticed they were also annoyed by her complaints, to the extent that the choir leader told her he does not understand English.

This shows that, as the migrants try to adjust and fit into their new environment, the host society also has to adjust to enable the migrant to fit in. Moreover, as Ginberg and Ginberg (1998) argue, it is not only the migrant who feels their identity is endangered but in a different way, the community on the receiving end may feel that its cultural identity, the purity of its language, its beliefs and its sense of group identity are also threatened, as typified in the case of Annabel above.

Length of Residence in South Africa and the Ability to Adjust

Most interviewees felt that the length of time definitely helped in the adjustment process given that, the longer they stayed in Durban, the more opportunities they have to learn and emulate how South Africans operate in different situations. The sample excerpt given below represents typical comments from the majority of those who participated in the interview. In analysing these migrants' comments, it soon became obvious that the length of time the migrant has been residing in the host society is very crucial in the adjustment process, along with other dynamics, such as the individual migrant's personality, their attitude and the choices they make. It is conceded that the length of time provide more opportunities for the migrants to continue learning and growing as they continue their adaptation process.

I initially found this new environment here in Durban, frightening. I was too intimidated. Time really thus matters, because with time you are able to adjust and be yourself again for example, I use to do pretty much what my boss said or wanted me to do not minding whether it is right or wrong. When my boss or other co-workers ill-treat me, I wouldn't question not only because they are the ones in authority but also largely because of the complex I had that I am not in my country so I have to accept whatever they do to me. But now, because I have been in this country for long, I've actually developed and adjusted. I have become confident of myself such that if they treat me badly I'll complain immediately, which is something I dared not do when I first came to Durban.

In the main, the study found that interviewees noticed gradual changes to themselves in various ways as well as developing themselves culturally as time progressed in their host society, compared with the initial period as new migrants. Migrants' length of residence in the host country as illustrated in the above extracts is very instrumental in their ability to adjust in the host society. The longer they are in Durban, the more opportunities they have for exposure and observations to learn how South Africans operate. For most Cameroonian migrants, the initial exposure to a foreign environment where making sense of the different behaviours and customs of the local people is almost an uphill task, adjustment is only possible with the progress of time in their adopted country. The first experiences seemed daunting and filled with challenges and hurdles as the new migrant grappled with a host of unfamiliar things. However, the length of time on its own is not enough as was evident in the experiences of some of the interviewees, who believe that discarding traditional shackles, personal and cultural norms and some of their character traits are more important if one wishes to assimilate into the South African society.

Negotiating the Host Space: The 'in-betweeness' of Migrant Identity

Migrants struggle to find a place of physical and emotional belonging in a

fluid and globalised world. Migration has personal, social, financial and emotional consequences for migrants. The process of assimilation is dependent on the host country's policies towards migrants. According to Tajfel (1987), identity is a social construct. For migrants this means that multiple forms can exist. As Ojong (2002) claims, migrants display characteristics of home and recipient country identities depending on the situation. For example, she found that when migrants were interacting with fellow countrymen they would behave as if they were at home. At other times when dealing with nationals in the recipient country they would change how they spoke and behaved to mirror that of their host society. Berry (1997) identifies four fundamental representations of identity, namely language, culture, family and society. Social identity theorists have argued that meanings associated with interactions are linked to the formation of self and group identity. Thus how and why a person interacts with others is closely related to that person's sense of self. However, theorists like Abu-Lughod (2005) and others have argued that the same interaction can have different meaning for different people. Thus two people engaged in the same activity with the same social group may form different meanings from that interaction based on their specific needs. Deaux and Ethier (1994:27) state that these 'beliefs and meanings held by an individual in turn shape the nature of interaction between the person and others.' According to Rogers (1987) identity is formed as a result of interaction with significant others. It consists of a set of values and norms that make up a person's sense of self.

The Impact of Migration on the Identity of Migrants

Migrants find themselves caught in a confined space between country of origin and country of migration. Migrant identities tend to be multiple, fluid and complex rather than simple, stable and singular. Moving between spaces and societies, migrants struggle to develop and maintain an identity that is at once an accurate reflection of themselves and at ease with their environments.

Berry's (1990) model of acculturation attitudes directly relates to identity issues with migration. According to this model, migrants must decide if they wish to maintain their minority cultural identity or assimilate the identity of the majority of the population. Dichotomous answers to these

questions generate a framework of migrant incorporation which determines four types of acculturation attitudes: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation. Integration is the adoption of elements of both home and recipient culture. Assimilation is an adoption of the host county's culture and a simultaneous rejection of the home country identity and is defined by Massey (1993:3), as 'the means, mechanism and policies by which immigrants adapt to and are incorporated within receiving societies'. Separation is defined as an attachment to home identity and rejection of the new country. Lastly, marginalisation is the rejection of both identities. In reality these questions are not as easy to answer as Berry (1990) postulates. Migrants face a constant inner battle between remaining loyal to their home country, family and customs and adjusting to the lifestyle of the host society in order to work. Identity amongst migrants is located within a continuum between complete assimilation and cultural continuity.

Rouse (1995) argues that identity only becomes an issue for migrants once they face a threat to their identity in the new space. This suggests that if migrants feel discriminated against they are more likely to re-examine and become stauncher in their beliefs. In this way, close groups based on ethnicity and nationality is more likely to form at the expense of integration. Portes *et al.* (1999) argue that success for migrants depends not on their ability to embrace another society but on preserving their original cultural endowment while adapting instrumentally to a second. These authors are implying that migrants need to be in two spaces at one time. This translates into a constant struggle to redevelop a sense of who they are (Margolis, 1995). The most common form of adaptation among Cameroonian migrants in Durban is integration or blending of aspects of both the home and new culture. Most migrants find it impractical to ignore the practices of their host country and also find it comforting to retain some of the traditions of their homelands.

Migrants' ties with home have become more constant and pronounced in the last twenty years. Ong (1994), states that boundaries are no longer impediments to a sense of belonging and identification with homeland. The use of the internet, easier travel and mobile technology has allowed migrants to remain connected with home. As Appadurai (1991) describes, migration and the media makes the previously 'imagined community' of home a reality. He writes that 'as Turkish workers in

Germany watch Turkish movies in their flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through live television feeds and as Pakistani cab drivers in Chicago listen to sermons in mosques over the internet, we see moving images meet deterritorialised viewers.' (Appadurai 1991: 190). Appadurai (1991) argues that increased mobility leads to a dispersion of identities. Identities are constantly being reproduced in order to fit and find a sense of peace and comfort in new spaces, whilst still trying to hold on to the principles and way of life found at home. Cameroonian migrants in Durban, for example, would at times engage with local South Africans and try to speak their language and at other times they would exhibit classical home country identities through dress customs and behaviour.

However, it would be dangerous to reduce migrants' identity to a form of biculturalism, playing the role of whichever culture they may at that moment find themselves in. Such a view would be reductionist at best, as it ignores the complexities involved in finding a sense of belonging amongst different groups. This study argues that, rather, a hybridised identity based on the original or home identity is formed within the new migratory context that incorporates the experiences of the new country. Such incorporation or symbolisation of experiences is essential for the migrant to feel a sense of congruency and understanding. As new behaviour and experiences come into the life of the migrants, they begin to acclimatise it into their sense of self, thereby developing an identity that is fluid enough to incorporate new experiences but also stable enough to offer them a sense of self that is congruent with the original or home self.

Remaining Cameroonians and Becoming South Africans

Migration poses new challenges to people as they struggle to fit into their new environment. Ultimately, new interactions and a new lifestyle causes a migrant to reflect on their own sense of self. Settling into their host country, making conscious attempts to assimilate and making personal changes in an attempt to fit into the host society, migrants may also experience hurdles of an entirely different kind. This is poignantly told by the Cameroonian migrants who participated in the study:

> It feels like you have to be two people in two places, when I am at my flat with my friends with whom I share a flat, I am Cameroonian and I behave like it. But when I am at work I feel like I have to become a bit South African, I even start speaking differently, it feels funny to be like this but also it is not bad if you know what I mean I am still the same person I was but I am just a bit more now a different person because of the new environment I am in. So I don't see it as a bad thing changing my behaviour and the way I talk in different scenarios depending on whom I'm dealing with at a given time.

Migrants face adjustment problems which stem from reinforcing their own cultural identity and at the same time adopting elements of the culture of the host society. These migrants are caught between the host and home country cultures. The inherent paradox in such dualism is that they have the option of choosing one over the other but not without implications. If they choose to maintain only the home country culture, that may possibly cause social isolation and separation from the mainstream society. On the other hand, if they follow the culture of the host group for the purpose of upward social mobility, which necessitates assimilation and joining the majority group, they risk not being accepted by their fellow counterparts from their country of origin and also from their home country when they return home. Most Cameroonian migrants choose to adopt aspects of both cultures making their identity fluid. This is indeed the case as depicted in the reflections of Wilson. In essence, this participant finds himself caught between two worlds. This is congruent with the observations from Bochner (1972) who claims that migrants live within and between two cultures, striving to integrate with the country of resettlement, even while maintaining an affiliation with, or loyalty to the home country. This gives insight into the complexities, challenges and even ironies that migrants face while undergoing the adjustment and adaptation process in Durban.

The process of adjusting to a new culture or society involves potential changes in identity, values, behaviours, attitudes, interactions and relationships (Berry 1990). A migrant may need to change some strategies while adapting to a new social context, and at the same time continues other strategies or patterns of interaction that help to maintain stability in the host

society (Falicov 2003). A number of Cameroonian migrants in Durban cited that migrating has placed them in a situation whereby they have to adjust their ways in order to fit into the South African society. The South African space is an entirely new space for them and this has led to change in attitudes. For example Blessing one of my participants, attested to this by expressing that she is a very impatient person who does not like slow people and if someone made her angry, she would voice her annoyance immediately. However, when she came to South Africa it dawned on her that this is not her home and that she has to do everything possible to relate well with everyone, so she had to learn to be more patient with people, to take time before reacting to situations. Being in a different context had changed her dramatically in terms of interpersonal relationships. Interacting with different people had made her a better person. Blessing's case is one of many which reveal that migrants adjust in the host society through change in behaviour and attitudes. Cameroonians in Durban devise ways of enabling them to cope with being away from home and enhancing their interactions with other people. They do so by changing their attitudes and behaviours, for example they become more tolerant, patient, understanding, accepting and less judgmental.

However, not all Cameroonian migrants integrate themselves into South African society by adopting aspects of both home and recipient society. When asked to describe themselves as individual Cameroonians living in Durban and their experiences, some of the migrants responded that it is hard because everything is so different, they think they are not being themselves in that they try to ensure that they do the right thing and say the right things as a result of the fact that to they claim South Africans take offence so quickly even when no harm in intended. At home (in Cameroon) they feel most comfortable because to them they are part of the world but here they see themselves and are seen as foreigners. These migrants claim that in south Africa people are very closed minded, because 'no one really mixes with us'.

For these Cameroonian migrants lack of integration appears to be the most significant factors as new migrants. They feel like outsiders and are unwilling to mix with South Africans. This in turn makes migrants more marginalised as a group. The experiences of these migrants understood more naunced from the marginalised acculturation approach reveal that apart

from feeling isolated, these migrants actually avoid integrating themselves into the South African society. This becomes a bit problematic for them given the transnational context in which they find themselves. In other instances the migrants responded that:

> I am Cameroonian and always will be. Home is about family for me, I miss my mother, and my sisters and brothers and my friends. I miss the way we joke, and tease each other. Home is where people can be together like back at home, eating and living together. Even though they are not here I have made friends here who are like my family. I wear my traditional attire like on Sundays when am going to church, I prepare Cameroonian dishes and eat though they are expensive, they are sold here. I speak my language with other migrants. I am ok living and working in Durban. Business is good and I am happy.

This response seems to reflect Appadurai's (1991) notion of imagined community which was discussed earlier. Migrants feel as if they are in two places at one time. The imagined community is created to feel a closer connection to home and original self. A homogeneous and close social circle helps to foster such a community. Furthermore, a common theme emerging from these narratives is loss. This is manifested four fold, loss of family and honour, standing and identity. Home for the migrant is family and the absence of the large extended family in close proximity to each other creates a sense of loneliness and in some cases, feelings of inferiority. For this group of migrants, leaving home has meant losing strong social networks consisting of extended family and friends. Migrants have coped with this loss by turning to fellow Cameroonian migrants in South Africa. Thorough carefully formed social networks with fellow nationals, migrants have attempted to reproduce elements of home and identity. In so doing, migrants are able to continue exhibiting the community based spirit of assistance and brotherhood that characterizes their society at home.

Conclusion

The findings in this study demonstrate the many complexities involved in the adjustment and adaptation process and the challenges that migrants go

through as they strive to fit into their new environment. It reveals that some people adapt better and faster than others and the reasons may lie in a person's predisposition or adaptive potential underpinned by the person's preparedness and personality. Personality includes self-image, self-identity and self-esteem. A person's disposition, attitude, and personality have significance, for example, some migrants have a propensity to handle their new environment in the host society better than others, acquiring and attaining skills along the way. However, the length of residence in the host society also plays a pivotal role in the adjustment process of the migrants. When people migrate, they migrate with some aspects of their cultures. The way they eat, dress behave or speak reflects their country of origin. They try to maintain their values from the culture of origin in their host society.

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Cross-border Traders: Emerging, Multiple and Shifting Identities

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Abstract

A significant number of Zimbabweans cross borders daily to engage in informal cross-border trade. Zimbabwean cross-border traders are a 'cosmopolitan, footloose group of cultural and economic entrepreneurs'. They are a highly gendered group, as they comprise mostly women. These women cross-border traders are characterised by emergent, multiple, shifting and negotiated identities. In Zimbabwe, cross-border trade as an occupation had given rise to the image of a strong, independent and mobile class of women involved in long distance transborder business (Cheater 1998; Muzvidziwa 1999, 2000 and 2005; and Zinyama 2000). A new identity marking women cross-border traders from others appeared to be emerging. The paper draws largely from the one year study by the author in 2002 in Chinhoyi, the capital of Mashonaland West Province and Harare, Zimbabwe's capital. This paper seeks to examine how identity is formed and legitimated in the context of women cross border's lived experiences. The paper examines issues related to emerging, shifting and multiple identities in the context of cross border trade. The paper focuses mostly on lived experiences of Zimbabwean cross-border traders. Global domains and issues concerning home and belonging and acquired cross-border identities are also examined in the paper. Discussions in this paper lead to the conclusion that anthropological perspectives are useful and do contribute to a better understanding of issues of belonging and identity among cross border traders in Zimbabwe today.

Keywords: cross border, traders, gendered, multiple identities, negotiate

Victor Muzvidziwa

Introduction

Since the official adoption of the economic structural adjustment programme (ESAP) (referred to then in Zimbabwe in street lingo as the extreme suffering of the African people) in 1991 by the Zimbabwean Government cross-border trade has become a very important aspect of the national psyche and economy. Many Zimbabweans cross borders daily between the country and its neighbours, that is, Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries and the rest of Africa and go as far as the United Kingdom, China and the USA. With the near collapse of the Zimbabwean economy during the first decade of the 21st century, informal cross-border trade mostly by Zimbabwean women became the single most profitable strategy adopted by a number of women in order to earn an income and in some instances invest the accrued surplus. A number of Zimbabwean women traders not only managed to extricate their households out of poverty but also used the surplus to invest and climb out of poverty. Informal cross-border trade mainly by women is one example of an effective response to poverty and economic hardships. However, it is important to stress that despite the seeming successes of cross-border women traders, highly successful outcomes remained a preserve of the few. The majority of women in the urban populace continued to live in poverty (Musoni 2010; Muzvidziwa 2005).

This paper draws its data from an ethnographic study of a selected group of cross-border women traders who lived at the time of study in two cities in Zimbabwe, namely Harare, the country's capital and Chinhoyi, a provincial capital of Mashonaland West Province some 115 Km to the north west of Harare. The study was funded by the Organisation of for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA). The study mostly employed qualitative research methodology. Fieldwork spanned for a period of a year starting in December 2001 to the end of November 2002. Multiple research methods were adopted in terms of data gathering. Data was collected mainly using in-depth and length intensive interviews with 20 selected fulltime cross-border women traders as well as more than 30 officials. Only those amongst the women who lived in Harare or Chinhoyi at the time of the study were included in the in-depth interviews. The 20 women, 10 from Harare and another 10 from Chinhoyi were selected using snowball sample techniques. Interviews took place in the women's homes

while officials were interviewed at their work stations. In addition during fieldwork, informal interviews and direct observations at border posts and people's homes were utilised. This resulted in the gathering of a lot of data some of which has not been presented in depth in publications resulting from this study. While the study resulted in a book publication, two journal articles and several conference papers, issues focusing on emerging and multiple identities have not been explored in depth. This paper seeks to explore issues related to emerging, multiple and shifting identities amongst Zimbabwean cross border women traders. This is intended to take the debate expounded in Muzvidziwa's (2010) article focusing on double-rootedness and networking amongst cross-border traders further.

Social identity is the defining feature of any person or group including cross-border traders. It is the rallying point and strategic resource wielded by women cross-border traders as they go about their daily operations. Identity issues mark and circumscribe women cross-borders' activities and well-being. This paper seeks to examine how identity processes are played out and legitimated amongst the women traders. The focus is on women traders' lived experience in terms of given identities.

This paper excluding the introduction and conclusion consists of five sections. The first section presents a descriptive account of four cross-border women cases selected from the 20 women who participated in the in-depth interviews. This is intended to present a back drop against which to understand identity issues subsequently examined in the paper. The second section explores issues related to emerging, multiple and shifting identities. The use of multiple identities sometimes functioned as a strategic resource that enable research participants to access resources and cement business ties and networks. The third section examines the link between lived experience and identity. The significance of daily life and practice is discussed in order to understand issues of belonging and identity using the Zimbabwean cross-border case study.

The fourth section explores issues related to the cosmopolitan nature of cross-border women traders. This section tries to contextualise cross-border trade in relation to the interconnections between the global and local. Ties that bind go beyond one's borders as demonstrated by what constituted a trader's well-being and domain of operations. The last section before the conclusion examines issues of belonging in the context of internal and

international migration. The section examines notions of belonging, double-rootedness and 'home' '*kumusha'.* A strong sense of belonging engendered by the varying lived experiences of the women is an important part of understanding emerging identities among cross-border traders. The analysis of issues of emerging and multiple identities in the paper focuses mostly on an examination of lived experiences of Zimbabwean cross-border traders. It can thus be concluded based on the issues raised in the paper that cross-border traders are a cosmopolitan footloose group of cultural and economic entrepreneurs. Cross-border traders are a highly gendered group, as they comprise mostly women. It is demonstrated in the paper that cross-border traders are characterised by emergent, multiple and negotiated identities.

Cross-border Women Traders' Cases

Case1: Amai[1] Sekai

Amai Sekai was a 49-year-old married woman and mother of four, three sons aged 30, 24 and 12 and a daughter aged 28. Two of her eldest children were married and worked in the United Kingdom (UK). Her 24-year-old son was single and also worked in the UK. The only dependent child was the 12-year-old son in grade seven. Amai Sekai's parents and parents-in-laws had died, hence her only dependents were her youngest son and retired husband in his late sixties. She stopped secretarial work with Zimbabwe Cares Trust (ZIMCARE) an organisation for mentally challenged people in 1978. Amai Sekai started cross-border trade in 1979 a year before Zimbabwe's independence. In those days they acted as a club and hired Express buses to travel to Durban and Johannesburg in South Africa. Average trips took them two weeks away from home. Her husband has always supported her cross-border business. Her husband's uncle's wife initiated her into cross-border trade.

In 1981 she switched her operations to Botswana. During those days she used to source goods for resale in Zimbabwe, goods like umbrellas, radios, and other electronic items, jeans, etc. She was able to build a house then, using the surplus from her cross-border trade activities. In 1984 she

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[1] *Amai* means mother but it can also be used as a mark of respect, calling a mature woman *amai* irrespective of whether one has a child or not is a mark of respect.

stopped going to Botswana and worked on the Voters' Roll fulltime. She left after nine months to resume her cross-border trade operations, which were more profitable, compared to this fulltime job. On resumption of cross-border trade activities in 1985 she travelled to Durban. At that time she managed to bring in two cars and a machine for knitting jerseys. In 1987 she worked briefly as a fulltime employee of the Norwegian DANIDA organisation. From 1988 to 1991 she specialised in selling doilies in South Africa. The train was the main mode of transport then. She would go either through Mafeking Botswana to South Africa or direct to Johannesburg. During this period she was able to buy a car, sewing machines, and chemicals for dyeing and many other goods for resale in both Zimbabwe and South Africa. She even managed to pay fees for her daughter, now married, then studying at the University of Cape Town.

In 1992 she briefly operated in Namibia. They had to travel to Gaborone, then Lobatse in Botswana, and then hitch hiked from there to Windhoek, Walvis Bay and Swakopmund. Business was brisk but too demanding. She resumed trade in South Africa this time going to the Orange Free State in South Africa in 1993. Her speciality was now doilies. From 1994 to 1998 she conducted business in Cape Town and Johannesburg. She was able to build a fleet of Taxis from two to six during this time. Some of her taxis operate from the Harare International airport. She stopped cross-border trade briefly in 1999/2000. She resumed operations in 2001. This time she flew to Mauritius. They stayed up to three weeks on the island. She specialised in doilies, chair bags, and souvenirs items, sewn, knitted and crocheted items. On her first trip she paid an amount of 20 000 Rupees as duty for the seven boxes she had because she did not have a COMESA certificate of origin. For the same number of boxes once her papers were in order she paid only 2000 Rupees. Between June and October 2002 the return air ticket from Zimbabwe to Mauritius went up fromZ$79 000 to Z$500 000. This closed the door to Mauritius. She resumed operations to South Africa at the end of October. She sees cross-border trade as a career. Amai Sekai had initiated many people into cross-border trade. While she believed a professional course is important, she was convinced cross-border trade was more exciting and profitable.

She specialised in doilies, which she sold then to predominantly whites. Her customers generally paid in cash. She had no problem of

following up on debts. She wanted to activate her network of white customers in the Orange Free State. Otherwise she had not been able to maintain a strong cluster of friends as she was always changing destinations. She confessed though that friendships were an important resource in cross-border business. She only brought back cash to Zimbabwe and no items for resale due to the collapse of the Zim\$ vis-à-vis other currencies. She was then contemplating taking her wares to London in 2003. She observed that a number of Zimbabwean women were plying the London, Dubai Middle East, Malaysia and China routes. Amai Sekai was a strong, determined, hardworking informal cross-border trader who knew what to look for in the market. This was an example of a successful pioneer who had defied negative attitudes of society to become a successful informal cross-border trader. She was in the climbing[2] out of poverty category. She owned a house in one of the low-density suburbs of Harare and was planning to invest more into properties. Due to her exposure Amai Sekai had become a language expert, something critical to cross-border success. She knew nearly a dozen languages that include Sotho, Venda, Zulu, Xhosa, Shona, Nyanza, Tswana, Shangaan, English, and Afrikaans etc. Language proficiency was found to be handy in cross-border trade operations as it enabled the trader an opportunity to blend well with her customers' communities.

Case 2: Amai Kudzi

Amai Kudzi a 32-year-old divorcee had two sons aged 15 and 12. She was in the poverty coping category. Her marriage had ended in 1995 and since then had supported herself and her sons. She was just glad to be out of the unhappy marriage and had not bothered to sue her ex-husband for maintenance. She rented a two-bedroom cottage in one of the city's low-density suburbs. She left school before completing her O levels due to pregnancy.

Amai Kudzi started cross-border operations in 1996. She used two sewing machines to generate income for food and rent. She raised her start-up capital for cross-border operations from savings. Amai Kudzi was initiated into cross-border trade by a female cousin who took her to Durban. Up to the year 2000, she used to go Durban at least once every two months.

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[2] Used as per Muzvidziwa 1998. Climbing out of poverty referred to those who had relatively healthy domestic budget, savings and investments.

From 2000 onwards she made monthly cross-border journeys to her destination. She was proficient in English, Nyanja, Shona, Sotho and Zulu. She carried crafts, souvenirs and curios, textile products, embroidery, knit ware and doilies. At the time of research, Amai Kudzi had stopped sourcing goods for resale back home in Harare. She only brought back grocery items for the consumption of her household. On average she was able to raise at least SAR3000 monthly. Amai Kudzi had other sources of income in addition to her cross-border operations. She had a flea market and a thriving dressmaking business enterprise in which she employed three women. The three women worked in the city where they shared rented space in a room in a high rise eight-storey building.

Amai Kudzi did not have dependents other than her children. Amai Kudzi had managed to buy a vacant stand in a low-density suburb. She had been buying the materials slowly and was ready to start construction at least before the end of 2002. For her, the house was the major investment of her life. She wanted to move into her house sometime during 2003. Amai Kudzi was a member of the Apostolic Faith church. Whenever she is not away on cross-border activities she attends church services. Amai Kudzi is also a member of a four-person rotating savings club. Members take turns to receive a lump sum of money as agreed amongst the members. Generally every member agrees in advance who the beneficiary for the month is.

Case 3: Amai Dzimba

Amai Dzimba a 28-year-old widow was a mother of two; a son aged 10 and a daughter aged 7. She was solely responsible for her children's general welfare. Her husband had died in 1999 and his relatives shared amongst themselves most of whatever he had. She had continued to live in Chinhoyi after the death of her husband. In addition to supporting her two children Amai Dzimba remitted money to her in-laws on a regular basis. From time to time she also remitted money to her own parents. She rented three rooms and stayed at the premises together with her children. Amai Dzimba was in the poverty[3] coping category.

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[3] Used as per classification by Muzvidziwa 1998. Coping referred to those who could balance the household budget.

Amai Dzimba had started cross-border trading operations in 1997, when her daughter was two years old. She travelled to Cape Town in South Africa on a monthly basis and spent at least a fortnight away from home. She had a domestic worker who was very reliable, loved the children and remained behind looking after the children during Amai Dzimba's numerous cross-border trips. Amai Dzimba had completed O levels but did not do any professional course thereafter.

For her outward journeys to South Africa she specialises in tourist focused objects, pieces of artefacts, both wooden and stone crafts products. In addition to artefacts, she also carries with her doilies. She does the crocheting of doilies herself. One required at least SAR1000 rands per trip. She reckoned she was making a profit margin of SAR5000 or so rands per month. With parallel markets rates appearing favourable to all those with access to foreign currency it was likely that that she would finish building her house in a short time. She had bought a stand.

Like most female cross-border traders she relied on public transport i.e. taxis and buses to get to and from her destination. She used to bring back goods for resale from South Africa, but had stopped purchasing goods for resale to the Zimbabwean market. The free fall of the Zim$ made the currency so unstable and this had contributed to the skyrocketing of prices of commodities in Zim$. Cape Town being a tourist market place had a huge market for Amai Dzimba's products. Amai Dzimba was proficient in English, Afrikaans, Sotho, Shona, Nyanja, Xhosa and Ndebele.

Amai Dzimba was a member of a three-person credit and savings club. The three women had an arrangement where they contributed Z$20 000, which they advanced to each other on a monthly basis. They took turns to receive the money. Amai Dzimba had also found help and refuge in the church. She had minimal interaction with other women in the neighbourhood.

Case 4: Amai Sarudzai

Amai Sarudzai was a never-married, 35-year-old and had a son aged 16 years who was doing form four at a boarding school. She had an elder brother who worked in Harare and stayed there with his family. She lived with her mother in Chinhoyi. Her father died in 1996. She had completed O levels but did no

further professional formal training. The house where she stayed belonged to her mother. She however, contributed money for extensions of two additional rooms to the original four rooms.

Amai Sarudzai is in the poverty coping category. She managed her finances well and was planning to invest in housing. She worked in a saloon and retail shop up to 1999 when she abandoned this line of work and started cross-border trading activities. Since 1999 she had been going down to Johannesburg in South Africa. She travelled to South Africa on a monthly basis. She had financed her first trip from both her own savings and was also given a grant by her brother. A cousin initiated her into cross-border trade. They still travelled together on most trips. They sold their wares to individuals in their homes. She also visited people at work places marketing her goods. She spoke English, Shona, Sotho, Venda and Zulu very well, something that is good in cross-border trade. Many of her old customers act as referees for prospective new customers. They also help her find customers for her goods. She sold goods on a two to three month credit basis and had no debt collection problem. She sometimes found customers who purchased goods on a cash basis. She also sold goods to formal shops especially goods destined for the tourist market.

She used to bring back goods for resale in Zimbabwe. She had stopped this practice because of reduced profitability. She only brought back grocery for consumption by her household and money for exchange in the parallel foreign currency market. On average, she got between SAR1000 and SAR2000 monthly from trips to South Africa. She took to South Africa clothing items, Zambian cloth, trendy shoes, knitted clothes, and crocheted items, occasional wood, metal and stone crafted products for the tourist market. Formal shops paid her cash for her products unlike most of her individual customers who operate on a credit basis. She partly self-produced some of the items for her trade. She also commissioned people for a fee to produce some of the items. In addition she sourced from formal shops and individual producers some of the goods she took down with her to South Africa.

During her visits to South Africa to minimise costs she shared a room with three or four other Zimbabwean cross-border traders and paid for the duration of her stay SAR50. She spent three to five days each month in Johannesburg, her area of operations. The owner of the house where she

rented a room had become a friend and they related as if they were kin. Sometimes Amai Sarudzai brought her landlord friend gifts. She used to bring her some selected food items from Zimbabwe. The landlord had stayed with some of the people who lodge rooms at her place during short visits to Zimbabwe.

She believed something needed to be done to lessen the burden women faced trying to get visas particularly those outside Harare. Customs officials of both countries needed to improve on customer care handling procedures. Zimbabwe customs officials were reported as being to desperate to raise money from cross-border traders that at times their zealousness borders on harassment. Amai Sarudzai felt something should be done to improve interactional relations between customs and cross-border traders. She had commended the work ethic of immigration officials.

Amai Sarudzai was an Apostolic Faith member. She attends Church on Sundays at least twice a month and pays her dues to church. She was a member of three credit and savings groups, one group had a membership of three they rotated giving money to each other. Their contributions are Z$10 000 and the second group had a membership of four just like the first group they contributed Z$10 000. The third group consists of 23 members. They contributed Z$500 and members can borrow money and make a repayment of the full amount with 10% interest the following month. Amai Sarudzai bought a 300square metre-stand in 2002. She was planning to start building sometime in 2003. She believes investing in property was the only means to secure the future.

Cross-border Traders: An Emerging Identity

Cross-border trade was clearly moulding a new type of business woman in Zimbabwe. This was more than what Lacaze (2010) in the case of Mongolian traders referred to as 'businessmen of the transition' or informal 'suitcase traders'. In the 1990s and early 2000s cross-border women traders were popularly referred to as *vakadzi vekuSouth* (the women who go down South – this was with reference to South Africa). This term was used irrespective of destination plied by the woman trader. The term was also associated with business shrewdness and success. Women like Amai Sekai, Amai Kudzi and other fellow cross-border traders were beginning to be constructed as male to

denote their breadwinner status and hard determination to succeed. They were seen and referred to as *varume pachavo* (just like men). The women had broken the glass ceiling by proving that women too can be shrewd successful business persons.

While all the women cited in this paper self-identified as Shona in terms of ethnic group, they considered this to be of less importance in cross-border trade but the women stressed that language competence was critical and more often than not a pre-requisite to success. The language ability of these women was amazing. Yet none had gone beyond O level, but all of them were multi-lingual. Mai Sekai a veteran cross-border was proficient in nearly a dozen languages. Mai Sarudzai and Mai Kudzi were competent in five languages and lastly Amai Dzimba was fluent in seven. These women could understand several other languages. Language proficiency is seen as the key defining feature and of necessity to anyone contemplating being a successful cross-border trader. The women were able to gain acceptance and win customers in any ethnic group they happen to come across due to their ability to reach out to their customers through the language of the customer or prospective customer. It is not surprising that even during the highly publicised xenophobic attacks in South Africa in 2008 there were hardly any reports of attacks of cross-border traders. The importance of one's ability to adopt multiple identities is seen as critical to successful development efforts (Kiang, Yip & Fuligni 2008). This however is not something specific to adolescence and young adults. The women cross-border traders were able to blend in easily in the communities in which they plied their trade by learning the local languages. Through language competencies the women cross-border traders were able to fit in very well in the respective communities. Language was in a way being used to redefine ethnic identity. It was recognised as a key resource that enabled the women to maximise returns on their investments in cross-border trade.

Language versatility was matched by the high levels of physical mobility. Cross-border trade was very demanding and required physical stamina on the part of the women traders. A lot of effort was needed carrying the goods to be traded in distant places. Amai Sekai had travelled across the South African landscape and equally in Botswana and Namibia. It did not matter whether one moved by bus, train, long distance trucks or aeroplanes. Mobility in terms of space was very demanding and needed strong

determined women prepared to venture into new unknown places. As demonstrated through the four cited cases, it is clear that Zimbabwean cross-border traders are highly mobile trans-nationals. Mobility is a pre-requisite to success in cross-border trade (Muzvidziwa 1998, 2005; Peberdy 2000; Peberdy & Crush 1998, 2001, 2007). This gave rise to the impression of women on the move both metaphorically and in actual space. Cross-border trade was the one single livelihood that was creating a space for women to move up the socio-economic ladder. Amai Sekai was a successful investor business woman and the other three women were all in the poverty coping category. Through cross-border trade women were in physical and metaphorical terms on the move.

Cross-border traders are a highly gendered group, as they comprise mostly women. This allows us to see how women cross-border traders such as those in Zimbabwe construct their lives under changing contexts and circumstances. The propensity of new forms of migration that attracted many women entrepreneurs especially in the post 1990s structural adjustment phase which decimated the livelihoods of the poor is noted by many writers (Cheater & Gaidzanwa 1996; Mahler & Pessar 2006; Muzvidziwa 1998, 2005; Ojong 2006; and Porter & Poerwandari 2010). As observed in Muzvidziwa (2010:85),

> cross-border trade as an occupation had given rise to the image of a strong and independent class of women involved in long distance trans-border business. A new identity marking cross-border traders from others appeared to be emerging. It was quite clear that cross-border women traders were shrewd business strategists. Cross-border trade was the one single strategy for climbing out of poverty.

Mushaben's (2009) observation that gender tends to give rise to 'complex migration dynamics' that in many ways determine 'who stays, who moves, where, why, how often' tend to be played out in the lives of Amai Dzimba, Amai Kudzi, Amai Sarudzai and Amai Sekai. The choice of residence during the women's stay when on cross border operations, was greatly influenced by security and safety considerations. Amai Sarudzai and Amai Dzimba shared a room with friends. The women cross-border traders were also cultivating more personalised relationships with their landlords.

Cross-border Traders: Emerging, Multiple and Shifting Identities

The four cross-border women traders cited in this paper were forging ahead economically. All the four women cross border traders used a Zimbabwean passport to cross borders legally. However, in informal discussions women knew of some Zimbabwean cross-border traders who were legitimate holders of passports from South Africa and Malawi. South Africa allows for dual citizenship while Zimbabwe does not. Many Zimbabweans qualified for dual citizenship on the basis of descent. More than a million Zimbabweans are of Malawian origin and many have South African roots in addition to other nationalities. At the time of field work there were many obstacles that made it difficult to access a South Africa visa for Zimbabweans. On the other hand holders of a Malawian passport did not need a visa. It is also more of a symbolic statement to insist on mono citizenship when other states do not. It is quite possible that some of the cross-border traders successfully negotiated their way into South Africa using a legitimate passport from a country other than Zimbabwe. Cheater (1998) and Cheater and Gaidzanwa (1996) made a critical assessment of how the Zimbabwean patriarchal state tried to control women through citizenship constructions but with limited success as women continued to find space for themselves to conduct successful cross-border business ventures under hostile states gaze that include Zimbabwe. In many instances women cross-border traders had managed to overcome obstacles from state functionaries and gate keepers such as customs officials and immigration officials by appearing to be going alone with official policy and also appearing to be weak. This is what is referred to by Scott (1993) as the 'weapons of the weak'. The women's strategic responses to cope with the various demands in the conduct of their business, made them better tactical 'politicians'.

In their lived experiences women cross-border traders did not hold on to one identity only but were doing what was pragmatic and practically feasible under the circumstances. This was meant to maximise returns on their business operations. This gave rise to what Werbner (1996) referred to as 'shifting identities'. As noted from the story of the cited four women cross-border traders they confronted a number of obstacles in their lives as cross-border traders. Cheater (1998) observed that women learn survival tactics out of the everyday lived experiences at borders and during operations away from Zimbabwe in other countries. Ranger (1996) also noted that identity reflected the strategic choices that people make in view of the circumstances they face.

This is important in order to have a clearer picture of the lives of the women cross-border traders discussed in this paper.

Identity as a Product of Daily Life

Cross-border women traders' identities are created in the course of daily struggles for existence and survival that challenge people. Amai Sarudzai just like the other three women traders' lived reality and daily realities influenced the kinds of possibilities and options available them in terms of livelihoods strategies. For these women, the notion of the existence of one identity in any given social context is rejected and substituted by the possibility of the existence of a multiplicity of identities. This mirrors the observation by Mbembe (2002 cited in Ceton 2005:121-122) that

> we have to start from the assumption that identity formation is always a historical process. This means that identities are not formed out of a vacuum. The material conditions in which people live have a serious impact on the way they imagine themselves. For most people in Africa, those material conditions of daily life are such that they have to grab at every opportunity to try and make it from one day to the other. In such a situation, it is more rational not to have one single loyalty. … One has to invest in multiple social relations in order to be able to confront the different facets of everyday imperatives.

This is equally true of the lived experiences of the women cross-border traders cited in this paper.

The practicalities of everyday realities force people to enter into various kinds of relations that in turn mould them into certain types of peoples. Informality and the kinds of survival struggles that people opt to hang on to affect their emerging identities. The women traders resorted to use of social networks in order to survive in their everyday lived experiences. Amai Kudzi, Amai Sekai and Amai Sarudzai were initiated by kin into cross-border trade. Kin also played an important role in terms of raising start-up capital for cross-border business as shown by Amai Sarudzai and Amai Sekai. Not only were the women connected to kin they were

strongly connected to various groups of different individuals. This enabled the women to maximise on returns of cross-border trading activities. Friendship networks played an important role in the lives of the women cross-border traders. In the case of Amai Dzimba and Amai Sarudzai some of their customers not only had become their friends they also acted as referees of potential customers. This had the effect of minimising bad debts. To minimize rental costs during cross-border visits some of the women shared a room with other traders. In due course the women had developed friendship relations with their landlords some of whom visited Zimbabwe and stayed with some of their tenants. Spiritual support gave the women the strength to continue in their trading activities. Amai Kudzi and Amai Sarudzai were Apostolic Faith adherents and Amai Dzimba was a Methodist. The importance of social networks in the lives of the women traders cited in this paper is shown by the high level of participation in rotating credit and savings clubs. The three women in the poverty coping category belonged to at least one rotating credit and savings group. In the case of Amai Sarudzai she was a member of three vibrant clubs. These networks can thus be seen as strategic resources that helped the women to mobilise other resources needed in order to be a successful cross-border trader.

The daily negotiations and interactions taking place at many levels in the lies of African women cross-border traders contributed to the emergency of multiple loyalties. For cross-border traders we cannot speak of a homogenous identity, the pressure for multiple identities is high. The cross-border woman trader is pulled in various directions all at the same time. It is to her advantage to establish effective social networks whether they are kin or non-kin ones. When we asked who are these cross-border women traders we realized that the notion of a homogenous identity is not that correct. Flowing from Mbembe, Ceton observed that the African identity is a splintered identity not a single one. This is so mainly as a result of survival challenges faced by people in their everyday lived experiences. African identity or rather any other form of identity is deeply rooted in the cognitive maps of existence. Taking this discussion to our home base Zimbabwe we can begin to appreciate the importance of grasping the dynamics of inter-group relations. In order to come up with practical examples it is useful to illustrate some of the issues on our real life citizens. Once we begin to see

the influence of lived experiences on people's lives there is a likelihood of an emergency of divergent and competing identities. In the following sections I examine the issue of Zimbabwean cross-border traders as global citizens,

Zimbabwe's Global Citizens

The 2002 study showed that Zimbabwean women cross-border traders are a highly mobile and well-connected group of entrepreneurs that has managed to establish links that cut across ethnic, class, gender and nationality. They plied their business virtually in every continent though the four cases cited in this paper were mostly confined to the SADC region. However traders like Amai Sekai were planning to start trading in places like the UK. Hannerz (1996) stressed the strong connection between one's cosmopolitan outlook and globalisation processes. This is something that brought out clarity in studies focusing on cross-border traders. Women traders in the context of global challenges were developing skills that enabled them to manage and survive under conditions of increasing diversity and often difficult circumstances. Hannerz (1996) observed that cosmopolitans are people constantly on the move. The women discussed in this paper were all highly mobile. Mobility is to a large extent part of the survival and business strategies adopted by cosmopolitans. Amai Dzimba and Amai Sarudzai spend at least a fortnight away from home on cross-border trips. Cosmopolitan behaviour fits quite well with that of the cited four cross-border traders' cases in this paper. Hannerz's observations are particularly useful as women traders are constantly on the move sourcing and selling their wares and at the same time creating business links through the different kinds of relations based on friendship and kin like relations. In order to understand cross-border traders one needs to locate them within a particular global domain.

While all the four women cases in the paper remained rooted in Zimbabwe and could be termed local, their horizon and sights in terms of business operations went much further than Zimbabwe they were global in orientation. The market for their goods extended beyond the country's borders. Traders like Amai Sekai were good at sensing and utilising market opportunities. They were not risk aversive. She had been to Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Mauritius and was planning to extend her operations to international markets like the UK. Amai Dzimba was

networked into the tourist market in Cape Town which exposed her to people of many nationalities other than South Africans. These women were to a large extent cosmopolitan in outlook and a highly mobile group of cultural and economic entrepreneurs.

Cross-border trade had resulted in transnational behaviour on the part of the women traders. They all self-identified as Zimbabweans and were deeply connected to their families and homes in Zimbabwe. Yet at the same time their whole being was oriented towards forging strong ties and connections with persons and places in and outside Zimbabwe. Mau, Mewes and Zimmermann (2008) noted that trans-nationalism is 'the extent to which individuals are involved in cross-border interaction and mobility'. For instance Smith and Guarnizo (2009) noted that global migrants do work and live in cities and towns quite different from their place of birth and many of them stay connected to their antenatal homes. This is true of cross-border women traders. While the women transverse the region, they were all firmly connected to their Zimbabwean roots.

Freuke (2008) identified mostly four entrepreneurial strategies amongst Poland's global migrants particularly those operated in Germany. Firstly, there was a high degree of mobility amongst the economical differentiated migrants; secondly they were transnational in outlook; thirdly the home and foreign places where they were located were both considered as market places and lastly migrants were initiating and expanding business opportunities at home and abroad. Transnational social networks and social mobility were considered instrumental to success in the global market. Freuke's (2008) observations are similarly mirrored in the case of Zimbabwean cross-border traders despite differences in location and levels of socio-economic development.

Cross-border Trade and the Politics of Belonging

A high degree of connectedness to some place and people underpinned cross-border migrants' behaviour in the 2002 study. For Zimbabwean women cross-border traders every person needs a *kumusha* i.e. a home. While the real home is the natal village home has come to include the urban place of residence to which one can claim undisputed ownership. In the study either a person had established her home in the form of an urban residence as was the

case with Amai Sekai or the women were at various stages of constructing one as shown by the purchase of vacant stands and the strong desire to build a housing unit on it by Amai Dzimba, Amai Kudzi and Amai Sarudzai. The women believed that unless you had a home you were nothing. For this group as noted in Muzvidziwa (2010:85) 'the concept of *kumusha* (home) is very important in understanding urban migrants' behaviour'. With respect to cross-border women traders when outside the country the notion of *kumusha* refers to Zimbabwe. Even those cross-border traders like Amai Sekai who had children in the diaspora still encouraged their children to invest at home i.e. Zimbabwe. One would see how despite the many challenges Zimbabwe as a country was facing they still kept the flow of goods, services, money and people homeward bound. As observed by Sadouni (2009:243) 'diaspora is a migratory phenomenon characterised by a strong communal experience', rooted in the case of Zimbabwe on the *kumusha* ideals of the women's lived experiences. The *kumusha* mindset can be seen as been instrumental in terms of continued investments at home in the form of property buys despite the free fall of the Zimbabwean economy. Economic decisions in terms of investment were influenced by this *kumusha* ideal reality.

The study demonstrated that cross-border migration is another terrain on which issues of identity and belonging are being played. The cross-border trade migratory process is not a neutral process. It is something that triggers people's awareness of their identity and sense of belonging and at times entitlements. The women cross-border traders had moved beyond what Worby (1994) described as the colonial practice of mapping ethnicities. This leads to identification of particular places as belonging to a particular ethnic group. In practise in terms of the women's lived experiences the urban space belongs to all Zimbabweans. In other words in the urban, identities are not tied to ethnically identified geographical boundaries. This does not lead to the dissolving of ethnic boundaries but ethnicity ceases to be an important aspect as far as acquiring an urban home is concerned.

A point muted in the study of cross-border women traders but not fully developed is the issue of how these movements had generated a strong sense of belonging and identity amongst the women. Generally the women are proud of being Zimbabweans despite the collapse of the economy and all the negatives that surrounds the Zimbabwean state. However, the women did not carry a single identity premised on say citizenship or any other thing.

They wore many identities at the same time and this enabled them in many instances to use their identities to maximise returns in their business ventures. The women were mothers, religious persons, breadwinners and heads of households, members of various associations and social networks, Zimbabweans, etc. It is clear drawing on evidence from the study that matters of identity and belonging were fluid and dynamic.

Conclusion

The issue of identity remains central to an understanding of cross-border women trader's well-being, behaviour and predispositions. As observed by Mbembe (1992:5) the 'subjects in the postcolony have also had to have a marked ability to manage not just a single identity for themselves but several, which are flexible enough for them to negotiate as and when required'. Like Narotzky (2009:175) who stresses the need to 'historically contextualize and localize economic models', to get to grips with issues of emerging identities and sense of belonging amongst Zimbabwean cross-border traders there is a need to situate the Zimbabwean socio-economic context against the overwhelming global forces sweeping across nations. It is quite clear from the study that cross-border women traders did not have a single identity but mobilised several in their day to day lived experiences. This is in line with Ranger's (1983:248) observation that, 'most Africans moved in and out of multiple identities'. This was equally true of cross-border women traders in the study. Not only were their identities multiple they were dynamic and changing as well to enable them cope with the changing circumstances impacting on their lives.

To some extent the cross-border women traders' ability to engage in transnational behaviour and their being strongly networked enabled them to maximise returns on cross-border investments. Notions of *kumusha* and sense of belonging in terms of the ideology of *kumusha* enabled the women to stay connected irrespective of high levels of mobility. This in a way might explain the emergency of women cross-border traders as a highly successful entrepreneurial group. As noted in Muzvidziwa (2010:90) 'the crisis in Zimbabwe has seen the emergence of an independent, economically vibrant entrepreneurial group in the form of cross-border traders'.

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Migration's Role in Rising Obesity among Women of Zulu Ethnicity in Durban, South Africa

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Abstract
This article proposes to investigate perceptions on how migration is contributing to the rise of overweight and obesity mainly among female staff and students of Zulu ethnicity at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Durban. Through a cultural anthropology lens, this article interrogates the perceptions against the backdrop of rural-urban migration, and vice versa. From a public health perspective, both trends of overweight and obesity contribute significantly to the prevalence of nutrition-related, non-communicable diseases (NR-NCDs) and chronic diseases of lifestyle (CDLs). Vignettes illustrate the findings, based on the following theoretical underpinnings. Since no single theory explains the above phenomena adequately, the theories applied are the acculturation theory; critical medical anthropology; postmodern feminism and structural symbolism. This article thus aims to help explain, from an ethnographic perspective, why in terms of problems with obesity Zulu women are among the worst affected in South Africa (after the US and the UK).

Keywords: obesity, rural-urban migration, public health, nutrition

Introduction
Standing at the busy outlet of the A5 mega-supermarket along Durban's Albert Street some years back, I observed that an average of seven out of 10 women patronizing this superstore ranged from being overweight to being morbidly obese. The retail chain is a magnet to women seeking to save some

money at an outlet selling small quantities of consumer goods at wholesale prices. It was at this point that I began wondering what kind of food habits cause that kind of weight gain, and the consequent health implications. I wondered whether ethnicity had anything to do with the women's oversize bodies. In general, apart from the little there was tacked away in a sentence or two from clinical trials, the existing literature yielded little insight from a cultural viewpoint.

Over and over again, this research left me wondering to what extent acculturation featured in the obesity equation in association with ethnic diets and lifestyle of the past. I also pondered to what extent – if at all – obesity was determined by rural-urban migration, or the reverse. A closely related question was to what extent 'traditional' eating habits had been eroded by the onslaught of the supermarket, and how the food items it stocked were implicated in weight-related ill health. A literature search led me to a book by Pollan (2006: 4-5), who paints a picture that renders supermarket – ubiquitous in urban settings – as a perilous jungle that gradually erodes the consumer's health:

> The cornucopia of the American supermarket has thrown us back on a bewildering food landscape where we once again have to worry that some of those tasty-looking morsels might kill us (perhaps not as quick as a poisonous mushroom, but just as surely).

I wondered too, from the theoretical perspective of Critical Medical Anthropology (CMA), to what extent such forms of modernization, entrenched in urbanization, are not only linked to our cultural past as Africans, but also to health implications for our future. I began mulling over how ethnicity affects food decisions, and whether digging into the individual past of isiZulu-speaking women's could yield the answers I sought. Thus began the literature search on the subject of urban migration in relation to a nutrition transition, which refers to changes in dietary patterns and lifestyle. In this article I use the hyphenated terms 'traditional' or 'indigenous' practices and perceptions since culture is dynamic rather than static.

Once people have migrated to towns or cities they tend to engage in physical activities less, to the detriment of their health. Commenting on lifestyle, a doctor in Family Medicine and a proponent of community health,

Candib (2007) regrets that obesity and its sequelae are increasing in cities in the developing world. In their quest for a better life in urban settings, migrants walk less, ride more, and rely overly on television to entertain both adults and children. In addition, urban areas have fewer safe places for exercise. Besides relatively sedentary lifestyles, urban dwellers are more likely to eat fast food or fried food in a sugar-laden diet, amid numerous vendors. Due to time pressure in urban harried life, not enough time is invested in cooking wholesome meals.

In the wake of the above obesogenic (factors contributing to obesity) environment among increasing urbanized populations, overweight and obesity are implicated in the acceleration of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as chronic diseases of lifestyle (CDLs). Such conditions include hypertension ; high blood cholesterol; glucose intolerance; type 2 diabetes; cancerous malignancies of the breast, prostate, colon and endometrium; gout; kidney disease cardiovascular diseases; stroke; and osteoarthritis, among others. So serious is the obesity, for example, that some 60 South Africans (three people every hour) die from heart attacks and strokes daily (MRC 2003).

Females are worst affected for a number of reasons. They tend to put on relatively more weight in childhood's growth spurt in the first decade of life as well as in puberty (Monyeki *et al.* 1999). Physical inactivity among black young women is a major determinant of obesity (Kruger 2002), and so is child-bearing, where after delivery, often women do not shed weight gained in pregnancy. In the THUSA Study, black women with high incomes were singled out as being at greatest risk for weight gain in the overweight and obesity range (Kruger *et al.* 2005). The authors point to environmental factors including socio-cultural factors, urbanization, income, education level, parity and stress, as being implicated in the escalating obesity epidemic among South Africa women.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Despite an extensive literature search, no single theory was found adequate to frame cultural beliefs and practices relating to the current nutrition transition as it relates to overweight and obesity. Theories applied in this article draw upon literature on diet and lifestyle relevant to the rise of

chronic disease. They include the critical medical anthropology theory, acculturation theory, post-modern feminism and symbolic interactionism.

To explain sequential changes in dietary trends under the nutrition transition among Durban-based *isiZulu*-speaking women are experiencing, this study employs acculturation theory. Most existing data under acculturation research have been gathered in migrant settings (Cheung-Blunden and Juang 2008); which could apply to the above-mentioned women. In this research I study the Zulu women themselves, and their mothers or grandmothers who migrated from rural to urban areas in search of employment, education or to accompany their spouses or partners. In their context, acculturation could be defined as cultural change resulting from continuous, first-hand contact between various distinct groups – as has occurred among generations of Durban's urban women. This study looks into dietary changes that have occurred as a result of *isiZulu*-speaking women or their family members coming into contact with other ethnic or racial groups.

The Critical Medical Anthropology theory offers an explanation for the forces of dietary change identified, which include the modernizing juggernauts of urbanization, industrialization, globalization and formal education – all initially ushered in by interaction with the West. Critical medical anthropology (CMA) theory advances two broad ideas. Firstly, CMA exponents argue that many medical anthropologists have incorrectly attributed regional disparities in health to local socio-cultural differences without examining the influence of global, political-economic inequalities on the distribution of sickness. The CMA exponents insist that this explanatory framework be broadened to describe how large-scale political, economic and cognitive structures constrain the individual's decisions, shape their social behaviour and influence their risk of sickness (Pollan 2008; Watson & Caldwell 2005; Cook 2004; Nestle 2003; Schlosser 2002; and Wylie 2001). Secondly, CMA emphasizes how historical and political factors shape contemporary decision-making as well as the distribution of present-day health problems, an approach which is also known as the political economy of health. Such aspects are evident throughout this article.

Through symbolic interactionism, the research study views the social contexts under which food-related symbolisms occur and shape what people believe, how they behave, and consequent health implications. To deeply comprehend the symbolic world of research participants, the symbolic

interactionist has to have close contact and direct interaction with people in an open-minded, inquiry coupled with inductive analysis (Patton 2002). To this end ethnographic inquiry will under-gird this article.

Most of the existing knowledge has been documented by men, knowledge that has tended to be patriarchal by nature rather than neutral and universal. Such biased knowledge, which is inclined to replicate stereotypes and prejudices emanating from male-centric thinking, is common in all research disciplines, including ethnography. This article demonstrates the relatively 'new' feminist ethnography, a post-modern methodology aimed at offering an alternative that pays greater attention not just to women, but other marginalized groups as well. Ideally, the new methodology's guiding principles should distinguish them from 'traditional' male ethnographies, which also cover female ethnographies that are not feminist.

In the process, the article illustrates the inappropriateness of 'traditional' ethnographic methodologies which tend to be western in origin, often failing to give non-western women – and other marginalized groups – a voice. The new ethnography takes on a multi-voice approach where women who are usually silent are encouraged to speak up. In the process, the methodology champions research ethics based on respect, truthfulness, reciprocity and accountability. Among other characteristics, ideally the 'new' ethnography should adopt an advocacy perspective, geared to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience. The article also illustrates the extent to which elements of the new methodology apply practically in the context of migration among Zulu women and significant others, against the backdrop of the prevailing obesity epidemic in South Africa. The themes of ethnography, obesity and theory are amalgamated through deliberate efforts to use narrative, a key feature in feminist ethnography in which the women tell their own stories.

The study site is Durban, a coastal city on the east coast of KwaZulu-Natal Province, to which many Zulu people have migrated, though others still live in traditionally structured rural communities. The Durban-based study is set in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa's most densely-populated province. In the last census in 2001, the general adult population was 9,426,017, of which 70% speak isiZulu as their mother tongue (Statistics South Africa 2000; Rudwick 2008).

Currently, South Africa is the third among the world's most overweight nations, after America and Britain. A recent nationwide survey that covered all races and classes of South Africans shows that 61 percent of adults are overweight, obese or morbidly obese in four of the country's cities, Durban included, at 52 percent (Keogh 2010). These urban-based figures are higher than those of a national survey by the Medical Research Council (2003) in which at least 56% of women aged 15 and 29% of men in the same age group were either overweight or obese (Puoane *et al.* 2002). Smaller studies have shown pockets of severe female overweight/obesity. In a rural area in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, 76.9% of the females were either overweight or obese (Oelofse *et al.* 1999).

The study sample comprises 20 female key informants of Zulu ethnicity; half of them aged under 35, plus an additional 30 other participants. All 50 were recruited purposefully, on the basis of their ability to contribute to the constructively to the research topic. This study acknowledges that one cannot study women without studying men; to this end, men also feature, albeit to a relatively small extent. Through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and ethnography, this article documents women's narratives going back over half a century by spanning a sample that brings together participants aged between 20 and 70.

Background

In order to better understand the topic at hand, it is important to comprehend migratory trends in South Africa, using a critical medical anthropology (CMA) theory to unpack obesity-related health issues. The country is situated in sub-Saharan Africa, a sub-region currently undergoing the fastest rate of urbanization worldwide, at an average annual rise in migrants of more than 3%. Factors causing urbanization include longer life expectancy, and massive rural-urban migration and to a small extent, vice versa. Either way, the key risk factor is obesity (Mbanya *et al*. 2010).

Urbanization, coupled with rising standards of living, is among key factors in South Africa's obesity epidemic. Rubin (2008), a US national, observes that increasing numbers of men and women migrating from South Africa's rural areas, where many take up jobs that provided disposable income they otherwise would not have. A sizeable portion of the earnings go

into spending at supermarkets where isles are replete with packaged foods containing white wheat flour and maize meal, refined sugar, artificial colouring and preservatives.

In addition, consumers in an urban setting are exposed to a vast array of fast food restaurants that sell Western favourites, as observed by Rubin (2008:4): '… your greasy fried chicken, thick hamburgers, and heavily salted chips just like in my country, plus some local foods we don't see in the States, like *samoosas* and *vetkoek*'. The acculturation process among locals is evident, as they embrace diets and lifestyle that are relatively different from their forebears. In comparing the South African situation to his home country USA, for example, Rubin underlines the last three equally fattening foodstuffs originating from three other nations, respectively: the UK, India and the Netherlands. All six food items cited by Rubin cause consumers help to pile on visceral (abdominal) fat, a risk factor in heart disease among obese individuals.

Universally, urban areas are deemed an economic magnet, drawing migrants either within or without countries. However, the South Africa's experience entails intercountry migration, defined as migration within the country's borders. This comprises rural-urban movement, though destinations also include semi-urban towns and rural perimeters of metropolitan areas, as well as reallocation between rural villages (Posel & Casale 2005). With migration availing economic benefits to migrants and their households, in the 1990s some 16% of South Africa's rural population moved annually to urban areas not only in a bid to escape poverty but also attempt to offer financial support to their families back home (Camlin *et al*. 2010).

Contrary to expectations, dire economic straits in South Africa intensified after the apartheid era ended in 1994. Posel and Casale (2005: 473) posit that:

> The ending of Apartheid has been associated not only with the elimination of formal restrictions on mobility and settlement, but also with a significant decline in labour absorption capacity for the formal economy, the growth of more insecure forms of employment and a corresponding increase in unemployment.

The authors base their analysis on the October Household Surveys conducted annually between 1993 – 1999, Posel and Casale (2005) report that the largest number of South African labour migrants are of African descent, with the figures increasing with time. The majority of such migrants aged 15 upwards and categorised as adults, are men, although figures on women increased from 31% to 34% of the total figure by 1999. With migration availing economic benefits to migrants and their households, in the 1990s some 16 percent of South Africa's rural population have moved annually to urban areas in a bid to escape poverty and be able offer financial support to their families back home (Camlin *et al*. 2010). Both sets of authors in this paragraph point out thatmigrants leave their rural dwelling either as individuals or as households. Reasons for migration differ, with groups known either as labour migrants or migrant workers seeking better livelihood . However, some individuals migrate in order to join spouse or partner, family or friends.

Migratory patterns also reflect gender patterns, among which females exercising agency by defying traditional domestic and marital roles dictated by age-old patriarchal mores. Both Camlin *et al*. (2010) and Posel and Casale (2005) concur also that in South Africa, women tend to migrate shorter distances than men, to nearby informal settlements or towns where they can keep in touch with rural families. Men, on the other hand, tend to migrate to distant urban areas, where they remain on a permanent basis. Circular or temporary migrant workers of either sex tend to move back and forth between rural and urban homes (Posel & Casale 2005).

The above two authors observe that increasing rates of unemployment among males have resulted in a decline in marital rates, a trend marked by increasing numbers of females migrating in search of employment. Female migrants tend to leave home when their children are older, therefore requiring more finances for schooling. The children are left in their care of grandmothers who are pensioners and other womenfolk in the household. Women are more likely to migrate either if they are not married or cohabiting with men.

In 1993, for example, almost 90 percent of all female African migrant workers estimated at 575 844, 503 411 were from rural areas. In summary, the same authors attribute a decline in marital rates, changes in household composition, unstable incomes, and rising male unemployment as

the key drivers of migration in South Africa. All these factors continue to persist today, in a situation that has worsened even further following a global recession that has rocked the world since 2008. In South Africa evidence is apparent in massive employment and sky-rocketing prices of food as well as other commodities and services.

Nutrition Transition and Lifestyle

In South Africa the nutrition transition began in earnest in the 1950s with the advent of apartheid (Vorster *et al.* 2005), which brought about drastic changes in the political, social and cultural situation. Through a literature review spanning 50 years, Faber and Kruger (2005) attribute the current nutrition transition to rising urbanization and modernity. In the process, blacks of African descent relegate vegetables and plant proteins replete in micronutrients to the status of disreputable poverty foods. These developments in turn led to an escalation of health conditions previously associated with the West, though in general, rural black Africans still maintain a fairly 'traditional' diet.

Migration may be activated by two triggers: either the 'push' or 'pull' factors. According to Misra and Ganda (2007), push factors may include stressful situations such as poverty or war, while pull factors point to improved livelihood through education, financial or career opportunities. Take the example of Buyisile, a 22-year old key informant who migrated to Durban from peri-urban Greytown to pursue her university education at UKZN's Howard College Campus. The 'thickset' youngster wears size 42 clothing from men's stores since she cannot find the female equivalent. Already she has a heart condition.

Undeterred by her cardiac condition, she often takes the shortcut of eating fast food from two sets of outlets, a common practice among many fellow students at Howard College Campus. During the day Buyisile and her two pals eat at the university main canteen. On the day I sat with them to observe what they were having for lunch at the campus's central canteen, the three of them devoured chips, a chicken drumstick each and canned Coca Cola. On week days such lunches are the rule rather than the exception, that is, until whatever money they have runs out. Before that happens, though,

Buyisile and her fellow students shop for food at a nearby set of four fast food franchises. Nandos, KFC, Steers and Debonairs literally jostle each on the ground floor of a set of flats next to each other, across a road bordering one of the campus fences.

The other popular haunt for Buyisile and fellow students are the four newly established fast food franchises along Francois Road bordering Howard College Campus. In disgust, a fellow female student observes that these fast food outlets are making millions selling junk food to the hundreds of students who unless cash-strapped; opt not to spend time cooking healthier food. Nonetheless, it does not deter her from eating from the same food on offer from early in the morning till late at the night. Some mothers, who chose to pack more nourishing lunches for their university student, and who may also offer them pocket money for a drink or an extra snack are not aware that the labour of love is occasionally wasted . At times, these privileged youngsters either abandon the relatively wholesome lunches in public places, or simply trash the food in dustbins. Such youngsters opt instead for the junk food so readily available on campus and its precincts. Among the eateries on campus, most offer mostly Indian food while the rest serve western fare. Only one, known simply as Jubs, offers some traditional food on its largely western menu.

During the first semester in 2011 university students *toyi-toyi-ed* (demonstrated publicly) against the unhealthy food served at the canteen, demanding that at least the canteen should offer vegetables alongside the meals. Their request got buried under a pile of other requests; with this particular one landing on deaf ears on grounds that it was not important.

Through acculturation, Buyisile and other South Africans of all races, including the Zulu who are the nation's largest ethnic group, have become addicted to fast food. This is a reference to the burger culture of North America (Fieldhouse 1995) which Ritzer (1993) dubbed the McDonaldization of the world. The core fast food items – currently spawning overweight and obesity epidemics universally – include burgers and French fries, hot-dogs, friend chicken pieces, sandwiches, doughnuts, milk shakes and ice cream. When students and staff from rural or peri-urban areas commute to Durban, they opt to drop their relatively healthy, 'traditional' African diet in favour of western food, often leading to obesity. Whereas in the early 20th century the burger was considered 'a food for the poor'

(Schlosser 2002:197), many black South Africans formerly from disadvantaged communities perceive the food item as symbolising affluence, or the ability to afford the good life.

For instance, among some of the Zulu I interviewed a main meal is deemed deficient and unacceptable without meat, yet this foodstuff is among the key triggers of overweight and obesity among people of this ethnicity. In functions where eating is central, it is not uncommon to see adults who were raised mainly as vegetarians heaping their plates with every kind of flesh on offer. In a case of extreme acculturation, more often than not, hardly any grain or vegetables graces their plates. Inability to serve substantial portions of meat at functions or in homes is construed at being poor or stingy. Ready – and daily – availability of meat becomes a statement that one has 'arrived'. This is the case even if, as a one student pointed out, it means eating 'walkie-talkies' (chicken heads, necks and feet), which count as meat. In low income neighbourhoods the popular walkie-talkies are on offer at all butcheries.

University of KwaZulu-Natal staff members who have more money opt to buy food daily, and are also targeted by the regular food outlets in and around campus. Some staff members are not only regular customers, many buy larger food portions and can afford more drinks as well. Over the years I have watched formerly trim males and female staff of Zulu origin burgeoning in size from eating junk food daily at the fast food outlets either in the vicinity of Howard College or beyond.

Palesa, now aged 57, used to be one of them. She was raised in the countryside throughout her childhood and adolescence, only migrating to Durban to study at the tertiary level. Just over a year and a half ago, her daily routine included buying fast food for breakfast first thing on arrival on campus. Her daily routine also included fast food for both a mid-morning snack and lunch. Daily, on her way home Palesa would buy the mandatory large bag of crisps for consumption while driving home to Umlazi Township 17 Km from the university. The fried crisps used to serve as an appetizer to the large dinnertime meat portions that were the order of the day. The wholesome grains, vegetables or fruits that were the norm in childhood dropped from her diet.

However, the obese Palesa's daily eating routine was brought to a halt unceremoniously in 2010, when a doctor diagnosed her as being at the

verge of suffering a stroke, following years on high blood pressure medication. Moving away from her rural home to the city of Durban, the excitement of earning a salary for the first time and a sedentary lifestyle, all compounded towards the above health impasse.

Palesa has since reformed by changing her diet and lifestyle to the point that people assume she in the final stage of AIDS, where the body wastes away significantly. She declares unflappably that she does not care what people think as long as she steers clear of an unhealthy status that would eventually have cost Palesa her very life – prematurely. A price she nearly paid because of acculturation in her food habits. It seemed a good idea earlier, but not anymore.

When the wake-up call came, Palesa was a hefty 104Kg as a result of embracing wholesale a western-type high in salt, sugar and fat diet, and the absence of physical exercise. Since the stroke scare the now slim Palesa runs a minimum of 1 Km daily to keep her weight off. Today, when she wears pencil-thin skirts she gets wolf whistles form young men walking behind, only to apologise when she turns to look. To their disappointment, her aging face does not tally with her sexually alluring backside. Palesa is among the few participants age above 35 who consciously go to great lengths exercising physically for weight management purposes. Most of the others in her age group who have a disposable income opt to concentrate on eating the western-type 'goodies' that accumulate body fat not burned through vigorous physical activity. For some of these women whom I have observed over the years, walking out of one office building to another is too taxing. The most exercise they get in is making calls to the toilet, and even these are reduced to the fewest visits possible. Walking down two flights of stairs or more to their cars parked as close to the office as possible is seen as a necessary evil in terms of exerting the body.

Moving out of African townships to what used to be the former white suburbs in the apartheid era could also be a form of migration, albeit at a micro level. Nokhulunga, a key informant who moved out of a Durban township and has since lived in two white suburbs has adopted western-type eating to another level. Over four years ago, when she used to take six spoons of white sugar in a cup of tea several times a day, I inquired into the habit. Her clipped response was, 'I'd rather die than take sugarless tea'. Nokhulunga has since had to swallow her words, having experienced a mild

stroke from substantial weight gain. Now, in a bid to curb her weight she still takes several cups of tea, but using artificial sugar instead.

In another attempt at weight loss Nokhulunga has begun eating small meals periodically throughout the day. In the process she snacks on items like nuts that are fattening; a variety of fresh fruit most of which are sweet; dried fruits whose sugar is in concentrated form from drying; an assortment of wheat products either salted or sugared; frequently pushed down either by tea or syrupy drinks. Such processed drinks purport to comprise 100% fruit juice devoid of artificial flavours, colouring, preservatives and sugar.

Despite her noble intentions to eat healthily through vigilant food choices, however, the hidden salt, fats and sugars in the items coupled with sedentary lifestyle are ultimately working against her healthwise. This is despite purchasing some of the above-mentioned items from Woolworths Food Courts and other upmarket fare suppliers. Alongside the above-mentioned mouth-watering delicacies in her office drawers, she also stocks a wide array of costly-looking pills and elixirs aimed at health maintenance and restoration.

Nokhulunga illustrates the case of too much of a good thing, through which she is paying the price through over-nutrition, resulting in obesity related chronic diseases of lifestyle. Ingestion of a diversified diet has been known to lead to consumption of greater food amounts that could aggravate the burgeoning obesity epidemic in South Africa (Maunder, Matji & Hlatsh-wayo-Molea 2001). Increased intake of energy foods could potentially lead to obesity, which is associated with chronic diseases of lifestyle (CDLs), nu-trition-related non-communicable diseases of lifestyle (NR-NCDs), or both.

Meanwhile, intergenerational differences in food and body weight preferences are also emerging from the research data. For example, Zanele, a 24-year old university student, is constantly fighting about her weight with her mother. On most weekdays her mother's harassment over food and weight starts at the door; the minute the daughter arrives home. The dinner table – as well as away from it – presents another opportunity for what resembles a contest where both opponents are determined not to be swayed by the other. In the ensuring tug-of-war, the mother insists daily that her daughter is too thin and should therefore make deliberate effort to gain weight by eating more. In explaining this psychological tug-of-war, the

defiant daughter moans, elaborating on the strategy her mother, who is still 'traditional' in her thinking, which the latter's asserts in an attempted fattening mission. This family, too, relocated from an African township to a former white suburb. Zanele's outlook echoes ideas on the western female body ideal borrowed from the white girls she schooled in a white suburb prior to joining university

Zanele explains:

> My mother, who wants me to gain weight, always calls me to try to feed me this and feed me that; but I try to stay away from that junk food. If I do eat junk food, it's like a reward for me – once in, like, two weeks, or even once a month.

Exercising agency and caution concerning her weight, Zanele succumbs to mouth-watering items of the western-type junk food such as: chocolate, chips, biscuits, Chelsea buns, doughnuts, *vetkoeks* (donuts sans the hole) and savoury foods like sausage rolls and burgers. The young woman was acculturated through close encounters with both the western diet and ideal body weight by doing most of her schooling in the former Model C schools. During the apartheid era which ended in 1994, Model C schools were whites-only schools which had the best facilities and education, dictated by the policy of racial segregation. Under apartheid, each of the four races – African descendants, Indian, coloured and white – had schools allotted to the specific groups. Girls like Zanele only got to attend such schools after apartheid was abolished in principle, in 1994.

Asked why her mother [of Zulu ethnicity] wants her to be fat, the lean daughter replies simply: 'Because prior to this I was chubby'. The mother is probably trying to recreate her distant past growing up in a rural area, where from a universal cultural perspective that chubbiness denoting health in babies is the ideal. But a point of divergence occurs in perceptions, where unlike Zulu perceptions where females should grow into voluptuous womanhood, the western ideal for the sexually attractive woman is thin. Opting to break with the Zulu 'traditional' convention of *hlonipa* (respect) due from the young to the old, exercising agency Zanele opts for the latter ideal. Secondly, based on western influence incurred in her schooldays Zanele sticks to her guns with a clear mind as to health implications of

obesity. To strengthen her case against excessive weight gain, the daughter often cites to her mother the case of an obese female of Zulu ethnicity who died prematurely of diabetes.

Through over-nutrition, various forms of cultural behaviours practiced in both urban and rural areas lend themselves to heightening South Africa's obesity epidemic. From a public health perspective, such trends are exacerbated by local trends among people of Zulu ethnicity. For instance, there is need to reconsider those socio-cultural phenomena where the daily main meal among the Zulu is deemed deficient and unacceptable without meat. Such widely-held perceptions among the Zulu needs to be should be taken more seriously since this food habit could trigger overweight and obesity. Another example is the cultural etiquette among isiZulu-speaking people where the host takes offence at the visitor's refusal to eat in keeping with the spirit or philosophy of *ubuntu* (humanness) where sharing, caring, community and unselfishness and community are held in high regard.

Basically, *ubuntu* runs against the grain of individualism. Among Zulu communities, constantly eating wherever one visits, coupled with eating even when one is not hungry, or eating energy-dense and fatty food or whatever else the visitor is offered, and eating large servings of food despite largely sedentary lifestyles in urban settings is contributing to the prevalence of overweight and obesity. In observing that reverence for excess food consumption both in the Western world and beyond, Fernandez-Armesto (2002) singles out a South African saying to illustrate his point: 'We shall eat until we cannot stand'. Tendencies such as these forms of over-indulgence may ultimately prove life-threatening, considering the large amounts of food people eat on a daily basis.

Over-nutrition is revered among a Zulu 'traditional' gender role which contributes to acceptance of the large woman. Among interviews conducted with key informants and significant knowledgeable others, Manto, a 35-year-old key participant identifies a unique input on 'traditional' symbolism in Zulu culture concerning the pluses of being fat:

> Being fat means you can cook … or if you are thin, basically that means you are not a good cook. They [men] prefer the one that can cook. I mean, *ja*, they think you can cook, so they prefer that one.

This perception echoes the English idiom: 'The way to a man's heart is through his stomach'. However, the slogan differs with Zulu cultural perceptions where a stout woman and a good cook are one and the same; interpreted as a crucial component for marriage material. As another research participant observes, it is assumed that due to a woman's ample weight she is not stingy with food since she feeds herself well, and is therefore likely to feed others likewise.

Among blacks of African indigenous ancestry in South Africa, overweight women are generally viewed in positive light. Favourable cultural associations among women of this ethnicity range from beauty to physical well-being, happiness, vitality and affluence – all of them often linked to the fuller figure (Mvo *et al*. 1999; Puoane *et al*. 2002; Popenoe 2003; Hurry 2004; Mvo *et al.* 2004; Keeton 2006). Obesity in women is seen as a reflection of her husband's ability care well for both his wife and the rest of the family (Puoane *et al*. 2002). Such notions are still held widely among isiZulu-speaking women in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal – especially in the rural areas – despite overweight and obesity being implicated in public health disorders like diabetes, hypertension, cancer, coronary disease and stroke (Faber 2005).

Both diet and lifestyle contribute significantly to the prevalence of these conditions in both urban and rural areas in KwaZulu-Natal, where this study's respondents are located. This section specifically examines cultural perceptions associated with food consumption, body weight shape and size, in tandem with lifestyle, and how the various aspects are be linked to weight-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) as well as chronic diseases of lifestyle (CDLs). Faber (2005), for example, found most of the *izsidudla* (overweight) and a*bakhulupele* (obese) women in the study viewed their weight positively, and did not link it to over consumption of food or lack of physical exercise.

In comparing the western thin ideal female endorsed by the mass media, advertising and marketing, versus the Zulu ideal, Wandile, a 22-year-old key informant replies:

> A woman's figure should be like a Barbie doll. You know the Barbie doll? *Ja*, a woman's figure should be so small and she should be curvy, but not that much curvy, around the hips and she

should be tall and, you know, a little bit skinny with long legs. *Ja*, those are the kinds of things that a woman should be like.

Interrupting her thought pattern with a laugh, she continues,

> Well, in Zulu culture, you're supposed to be, you know, curvy. They really like the curvy people and, not so much a figure, but if you're, you know, your body's full. I cannot say skinny, they don't like skinny people, they like full-figured women with big butts and thighs and hips, you know, they like those.

In another interview, I ask whether such thinking about the above female body ideal still applies today among the Zulu people, Manto, a key informant aged 35 replies tentatively: 'I think that has not changed …'. However, attributing biological factors to Zulu females being portly, she asserts: 'Unfortunately our genes are big built'. After momentary silence spent pondering over her statement, the participant adds in an accommodating tone: 'My friends … most of them are big – not fat – but a bit big'. Reflecting further, in a polite understatement she reiterates in what appears to be denial over the pervasiveness of overweight and obesity among her Zulu peer group: 'Out of my 10 closest friends, almost all of them are *a bit big*'. This form of ambivalence is common among young Zulu women, who seem to be trapped between the 'traditional' Zulu and western thin ideal of the sexually alluring body.

Asked to venture an explanation as to why a sizeable number of Zulu women are overweight and in some instances obese even, Jabulile, a 38-year-old key informant is more succinct:

> I think that fat has more to do with the genes of Zulu women. As you know, in most cases Zulu women, they've got big bums, thighs, stomach, breasts, parts which in Zulu culture are appreciated in a woman. I think this is related more with genes than food, because even the people I have come across who are just like that (fat) are not people who are stealing food [closet eaters] or eating more [than average], or something like that. These are people who had hardly eaten and still they had that body structure.

The genetic aspect concerning Zulu women's characteristic voluptuous figures is plausible, a perspective which a doctor at Centre for the AIDS Programme of Research in South Africa (CAPRISA) concurred in an interview.

Still commenting on the ideal body size, Manto also points out some of the stereotypical aspirations of the western thin ideal that the group of women within a certain age range aspire to:

> You see … some people will like big body built people and some will like small, but I think… people that I know, everybody wants to be a size 34.

Halting temporarily to consider whether she has just said is generalizeable, she reiterates:

> They want to be 34, so I think maybe then size 34 constitutes the ideal size of a Zulu women – because most friends talk about the size 34.

She qualifies their age range as between 25 and 40 years. For Manto and women of this ethnicity under this generation, being genetically predisposed to a fuller body is no consolation. For Manto's her Zulu female pals – mainly professional women – the perfect female body is viewed through a western lens.

When it comes to race, this ongoing research study indicates that Zulu women participants who attended the former Model C schools (designed exclusively for whites during the apartheid era) mostly located in urban settings, have greater weight and dieting concerns than their counterparts who had Bantu education. Since the institutionalisation of apartheid in South Africa in 1948, through the Population Registration Act, the incumbent government classified the population into the 'White', 'Coloured' and 'Indian' and 'African', with the whiteness of the skin being assigned at the top of the hierarchy, and the darkest at the bottom (Carrim & Soudien1999). This distinctive racist logic

> influenced every aspect of their lives: where they lived, where they schooled, who their interacted with, which social amenities they

had access to, their social relations and their political positions (Carrim & Soudien 1999: 154).

Peer pressure and cultural context also influence the female body image in rural settings. Citing rural settings such as Nongoma some 268 Km north of Durban, Manto a 35-year-old respondent observes that the plump woman is still considered the female beauty ideal in keeping with 'traditional' Zulu thinking. Venturing an explanation for the disparity between rural and urban convictions on the ideal female body, the respondent concludes, 'People's views change because of who or what is around you', alluding to societal expectations in the immediate vicinity.

Whereas urbanites have embraced the western thin ideal of beauty and sexual attraction in a woman extensively, rural dwellers on the other hand have been slow in the uptake, despite television being almost as ubiquitous in the countryside. In the latter case deep-rooted cultural perceptions appear to have superseded modernity. Conversely, Manto points out categorically that in urban or peri-urban Durban – be it a former white suburb like Glenwood or a black township like Umlazi – the *new* beauty ideal is the slender female. She attributes this new-fangled thinking as having been popularized by the TV in either environment.

The mass media, on the one hand, can be constructive by raising public health awareness on the adverse effects of the nutrition transition. Conversely, media hype can be counterproductive, as Palesa, a 57-year-old key informant who almost suffered a stroke due to wanton eating observes:

> They [local television channels] always show us this KFC, these burgers. When you look at them, it's mouth-watering, like you say that, 'Hey, I want to try that!' It's very appetizing; you want to really taste it, you know. The spare ribs ... oh my gosh! You want try that, as well. There are other dishes you can choose from. I sometimes go to McDonald [the McDonald's fast food chain]; they have got nice salads and all this funny stuff [junk food]. But sometimes I say, salads are too boring, I just want this burger, you know.

Several research participants – both young and old – were averse to eating any form of greens.

Conclusion

Set against the wider backdrop of KwaZulu-Natal, this article set out to interrogate cultural perceptions on how circulatory migratory trends could be fuelling overweight and obesity in Durban and its environs. Both push and pull factors associated mainly with intercountry migratory trends, as opposed to unidirectional ones (as would be assumed in terms of the urban pull factors), were found to have had significant influence in the upsurge of the twin scourges of overweight and obesity. At the extreme ends of the scale, whether ultra conservative or *avant garde* in upholding ethnic beliefs, values and behaviours, the two extremes have influenced each other, showing that, yet again, culture is not static. Despite age, sex, gendered, educational, class, ethnic and racial differences, individuals chose to exercise agency as they deemed fit, at times against the odds.

Systemic factors like urbanization; better incomes or affluence; technological advances in agriculture, marketing and advertising; and mechanization all indicated the important role of environmental factors in advancing obesity. Consequent, adverse changes included a nutrition transition, lifestyle that minimized physical activity and other harmful practices like smoking and alcohol abuse. In turn, such factors pose key risks of public health concern, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart problems and obesity – with the latter hardly being recognized by many as a disease in its own right.

Ultimately, the article acknowledges that the causes of obesity are syndemic, defined as a complex and widespread phenomenon in health undergirded by multiple conditions. These also include the broader features such as genetic, physiological, psychological, familial, social, economic and political. From a public health concern, though overweight and obesity are both obvious to the naked eye and are widespread in South Africa, they are largely not seen as an epidemic requiring urgent attention. Meanwhile, the twin scourges of overweight and obesity spread unabated in South Africa, affecting urban black women of African descent more than any other group.

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Pragmatic and Symbolic Negotiation of Home for African Migrants in South Africa

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Abstract

This paper is written in an attempt to unfold the complexities of the concept of home and sets out to probe what happens to the way people construct their perceived reality (subjectivity) when their life circumstances are altered by migration and mobility. It also interrogates how new forms of consciousness develop and adapt to the old and new imagined or created reality. Whilst in South Africa, migrants forge all kinds of relations with the country of abode, country of origin and with migrants from other African countries; alongside these contestations is the symbolic means through which they are creating a feeling of being 'at home but away from home'. This anthropological conversation broadens our conceptual understanding of the ever changing and flexible nature of social identities in the context of migration. This perspective stands in sharp contrast with the notion of home as fixed, unchanging, bounded and given.

Key words: migration, home, space, place, transnational identities

Introduction

The fall of apartheid in South Africa, civil wars and political unrest in most African countries and the down-side of the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) has led to increased immigration to South Africa from the rest of Africa. This has resulted in a steady growth on study of the volume and consequences of migration of people from the rest of Africa to South Africa. Research

interests include cross-border migrants (Muzvidziwa 2001; Dodson 1998), street vendors and hawkers (Peberdy & Crush 1998; Rogerson 1997; Skinner 1999), migrant entrepreneurs (Ojong 2005), students as migrants (Muthuki 2010) and migrant academics (Otu 2009). Research epistemology has been both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Most of the quantitative work has focused on documentation and livelihoods; thereby portraying an overly simplistic characteristic of these forms of migration. On the other hand, the available qualitative research has been dedicated to bringing gender dynamics to the fore or prioritising country of origin experience or country of abode experience and thereby neglecting the renegotiation of these two sites, and highlighting how they impact on the everyday lives of the migrants. In this study, I draw on ethnographic research conducted among five Nigerians, four Ugandans, five Zimbabweans, five Zambians and ten Cameroonians; to show the experiences of migrants across the two sites of migration (home and host country) and how the negotiation of the concept of home is not linear but a complex inter-play of forces from both country of origin and South Africa, as well as the personalities of the individuals.

Studies of this nature lends itself to multi-sited ethnography which allowed me the opportunity as a researcher to follow the social locations, the virtual locations, the symbolic locations as well as the physical locations of these migrants. Being a migrant, I could not avoid positioning this work within an interpretivist and constructivist paradigm. My preliminary interest in the study was spawned by my personal struggles with responding to questions about home. Questions such as, when last did you visit home... and when will you be going home ... had often proven difficult to answer because for me. For I belong to a 'third space'. I do not completely belong to my country of origin or, to South Africa. I belong to a space I have carved out for myself which is a mixture of bricolage; it is a fluid, hybrid and symbolic space.

I write this paper fully aware of my own circumstances which often makes it difficult for me to understand as an individual, the parametres that define home. Often it has been said that home is where the heart belongs. If taken at face value, it can become a genesis of confusion and frustration for migrants because the reality of migration and the consequences it has for belonging becomes a blurred mixture of 'floating and balancing'. 'Floating' because it becomes increasingly difficult to tie home to places which have

been carved for the purpose of convenience and 'balancing' because migrants begin looking for frontiers of spaces where their hearts and socio-economic conditions permits them to belong.

Until recently, space and place has received little attention in anthropological literature (Appadurai 1986; Appadurai 1988; Gupta & Ferguson 2001; Rosaldo & Inda 2002). In our pursuit in Anthropology and the social sciences to understand how social boundaries shift and are re-defined, it is crucial for us to interrogate how the people who shift with these boundaries re-define them. The concept of home lends itself to the elastic, fluid and complex nature of contemporary identities. Often, home has been misunderstood as it is believed that migrants' country of origin is what constitutes home for them. Robertson *et al.* (1994: 14) has defined home as 'wherever your family is, and where you have been brought up'. In the general context of increased migration and displacement of people in contemporary Africa, such a definition is very limiting and fails to illuminate peoples' lives as they are lived.

Renegotiated Space of Migration Research

The phenomenon of migration and mobility has become a key issue in anthropological research because of the influence of urbanisation and modernisation and more recently because of globalisation. Such migrations have contributed to changing perceptions of boundedness of goods, commodities and culture and have also given rise to new perceptions of identity and place. These changed perceptions inevitably affect social interactions and the constitution of societies and social groups.

For decades after anthropology had become a discipline in its own right, ethnographic research focused on studies in which rapport was established with a small group of people who lived in a particular geographical area. Because this space was the place in which they had been born, such people were automatically viewed as sharing a common culture. Researching in a transnational context poses new challenges for both theory and method because the researcher is expected to extend his/her scope to develop diverse skills, to utilise the extensive social networks that link informants to their place of origin, and to use different methodologies to collect data. Research of this kind compels a researcher to utilise different

theoretical and methodological frameworks and to make use of those that already exist (Foster & Kemper 1974).

Contemporary Anthropological research now faces the challenge of having to understand migrants in the context of the social reality that they are investigating. Migration research has sometimes been regarded with varying degrees of animosity and doubt by proponents of conventional Anthropological research because it needs constantly to make changes that accommodate the changes in the social reality that it studies.

Why African People are Leaving their Home Countries and Migrate to South Africa

a) *Entrepreneurial Opportunities Present in South Africa/ The Effects of Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) in Most African Countries*

Entrepreneurship has always been used by immigrants as a means for sustaining life in a new country. Starting small businesses with relatively small amount of capital that is needed in the start-up stage has enabled many African migrants to survive by providing basic food and shelter for themselves and their families. My observation is that the decision to become a migrant entrepreneur is not a sudden or impromptu action. It is always a calculated and premeditated action taken after many factors and conditions have been carefully considered. It is also, according to my observation, an act that is carried out under the full control of the migrants concerned. Although there are numerous motivating and inhibiting factors that influence the decision whether or not to immigrate, the focus here is to investigate why people would leave their familiar frames of reference and choose the thorny path of negotiating home in a foreign land.

The social and economic factors that put pressure on many Africans to leave their country of origin and immigrate to South Africa include the so-called Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP). This programme was devised and implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a means of helping African countries to pay off loans to international banks. But the consequence of this policy was that many civil servants in Zambia, Cameroon, Ghana and other African countries ended up losing their jobs

while those who were allowed to stay on were obliged to accept reduced salaries. Because those who were once employed could no longer find jobs, they frequently ended up in the informal sector. Most of my informants described the damage done by the SAP and the unfortunate consequences it had for those who had to depend solely on informal activities for survival.

One of my informants from Ghana, Maria, describes the upheavals caused by the SAP in the following way:

As a little girl, after dropping out of school because my parents could no longer afford school fees, I was sent to a hairdressing salon, where I learnt how to dress hair. After I completed my course, I opened my own hair salon where I was managing until many people who had been working with the government started opening salons. This business became so over-flooded that I could hardly pay my rentals. By 1997 when I left Ghana, there was hardly a difference between those who went to school and those of us who did not because we were all doing the same things. Thus when I had the opportunity through Paulina, who first came to South Africa in 1994 and was repatriated in 1995 but returned in June of the following year, to come to South Africa, I did not hesitate.

Paulina and I know each other from way back in the 1980s when we both attended 'My Source Girls' Secondary School in Kumasi. I was born in Kumasi and spent most of my teenage years there. When I dropped out of school in 1981, I went to Accra where I lived with my mother's elder sister who was a dealer in beauty products. In Accra, I started braiding women's hair at home, and, at other times, I helped my mother's sister to sell in her shop. Before this time, I had no professional knowledge of hairdressing. When my mother's sister discovered that I was good with my fingers, she sent me back to Kumasi and registered me as an apprentice with King's Palace Beauty Salon. I learnt hairdressing for two years and in 1981 I completed my course and went back to Accra. With the assistance of my mother's sister, I opened a hair salon in Accra which I ran until 1997 when I left Ghana.

When Paulina was in South Africa, we used to write to each other and I was surprised to see her back in Ghana just one year after she left. Since she told me to be saving money to eventually come to South Africa, I had saved three hundred thousand Cedis, which she borrowed

and used in paying her travel fare back to South Africa. She promised to assist me in coming to South Africa, which she did. I would say that I was succeeding with my business at home until SAP came.

Another informant, Cecilia, explained other difficulties caused by SAP in the following words:

In South Africa, we are seen as the ones stealing South Africans' jobs. I do not blame South Africans when they say that because I have been there. I know how it feels when some super giant comes with all the knowledge and puts you out of business. The civil servants back in Ghana stole our jobs. With all the money they got when they were retrenched, they had all the capital to buy sophisticated equipment that we could not afford. They came and stole our jobs and we were put out of business.

These people, who had already established themselves as self-employed business people in entrepreneurial activities in their home country, found themselves obliged to immigrate to South Africa which had economic opportunities which attracted them because of its vast market potential.

b) *Promises of a Second Home Made by ANC during the Apartheid Era*

During the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, many South Africans were scattered all over Africa. There were many in the secondary or high schools as well as in the universities. During those years, as one of my informants Margaret (a Nigerian migrant woman who is also a science and mathematics teacher in a high school in Richards Bay) said, money used to be collected and given to the South African students as part of the struggle against apartheid. In return, Margaret said, they were promised a home in South Africa when the struggle ended. She said that South Africa is their second home and that they have every right to be here.

Another informant, Maria, a Zambian nurse presently working at the Richards Bay hospital said that she and her family back in Zambia used to live next to a house, which was used by the ANC-in-exile. Whenever that house was under attack, they too had to run away

from home. She explained that they did not bother about those experiences because they were promised a second home in South Africa after the end of apartheid.

c) *Skills Shortage in South Africa*

Many foreign Africans in South Africa are professionals from such fields as academia and medicine and have much to offer to the knowledge-based economy of South Africa. The reality for South Africa today, especially in the academic and medical field, is that it relies heavily on the skills of Africans around the continent to satisfy its current demand, especially at the high end of the skills continuum. This strategy is used to compensate for its skills shortage because of past apartheid policies and current large-scale white emigration. In most hospitals around the country, even in remote areas, the presence of Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Zambian and Congolese medical doctors and nurses are resounding facts, which cannot be ignored. Even in private medical practice, Nigerian general practitioners are making a valuable contribution. In all Universities in South Africa, the presence and contribution of African migrant professionals cannot be ignored. Many strategic academic positions previously occupied by white South Africa professionals are increasingly filled by these foreign nationals. Positions such as Vice Chancellor, Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments and Deans of Faculties are occupied by academics from other African countries. Amongst these professionals, some have migrated directly from their countries of origin while others, who were previously employed in universities in Europe and America, have decided to bring back their acquired skills to South Africa because of the need. In terms of research and general scholarship, these academics are editors of peer reviewed journals, members of editorial boards of journals and recognised publishing houses like Langa and CODESRIA.

Theoretical Basis for Belonging and Connecting

Long before the colonial encounter by Europeans in Africa, African people had an elastic way of conceiving home which is far removed from the fixed notion given by classical theorists. Gupta and Ferguson (2001) have also

questioned the fixed notion of home and construct it as remembered places for dispersed people. In her work on the nature of contemporary social identities, Malki (2001: 56) had shown how identities come to be fixed. She writes that; 'people are often thought of, and think of themselves, as being rooted in a place and as deriving their identities from that rootedness' (Malki 2001: 56). Today, we are faced with a highly mobile (more so than ever before) and globalised world which increasingly erodes people from distinct places of abode. In such an era, we cannot continue to map people to particular places of abode.

In trying to unfold the complexities of home, Faists (2000) notion of transnational social space is useful since it denotes, in most cases, the symbolic spaces created through the process of transnationalism (Schiller 2004) which migrants occupy. These spaces are carved out by migrants who are always evolving and are not fixed. The transnational social space is made pragmatic within the social network theory since it links individuals to the different physical sites and with the different social locations and symbolic spaces.

Hannerz (1996), Kritz and Zlotnik (1992), Basch *et al.* 1994) have written elaborately on how networks connect people to place and relationships. Faist (2000) also draws our attention to how the concepts of reciprocity and cultural solidarity function to keep these networks intact. In renegotiating home in South Africa, the concepts of solidarity as 'shared beliefs, ideas, and symbols; expressed in some sort of collective identity' (Faist 2000: 192) is fundamental. People forge a collective identity through their social networks. These networks are fluid and not fixed and are dependent on the need of the individual in question. Such needs vary from the need to access foodstuff from home country to gaining access to traders in foodstuffs and other commodities of African origin in South Africa. All these social relations are transformed at some point into social capital in different ways. In my opinion, one of the most important factors required as people negotiate home in South Africa is the ability of someone in these transnational social relations to provide a migrant with 'home food'. The process of migration disconnects one from their routine reality and people in this space constantly have to renegotiate their sense of belonging. Food has become one of the major adaptation strategy through which migrants regain a consciousness of self and group belonging. This resonates with Koptytoff's

(2006) assertion that commodities must not only be produced materially as things, but also culturally as marked as being a certain kind of a thing. The consumption of food for migrants does not simply serve the purpose of satisfying cravings and hunger, but fills a cultural and emotional gap and connects migrants to home or a 'feeling of being at home'. Miller (1995: 35) alluded to this fact when he stated that; commodities are brought to life in the consumption practices of the household and enact moral, cosmological and ideological objectification, and creates the images by which we understand who we have been, who we are, and who we might or should be in future. Being able to eat 'home food' or food prepared home-style; is very instrumental in their ability to adapt and adjust to life in South Africa. During their annual and monthly get-together, birthday parties, weddings and funerals, home food is prepared while they all relax, dance and listen to music from home. This reminds them of who they used to be and when they are able to taste home food; in most cases, it becomes the only thing in a foreign land that connects them with home.

If one examines the social networks with which these migrants surround themselves, one can see that most of their social networks reflect more than one type of activity. While social ties of various kinds are evident, for example, in widely separated networks, all these networks are connected with one another for the purpose of 'feeling at home'.

All the migrants interviewed have deliberately developed and sustained networks that benefit newcomers. Among Cameroonians, Nigerians and Zimbabweans, there is a clearly identifiable tendency for kin to cluster around a specific location around South Africa in towns like Esikhaweni, Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg in order to feel at home. When such clustering occurs, it sometimes results in the formation of migrant associations. These associations (as is the case with Cameroonians in Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban and Ghanaians in Durban) provide invaluable assistance when it comes to adaptation and connecting all within the social networks.

Through the influence and patronage of one successful contact in South Africa, an enormous network of friends, neighbours, acquaintances and families back in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Uganda and Cameroon have carved out a space of their own, called home. Apart from this very direct contact that is common to these migrants, others come into being in South Africa.

Through the social network established by Eddy, a Cameroonian who came to South Africa and established himself in Cape Town in the informal sector, a whole group or social network of family, friends and neighbours have also established in Cape Town.

In November 1997, Eddy came to South Africa and decided to settle in 'Khayelitsha', a township in Cape Town. He realised that there was a ready market for hairdressers, electricians and mechanics. He immediately invited his sister Esther to him and opened a shop for her in 2000; in 2001, he invited his brother John and opened a car repair shop. In 2003, he invited his friend Joe, who eventually opened an electrical workshop. This network has increased and there are currently two[1] Cameroonian associations in Cape Town. These associations meet once a month and prepare home-style food. In 2010, they decided to each contribute money and order African fabrics and designed them to be of African style. All these are endeavours for feeling at home, away from home.

Connections between Home and Host Country *vis-à-vis* Constructions

a) Creating New Consciousness

Migration dislodges people not only from the places of origin and patterned senses, but as Ahmed (1999:341) had noted, it creates an abrupt change in migrants' sensecapes, a change in their 'sensory world of everyday experience'. As soon as someone decides to leave their country of origin, there is a certain level of disconnectedness and alienation from the place of origin. This begins with family members and friends who start perceiving the person as the 'other'. Such a person is called 'bush faller' in Cameroon. Upon leaving the native country, such a person therefore loses a home in the hope of finding a new home abroad. Upon arrival at the country of abode, he/she is denied a home because home is conceived (by people in the host country) as the country of origin. This automatically deepens the level of alienation and disconnectedness.

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[1] Manyu meeting and Manyu Elders. He has been very instrumental in the formation of the two associations and is the current president of Manyu Elders.

Whenever someone is about to leave Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria etc. to come to South Africa, one finds that there is great excitement among family members. Because one of their family members is emigrating, they already anticipate an end to poverty and suffering through the creation of a means to ensure prosperity. Such families tend to rally around the emigrant and offer every possible means of financial and moral support to the person who is leaving. Needless to say, they regard emigration as a good omen for themselves as individuals and for the family as a whole.

Such families will scrape the bottom of the barrel to contribute whatever amount that they can afford to sponsor the emigrant's trip. Agatha (an informant from Ghana) related how both her mother and mother's sister sold their traditional gold jewellery and expensive clothes to raise the air ticket for her trip to South Africa. Fathers whose children are emigrating will sell property such as land or even borrow money from money lenders. The child who thus benefits is naturally expected to work hard and send sufficient money back home to repay the debt or ultimately to pay back the money for the land that was sold (together with the interest) so that the family can take steps to repossess the land.

On the spiritual side, a lot of secrecy surrounds people who are about to leave their home country. As the time draws near for emigrants to leave their village for the city, everyone knows what is happening, even though they pretend that they do not. Whether the intending emigrant is from a family that practices Traditional African Religion or whether they are Christians, all information about imminent departure is kept a close secret from the wider community, and is revealed only to close kin. It is only once a person has actually left that the news is disseminated in the community and among friends. Immediately after the emigrant's departure, rumours will spread through the community and family members will either confirm or deny the rumours. This kind of secrecy prevails because of the traditional community belief that there are invisible (spiritual) powers that can sabotage a person's prosperity if they get to know too much about it. It is for this reason that all pertinent information is shared only among family members. Families believe that if they announce a person's departure from the country in advance, some hostile spiritual power might prevent that person from going. Christian families thus fast and pray to invoke divine protection. But they nevertheless also wait until the intending emigrant has left before they

announce the departure. Practitioners of Traditional African Religion will consult the local deities through the medium of a fetish priest and ask the ancestors to 'keep an eye on the person who is leaving' and bless him or her.

b) Home as a Dreaded Place

The process of migration and the expectations of those left behind makes home a dreaded place for migrants who intend visiting their country of origin. These expectations are in fact so high that they are often a source of concern for African migrants in South Africa. My informants continued to receive letters demanding money from those who remained behind up to six months after their departure. The amounts solicited in this way were quite unrealistic, and this also created a great deal of tension. Even people who were not closely related to the emigrant asked for money for expenses such as school fees and trips abroad. Eddy (a Cameroonian man) said: 'in Cameroon you do not draw a line', meaning that patterns of obligation extend without limit beyond one's own family. Even cousins write letters requesting money without informing the migrants' parents.

My informants all claimed that if they did not respond to these requests for money, they would be 'painted black' (denigrated) by both family members and community. The general belief back in the other African countries is that people who fail to send remittances home to all and sundry are 'selfish'. There is a prevailing sentiment in these countries that can be paraphrased like this: 'if things are really as difficult as some people abroad portray, then why are they still living there? They should come back home'. Some migrants even felt embarrassed to return to their home countries for visits because of all the inflated expectations of immediate family members, inhabitants from their villages and even friends from primary school days.

Whenever these migrants return home, everyone who comes to welcome them comes with great expectations. Questions such as 'was I on your list?' and 'What did you bring for me?' are soon asked. And if the visitor from South Africa gives them, for instance, a shirt or a hair product, they will not hesitate to say that they need only money and not goods or products. Some of my informants emphasised that 'one cannot blame those who are left behind because one can see the genuineness of their requests'. There is undoubtedly a great deal of financial hardship in the rest of Africa.

Everyone in the extended family and even acquaintances expect the migrant to come back and help them with their problems. In short, a person is conceptualised as living abroad for the benefit and well-being of the entire family and extended kin network.

Even in South Africa, those immigrants who send money home look down on those who do not. The person who fails to send money home becomes a subject of gossip because of his or her inability to help those back at home. It is interesting to note that all immigrants in South Africa know who are sending remittances and who are not. This happens because whenever one of the migrants is about to return home, he or she is asked to take certain sums to family back at home. Since migrants tend to take turns in travelling home, who the recipients were, and what amount were involved is common knowledge.

When a poor family from any African country manages to send a family member to live abroad, one is able to notice the difference in their standard of living because the money that they receive to some extent transforms their lives. A family may, for example, build a house in the village on the strength of remittances received. Maria is but one example of an emigrant who built a house in which her mother and mother's sister now reside. Paulina built a house in Accra and rented it out. On the proceeds of the rent from this house she supports her parents. These migrants are intensely socially competitive and if his or her next-door neighbour builds a three-bedroom house, he or she will desire to build a four or five bed-room house. Each of them takes pride in the fact that they have been able to build a house back at home and they despise anyone who has not been able to do so. Most people try to send remittances home so that, when they return either to retire or when they die, they will be accepted by those left behind and not treated as strangers. African migrants are very careful to continue sending remittances home because they do not want the entire community as well as their families to reject them when they return. Rejection of this kind is regarded as one of the worst possible fates among African migrants.

Most of the migrants interviewed think that it is a great mistake on the part of those who return home for visits to talk only about the advantages of living abroad. These one-sided tales have led the people back at home to believe that those who live abroad invariably live in the lap of luxury. They explain that how people back at home do not understand how one is not

automatically made prosperous simply because of the act of emigration. They therefore cannot understand why some migrants are able to remit and others cannot. This has left migrants with mixed feelings about returning home for visits because of these expectations. But the attraction remains and the home country holds a potent appeal. As Maria says: 'home is home and there is no place like home'. Most of the migrants I spoke to demonstrated a strong desire to return to their home country some day. Most of them did not want to die in South Africa. This is the reason why one of their main priorities is to build a house back at home to which they might one day return. None of them fancy living in rented or family premises when they return because that, they feel that, that would be an insult to them because it would diminish their status. They did, after all, emigrate so that they would one day be able to own their own house back at home and they expect that such a house would always function as a sign and token of how successful they had been abroad.

c) *Pentecostal-Transnational Religion as a Type of Home*

Pentecostal-Transnational religion also creates a feeling of being at home in South Africa. The Pentecostal churches in South Africa offer a social space whereby new migrants who see themselves as family members based on their religious affiliation meet and create social relations and a means of accessing niche markets. Being in the presence of God with fellow believers from their home countries makes migrants feel at home. Although some migrants use these churches as a 'bridge' to establishing themselves in South Africa, some were members of the 'mother churches' back in their home countries. For this group, joining the 'sister church' in South Africa is a way of being at home away from home. For others like Mary Kusi, a migrant woman from Ghana, who currently runs two hair dressing salons in Durban, business is not only seen as a route to success but as a way of carrying out God's creative and redemptive plan. Viewing her business in the light of God's divine plan gives her significance in what she does and a feeling of being at home.

Mary's conceptualisation of being at home includes the liberty and opportunity of incorporating her religious practices and business endeavours, which is demonstrated in her every-day life. Her salons, she says, are her pulpit given to her by God. She believes that if she is unable to preach in church, she has countless opportunities to preach to people who come to her

salons, as the opportunity arises. She said that God did not only provide her with a salon to dress women's hair but also to address their spiritual needs. This public space is used as a meeting place for other believers and Pastors from West Africa; who come from time to time for a word of prayer, especially in the early hours of the morning when there are no customers.

d) Negotiating Home '(ill)legally' in South Africa

The interviews I conducted confirmed that migrants tend to make use of any possible provision to live legally in South Africa. Marriage of convenience is one of the means used by African migrants to acquire the status that allows them to remain legally in South Africa. As soon as they arrive in South Africa, migrants apply for refugee status. Then, while they are in the process of seeking asylum, they enter into marriages of convenience with South African citizens. Minnaar and Hough (1996) state that when they are in South Africa, migrant males hasten to marry South African women and produce children from such unions. Minnaar and Hough believe that they do this so that they will have some grounds on which to base a plea, however fragile, to remain in South Africa if they are apprehended by the authorities. The basis of the plea would be that they already have dependents in South Africa if they are apprehended.

Other migrants merely enter into liaisons with South Africans and try to bear children as soon as possible. They do this so that if they are caught, they will be able to adduce humanitarian reasons for being allowed to remain in the country (the basis in this case would be that they have obligations to support a family who are South Africa by nationality). Some men even enter into traditional marriages and pay the traditional lobola (bride price) for their South African wives.

My study revealed that it is not only men but also women who enter into marriages of convenience of this kind. But they do it in a different way. Ugandan, Nigerian, Cameroonian and Ghanaian women do not bear children for their South African partners, nor do they engage in any kind of sexual encounter. To them, the men sign a marriage certificate, and they both go through the form of a marriage. But because the South African government has in recent times begun to follow up and investigate this kind of illegal

marriage of convenience, the women who arrange them make sure that they remain constantly in touch with their supposed husbands.

Such immigration malpractices can create legal thickets of extraordinary complexity. One finds, for example, that the real husbands of these women are married to South African women while they themselves are married to other South African men. Sometimes these women will divorce their South African 'Husband' before marrying a man of their nationality. If a woman does this, she and her husband are able to live legally as permanent residents in South Africa.

Conclusion

The migrants who were interviewed for this project feel strongly that their decision to migrate to South Africa was a good one, irrespective of how they construct and conceive home. In South Africa, migrants draw on their social networks to access the necessary food or items that make them 'feel at home'. Certainly, all of them strongly believe that there is no place like home but have mixed feelings because they are caught in-between. The reality of migration; most of them agreed is that; once you have left, it is hard to return. Migrants have struggled over the years in being transnational with the intention of maintaining their roots and connections so that it would be easier for them to return someday. These efforts have only ended up deepening their level of alienation. Those who are left behind will always see them as the 'other' and are happy to have them living abroad so that they can continue receiving remittance. The interviews reveal that these migrants experience a sense of home in their transnational space and not just a location which is assigned to them. As I conclude this paper, I am tempted to define home for migrants as a place where an individual feels emotionally fulfilled and physically secure on a symbolic level.

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'Mind the Gap':
The Structural Ecology of
Small Networked Communities

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Abstract
The social network perspective starts with individual actors and observes among other things, the social and opportunistic ties and emerging patterns of arrangements within the group structure. In social networks, resources (including ties as social capital) are unequally distributed, and embeddedness defines the particular locations of actors in the network. By using social network analysis, the paper attempts to draw attention to the cohesive aspects of the structural ecology of two small groups of Indian migrants and their nodal ties in their transnational community. The paper works through the prism of structural-hole theory and seeks to show that the cohesive ties of 'knowing' (Urry 2007) amongst the nodal actors in such small and closed communities, while creating norms of goodwill and reciprocity, is also able to act prohibitively and hinder other sorts of 'connectivity and relationships' outside of the immediate transnational group of actors (Gargiulo & Benassi 2000:183). The argument is that networks underlie the relational nature of groups, and while affording access to network assets or social capital in the shape of employment opportunities, accommodation space and social gatherings, these networks also allow a significant amount of constraint to be built into the dynamic.

Introduction: Network Analysis in the Social Sciences and in Anthropology
I often borrow as quotation, the elegant words of Arjun Appadurai who

speaks of 'anthropology as the archive of lived actualities' (1990:11). For me this simple description of *what anthropology is*, captures emblematically the way I feel, where a visit for the belated(!) haircut for the school-going son, and a eagerly awaited trip to the favourite sushi restaurant, for the same son one adds, reveals an archive of 'actualities' that lend themselves to the anthropological gaze. For increasingly, perhaps understandably so in the case of the sushi bar (needing the specialist chef), and now, somewhat more surprisingly so for its increasing frequency, at tailors and salons and similarly supermarkets and small businesses situated in various Indian suburbs, we are met with staff that are from other spaces and distal reaches of the globe. Such transnational scatterings of individualized migrant labour are to be found in many other economic nook and crannies of the, in a sense, 'respatialized' country, with foreign faces offering otherwise routine services (see Naidu 2008).

In many of these small businesses, is the discernible face of cliques or clusters of migrant groups who appear to be related or connected in some manner to one another. These cliques of migrant workers in turn offer themselves up to the anthropological gaze as they reveal richly embedded social patterns of arrangement that work through particular relational webs. It is the presence of many such small cliques and networks that drew my gaze to the changing social landscape in suburbs like Reservoir Hills, which takes its name from its geography, the topography of the hilly suburban space, and the large reservoir that sits atop one of those hills.

Network analysis, although having greater currency in the physical sciences, is becoming increasingly popular in the social sciences and in sociological and anthropological studies. Many of these studies, especially in anthropology, have focused on large and often international networks and have looked at the diverse social phenomena of international terrorism, transnational corporation profitability and religious organisations. This paper is an attempt to bring the paradigmatic scrutiny of network analysis to small networked communities. Much of the work in network analysis is necessarily couched in network jargon and algebraic formulae that often elides the appreciation of the individuals and their experiences which I see as 'thickly' able to illustrate the qualitative nature of the relational webs within networks. This paper is an effort to bring into deeper working relationship, ethnography and network analysis. It is a move away from much of the stark

algebraic representation associated with network analysis, while retaining some of the relevant jargon and more importantly, the intellectual under-pinnings of the paradigm. It was White back in 1992 who stated that narratives and stories are vital to structural pursuits, telling us that stories describe the ties in networks (White 1992: 65), and it is this cue that I follow.

The Mobile Indian: The *Indian* Diaspora, the South African *Indian* and the *Indian* Migrant

I can recall lying on a glorious beach on one of the Greek isles a few years back and having an Indian face in a heavily accented Indian voice asking if I *'want to buy a DVD'*. My thought (after declining the purchase) was 'wow, Indians are everywhere'. Although perhaps not quite literally '*everywhere'*, Indians have dispersed far beyond the Indian subcontinent. In South Africa alone, there are approximately one million Indians, mostly concentrated in the coastal province of KwaZulu Natal. South Africa has the largest population of people of Indian descent outside of India, who are born in South Africa, with sunny Durban playing host and home to the largest concentration of Indians in the country. This is rendered into global perspective by Bhat and Narayan (2010:16) telling us that population estimates by the High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora[1] suggest 'that the Indian immigrants have crossed approximately the 20 million mark, dispersed around the globe in more than 70 countries'.

The history of the early Indians to South Africa is itself entangled in the wider socio-political 'movement' of colonial arrangements of power over people and lands, and the bodily 'labour' signified by the people. Thus, the earliest immigration and concentrated movement of Indians to South Africa would be traced back to the arrival of the approximately 140 000 indentured workers in 1860. The passenger or 'free' Indians arrived from the year 1880s. Granted, this rendering of early Indian migrant movement into South Africa, as 'indentured' (and aided) and 'free' (and unaided), shows a rather

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[1] This report outlines the profile of 23 countries with Indians, and shows that Indians number above 10,000 in 48 countries and are at the half a million mark in 11 countries.

naive typology, given the later patterns of migratory flows into the country. However, it was not until very much later in the early 1990s that Indians started arriving as 'new immigrants' in South Africa[2]. This is what Bhat and Narayan (2010:16) refer to as 'old diaspora' or broadly speaking, the '3rd to 5th generation descendants of the early emigrants during the mid-nineteenth century'. This earlier movement of people is to be distinguished from later waves of migratory flows of professionally trained and skilled emigrants to the developed countries of the West during the second half of the 20th century which comprise the so called '*new Diaspora*'.

Last, is the 'labour diaspora' which is a reference to the migrant labour force, from the so called unskilled and semi-skilled, to the highly skilled and professional, said to constitute the third component of the immigrants from India. Many of these individuals are said to have left behind their families in India and continue to remit savings towards the maintenance of the family (Bhat & Narayan 2010:17). Having left behind family and friends, in many instances these labour migrants enter networks of constructed relationships with other migrants within the host societies. This is the point of insertion of this particular paper which begins with the position that the topology of most social networks is more often than not characterized by clustered connections or short paths between nodes (the individual actors).

Network analysis by itself does not of course tell us much about the actual qualitative nature and 'human value' of the relationships within the structure, and as such it is in the richly veined narratives of the migrant participants that we can hope to 'see' how relational effects such as community size and strength of ties is able to shape network structure by influencing the course of social, and other links between the labour migrants in the group.

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[2] Park and Rugunanan (2010) attribute this to the fact that the then government of South Africa wanted to repatriate the Indians already in the country and halt further immigration of those wishing to enter the country. They point out the rather obvious, that, while the former (attempt at repatriation) did not have much success, the latter policy (halting the tide of further immigration) proved more fruitful.

Background and Methodological Entrances

This paper draws on ethnographic work done in late 2008 and early 2009, and then 2010, over a fifteen month period, and succeeds earlier papers (Naidu 2008; Naidu 2010). As transnational networks are not fixed and unchanging, with new members entering and older members leaving at different points in time, follow up interviews were scheduled in the latter part of 2010 (June-November) and 2011 (September-October) with purposively selected Indian migrants from two of the original groups. This was to obtain a sense of how the networked community may have changed its profile of members, as well as to make contact again with some of the early respondents and revisit (literally and methodologically speaking) with them.[3]

The research design is both descriptive and explanatory, and narrative description is seen as vital to the research process. The rich narratives from the participants are located within network analysis which allows us to understand some aspects of the migrants' transnationalised lives. There were thirty participants in the original study and the sampling on these occasions was broader and drew from five different networks or groups, and included participants that were both Indian and Pakistani. The total number of participants revisited in 2011, number nineteen. Here the sampling was purposively narrowed to just two of the networks that comprised Indian migrants. As the number of individuals in the groups was appreciably small, the sample within the category of Indian migrant was not consciously selective or delimited in any way. Rather, efforts were made to include all within the group as participants.

As in the initial interviews two years ago, the participants were all male as this form of individualized migrant mobility, was found to be highly 'masculinized'. It appeared from conversations with the participants that women from the background and towns that the male participants were from,

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[3] In 2009, and in 2011, a research assistant was used, who went in, on both occasions for two days and asked some questions formally. The reasoning for this was simply to triangulate some of the bits of information for which seemingly conflicting information had been noted. By then the respondents had gained a sense of familiarity with me, and having bridged somewhat, the gap between researcher and respondent, I was concerned that there were sometimes teasingly giving differing 'answers' to my questions.

and who might fall into the category of unskilled or semi-skilled, did not migrate alone in search of work. This observation is vindicated by Park and Rugunanan's (2010) study, which was carried out in the Fordsburg/Mayfair areas of Johannesburg for the South Asian migrant communities they interviewed, where they also point out that their respondents were all male. They explain that the 'lack' of female respondents is due to 'a gender disparity in Asian migrant populations', and 'traditional gender norms'. They stress that the vast majority of the South Asian migrants are male and claim that this is typical of most new migrant groups where young, single men tend to arrive first and then, if successful, return to the sending country to 'collect or find wives and children' (Park & Rugunanan 2010:7). My own sense is that this is perhaps a bit of a 'flattening' of the reality which is somewhat more complex. Certainly in the case of migrant Indian communities of skilled labour (see Meijering & van Hoven 2003), the individual migrates with the nuclear family (which includes the spousal female), and in some instances, subsequently 'sends for' members of the extended kin. The migration pattern that I found amongst my respondents was that Indian *females*, who might be termed as belonging to the categories of so called unskilled and semi-skilled labour, *did not* migrate to South Africa for mainly normative 'cultural' reasons, and that the male migrants, even if married, chose to migrate alone and did not send for their wives[4].

When I first met my participants, their work day extended over 12 hours, from 8 am to 8 pm, and this had not changed two years later, when the latter sets of interviews were done. The important early meetings facilitated a level of familiarity, vital for dialogue. Later interactions were scheduled interviews, themselves structured flexibly as conversations, given (most) participants' long work hours, and a scarcity of 'free time'. There was also the added language 'challenge' to be negotiated with some of the respondents as English was not their native language. This had also changed very little. Although their English appeared very much more fluent, the

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[4] When probed, the married men said that they preferred their wives 'safe with family' back home. It was not so clear however to what extent the reasons were also embedded in the sense of 'freedom' that the male migrants seemed to be experiencing away from family and in some instances, away from their wives.

respondents were still more comfortable in their own language of *Gujarati*. This I ascribed to the fact that all of their interactions amongst themselves was in their native tongue. Their English was reserved to the stock questions posed to the clients regarding the specifics of their haircut. Thus, given the language difficulties, and cultural 'coyness' perhaps, 'conversations' moved slowly until a certain degree of rapport had been established[5], facilitated by my own rudimentary familiarity with the popular North Indian vernacular of *Hindi* (itself culled from Bollywood movies).

As part of the 'old diaspora in South Africa, I was an outsider on many levels. I was after all a local Indian female, 5th generation in the country, who had no known kin or other links with India, who wished to understand the 'materiality' (Featherstone & Waters 2007:383) of the participants' lives as transnational migrants. To this end a large window was invited on their transnationalised lives and practices. A clutch of concerns around remittances, xenophobia, the legality of their stay, cultural taboos etc., were allowed to surface in both the early and latter interviews, even though the delimited orbit of the study did not include these issues. This 'window' greatly assisted in 'looking inside' the complex reality characterizing migrants' lives. The ethnographic snapshots that follow capture a few of the 19 participants, and are not meant to imply that there exists a generic profile for this category of migrants, but rather to hold a lens to aspects of network cohesion and network constraint as they come to be revealed in the participants' narratives.

Networks, Community Size and Network Structure
There were two networks that featured in this study. These were small

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[5] My very early meetings were casual and unscheduled visits seeking to establish an acquaintance, and offered a chance to make use of the salon (for the rather unwilling son and his much needed mop of hair) and restaurant facilities (not surprisingly, more welcomed by the same son). The salon catered initially to only males. It thereafter employed a local female who 'took care' of the female clientele. I did not offer myself as a client as it was the male haircutters that I wished to interact with. Thus the (rather unwilling son) was the early (bribed) sacrificial lamb needing the repeat 'shearing'.

networks with small membership that ranged from 12 individuals in one networked group, to 7 in the other networked community. The assumption was that the close acquaintances of an individual in a small community would most likely be close acquaintances or friends with each other because there would be few other potential social opportunities, thus engendering greater or high network closure and exhibiting a significant measure of social capital. The network and the networked community, is characterized by a set of nodal actors and by connections, or said differently, *interactions*, between these nodes. Each of these groups had also transnational linkages, members outside the country but these are construed as 'weak ties'. Although we are aware of them as they feature in the narratives of the participants, this study focused on the 'cliques' represented by the immediate and strongly 'tied' individuals that were in close and daily contact with each other, and form the research community of this study.

The structure of the network and size of the community makes sense if we were to frame the transnational movement within a particular typology and 'scale' of migratory flow. Much work (see Aulakh & Schechter 2000; Hudson and Slaughter 2007; Vervotec 2009) has been done revealing how transnationalism articulates within the wider frame of globalisation and the paper does not mean to revisit those discussions. What is of more immediate interest rather is the smaller scale articulation of transnationalism. Creating conceptual typologies that aid in methodological and empirical studies, Guarnizo and Smith (1998) speak of 'transnationalism from below' or the routinized activities and practices of transnational individuals. Similarly, echoing what are termed as the sociology of South Asia, and found particularly in studies of south Asian religions, are Gardner and Grillo's (2002:183) semiotic concepts of 'great' and 'little' transnationalism, that is to say signifying the 'macro' transnationalism of state and economy, and the 'micro' transnationalism at the level of household and family, and as in this particular study, at level of the *individual.*

Indeed, more and more, transnational processes are examined at the micropolitical level of family and household, and at the level of the individual (see Levitt 2001; Poros 2001; Chamberlain & Leydesdorff 2004; Yeong *et al.* 2005; Silvey 2006; Gernsheim 2007; Thieme 2008). As Portes *et al.* (2001) and Voigt-Graf (2004) point, there are particular typologies of transnational flows that can be spoken of within the contexts of 'little' and

'great'. However, the various authors themselves caution, '*little'* and '*great'* are not to be reified as oppositional streams of transnational flows, but are rather to be understood as the articulation of the *global* with *local* manifestations. This statement cuts to the core of the point that, the '*transnational'* and, '*transnational flows'* are not always immense in scale (see also Hannerz 1996). It is understandable then that this small scale migration had led to small networks and hubs of migrant communities.

Given all of this, the scrutiny of the paper is focused narrowly on, *individualized mobility* and particular categories of work of the transnational migrants. The paper is an attempt to reflect upon the constructed pathways of connectivity and social capital within the Indian migrants' transnationalised lives, and holds the lens to two small networked communities, onto a small community of 'haircutters[6]' and waiters and a small community of tailors. Of course not all migrants engage in sustained transnational practices, in other words not all migrants are *trans*-nationals. The groups in the study however, are transnational by virtue of their engagement in transnational activities of remittance, frequent contact and emotional investment in 'home' as well as different degrees of movement in straddling and criss-crossing home and host society.

Network Structure: Introducing the Migrant Members

Mohamed*[7] was a thirty year old Muslim Indian owner of the *Surti*, a one-roomed 'tailor shop' tucked away in a little passageway and bordered by other small businesses, a local grocer, a local fishery, as well as a salon and small restaurant run and staffed by migrant Indian workers. When I first met Mohamed, he was visiting his 'haircutter' friends in *Al Noor* Salon, immediately next door. As he bounded in and out of the salon, it was easy to see that he was at ease in English and he had picked up numerous (quaint and not so quaint) South African colloquialisms, which he was keen to try out on

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[6] The seemingly quaint way of referring to the male stylists as '*haircutters'* echoes the manner in which they see themselves, and is a fall back to the male barber shop and haircutters.

[7] As some of the participants were comfortable with me using their names and others not, I have opted to use pseudonyms for all of them.

me. With Mohamed, it was thus a fortuitous and a fluid transition into conversation about himself. In my early interviews in 2009 he had revealed that he had left Gujarat seven years earlier in search of better economic pastures and had opened his 'tailoring shop' six years earlier in Reservoir Hills, claiming that he 'knew people here'. This journey was on the heels of and aided by his brother, who had arrived a few months before Mohamed and set up a tailoring business in Johannesburg. Mohamed had employed two other migrants (from Gujarat) as workers a few weeks before the early set of interviews. He shared that he had 'oh so many friends', both Muslims and Hindus, mainly from Gujarat and that it made it 'very easy' to be in this country. In many of my visits to the *Al Noor* Salon I noticed that Mohamed was seamlessly in and out of the salon that bordered his 'tailor shop', and interacted with all the migrant workers here, even the newly arrived, almost as if they were all long time friends. It was clear from the narrative that Mohamed who had had no tailoring experience or interest! prior to arriving in South Africa and setting up shop on the advice of his tailor brother, was comfortable with 'falling into' this line of business. In the interviews conducted in 2011, approximately two years after first meeting him, he had rented and moved to larger premises and was running a larger business, further down the same main road.

Mohamed is part of what I refer to, for want of a better name, as the 'Tailor Network'. He had employed two other immigrants from his native town in India. These migrants also had no experience in the tailoring business but made quick work of the employment (and social) opportunity offered by their cohesive ties with Mohamed and learned their tailoring skill '*on the job*' so to say. While one of the newly employed workers (Memud) had made contact with Mohamed while in Rajkot in Gujarat, the other worker (Jihan) had according to his story, simply 'turned up at the new 'tailor shop' and 'asked for a job'. He claimed that he 'got the address' from some friends who knew that Memud was coming here, and who knew Mohamed. Back home, he had worked as a 'delivery boy' he said. He told me however, that he was enjoying the 'sewing', and Mohamed confirmed that he (Jihan) had learned quickly and become quite adept. The very many satisfied local patrons who came in while I was talking to the workers testified to how skilled and in demand all the migrants had become.

According to what many of the migrant workers from the tailor shop

shared, their networked community comprised a small and tightly knitted group of seven individuals, five of whom worked daily in the tailor shop, and another two (also fairly recent arrivals) who 'took care of the house' and appeared to be on standby when work orders exceeded the labour capacity of the workers in the shop. Networks are of course not in any way permanently stable but are rather fluidly assembled and altered by newly arriving members. Over the last two years, two of the workers had left to return to India and another two (the two recent employees) had entered the community. All had arrived at their employment, literally through their nodal networking and associative ties with each other. Mohamed had liberally peppered his conversations with me with sympathetic and caring comments that, 'these guys' were his 'brothers' and like him, 'needed a start in life'. He said that even though he did not always have work for the other two more recently arrived individuals who mainly stayed at home and took care of the domestic chores, he nevertheless felt compelled to help them with accommodation. He also told me that they all socialised together and attended worship at the local mosque together. Farr notes (2004:10; see also Allcott *et al*. 2007:80) that amongst transnationals, sympathy is a capacity 'that could be cultivated to understand and identify commonalities with others' and emerges as a deep feature of such networks.

Anant* was thirty four, and a single Muslim from the city of Surat in Gujarat who had been working for about three years at the *Al Noor* Salon. These premises were initially rented by a Pakistani Muslim migrant who owned the salon. I learnt in the interviews in 2011 that the salon had been taken over by **Roshan***, another migrant from Gujarat who had been working there for a few years. When I first met Anant, he was thirty two and had been at the salon for just under a year. Anant was part of what I refer to as the 'Salon Network'. Drawing our attention again to push and pull dynamics of economics, he told me that he had wanted to come to South Africa to 'make some money for his family'. Having done the same kind of 'job' in Gujarat, he shared that he was quite comfortable working in the salon. He had heard about the *Al Noor* from a friend while in India, who in turn had been told about the salon by another 'friend' who had already moved to South Africa for work. Anant was then able to obtain more details and 'turned up' at the Reservoir Hills salon and 'asked for a job'. This by now was emerging as a

sustained narrative refrain amongst the members in both networked communities, that of 'turning up' and almost, 'falling into' their line of work. While it may appear that Anant, with a salon background, had been fortunate to find the kind of work he sought, Anant revealed in the initial round of interviews two years ago that he had in fact hoped for 'something else' that was new, and better salaried. However, he shared at that time that it was 'impossible to find any other work' and that he did not wish 'to sell DVDs on the streets like some others'. Failing to find anything suitable, or 'anything at all' he too joined the rapidly expanding *Al Noor* Salon staff. Two years later, Anant was still working in the salon. He told me that while he had grown to 'really like' his 'job'; sometimes he still wished it was easy to 'go find some other kind of work'. He continued that he did not have the kind of 'money like some Bangladeshis'[8] who he claimed, came into the country and quickly started up small shops.

Kirtan* was a Hindu from Gujarat, twenty two years old and single when we first met. Unlike many of the other informants, he was articulate in English, jovially talkative to the point of being garrulous. He had attended first year psychology courses at his local University in Surat, in the state of Gujarat. His narrative revealed that his passage to South Africa over four years ago was aided by the fact that he had *both* relatives and friends in other African countries like Kenya and Zambia. He had gone to Zambia first and worked there in a grocer business belonging to his uncle. However, he had decided after a few short months, to move to South Africa. Again, he had an uncle here who had helped with his arrangements getting into Durban and with whom he had lived with for the first year before 'finding his feet'. He had heard about the position for 'haircutter' at *Al Noor* Salon through the uncle who had in turn, '*heard*' from other friends. When prodded gently for a name, Kirtan says that he thinks it was his co-worker **Roshan*** who mentioned the 'job' to his uncle.

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[8] Park and Rugunanan's (2010:7) research in the Free State revealed that the vast majority of Indian (and Pakistani) immigrants are engaged in small retail businesses, and that in almost every major town, secondary town, and in every 'dorpie' there was at least one or two Bangladeshi or Pakistani shops.

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Kirtan's story, like that of the other migrants, appears to be in concert to what is pointed out in the bulk of the literature on international migration, which reveals that immigrants rely vastly on interpersonal ties (see Poros 2001; Levitt 2001) to migrate and find employment. In Kirtan's case these interpersonal ties opportunistically corralled him into the work as haircutter. In the interviews in 2011, Kirtan reveals that he had recently married on one of his regular return trips to Gujarat. While he would like to earn more and get into 'other kinds' of work, he says everybody he knows well 'does this kind of job' and that he also has grown to 'really like the job'. When prodded he said that his wife was 'happy to remain with his family in India, and where she 'had work in an office'. When asked, he quipped to not have any plans to have her join him.

Komal*, now two years older at twenty eight and that much more rotund, was a single Hindu from Surat. Although his family's background in India, had been in the laundry business, his story reveals that *who* he *knew* in South Africa determined what kind of employment he eventually settled into. He had come to South Africa to visit his cousin, the then 25 year cousin *Roshan**, who by then was working in the *Al Noor* Salon. Roshan himself was a skilled electrician who could not get into the line of business that he had originally trained for back home. Roshan confides that he would 'really like electrician work'. Komal had stayed because he 'liked the country'. Although Komal had had a background and preference in running a small business he found that it was relatively impossible to find 'good' employment. His acquaintance and relationship with his cousin Roshan, and the cousin's web of relationships around the (migrant) salon owner and other transmigrant workers, had made it inherently straightforward, a *fait accompli* almost, to find employment *within* the salon.

Rafee* was now twenty seven. I had initially met him when he was a coy and soft spoken, twenty five year old. He had left Gujarat three years ago on the advice and prompting of his parents. Although married and the father of by now a five year old little girl, he had wanted better salaried work to help take care of his family in India. When I first met him he was employed at the restaurant next to *Al Noor* Salon. The close proximity and subsequent relationship meant that he was part of the 'Salon Network'. In his early

narrative he revealed a short summary of a long chain of acquaintances and friends whose sympathy and advice he says he sought and 'trusted'. This trust led him to his work as a full time waiter and occasional cook's assistant. The migrant staff at the salon and restaurant, were, both Hindu and Muslim. However, they all came from closely dispersed towns (in some cases the same town) in Gujarat. They formed one networked community, sharing work space and accommodation. Rafee not only revealed that he shared the accommodation with some of the salon staff, but added that he was also able to help out in the salon if any of the (salon) friends took ill. When I returned in 2011, I saw that the restaurant had been closed down a few months ago and had given way to a locally run liquor store. As a member of the small community, Rafee had managed to find work in the salon. He tells me that one of his migrant friends from the restaurant had returned to India, while another had found work in another restaurant that was run by 'people from India'.

Ajay* came to South Africa two years ago. He has no family in this country, and shares that he gets all the support that he needs from his salon friends. He seemed to be mostly under my radar in the early round of interviews two years ago, his days off coincided with my research days and when we did meet (due to me swopping around my schedule specifically to meet him) he seemed shy and did not open up much. This time round he was more comfortable narrating that he had 'worked as a hairdresser in India' and says his friends advised him to come to this country as there are many opportunities for 'hairdressers'. He tells me that he enjoys 'taking care' of his migrant friends and feels this as natural as they are the only family he has here. Also, he shares, 'they are from the same town in India' so they are able 'to share a lot'. He owes 'this job to his friends' not 'just the ones from the salon but even other friends' who had come to South Africa before him (and worked in the salon for a while) as they 'encouraged' him to move here. He also seemed to point to **Roshan*** as a central figure in the group that helped to consolidate his move here.

Sunil* arrived in the country five years ago to 'visit' friends in Johannesburg. A few months later they found him a job in a salon in Johannesburg. He moved to Reservoir Hills, Durban when he heard this year

that Roshan had 'taken over' the salon. He also referred to a long time acquaintance with Kirtan whom he met through mutual friends. He tells me that he did not want 'that kind of job' but did not 'mind it' either. He has since (like the other workers) spent 'six days a week cutting people's hair' (all the workers took turns having a rest day off), and had come to 'enjoy the job'. Sunil did not have any family here but several close friends who were from India and 'a few South African friends' (although after some prodding he revealed that he does not actually spend social time with these local friends). His friends from India, through 'their connections' helped him settle in South Africa and he told me he owes 'getting his job to his friends'. He feels his co-workers have become his family here as when they are together, they speak their home language and they are able 'to do' their religious practices together, as they would normally have engaged in back home. Sunil also shares the communal chores, and confides that he enjoys doing the cooking. His 'brothers' make the *roti* or Indian flat bread and other types of foods, but he claims that he is the designated cook who cooks a 'good hot curry' (Kirtan confirms this).

'Like physical capital', which can be used for different purposes, social capital according to Adler and Kwon (2002:21) is appropriable in the sense that an actor's network of, say, friendship ties can be used for other purposes, such as information gathering or advice, or vice versa. In this case it was played out in Sunil assuming a paternal role outside of the shared work context. Sunil tells me that he enjoyed spending time with his 'brothers', and feels he has the responsibility of ensuring that they are well taken care of, and says quite disarmingly, that he 'loves them all'. Even when they go out he feels that he has to 'look out for them' as some 'like too much partying and drinking' (Kirtan again confirms that Sunil was the 'father figure'). He claims that living with his 'brothers' helps him cope with missing home as 'from time to time' they sang cultural songs, danced and watched Indian movies together.

Jameel, who was coy about his age, was from Bangladesh (and did not have a separate Bangladeshi self identity as such and was happy to refer to himself as Indian). The other migrants working with him put his age down to thirty one. At the time of the early interviews he had been in the country for just a month. He had come to South Africa looking 'for work and more money', via

a rather chequered route having attempted working for short periods in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In those early interviews he had chosen not to share very much about those movements except to intimate that 'it was tough times'. He had come to South Africa through some 'good friends', (from Bangladesh) that he had met and befriended in Zambia, and who knew 'others who had come and worked in the salon' some time back. He 'knew sewing' back home and when he arrived at *Al Noor* Salon a few years ago, the workers here 'helped get him work' at the neighbouring tailor shop of Mohamed. He said he had no other family in South Africa, only 'many Indian friends from India', made here in South Africa and with whom he went to the movies, and to the mosque every Friday. Two years later, he shared that he had left and gone back home for several months, 'to see his family' and then came back to South Africa. As the tailor shop had moved down the road and had more workers than it needed, he was co-opted into the salon. It appeared that he had slipped effortlessly back into the community. He, like Komal, referred to **Roshan*** as a kind of 'focal' actor (Adler & Kwon 2002:19), who effectively tied together many of the members of this particular network by their common associative ties with him.

The Two Faces of Social Capital

Social capital, as a sociological concept, has become somewhat of a trendy term in the social sciences. Portes (2000:2) points out that the original theoretical development of the concept of 'social capital' by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the American sociologist James Coleman, centered on *individuals* or *small groups* as the units of analysis, and on the benefits accruing to individuals *because of their ties* with others. These theorists defined social capital in terms of *resource* to which an individual has access to, and is able to use for their benefit. Simply put, social capital is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections (of goodwill that can be called upon) *within* (and sometimes *between*) social networks. For a community, frequent cooperation or interactions by its members leads to tighter social linkages and increased trust in one another, described as a 'virtuous circle' of participation and trust (Janjuha-Jivraj 2003:32).

Closely knitted social networks are thus able to act as 'pools of

popular agency' (Meagher 2005:220) and are embedded in popular relations of solidarity and reciprocity. Rafee's story (similar to many of the others) show that his movements were clearly facilitated at most points by the people he knew and trusted, and by the fact that he could insert himself into the network and the pre-existing ties and pool of social capital in the network. The concept of social capital is 'complexly conceptualized as a network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain psychological capacities, norms, and trust' (Farr 2004: 8-9).

The migrants' narratives reveal the complex and dense relational texture of their community. This emerges in terms of how they responded to, and in anticipation of each other's closely knitted emotional, work and social needs. Sunil was able to comfortably admonish a paternalistic eye, and his own emotional need of 'family' was reciprocally taken care of. Likewise the newly entering migrants in the 'Tailor Network' were embraced within a similar paternal offer from Mohamed, with work and accommodation. Even when work was less forthcoming, they still had a place to stay and friends to socialise amongst, and attend mosque with.

The relational characteristic of social capital is echoed by Adler and Kwon (2002:18) who point out that the social structure within which the actor is positioned is the resource available to actors *as a function of their location* in the structure of their social relations. Adler and Kwon (2002: 22) additionally point out that social capital is 'located' not in the actors, but *in their relations* with other actors. Mohamed was at pains to inform me that that the migrants he employed were 'related to him'. This was in a sense knitting a social relation into a deeper kinship relation. I am hesitant to refer to this as 'fictive kin', for in the understanding of people like Mohamed, these are not 'made up' relatives, but an expanded and stretched sense of who one is related to that extended beyond both consanguinal and affinal relations, and was fed by circumstances of past ancestral location and present situational location, a case of a connection engendered by sharing the same 'roots' and 'routes' (Gilroy 1993). All of which cohered to, in turn fix the migrants into a tightly networked community.

However, Gargiulo and Benassi (2000) claim that it is the optic of structural-hole theory that peels back the wrapping on the concept of social capital. The theory is claimed as describing how social capital is a function of brokerage opportunities in a network. In their rather aptly titled paper

'Trapped in your Own Net? Network Cohesion, Structural Holes, and the Adaptation of Social Capital', these authors explore the tension between oppositional views on how (actually) networks work to create social capital. Network closure (Coleman 1988) of course stresses the role of cohesive ties in creating a normative environment that facilitates cooperation. Gargiulo and Benassi's (2000) argument, is that the 'other side' of social capital is borne out by structural-hole theory (Burt 1992), which conversely sees cohesive ties as a source of rigidity that hinders opportunities, and in a sense works against certain relational benefits created by social capital.

The lens of structural-hole theory allows us a glimpse of both faces of social capital. Individuals like Mohamed from the 'Tailor Network' are 'central nodes' in the networked community. The notion of 'centrality', itself emerges as a key concept in network theory and refers to the position of an individual actor in the network, and denotes the extent to which the focal actor occupies a strategic position in the network by virtue of being involved in many significant ties (see Gnyawali & Madhavan 2001:433). This 'centrality' is key in understanding the benefits that can accrue through association with such a central nodal actor. However, it is this very centrality that closes the 'gap' and door to the possibility of other kinds of employment opportunities for individuals like Jameel and many others. Likewise Roshan, by virtue of his central position in the 'Salon Network' was able to help many migrants with getting work at the salon, but not able to help with other sorts of employment possibilities, even for himself. We are reminded that he was a trained electrician who earnestly wished to get back 'into that kind of work'.

According to Burt (1997:441) the 'structural hole' is an opportunity to broker the flow of information between people and control the form of projects that bring together people from opposite sides of the (structural) hole. However, in both networks there was no 'hole' that could allow for a brokerage of diverse opportunities, *outside* of the salon or tailoring business respectively. Labour 'markets', even at the level of small scale and with so called unskilled labour, are themselves embedded in networks of social relations which, as in the case of Mohamed (tailor-shop) and Anant and Jameel (salon work), often do the business of 'matching' or bringing together work and person. The network mechanisms also highlights the role of individuals in the network in producing distinct types of 'migration flows'

and 'occupational outcomes' (Poros 2001:244). Social network theory unveils how *nodes* or the actors in the networks and *ties* or relationships between the actors function within networks. Critical concepts of 'degree' and 'cohesion' allow a further unpacking of *how* the migrant participants are connected, and to *whom,* with the concept of 'knowing' and 'cohesion' being vital in our understanding that other transnational relatives and friends connect the migrants cohesively and directly through routine rituals both secular (e.g. going to the movies) and religious (attending worship at the mosque). Structure refers to the particular pattern(s) between actors, where the strength of ties ('degree') has meaning and consequence. While structural holes in a network are traditionally seen as entrepreneurial opportunities to add value and opportunities to those able to facilitate some kind of brokerage outside of the closed system, structural-hole theory is used in this instance to show how being inside a densely knitted, and highly connected network means that the cohesive ties prevent one being able to get information and opportunities for employment outside of that network.

My sense, based on the interviews, was that it also worked to prevent any kind of brokering of new or meaningful social relationships or friendships with the local Indian (diasporic) communities. Leonard (2007:52) spells out that unlike cosmopolitans who move comfortably between so called 'cultural worlds', transnationals are people who build encapsulated 'cultural worlds' around themselves, most typically worlds circumscribed by interpersonal ties. Of all the participants interviewed back in 2008/2009/2010 and even in 2011, only one(!) Kirtan, claimed to have had South African Indian friends. However, he had never visited the friend(s) at home or met the rest of the local Indian family. More recently, in 2011, Kirtan boasted that he had many local Indian friends (and African friends). However, when speaking to his co-workers it emerged that given his level of ease with the English language Kirtan was very comfortable conversing with the local Indian clientele that visited the salon and the local Indian and African clients that patronised the liquor store next door. However, all his free time, limited though it was, was spent with them, the migrant co-workers claimed. They all chorused that they enjoyed spending time with each other. Thus it seems that their insulated (social) worlds were kept in place by cohesive nodes and ties. This is heightened within small groups where the expectation is for greater *network closure*. The intuition is straightforward

says Allcott (Allcott *et al.* 2007:1), in small communities, the pool of potential friends is limited, which increases the extent to which the network neighbourhoods of two friends are likely to overlap. These small closed communities are good examples of individuals embedded in networks of cooperative relationships that direct the flow of resources and social interaction among them (Gnyawali & Madhavan 2001:431). Thus not much had appeared to change two years later when I returned for follow up interviews. The Indian migrants still had not brokered any meaningful social interactions with the local Indians beyond the context of the salon. Part of the reason for this was that the migrants felt fully supported within the cohesive networks that they lived and worked through[9]. Mohammed and three of the other workers from the 'Tailor Network' seemed to have some meaningful interaction with the local Indian Muslims at the mosque they worshipped at. Here again though, this did not extend beyond the worship context.

Conclusion: Minding the Gap, Knowing and Networking

According to Gargiulo and Benassi (2000:184) and clearly borne out by the narratives, the members of a knitted network can trust each other to honour various obligations. The various stories that cut across the domains of work and home have shown how the migrants in both the small networks rely and count on each other. However, the point Gargiulo and Benassi make is that the amount of social capital available to an actor is not merely a function of the closure of the network surrounding him, but also the amount of structural holes in the network that allows brokerage. For networks also function to develop social constraint and to direct information and other flows, as well as maintaining social capital. Structural-hole theory holds that actors are in a better position to gain from their interactions with others if they are

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[9] Although not the immediate focus of the paper, a randomly selected cross sample of the local Indian patrons was also interviewed probing their perceptions towards the salon workers. Most of these respondents echoed that, while they admired the talents of the migrants as hairdressers and tailors, they did not interact with the migrants socially. Many respondents said that the migrant Indians 'were friendly' but felt that the migrants 'preferred to mix amongst themselves'.

connected to those others, *who are not themselves connected*. The lack of connections among those others, are the *structural holes*. The actor's opportunities are constrained if there are no holes. When the connections (opportunities) are surrounded by structural holes, and the *actor is not* surrounded by structural holes there is what is referred to as 'structural autonomy', for the actor. The network dualities of brokerage and closure are seen as the imperative mechanisms by which social networks constitute social capital.

Clearly the structure of network itself does not tell us much about the quality of the ties or relationships amongst the members, which is where rich ethnographic work that that documents the narratives of the migrants is vital. Looking through the windows they have allowed, one sees that the transmigrant workers who have criss-crossed vast distances and spatial coordinates, have to a large extent permeably entered existing networks through their chains of acquaintances and capitalized on *knowing*. The narratives reveal that their (small) world appears as a cohesively networked 'multiplexed' world (Portes 2001:10), straddling home and work domains, and where workers are sometimes linked also by family or acquaintance ties (such as in the case of cousins Komal and Roshan) within which there is frequency of (exclusive group) contact and reciprocity (Vertovec 2003:647). This world, constructed through *knowing* and *networking*, while allowing migrants a social space to construct relationships amongst other transnationals and access opportunities known to their group(s), simultaneously denies them, and insulates their access to the wider knowledge and economic communities and opportunities. It also renders contact and relationship with the local Indian communities, at best, difficult. While the migrants did not exactly 'ignore' the local Indian patrons in the salon, they spoke 'through' them, to each other in their local tongue of Gujarati. The migrants also did not appear to have any meaningful relationship with the local Indian Gujarati-speaking community, who share linguistic kinship with them. It emerged in interviews that the migrants did not feel comfortable enough to socialise or interact much with the local Indian community. Many shrugged it off by claiming 'not to have the time' in their long work shifts.

Poros' study (2001) discussed labour market flows in the context of professional Gujarati Indian migration to New York and London, showing

how specific configurations of network ties result in different migration flows, and revealed how new networks formed and how individual immigrants 'flowed' into particular kinds of employment as a result of the dynamics of the linkages and networks. By focusing on non professional labourers, the haircutters and tailors, the attempt in this paper was to focus on how individuals in this labour category enter and become embedded in networks through the process of *knowing* the people who allow the porous movement into the networks. Closely knitted social networks are seen as pools of popular agency, embedded in popular relations of solidarity and reciprocity (Meagher 2005:218-220). Networks are constantly being socially altered and reassembled by the (sometimes newly arriving) members. Yet, networks still manage to maintain their cohesiveness of ties and closure, engendering opportunity and trust. However, what this paper attempts to show is that in the context of the small communities of Indian migrants, interpersonal nodal ties also limit opportunities because the networked kin and the insular community can rarely provide new information and resources about work and social opportunities (see Poros 2001) This is clearly to be seen in many of the migrants' stories such as in the case of Komal and Kirtan who shared that they more or less 'fell' into their current work at the salon through their linkages across networked connectivity. An individual's position in the structure of these exchanges can in sense be an asset in its own right. A person like Roshan from the 'Salon Network', or Mohamed from the 'Tailor Network' comes to mind as individuals who knew many people. Structural holes however, are the gaps between non redundant contacts (Burt 1992:25-30), 'redundant' in the sense of *knowing people who also know each other*. The embeddedness argument is that actors' actions are embedded in enduring relationships that impact particular outcomes (Gnyawali & Madhavan 2001:432). We have clearly seen this in the context and lived experience of the participants. While they are assets, Roshan and Mohamed are also 'redundant ties' in their networks as many others who knew them, *also knew each other*. A structural hole shows that the people on either side of the 'hole' circulate in different flows of information, in this instance employment and social opportunities. The idea is that social capital stems from the brokerage opportunities created by dispersed ties, or by the lack of network closure. The structural-hole argument defines social capital in terms of the information advantages of being the broker in relations

between people otherwise disconnected in social structure. The disconnected people are said to stand on opposite sides of a hole in social structure. However, within both the small network communities of the 'Salon Network' and 'Tailor Network', all the members are closely knitted in work and social contexts, and there are no structural gaps between them, into which new opportunities of socialising and employment possibilities may be introduced. There is thus no 'gap' to mind.

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