AN EXPLORATION OF ZIMBABWEAN MIGRANT WOMEN’S
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR IDENTITY: SELECTED CASE STUDIES IN
GQEBERA, PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA

By

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This study explores the perceptions of women who had migrated to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, from Zimbabwe, in terms of their own identity. In-depth interviews were conducted, situated within a phenomenological paradigm with a feminist epistemological orientation, in order to describe the rich detail of a woman’s quotidian existence subsequent to the migratory experience.

Findings suggest that women’s identities are constructed in relation to other people, both those who form their in-group and their out-group. The process of migration and difficulties associated with assimilation into the host community impacts on felt ethnicity, strengthening ties to the homeland and to fellow Zimbabweans. Identity is also impacted on by spatiality, or lived space, in terms of both memories of home and present space occupied. Migration incorporating even the post-migration period may well form an extended liminal experience for women.

Key words – migration, identity, liminality, spatiality, relationality, feminist epistemology, women’s voice, sociological
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DECLARATION

I, Lesley McWalter Moorhouse, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains neither material previously published or written by any other person nor material previously submitted for assessment to any other institute of higher learning for any other degree or diploma. I declare that all the sources that I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature:________________________________________

Date: 06 January 2010
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I dedicate this dissertation to my gran, Jean McWalter (nee Brodie), who passed away aged 93 years during the final stages of this writing. I wish I had had the chance to hear your story.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Identity is a life story. It is what it is about her life that provides her with meaning; unity and purpose (McAdams, 1993, p.5)

1.1 An overview of the Research Topic

The topic of identity has gained prominence in the social sciences in latter years; the definition shifting from one of constancy over time (Howard, 2000), to the post-modernist notion that it is fluid, mutable (Schwartz, 1999; Hall, 2003; Foster, 2006), and chimerical even; sculpted by the events and experiences of a woman’s life.

It has been posited that certain aspects of an individual’s suite of identities are afforded more primacy at particular times than at others; that which is the source of meaning for her today might not be the same as that which provided her with meaning in the past.

Furthermore, it is recognised that identity is comprised of both social elements; those aspects which make us more similar to other people within our group, such as ethnicity, as well as individual elements which make us unique (Maalouf, 1996), different from anyone else (Zegeye, 2008). The often unconscious choice as to which aspect of a given individual is most salient will depend on the context in which the individual finds herself.

Stuart Hall (1990) in Martin Alcoff (2003, p.3) alleges most succinctly that

Identities are often created in the crucible of colonialism, racial and sexual subordination, and national conflicts, but also in the specificity of group histories and structural position.

Migration may thus be considered one such context which impacts on identity. Migration, the geographic upheaval characterised by the fleeing from an unbearable situation of
political conflict and immense economic hardship, might well be one of the “crucibles” which Hall refers to, which would cause the reconstruction of identity for a woman. Migration is not only about leaving a geographical place, but also necessitates an individual’s leaving of her figurative home of ethnic belonging: her family and friends on the micro-level, but also her ethnic group and nation on a macro-level (Hook, 2003). On arrival in the destination country, subsequent to a potentially hazardous and traumatic border crossing, she will have to attempt to assimilate into a host community composed of other ethnicities, groups to which she does not belong. In Social Identity terms, she is regarded as ‘Other’, stereotyped as part of the out-group, often marginalised (Foster, 2006).

The impact of migration on identity is of particular import in the South African context, as post-apartheid South Africa has increasingly become a desirable destination country for would-be migrants, fleeing the economic collapse and conflict of their home countries. Many migrants have imagined South Africa’s urban landscape as the proverbial ‘land of milk and honey’, only to discover that the reality of life in host communities is very different, and not nearly as benevolent as they had hoped. South Africa has in fact been cited as one of the most hostile countries to foreigners in the world (South African Migration Project Survey, 1999, cited in Crush, 2008), and has been plagued over the past two years with the exhibition and enactment of increasingly xenophobic attitudes to African foreigners in particular. Aside from the obvious violence that has been perpetrated on migrants, foreigners have also been ‘othered’ more subtly, in derogatory labels such as “mkwerekwere”¹, as well by as a general lack of acceptance by the host communities, which makes assimilation by migrants nigh impossible (Motsemme, 2003).

South Africa furthermore has been the main receiving country particularly of Zimbabwean migrants, the Diaspora of which began in the 1980’s as a reaction to the massacres in Matabeleland and which has increased steadily in response to state violence, land reforms, soaring inflation and devaluation of local currency (McGregor, 2007). The exact number of

¹ ‘mkwerekwere’ has been stated variously as meaning either foreigner or African immigrant. It has also been posited that some South Africans hear ‘kwere kwere’ when a foreigner speaks in their native tongue.
Zimbabweans residing in South Africa is unknown, cited variously as 500 000 (Crush, 2008) and most recently as in excess of 3 million (HSRC).²

It is also acknowledged that although historically migration was principally a male dominated activity, a “feminisation of migration” has taken place, as more and more women are moving: accompanying spouses; initiating their families’ migration, or indeed, travelling on their own (Kanaiaupuni, 2000; Kihato, 2007; Crush (2007) in Bennett, Maharaj & Ncanywa, 2008). It is for this reason that migration as an influencing factor in a woman’s identity is afforded primacy – if migration of women is increasing as a sociological trend, then migration as it impacts on women’s identity needs to be researched.

1.2 Rationale

The foregoing thus provides the rationale for the study: identity is affected by migration; more women are migrating globally than ever before; therefore it is relevant to research the impact that migration has on women’s identity.

1.3 Research Context

Much research has been conducted on migration in the South African context, particularly with regards to the demographic profiles of migrants (Maharaj, 2004; Landau & Segatti, 2009). Addressing specifically Zimbabwean migration, both Bloch (2006, 2008) and McGregor (2007) have examined the narratives of migrants to South Africa and the United Kingdom, focussing specifically on the deskilling experienced by many Zimbabweans. This deskilling has a psychological impact on migrant individuals, often resulting in stress, and may also have a farther reaching effect on their families trans-nationally, as most migrants

are responsible for sending remittances home. More positively, McGregor discusses how their entry into the host community labour market is most often facilitated by social capital – by the networks which exist between Zimbabweans, resulting in compatriots assisting one another in coping with change. Takhar (2006) also, has afforded primacy to the role of social capital in migration, emphasising the specific ability of women to create networks which facilitate their migration and integration into host communities.

Research has also focussed on the assimilation, or lack thereof, of different groups of migrants in the South African context, as well as the general rejection by the host communities who are the recipients of migrants (Deumert, 2005; Crush, 2008; Hicks, 2009). Golooba-Mutebi (2001) cited in Steinberg (2005) examined the integration of Mozambicans in a Bushbuckridge village, Mpumalanga, revealing that even after a number of years in the village, the Mozambicans had not integrated at all, in fact, conversely lived in an ethnically intact enclave. Atam (2004, also cited in Steinberg, 2005) found much the same pattern amongst the Congolese refugees residing in the inner-city areas of Johannesburg, Gauteng: many stated that they had little or no interaction with non-Congolese inhabitants of the same area. Additional research on problems associated with assimilation has been conducted subsequent to the xenophobic attacks in Cape Town, Western Cape, in May 2008, by Fuller (2008), who noted that women are often the victims of xenophobia, because it is women who are seen to be the creators of ‘home’, who put down roots, therefore presenting the greatest threat to South Africans.

It is thus apparent from the foregoing, that aside from Golooba-Mutebi’s study of Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, all research cited has been conducted in the major South African cities of Johannesburg, Gauteng; Durban in Kwazulu-Natal and Cape Town in the Western Cape.

Certain researchers such as Bozzoli (1991) and Kihato (2007) have addressed the issue of identity, with specific reference to migrant women’s identity, in the South African context. Bozzoli (1991) examined the impact of gender on women’s lives, and both Bozzoli and Kihato (2007) attempted to explain how women employed multiple identities in their
quotidian existences; sometimes being in charge of their lives, active agents of their life strategies, and other times being victims of the oppressive patriarchal system, both in the public and private spheres.

Internationally, researchers have investigated the impact of migration on various aspects of identity. Alund (1997) addressed the issue of spatiality within the mutability of identity, examining the ongoing construction of ethnic identity and indeed, ethnic memory as it relates to ‘imagined’ homelands. She concludes that migration does indeed impact on identity as it results in nostalgia for what was lost ‘back there’ (she terms this “ethno-romanticism” (p.146)) as well as a constant sense of rootlessness and a need for socio-cultural belonging. The themes of spatiality and home as both location and an imagined space of comfort in which women can reconnect with the self and find belonging is reiterated by Nettles (2004). Nettles reaffirms the sense of placelessness and rootlessness discussed by Alund (1997) in the context of women who have migrated.

Attanpola (2006) explored the impact that migration from a rural to an urban area had on Sri Lankan women’s identities, incorporating aspects such as sense of place as well as the influence of changing gender role on a woman’s self-identity. Attanpola acknowledged that identity is not only affected by sense of place, but also by relationality, that is, the interaction between individuals, including whether incomers to a community were regarded positively or negatively by the residents of that community. She concludes that socially constructed identities held by others affect the self identity of the individual, and that identity changes constantly, according to lived experiences and mutable sense of place. Attanpola thus knits together the threads of relationality and spatiality within the broader fabric of identity.

The threads of relationality, displacement and belonging are also the focus of Tehranian’s (2006) research on Iranian migrant women’s reconstruction of their identity. For Tehranian, subsequent to displacement, women find a sense of belonging and rootedness in the memories of their homeland.
This becomes a mental place of refuge for them, as they negotiate life in the host community, and come to terms with “ethnic marginality” (p.419).

Hedberg and Kepsu (2008), furthermore, consider the relationship between migration and the construction/re-construction of identity, explaining that crossing borders exposes the individual to other groups and nationalities, which often results in a strengthening of ethnic identity in the migrant, particularly until full assimilation takes place. In their research, they discuss that an individual reflects on the self, relative to others; thus identity is comprised of both an individual and a collective element. They, moreover emphasise, as does Attanpola (2006), the intersection between migration, identity, relationality and spatiality.

Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004) address specifically the multiplicity of identity, focussing variously on the themes of ethnicity or group identity, self-identity and acculturation into the host community. These authors stress that individuals who have migrated, including second-generation migrants, negotiate their identities, the occurrence of which is situationally dependent, as migrants straddle two cultures: the ‘imagined’ culture from which they originate and that of the host community.

Space thus remains for research on women’s identity which is impacted on by migration and which is intersected by themes of spatiality and relationality in the South African context, most specifically in the destination city of Port Elizabeth.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

As indicated above, migration is ever-increasing as a coping mechanism or life strategy for the many Zimbabweans attempting to escape the economic collapse of their country. Many of these migrants make their way to Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape, where they settle predominantly in the Gqebera area of Walmer, according to the Eastern Cape Refugee Forum. Here, they are faced with many problems of integration into the host
community, not least the often hostile ‘othering’ by the inhabitants of Gqebera. The negative perceptions of the host community, the cultural differences between the two groups exacerbated by language, limited resources and space, as well as sense of loss and discontinuity experienced by migrants often impacts on their self-perceptions, resulting in a reconstruction of identity.

Furthermore, although no accurate statistics exist with regards to the demographic and/or gender profile of Gqebera, it can be assumed that if the feminisation of migration is increasing globally, as mentioned earlier, then the local context will also be characterised by an increase in female migrants.

It is also apparent from research (Kihato, 2007; Fuller, 2008; Hicks, 2009) that migrants are often marginalised, regarded as the ‘underclass of the underclass’. They are so often denied voice, silenced by the dominant group. Women too, by virtue of their gender and their positioning in the private sphere, are often marginalised, particularly women of a lower socio-economic standing and lower educational level - their voices go unheard. Migrant women, then, are doubly marginalised, as both female and migrants.

The focus of this research was thus to give voice to Zimbabwean migrant women, to explore their identity as it had been impacted on by their migration and through their quotidian life events.

1.5 Research Question and Aims

This study endeavoured to explore the self-perceptions of Zimbabwean women who had migrated to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, in terms of their own identity. Identity was viewed as being composed of various aspects such as relationality, or the self in relation to others; spatiality, meaning the experience of lived space and incorporating sense of belonging and literal and figurative sense of home; and finally liminality, meaning the periods of transition which characterise an individual’s life, such as migration.
The principle aim of the research study was thus to explore Zimbabwean migrant women’s perceptions of their identity.

Secondary aims were

- To explore how gender has affected their lives
- To enable understanding of the lifeworlds of the migrant women in the study
- To describe the above-mentioned themes of liminality, spatiality and relationality within the context of social identity.

1.5.1 Research Objectives

The research aim was achieved by means of the following:

- By exploring, by means of in-depth interviews, the women’s memories of how they were before they migrated; their recollections of lives ‘back then’; their rationale for migration, as well as their post-migration reality, as interpreted by themselves.
- By thematically analysing the data manually through a comparison of the narratives of the above-mentioned women interviewed.

1.6 Methodological Overview

The research followed a qualitative approach which allowed for rich, in-depth descriptions of the respondent’s perceptions of their identity. A quantitative survey approach would have been most unsuitable for affording these women opportunity to be heard. The study had a feminist epistemological orientation whereby the researcher both acknowledged and afforded primacy to the gendered reality of her respondents. The research study was, moreover, situated within a phenomenological paradigm, recognising that all reality is mediated and constructed by individuals, and that there is no one reality.
1.7 Chapter Overviews

The document is organised into the following chapters:

- Chapter 2 is the review of literature and is divided into three main sections, namely an exposition of feminist schools of thought; identity and migration
- In Chapter 3, the phenomenological research methodology within the feminist theoretical orientation is discussed.
- In Chapter 4, the data is analysed and findings are discussed.
- Chapter 5 provides concluding arguments to the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

1.8 Conclusion

The thesis of this study was to explore the self-perceptions of Zimbabwean migrant women in terms of their own identity. The multiple case study approach, within a feminist epistemological orientation and phenomenological paradigm were utilised in order to gather and analyse data in this respect.

The following chapter will situate the study within current research, by drawing on relevant literature.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an overview of the themes relevant to the research topic is given. The discussion is intended to show how an experience such as migration might impact on the construction and re-construction of a woman’s identity. Also, discussion is situated within a feminist discourse, as it is questioned whether gender shapes a woman’s life. The themes relevant to the research topic are as follows:

- First, an introduction to feminist schools of thought is provided, in order to situate the discourse within a theoretical framework

- Second, identity is discussed; indicating how the definition of identity has changed from a modernist to postmodernist interpretation, with specific attention afforded the construction of meaning, as well as aspects of identity such as ethnicity and place identities.

- Third, the topic of migration is examined with reference to economic and non-economic theories of migration; the feminisation migration globally and migration to South Africa from the African continent, specifically, as well as the difficulties experienced by migrants to South Africa.
2.2  FEMINIST SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

There is no one feminism which can be upheld as the ‘bible’ of women’s liberation or even women’s thought. Feminism in the western world arose from the women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s, known as Second Wave Feminism, bringing about political change and demands for gender equality. Initially, the movement assumed that all women shared the same gendered experiences, by virtue of being women; that they shared an identity within the monolith ‘women’. This viewpoint was rejected as the differences between women (such as black women; lesbians; disabled women; older women and working class women) became apparent, leading to a fragmentation within the feminist movement itself (Richardson and Robertson, 2008). All feminisms seek to understand why women are denied equality with men, but there is little consensus as to how to liberate women from their shackles (Letherby, 2003).

It is however accepted that all feminist theories have women and their life-worlds at the centre of their research and that the over-arching goal of all is that of female activism, resulting in improvements in the lives of women (Ritzer, 1988).

2.2.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism originated in the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft in the late 1700s which emphasised the need for equality of education for girls and boys, so that both sexes could develop fully and optimally. Mill and Taylor, writing in the 1800s reiterated the need for equal education, but added that this needed to be accompanied by equal employment opportunities. Taylor specifically felt that women could only be liberated if they were economically independent – thus if they earned a living outside of the home. This was criticized as being a typically classist statement: most women of that time could not afford to work outside of the home, as they did not have access to childcare or domestic servants.
Mill recognized that, as long as women were tied to the home and family, constricted to the private sphere, they would never be free (Tong, 1989).

One of the central tenets of feminism was, and is, the problematic division between the public and the private spheres (Ritzer, 1988). Women were seen largely to be confined to the private, hidden sphere of the home, whereas men inhabited the public, more visible sphere. This patriarchal divide subjugates women to men, as they are reliant on them economically as well as socially. As economically subservient, women were less likely to own property; as domestically subservient, women were never the heads of the households they inhabited. Bogues (2001, in Richardson and Robertson, 2008) states unequivocally that

- the feminist argument that the ‘personal is political’ alerts us to the fact that by recognizing the family’s right to privacy the state is actually upholding men’s right to control other members of their households. The very definition of privacy is gendered . . .

These early liberal feminists influenced Friedan, writing in the 1970s, who encouraged women to step out of the private realm and into the public sphere of men. Unfortunately, Friedan did not simultaneously encourage men to share the responsibilities of home, a stance she revised in the 1980s. Later, Friedan wrote that “the concept of equality has to take into account that women are the ones who have the babies”, meaning that liberalism cannot ignore the differences between men and women, as the previous insistence on gender-neutral laws had encouraged, but should rather focus on equality for “concrete men and women” (Tong, 1989, p.27).

More recently, contemporary liberal feminism attempts to liberate women from oppressive gender roles such as are propagated by patriarchal society. It has been categorised as in favour of androgyny: the belief that men and women are exactly the same; that whatever a man can do a woman can also do (Evans, 1995).

Liberal feminists have also proposed that individuals, regardless of gender, should be free to choose the lifestyle most suited to him or her and that this choice should be respected by society at large, thus whether a man wishes to take up the role of househusband, or a
woman chooses to pursue a career and to remain childless, these should be equally accepted and valued (Ritzer, 1988).

Liberal feminism has, however, been widely criticized as taking no cognizance of the black experience, and thus for incorrectly homogenizing the female reality, but it is also acknowledged that much of the reforms in both education and the law are as result of this movement (Tong, 1989; Gouws, 2005).

### 2.2.2 Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism stresses the superiority of women, emphasizing the female propensity to nurture. It pays homage to motherhood and “asserts womanhood in triumph” (Evans, 1995, p.19).

As opposed to liberal feminism which tends toward the concept of androgyny, as mentioned earlier, cultural feminism highlights and celebrates the differences between men and women (Liss, Hoffner and Crawford, 2000).

### 2.2.3 Marxist Feminism

Marxist feminists relate the inequality of women to capitalist oppression. Marxists stress that women are oppressed as a result of their subservient position in the labour market. Gender inequality can be equated with class inequality, which only serves the ruling class. Women will only be released from this oppression if the capitalist system is overthrown (Richardson and Robertson, 2008). Tong explains that Marxist feminists have allowed us to see how women’s work, in the private sphere, is denigrated as “not real work”, and how women are given the work which bears the lowest status and which yields the lowest wages (1989, p.51). Furthermore, the family itself as a patriarchal institution functions to subordinate women, allowing men greater social and economic freedom and perpetuating
the double standard of affording men sexual freedom while the wife remains shackled to the home.

Contemporary Marxist feminists have proposed that the only solution to women’s subjugation to men and the ongoing domination of the working class by the ruling class is a united working class comprising men and women who, together, fight to destroy the classist system and the ensuing gender inequality created by the capitalist system (Ritzer, 1988).

2.2.4 Radical Feminism

Radical feminists afford primacy to the “positive valuation” of women as well as to a “deep grief and rage over their oppression” (Ritzer, 1988, p.424). To this end, radical feminists draw attention to men’s attempts to control women, through denying them abortions; by restricting contraception; through violence, pornography and rape. They stress that women have been subjugated to provide for men’s sexual needs (Tong, 1989; Mackinnon, 2006). Mackinnon (2006) questions whether, in the eyes of the world, women are even regarded as human? There is a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) but yet women are consistently denied human rights. Mackinnon (2006, p.180) states that

Human rights have not been women’s rights – not in theory or in reality, not legally or socially, not domestically or internationally. Rights that human beings have by virtue of being human have not been rights to which women have had access, nor have violations of women as such been part of the definition of the violation of the human as such on which human rights law has traditionally been predicated.

The root of inequality lies in patriarchy, the male dominance of women, which is viewed as universal.

In agreement with Marxist feminists, radical feminists stress that women have been denied equality through the construction of the nuclear family, which exploits women for their
unpaid, mostly invisible labour which is undervalued and which prevents women from
taking up positions of power in society. Shulamith Firestone (1971) called for the abolition
of the family, believing that only in so doing would women be liberated. She emphasised
that liberation lay in technology, envisaging an

androgynous culture that will surpass not only the peak experiences of male technological
culture and female aesthetic culture, but also combine them into an integrated whole
(Tong, 1989, p.75).

For radical feminists, the liberation of women from patriarchy will be effected by
the development of women’s consciousness and ensuing belief in herself, which
will in turn result in a global sisterhood characterised by an atmosphere of trust and
mutual support among women (Ritzer, 1988).

2.2.5 Socialist Feminism

Socialist feminists attempt to achieve a synthesis of both Marxist and radical feminist
schools of thought. To this end, there are two main streams within socialist feminist,
namely those which map gender oppression, focussing on the capitalist patriarchal system,
and those which attempt to understand all social oppression, thus incorporating race,
class, ethnicity, age, gender and sexual orientation (Ritzer, 1988).

Socialist feminists go beyond the macro-economic focus of Marxist feminists and
incorporate micro-social aspects of human life, such as sexuality and family life. To this
end, socialist feminist Young points to the exploitation of women under the capitalism
system: a system which keeps women at home, freeing men to work outside the home.
She explains that under capitalism, even if women do work outside the home, they are not
remunerated as well as are men. Prior to capitalism, men and women worked side by side,
for themselves and their families. In this way, traditionally, pre-capitalism, women owned
their own labour. Capitalism separated men and women, sending men out to work as the
primary labour force and confining women ever to be the “reserve army of labour” (Tong, 1989, p.186).

Alison Jagger also focused on the concept of alienation, as did Young. In the same way that men are alienated from their labour in capitalism; women are alienated from the product of their bodies. Women diet for men; dress for men; their bodies are used by men and their bodies are objectified through its preparation for men, by shaving, plucking, painting. They are alienated from the products of their labour – literally, from their children, in that male obstetricians decide on the date of women’s labour by scheduling caesarean sections, as well as by in-vitro fertilization and artificial insemination. Women are even alienated from their intellectual labour by being made to feel so inferior that they hesitate to voice their thoughts and opinions in public, less they be ridiculed by men. Women are thus alienated in totality, “in the mind . . . in social institutions and cultural structures” (Tong, 1989, p.189).

2.2.6 Black feminism

Since the 1980s, feminism has been criticized by black women as homogenizing the female experience and ‘painting it white’. Black women have stressed that the experiences of black women are different from those of white women, and indeed, even the experiences of black third world women cannot be viewed as monolithic, as this ignores diversity among women. There is no mythical “universal sisterhood”, but focus should rather be on the recognition and appreciation of difference (Mohanty, 1988, in Richardson and Robertson, 2008). Barnes (2002, p.246) concurs, stating that

Sometimes, it is expected that being black anywhere is the same as being black everywhere. Given the long, painful history of exploitation between North America and Africa, can South African women of colour and black American women overcome their differences? There is no automatic congruence of identity, but there can be a shared recognition of social responses and strategies.
2.2.7 Post-structural Feminism

Post-structural feminism is rooted in Simone de Beauvoir’s questioning, “Why is woman the Other?” (Cited in Tong, 1989, p.219), although she turns this ‘othering’ on its head and views it as positive. Tong (1989, p.219) states that

Otherness is a way of being, thinking and speaking that allows for openness, plurality, diversity and difference.

Deconstructionists question the dichotomy of oppositions like beautiful/ugly and self/other. Deconstructionists, further, dispute the assumption that there is a continuous self across time, emphasizing instead the fragmentation of the self. As is discussed in more detail in the section on identity, meaning is found to be situated in and through discourse, there is no meaning which exists in reality, it is always constructed in relation to others (Tong, 1989; Richardson and Robertson, 2008).

Postmodern feminists like Judith Butler disclaim unified identity categories, such as women, questioning the concept of shared experience. In line with black feminists such as bell hooks, then, they reject the notion that women can talk on behalf of other women. Evans (1995, p.133) explains that Butler “argues that ‘woman’ and ‘women’ no longer connote an identity: if one ‘is’ a woman, that is surely not all one is . . .” In any one person, there is no segment which is ‘woman’; another which is ‘black’; another which is ‘working class’.

For Butler, furthermore, gender is situated, fluid. There is no “real” gender, it too is a construction: a type of performance, even, synonymous with a male drag queen giving a performance as a woman. Butler describes gender identities as “momentary, as a process of continuous construction that produces the effect of being natural and stable through gender performances that make us ‘women’ and ‘men’” (Richardson and Robertson, 2008, p.12).
2.2.8 Practical Feminism

Castells (2004) states that many women, specifically third world women, are feminist in practice, but do not label themselves as feminist. This may be that they do not explicitly proclaim a feminist consciousness, nor do they denounce patriarchy, but their struggles as women, for their families, in their daily lives are feminist in orientation, by virtue of their collectivist actions. According to Castells (2004), however, feminism is still elitist, which divides the third from the first world, the North from the South.

2.2.9 African Feminism

African feminism, according to Barnes (2002) has always been activist, rather than academic, although there is very little agreement as to whether African feminism actually exists as a movement. There is an African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (of 1981) but there is a discrepancy between rights as cited in the Charter and women’s reality as lived experience in Africa (Olowu, 2006). The reality is that Africa is characterized by an exceptionally patriarchal society, in which women are marginalized socially, politically and economically. Even in South Africa, a country with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world, impressive changes may have been made at policy level, granting women substantial legal gains but life in the private sphere remains largely static. South African women, generally, experience high levels of rape and domestic violence; one of the highest incidences of HIV infection in the world coupled with extreme poverty in some areas (Gouws, 2005; Gomez, 2006).

Feminism as a label was not common to most African women (Mikell, 1995), although it is now thought that African feminism can be seen as consisting of a continuum, at which women’s grass roots associations lie at one end and urban educated women’s more theoretical leanings lie at the other. This is not to say that educated women are more advanced, nor by implication, more feminist than rural women, but rather that there is an
awareness shared by women all along the continuum. This concept of a continuum is disputed by Olowu (2006) who stresses that feminism in Africa is characterized only by networking among the urban elite who academically pontificate. Olowu (2006) feels what is needed, rather, is a grass-roots mobilization, from the bottom up.

Sierra Leonean anthropologist Filomina Steady (in Terborg-Penn, Harley and Rushing 1987, cited in Mikell, 1995, p.2) has described African feminism as “dealing with multiple oppressions” inherent in African society, and as dealing with women “as human, rather than sexual beings”, thus rejecting the radical feminist orientation. Steady’s belief in a humanistic African feminism emphasises traditional African values which appreciate the balance provided by complementary gender roles. This, according to Badejo (1998) is underpinned by cultural myths and religious practices that revere women as guardians of the earth’s elements (water, fire and earth) and men as the protectors of women’s rights.

Traditionally, Africa is characterized by patriarchal systems, thus the women that Mikell (1995) interviewed were very focused on issues such as domestic abuse, violence against women and access to property. Mikell (1995, p.10) reiterates that although these women did not mention the word feminism, they wanted change and wanted to find the ways that they could bring about this change, as women.

Feminism is to be judged by women’s actions, so there seems little doubt that the emerging African feminism will generate positive changes in African political structures and contribute to greater gender equality before the law on the African continent.

In the South African context, Motsemme (2003) writes that black women have been able to rise above the oppression of their marginalised existence and have found agency in their ability to construct the home environment as a safe place for their children and families. These women should be lauded for their ability to transcend the difficulties inherent in their quotidian existences, as well as their capacity to exceed stereotypes of victimhood.

Amina Mama (in Selo, 2001) disputes Mikell’s description of African feminism, criticizing it as being a view from the outside, not emanating from Africa itself. This is reiterated by McFadden (2000), a self-proclaimed radical feminist who believes that African women
have always been feminist; have always struggled against patriarchal and political injustices. She attributes the oppression of women in Africa firmly to the colonial past, which excluded Black women from cities and exploited cheap Black male migrant labour to build the white dominion. McFadden (2000, p.7) stresses that

typically, most of the historiography on migration in Southern Africa represents Black women only as prostitutes who brewed beer and lived off the ‘hard earned’ meagre wages of ‘good men’ whose ‘decent wives’ waited for them patiently in the rural spaces – women curiously constructed as ‘grass widows’, passive and without resistance, a myth we have come to uncover through feminist her-storiography.

Seidman (1994) in Kuumba (2009) concurs with both Amina Mama and McFadden’s viewpoint that colonialism is the root of African’s women’s disadvantaged status.

The African Women’s Development Fund (2006) places women’s subjugation firmly at the door of patriarchal ideology which legitimizes women’s oppression. It is thus pointless to attempt to change individual men; one should rather fight to bring about change in the system. This is reiterated by Akatsa-Bukachi (2005) who explains that African culture is organized in such a way that although women are central to societal functioning, they are very much subordinate to male authority. Women are reared to be good wives; are denied education and are disciplined when they step out of line. “Rising up against these practices is bound to set one on a collision course with men . . . it is considered radical” (p.13). For African women, feminism is not merely theoretical, a claiming of ‘space’: it is to ‘rise up’ against male domination and fight women’s oppression.

A further challenge to African feminism, according to Akatsa-Bukachi (2005) is that most African women do not want to be associated with white feminist ideology, thus before attaining the level at which they could or would call themselves feminist, they would have to overcome the racial issue. The solution, in Akatsa-Bukachi’s (2005) opinion is that an African feminism would have to be developed which is appreciative of the diversity among African women, yet simultaneously is able to speak for all women.
Olowu (2006, p.90) is rather more disparaging of the possibility of an African feminism, stating that

There is the need to move the women’s rights discourse in Africa beyond the confines of fine rhetoric. The primary engagement of African women’s rights civil society groups should be how to sensitise the vast majority of African women in rural Africa to the basic elements of their rights. The level of ignorance about the message of gender freedom and women empowerment is reeking in much of Africa.

2.2.10 Summary of Feminist Discourse

In the foregoing section, various feminisms within the greater feminist discourse were introduced. Although it is acknowledged that there is no one over-riding definitive feminism per se, the commonality amongst all feminist arguments is the positioning of women at the centre of all theories, as well as a political agenda striving for the emancipation of women from oppression, both patriarchal and political.

While the path of feminism is by no means linear or chronologically sequential, feminist discourse, rooted in the multiple disciplines of sociology, anthropology, psychology, political science and literature, amongst others, initially gave prominence to the struggle of women’s liberation: for equality of education and the right to work outside of the home. Following this, it was acknowledged that not only were women’s experiences of the world different to those of men, but they were also not equal to that of men. This gave rise to Marxist and Socialist feminism, with a focus on both macro-economical and micro-social aspects of human life. Socialist feminism in particular recognised that in as much as gender oppression is prevalent in society, so too are women oppressed as a result of, *inter alia*, ethnicity, race, class and sexual orientation.

A further feminist theory of oppression, radical feminism, emphasised the positive valuation of women in society, and blamed institutions such as the family for perpetrating the subjugation of women. To this end, radical feminists even questioned whether, in the
eyes of the largely androcentric world, women were considered human, as the so-called human rights have not been afforded to women.

Feminist theories came under fire from black women, however, who criticised the notion of a global sisterhood, stating that women are not a monolithic entity: the reality of a white first world woman is not synonymous with that of a black third world woman, nor indeed are all black women’s realities the same.

Modernist feminisms have also been questioned by post-modernist deconstructionists, who state that even gender is a performance. They posit rather that it is fluid, mutable, situationally dependent, as is identity itself.

Through the feminist arguments traced, it is apparent that sociologically the view of the world which was previously taken as for granted, as universal even, is rather an androcentric view propagated by men. As Ritzer (1988, p.402) states, feminist theory has encouraged us instead to “relativise” knowledge and “rediscover the world from the vantage point of a hitherto invisible, unacknowledged ‘underside’: women”.

The topic of identity will now be discussed, outlining the progression in theories of identity, from modernist to postmodernist, with specific focus on sociological understandings of identity.
2.3 IDENTITY

Myself, I will start by saying my name is Prudence. I am a mother of two children, two boys – two handsome boys and married to a good man, a man of God. I am a hard worker, I am flexible in everything, be it challenges, be it good things. In every situation, I confirm the Lord first. I am happy with my family; I always want to be happy. I want also to be an independent person. I do things with my own hands, because I was given talents, you know. (Prudence)

Although identity is a central concept in both psychology and sociology, there is very little agreement as to just what identity is. This debate has grown as the world has become ever more dynamic.

2.3.1 Modernist Understandings of Identity

In earlier times, and according to modernist theorists, identity was seen as predominantly fixed, rational and measurable (Howard, 2000). You were born with a certain personality, and although you changed over the lifespan and presented different facets of yourself to various people, the inner core that was ‘you’ remained constant. Your identity could be pictorially ‘carried’ on the identity card, explained by one’s name, place of birth, fingerprints and height. Your identity was that which was unique to you (Maalouf, 1996), which could not, however, always be shown in official records and photographs, thus incorporated aspects such as religious affiliation, beliefs and political attitudes. Identity was something intangible that you had and which allowed you to recognise that you were similar to certain people and different to others (Franchi & Swart, 2003). Ultimately, it was believed that identity should answer the question ‘Who am I?’ The answer given would most often indicate the groups with which an individual identified: gender; race; ethnicity and the like (Joireman, 2003).
Phenomenologist’s such as Harre (1998) express the opinion that identity relates to sense of self, stating that “to have a sense of self is to have a sense of one’s location in space from which one perceives and acts upon the world” (in Franchi & Swart, 2003, p.152)

In this viewpoint, then, identity is a place, a launching pad from which to act, which is shaped by the time and place in which one lives.

Schwartz (1999, p.160) contends that “the idea of consistency is oversold. We all have paradigms that allow people and ourselves to make sense of us – to be able to predict who we will be the next day”. Schwartz (1999) goes on to say that we all need to have a “central theory” of who we are. This “central theory” develops through time, beginning in our families and progressing through our work and our relationships. This process is never done, our identity is never complete – we are all always works in progress. Castells (1999, in Zegeye, 2008, p.17) concurs with Schwartz, defining identity as the “sense and continuity of self” over time.

2.3.2 Postmodernist Identity

Postmodernists and deconstructionists, posit the viewpoint that identity is fluid, mutable – ever-changing dependent on the situation one finds oneself in (Foster, 2006). Who we are alters as we are exposed to different influences, to various communities. Schwartz (1999, p.159) posits that we have a “multiplicity of presentations of self” which might exist either sequentially or simultaneously.

Identity is also viewed as fragmented (Howard, 2000; Foster, 2006; Richardson and Robertson, 2008). Schiff and Noy (2006, p.401) describe identity as “a cyborg that is constantly in the process of collecting and recollecting, arranging and rearranging, an amalgam of meanings from our personal and collective experience and then grafting these bits and fragments together into an account of the past, present, and future which makes sense”. The process of constructing one’s identity is never complete (Hall, 2003; Takhar,

Hook (2003, pp.107-108) reiterates that identity, the “set of social and cultural understandings through which we come to know and experience ourselves” has four key components. As will be explained below, identity is social, incorporating how we make sense of the world as well as the “material circumstances” of our everyday life. Secondly, as explained above, it is ever-changing. Thirdly, identity is ‘bordered’ by power, by ideology and by privilege, or lack thereof. Identity does not exist in a socio-historical or ideological vacuum. Lastly, cultural resources such as language, shared narratives and beliefs provide the scaffolding of identity. Hook (2003) adds that these cultural resources are not equally allocated, however, but different social groups have varying access to resources.

2.3.3 Cultural Identity

According to Stuart Hall (2003), identity can be viewed in two ways: firstly that it provides the framework for all that is similar about a particular people, such as common historical experience, shared geography and socio-economic circumstance. In this regard, identity relates to our sense of being “one people” (p.234).

Secondly, cultural identity indicates all that is different about us. Hall (2003, p.236) questions whether we can even speak about our common experience without simultaneously recognising the “ruptures and discontinuities which constitute uniqueness”. In this way, identity transcends time; it is always in process and already there.

Hall (2003) goes on to say that cultural identity also does not only exist in reality, in history and in the remembered past, but is also constructed through fantasy and myth. It is those “unstable points of identification” which have no guarantee and which are thus “unsettling
. . . if identity does not proceed in a straight unbroken line from some fixed origin, how are we to understand its formation?” (p.237).

2.3.4 Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1981) incorporate the social dimension of identity, focusing on the relevance of intergroup relations in the development of sense of self. The theory can be understood by dividing it into three individual components, namely the self-concept; the process of categorization and social comparison; three social principles, namely status hierarchy; legitimacy of the status hierarchy (or conversely, the illegitimacy of the status hierarchy) and permeability of group boundaries. Furthermore, a central tenet of positive social identity can be identified (Foster, 2006).

2.3.4.1 Individual Components

2.3.4.1.1 Self-Concept

Identity combines that which is unique to each particular individual, such as personal characteristics (Maalouf, 1996) and that which makes them the same as others within their group, such as being a woman, or being of a specific ethnicity. Zegeye (2008, p.19) states that identity refers to “sameness among people”, as well as “sameness or continuity of the self over space and time” and “differences between groups”. This is an important differentiator between Social Identity Theory and other identity theories – the social is viewed as part and parcel of the individual, not as something extraneous to the person (Foster, 2006).
2.3.4.1.2 Categorisation

Social Identity Theory views categorization as an essential aid to processing the reams of information people receive on a daily basis. According to Tajfel (1981) categorization allows us to act as “cognitive misers”, assimilating and reducing information to only the most salient, thus permitting evaluation of self and others (Howard, 2000, p.368). We tend to regard people in our own group as more similar to us than they actually are, and to view those individuals from other groups as more different to our group than they actually are. In order to construct a positive self-identity, we view ourselves, our culture and thus those in our in-group favourably, and those different to us, who are defined as our out-group, negatively (Pickering, 2001). We are therefore continuously evaluating others as either positive or negative. Bruner (2001, p.35) states that in this way “autobiography involves not only the construction of self, but also a construction of one’s culture”.

Categorisation encompasses both a cognitive component of evaluation, as well as an emotional component, such as whether or not the person being evaluated is liked or disliked. This in turn gives rise to stereotyping as only the most salient characteristics are taken cognizance of, which are evaluated as negative, and the essence of the person is neglected in the process of labelling (Maalouf, 1996; Pickering, 2001; Foster, 2006). Stereotyping serves a number of functions for individuals and social groups, namely:

- Cognitive functions: Through stereotyping, it is possible to simplify one’s world and to categorise others, with an accompanying accentuation of difference between groups. This “denies the humanity [of those stereotyped] because it divests them of their social and cultural identities by diminishing them to their stereotyped characteristics” (Pickering, 2001, p.73).

- Values: Stereotyping allows individuals to protect their value system, allowing for continuity.

- Ideologising collective action: Stereotypes allow groups to justify domination of out-groups.
• Ethnocentrism: Stereotypes allow for groups to view their own groups as inherently superior (Foster, 2006).

Stereotypes are per definition social in nature, as they are not held by isolated individuals, but are shared by groups (Kiguwa, 2006). Pickering states that “stereotypes create barriers across their social interactions and relations, over both time and space” (200, p.48).

2.3.4.1.3 Social Comparison

As explained above, individuals define their identities both through the social dimension, namely the groups to which they belong, and the personal dimension, that is, the traits that are unique to them. People evaluate themselves primarily through comparisons with others. If they are associated with, or belong to, a dominant group, with a positive social identity, they will evaluate themselves in a positive manner, and by implication, will feel good about themselves. Of course, the converse is also true (Howard, 2000).

Foster (2006) explains that personal and social identities can be understood as points along a continuum, with the self moving between these points, depending on the different relational instances in which one finds oneself. Generally speaking, one will reveal more of one’s intimate self, thus the unique aspects of the personality, to those few individuals that one shares a special bond or relationship with, such as close family, lovers or friends. One will reveal a ‘neutral’ social self to an acquaintance, colleague or stranger; and will reveal only the social identity according to group categorization and stereotypical impressions to someone belonging to an out-group, such as in a xenophobic conflict situation. This movement along the continuum of personal to social is known as depersonalization, and involves losing one’s individuality and gaining the social self of a particular category. In this way, it is obvious that, according to Social Identity Theory, we possess multiple selves and “actions are dependent upon which sense of self is salient at any given moment” (Foster, 2006, p.45).
This has important implications for individuals who have migrated and who subsequently are marginalized by the dominant groups. Categorisation of individuals into ‘group identities’ with stereotypical properties allows individuals to make sweeping generalizations about other ethnicities, ignoring the specifics of individuals and permitting the ‘othering’ of marginalized groups. These “explanatory devices” allow us to justify social relationships, such as discriminating against individuals on the basis of gender or race (Howard, 2000, p.368).

2.3.4.2 Social Components

2.3.4.2.1 Status Hierarchy

Every society is comprised of various groups with differing statuses and opportunities available to them, thus forming a hierarchical structure of privilege. These hierarchies are intrinsically linked to one’s social identity, in that one’s position, or social status, will either positively or negatively affect the identity of an individual (Foster, 2006).

2.3.4.2.2 Legitimacy/Illegitimacy of status hierarchy

Individuals within a given society may regard the above-mentioned status hierarchy as either legitimate or illegitimate. If it is regarded as fair and legitimate, this will lead to stability within that society, as the individuals within society are less likely to try and bring about change. The converse is also true: if the hierarchy is regarded as illegitimate, or unjust, this will lead to instability, as some individuals may attempt to bring about change, thus creating instability in that society. The possibility for change/lack of possibility for change will lead to an accompanying change/lack of change in social identity (Foster, 2006).
2.3.4.2.3 Permeability of group boundaries

Tajfel and Turner (1981) also discussed the concept of social mobility within social identity. Societies characterized by permeable group boundaries have a greater possibility for social mobility to take place, whereas societies with impermeable group boundaries, such as, for example, racial boundaries, have less possibility for social mobility to take place. South Africa during the apartheid regime is a case in point for impermeable boundaries, as it was nigh impossible for individuals to cross the racial divide (Foster, 2006).

2.3.4.3 Central tenet: Positive Social Identity

It is apparent from the above that one’s personal and social identities are intrinsically linked. As one’s social identity is tied to one’s group membership, it is reasonable to assume that those individuals in out-groups, such as marginalized low-status groups of society will suffer from negative self-esteem, because they are denigrated in society. This exemplifies the social comparison process.

If an individual believes there are little or no alternatives to his or her situation within his social identity, because of impermeable group boundaries and ensuing lack of social mobility, the individual may attempt to improve his or her status on an individual level, thus bringing about psychological mobility. Attempting to assimilate into the host community might be a strategy that migrants would employ, to bring about psychological mobility, and thus an accompanying positive shift in social identity. Social change exemplifies the collective effort to bring about mobility (Foster, 2006).
2.3.5 Social Constructionism

According to social constructionists, identity is constructed, meaning that it is not something which exists ‘out there’, outside of the self, but is created by individuals. It is in this way that individuals attribute meaning to their worlds (McAdam, 1993; Zegeye, 2008). Mohanty (2003, p.398) explains that

Our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences. Identities are theoretical constructions that enable us to read the world in specific ways.

Furthermore, Kiguwa (2006) and Foster (2006) stress that social reality, as well as identity, is constructed through discourse. Meaning only exists through shared conventions and ways of doing things, thus there can be no absolute knowledge. Foster (2006, p.52) terms this “anti-foundational”, arguing that all knowledge is “perspectival” – thus if one is feminist, one constructs reality through a feminist frame, and so on.

In this way, identity can only ever be relational (Jackson, 1998; Howard, 2000; Callero, 2003; Mohanty, 2003; Tehranian, 2006). We experience ourselves “through the lenses of other people” (Jackson, 1998, p.173). Our identity is affected by our position(s) in society; our gender; our sense of power (or powerlessness). Stuart Hall succinctly states:

Identity is not in the main an individual affair. Individuals make their own identity, but not under conditions of their own choosing . . . Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past” (Hall, 1990, in Martin Alcoff, 2003, p.3).

Social constructivism, thus, according to Joireman (2003), bears certain similarities to instrumentalism, in that it gives cognisance to political factors in the formation of ethnic identity.

This view that identity is relational is transmitted through dialogue with others, and through narrative (Foster, 2006). Furthermore, because identity is socially constructed, it only exists in relation to a specific place and time (Takhar, 2006). Martin Alcoff (2003, p.4) makes reference to this historicity of identity, explaining that, for example, ‘femininity’ as a concept has changed over time. Furthermore, meaning is attributed on the basis of cultural attributes, which may be more or less important to the individual at different times in that individual’s life. An attribute only forms part of one’s identity once it is internalized and meaning is constructed around this internalization (Zegeye, 2008). One’s nationality; gender; ethnicity and race, - which are all ascribed, as well as one’s active choices – such as choosing to be feminist, or socialist - all potentially affect one’s ‘external’ life – one’s ‘life in the world’ – as well as one’s ‘interior’ life – how one views one’s self and makes sense of one’s experiences. Mohanty (2003) stresses that for this reason, a cognitive conception of experience is necessary.

Identity is also temporal – it includes one’s memories of the past, one’s notions of the ‘future self’ as well as the present experience (Maalouf, 1996; Oyserman, 2004; Woodward, 2004). A woman does not exist outside of time – she is largely a product of what has happened; her reactions, feelings, actions and perceptions to the events which have shaped her; as well as cognitions of how she would like herself to be in the future. Jamal and Chapman (2000, in Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004) go so far as to say that identity is constructed on a daily basis, depending on the environmental circumstances. May (2004) believes that this continuous construction of identity may cause it to be “situational, often contradictory” (p.170).

More recently, bicultural or hybrid identities are recognised, which incorporate global influences, such as where one is from, coupled with influences from the host community culture (Callero, 2003). This prominence afforded to hybridity is largely due to the increasing global trend of migration. In 2005, 191 million people migrated, with a further 21 million “uprooted people”, according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and an additional annual figure of 660 000 asylum seekers (Wood and Landry,
This obviously has implications for wider set of meanings in the construction of identity.

### 2.3.6 Narrative Identity

The conception that identity exists through discourse and by implication, story, is termed narrative identity by Paul Ricoeur (Foster, 2006). Ricoeur (1993) posits that “the life history of each of us is caught up in the histories of others” (in Schiff and Noy, 2006, p.399). People tell the stories of their lives by making use of shared frames of reference which they have learnt through shared culture, language and symbols. Their stories do not exist outside of this frame of reference; this meaning; but instead, meaning allows them to interpret their past. For Schiff and Noy (2006, p.399) “lives are narrated and identities fashioned out of the raw material of shared meanings”. Sarup (1994, in Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008, p.98) concurs, describing identity as “the story we tell of ourselves and which is also the story others tell of us”, thus emphasizing the reflexivity of identity.

This is seconded by Oyserman (2004) as well as Connerton (1989, in Buijs (1993, p.3-4) who says

> Our past history is an important source of our conception of ourselves; our self-knowledge, our conception of our own character and potentialities; is to a large extent determined by the way in which we view our own past actions.

Individuals construct the self through the relationships they have experienced as well as through that which has transpired – politically; economically; culturally and socially during their lifespan. The self cannot be studied without taking cognizance consequently also of the socio-historical context (Oyserman, 2004). Identities are thus hewn from shared meanings – through growing up a particular historical epoch, in a particular geographical space, in a certain culture which is inculcated through shared language, values and stories (Miller, 1994; Alcoff, 2003; Oyserman, 2004; Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004). Schiff and
Noy (2006, p.401) maintain that “narrative identity is part person, part situation, and part culture and entails relations between these three levels of analysis”.

Galindo (2007, p.254) goes so far as to say that “identity is a form of argument”, something that is used by individuals to make sense of themselves and others. Narrators negotiate their meanings, as well as their belonging to particular groups through the stories that they tell about their identities. This alludes to the “inventory” of possible selves that all individuals possess, which are brought to the fore situationally (DeFina, 2006, p354). These “polyphonous” identities of individuals often have ideological underpinnings, relating to more general group identities (Barrett, 1999, DeFina, 2006, p354).

Einagel (2002) proposes that construction and re-construction of identity is particularly prevalent after experiences of trauma, conflict and/or significant events in their lives. The process of migration might be one such significant event. The act of telling their life stories often further assists in this facilitation of the reconstruction of identity. Einagel (2002, p.232) states that

> life stories, therefore, not only provide valuable insights about how people (re)shape their identities in such contexts, but their telling may also provide welcome opportunities for those reconstructing their lives in the aftermath of trauma.

### 2.3.7 Oyserman and Markus’ Symbolic Interactionist Theory of Socio-Cultural Self

As a consequence of their belief in the significance of social interaction and historicity, Oyserman and Markus (1993) developed a theory of the socio-cultural self, based on Mead’s (1934) earlier work, positing that the self is comprised of a number of self-conceptions, which have developed through interaction with others in their socio-cultural contexts. These self-conceptions may be either temporary; fleeting; or may be more permanent. The permanent self-conceptions are called “self-schema” and are “cognitive generalizations about the self, derived from past experience, that organize and guide the

The self-concept one holds, then, would depend, largely on one’s experiences, socio-culturally and historically, as well as one’s cognitions and emotions about those experiences. Jackson (1998) explains that self-schema may be linked to aspects of the self related to religion, gender, or ethnicity. Furthermore, at any given time, certain schemas may be more important than others. McGuire, Claire, Child, and Fujioka (1978) in Jackson (1998) explain that if for example a black woman is among a group of white woman, it might be more salient for her to identify herself as black; whereas if she is among a group of black men, her gender might come to the fore as the most salient self-schema for her. This might have particular bearing on migrant women, whose memory and therefore self-schema is that of identity being in the place and among the community that they have left.

Freeman (1998, in Freeman and Brockmeier, 2001, p.77) concurs with Oyserman and Markus, stating that “we ourselves are living entries into history”, emphasizing once again the importance of the socio-historical context in one’s identity. This is reiterated by Freeman and Brockmeier (2001, p.78) who call identity “a socio-psychological gestalt embedded within the irreversible movement of history”.

2.3.8 Identity Dynamics

Franchi & Swart (2003), influenced by Camilleri (1990), propose a process definition of identity which focuses on the construction of meaning, as does Social Constructionism, but which also affords primacy to the processes sustaining this construction of meaning, as opposed to concentrating only on content. Similar to the above-mentioned theory of Oyserman and Markus, this definition of identity would, for example, question why a particular individual might define herself primarily in terms of gender at a certain time, and in terms of her ethnicity at another.
Franchi & Swart (2003, p.158) express the opinion that identity is not an entity but is a dynamic which is influenced by socio-historical and political forces. Identity is re-negotiated constantly, morphing and re-moulding itself as it is impacted on by the external environment, while simultaneously trying to preserve a coherent sense of self, in line with whom one thinks one is, really; who one was in the past; as well as whom one thinks one is expected to be in the eyes of others.

The above-mentioned sense of coherency will depend on how successfully one thinks one’s “self-articulated identity” corresponds with one’s “ideal self” and with the self that others hold her or him to be. The coherency of the self, furthermore, is perceptual only, based on that individual’s subjective reality, not on objective actuality.

The process definition of identity, moreover, is relational, as are all sociological definitions of identity discussed above; as Franchi & Swart (2003) hold that individuals construct the self in comparison to others, either others one views as similar to the self, who act as models; or others one views as dissimilar to the self, who act as negative indicators. The salience of negative indicators in this model is significant, particularly in the context of migration. If one migrates to a country or host community where the vast majority of individuals are dissimilar to you, this might well impact on one’s self-definition to one’s own detriment.

2.3.9 Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity comprises those subjective aspects of an individual such as an emotional linkage to one’s homeland and heritage; religion; language; racial grouping and culture. For this reason, ethnic identity is often termed “the politics of belonging” (Joireman, 2003, p.2). But is ethnicity determined at birth or is it mutable?
2.3.9.1 Cultural Primordialism

Geertz, an anthropologist advocating cultural primordialism alleged (in Joireman, 2003) that each individual is born into a culture which provides her or him with the scaffolding of identity. In this way, culture is viewed as primordial or primitive; as inborn. Through culture, individuals come to know their religion, to learn their language, symbols and culture. For Geertz, culture and by implication ethnicity is fixed and immutable, as one is born into and belongs to a specific homeland which cannot be altered.

Geertz argued, further, that culture structures identity, through its transmission by means of societal institution such as the church or education system. Those individuals who identify with, for example, a particular church or religious association will generally share certain aspects of identity with others in the same religious group.

For Geertz, it is not so much the primordial ties of birth and origin that are important, but the meaning that individuals attach to those ties and to the importance of belonging to a group (Joireman, 2003, p.27)

According to cultural primordialists then, ethnicity is a primary component of every individual, yet they do not state whether it is attributable to culture or whether it is innate (Joireman, 2003, p.38).

2.3.9.2 Instrumentalism

For instrumentalists, emphasis is placed rather on the political goals of ethnic groups as opposed to the primordialism of ethnicity. In this way, instrumentalists view ethnicity as a construction which is changeable, fluid and situationally dependent. Although they recognise there are salient characteristics which indicate ethnicity, such as race, language and customs, they afford primacy to behavioural signifiers, such as actions. Ethnicity can never be neutral, but is used in pursuit of political power. For instrumentalists, then, ethnicity is a tool to be used for one’s own self-interest (Joireman, 2003). This is reiterated
by Franchi & Swart (2003) who stress that identity and indeed the process of identification always involves power, in that identities are constructed in the group context, and groups are invariably comprised of unequal power relations.

Radhakrishnan (2003, p.119) concurs with instrumentalists, adding that ethnic identity is “always in a state of flux . . . understandings of ethnicity are always context-specific”. He goes on to explain that in the context of migration, a migrant’s ethnic identity may initially be suppressed in an attempt to fit in with his host community; but then may be reasserted in the medium term; ultimately to be integrated during eventual assimilation. Nagel (1996) alleges it is “a dialectic between internal identification and external ascription” (in Howard, 2000, p.375), linking once again to social identity theory’s tenets of belonging to a particular grouping.

Ethnic identity exists in space, defined through geographical borders, which are themselves constructed socio-historically (Paasi, 1995, in Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008). Whether or not a particular person incorporates these subjective aspects into their own definition of who they are, depends entirely on that individual, in that particular time period. Baldwin, Longhurst et al (2004, p.157) ask the question

How do people understand who they are and how do they differentiate themselves from others? This is also a matter of the ways in which people identify with places or are identified with them by others.

Ethnic identity might thus be closely aligned with citizenship, to national or even regional belonging (Joireman, 2003).

2.3.9.3 Felt Ethnicity

Ethnicity can thus also be differentiated from felt ethnicity which is “how strongly one identifies with one’s ethnic group in a particular situation” (Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004, p.214). This has implication for women who have migrated, as the act of migration
might bring about an ensuing change in felt identity. Joireman (2003) holds that felt ethnicity might even extend to the experience of identification with an ancestral homeland, as evidenced in children or grandchildren of migrant parent. Felt ethnicity would thus relate to psychological attachment based on an imagined space rather than a remembered homeland.

Stacey (1998) in Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004) affords primacy to the possible cognitive dissonance that migration causes, which might influence felt ethnicity. Migration transforms ethnic identity in that often one feels more of a ‘pull’ towards home when one is far away from that home and from all that is known, by means of fond memories and ‘imagined’ recollections of home. This might not be a once-off event, but might in fact entail an ongoing construction and re-construction of the self, facilitated by and impacted on by visits from family and friends from home (Evergeti, 2006). Radhakrishnan (2003, p.126) suggests that migration might thus have implication for “who we are to ourselves”.

Hedberg and Kepsu (2008, p.114), furthermore, found that that identity was multi-levelled; specifically subsequent to migration and that “migrant’s identities were linked to various scales in space and thus formed a spatial hierarchy of affinities”. Eastmond (1993) explains that migration often results in a need for reconstruction of lives and identities in a culture which is different from one’s own and which might in fact be hostile to the migrant.

### 2.3.9.4 Political Identity

Ethnic identity has particular implications for rise of nationalism, or politicised identity. Linking once again to Social Identity Theory, we are made aware that if one group is targeted or oppressed in society; there is a greater likelihood that that group will become conscientised, with clearly delimited boundaries of them and us (Joireman, 2003). Barth (1998, in Joireman, 2003, p.44) holds that not all ethnic identities (and by implication, political identities) are chosen, but may in fact be imposed, such as in the historical
examples of Nazi Germany, in the classification of the Jews and the Gypsies; as well as in the Rwandan genocide whereby the Hutu majority massacred the Tutsis.

Joireman (2003) contends that there is a concurrence between development of ethnicity and economic hardship. Geographical areas characterised by lack and/or by great economic disparities are often the breeding grounds for discontent which may, over time, escalate into ethnic conflict. This might have implication for the South African incidences of xenophobic outbreaks, which have occurred in predominantly impoverished areas.

2.3.10 Identity of the Dispossessed

Post colonialism attempts to understand how being dominated or dispossessed impacts on the construction of identity of those who have been the victims of this domination. Particular attention is paid to dichotomies such as dispossession and integration, as well as to group relations between the oppressed and the oppressors (Hook, 2003).

Hook (2003) explains that those who have been oppressed have been reared on propaganda from birth and have been subject to constant devaluation by those in power, which impacts negatively on the formation of identity and the sense of self-worth. He clarifies, “for each step with which I try to understand myself, I am actually further alienated, because I am using pre-determined and loaded terms that always dispossess and devaluate me and serve the dominant group culture” (p.111).

Fanon (1990, in Hook, 2003) asserts that this creates a problem of cognitive dissonance in the individual, resulting in a sense that he or she is inferior and worth less than the dominant group. Although migrants are not victims of colonisation by dominant groups in the host community, Hooks’ (2003) explanation of dispossessed identity could be extrapolated to any context, where migrants are devalued, marginalised and their culture denigrated.
2.3.10.1 The Impact of Race and Gender on Identity

Much research points to the fact that we experience our identities as raced, gendered, classed beings (Collins, 1990; Reid & Comas-Dias, 1990, in Jackson, 1998). Cross (1971, 1978) developed a model of racial/ethnic identity known as the Model of Psychological Nigrescence, which stressed a five-stage developmental process through which the individual moved from an unconscious stage of race/ethnicity (whereby she is unaware of the impact of race and/or ethnicity on her identity) during the Pre-Encounter stage to an eventual Internalisation-Commitment Stage whereby the individual is fully aware of her race/ethnicity, to the extent that she uses this awareness for the greater community (such as in the instance of political struggles or racial discriminations) (in Jackson, 1998).

Subsequent to Cross’s research, further attempts have been made to address the intersection of identity, race and gender. Pyant and Yanico (1991), in their studies on how racial identity and gender role attitudes predict psychological well-being in African-American women concluded that racial identity is more salient than gender role attitudes in most situations. This might be attributed to the fact that racism affects American women more than sexism (Jackson, 1998).

Parks et al (1996) concurred with the above, but stressed that it is unlikely that women experience their race as separate from their gender; it is rather possible that the salience of either race or gender might depend on the situational circumstances.

Jackson (1998, p.175) goes on to explain that although women have been described as experiencing a “double bind” status, whereby they are discriminated against both as women and as black, this labels them as victims, which is in contradiction with how many women view themselves.

Collins (1990) developed a model comprising five dimensions which she believed encompassed the “system of interlocking race, class and gender oppression” (in Jackson, 1998, p176). The first dimension addressed the core themes that Collins believed were common to all African American women, such as battling to overcome negative
stereotypes which denigrate black women. The second dimension points to the uniqueness of each woman’s experience, within the shared experience of marginalization. The third dimension relates to the intersection of experience and consciousness, which affects how a woman views herself and her ways of being in the world. The fourth dimension is defined as the shared Black, feminist consciousness which develops, and the fifth and final dimension is the interdependence of thought and action. At this stage a woman acts in accordance with her consciousness as being both black and a woman. The dimensions can thus be viewed as building blocks, whereby a woman moves from uniqueness of personal identity to the collective identity of feminist consciousness.

Subsequent to Collins model, there have been a number of further identity development models, most of which indicate that ethnic minorities experience a different reality from that of dominant groups. These models have been criticized as categorizing all ethnic groups in a monolithic fashion, in much the same way that feminist theories have been criticized for assuming that all women have the same experiences, by virtue of being women (Phan, Rivera and Roberts-Wilbur, 2005).

Motsemme (2003), like most African feminists, is critical of any homogenising attempts to understand race, class or gender by predominantly Western feminists. She contends that black feminists stress the inter-relatedness of these discourses; that an individual does not exist as a woman and as black and as marginalised: one may be simultaneously all three.

Further, in representing Black women, Motsemme (2003, p.220) cautions against “reinforcing gross stereotypes” such as “strong matriarch”, or “helpless victim”. Women are not these monolithic stereotypes, but are unique individuals and should be viewed as such – as their differences and their similarities.

For Motsemme (2003) how a woman chooses to identify herself is of particular importance. The connections she has, the shared social identities, such as ‘Xhosa woman’ situate her within a particular historicity, geography and political landscape.
Black identity may also be complicated by an experience of double consciousness. Hook (2003) explains that when a member of a dispossessed or oppressed group experiences success in the mainstream culture, thus the culture of the oppressor, (s) he is alienated from her/his own culture. At the same time, (s) he needs to realise that (s) he will never be truly accepted by the oppressor, resulting in an existence in a liminal space, neither here nor there.

2.3.11 Liminality of Identity

Migration is viewed as a liminal experience, namely the “phase between separation and reincorporation” (Eastmond, 1993, p.39) and as such is linked to identity construction, in that through the process of migrating and attempting to settle in a new geographical space and new community, identities are altered. It (migration) is a time of ambiguity, where one does not belong anywhere – the old place has been given up, but the individual has not yet settled in the new place. Whereas once, in their home country, the individual might have been regarded as one of ‘us’, (s) he is now ‘othered’. Again, this links back to the relational aspect of identity, that we view ourselves through the eyes of others (Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008).

Bhabha (1994) refers to

spaces of cultural difference as liminal spaces that have the potential of being communal
spaces of resistance with unifying powers that can decipher positions of social marginality
into a political strategy of empowerment and articulation (in Tehranian, 2006, p.421).

Bhabha (1994) also indicates that migration and indeed, even initial marginality can be a “fragmented sense of belonging that produces new strategies of selfhood and finds a new and empowered sense of identity” (Tehranian, 2006, p.421). Conversely, Pickering (2001, p.79) warns that “otherness is a denial of belonging; it is the unrelenting sign of not belonging”.

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The construction of identity is also influenced by memory, specifically when memory relates to a traumatic event, such as conflict or war or even the migratory experience. Einagel (2002, p.224) believes that “closer examination of the experiences of survivors are of great importance because they generate the memories through which histories and identities are constructed”. Conflict situations engender ‘shifts’ within an individual’s sense of self, their understandings of others, and their place in the world.

### 2.3.12 Spatiality of Identity

Everyone yearns to belong: to a group; a community; a culture; a nation. Pickering (2001) explains that we take our culture with us, wherever we go, and that this culture, in turn, facilitates our understanding of our surroundings. Our culture is a signifier of our identity: it is the very “experience of belonging”. According to Pickering (2001,p.80), “cultural experience generates our identity to the extent that it creates an appearance of similarity among those who more or less share it, who seem to belong to it, and feel at home within it”. Culture thus contributes to the aspect of spatiality within one’s identity – the sense of belonging, of feeling at home. This sense of being at home is termed ‘place identity’.

Recent studies (Cuba and Hummon, 1993a, 1993b) have examined the effects of mobility and displacement on place affiliation, as well as how place identities are affected by transitions across the life span; thus focussing on the liminality of identity, as brought about by change in spatiality (Howard, 2000; Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008).

Identity is seen to change, to be re-constructed, as a migrant attempt to integrate into the host community, and is influenced by whether the experiences of attempted assimilation are positive or negative. If the migrant is ‘othered’ by the host community, making integration difficult, it is logical to expect that this will have a detrimental effect on the migrant’s identity. It is not only the individual’s identity which undergoes a transition though. The position of the dominant group is also affected by in-migration, which may in turn affect inter-group power relations in the host community (Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008).
2.3.12.1 Belonging and Home

Migration and the search for self, for belonging in place, imply a kind of rootlessness, until assimilation is complete. Nettles (2004, p.57) acknowledges that in the transition from home to somewhere else, “It becomes important for her to (re)claim a sense of self that incorporates and values the multiplicity and the specificity of her identity”. In migrating to another country, the individual must struggle simultaneously with reconciling her own sense of identity and that of her old and new country (Alund, 1997). Nettles (2004, p.56) expresses the belief that:

The search for home is also to find one’s self, to find a place that gives meaning to who you are and/or helps you to become who you want to be. So, the search for home is about a politics of identity and place, one that may be bounded by nation, by gender, by race-ethnicity, by social class, by sexuality, but most often in combinations not easily articulated.

Ultimately, the construction of ‘home’ comes to incorporate both a woman’s sense of where she comes from, the past, as well as where she currently resides; both the physical place as well as the sense of belonging (Johnson, 2003), the “symbolic conceptualization of where one belongs” (Salih, 2004, p.246). Tuan (1990) calls this search for a sense of place topophilia, the “affective connection between human beings and places” (in Salih, 2004, p.247). Topophilia may have, variously, either a positive or negative effect on identity, depending on whether or not one feels a sense of home in the new place, the host community, or whether one is constantly ‘othered’ and thus made to feel one is a stranger (Attanpola, 2006). Ley (1982, in Baldwin, Longhurst et al, 2004) stresses that for this reason, it is necessary to take cognisance of an individual’s relationships to specific places, as this will engender understanding of that individual’s life worlds and the meanings (s)he ascribes. Ley explains that these assemblages of meanings are created between people and between groups, through interaction. For Ley, then “thinking through ‘life worlds’ means, therefore, thinking about place, language, and culture in terms of how places are collectively made meaningful” (in Baldwin, Longhurst et al, 2004, p.143).
There is an innate need to maintain a hold to the place where one is from, a need for continuity, to remember the ‘imagined’ past (Alund, 1997). Benjamin (1979, in Tehranian, 2006, p.414) asserts that “belonging and location are inseparable”. Belonging links conclusively to identity, and is dependent largely on one’s experiences and feelings towards a place, which is, in a circular manner, dependent on how well one is received in that place, as well as how much one feels one wants to fit in with the new place.

Benedict Anderson (1991, in Baldwin, Longhurst et al, 2004, p.159) contends that individuals exist in “imagined communities” because community exists in the minds of those individuals only – they do not know one another but yet they experience “comradeship” as a nation or ethnic grouping. In this way, communities also erect imagined boundaries, defining those within as ‘like us’ and those outside as ‘not like us’. Anderson states that for this reason

National identities are always built as much on the exclusion of people who do not fit and the drawing of boundaries as on the imaginings of a community and the territory where they can live together (p.159)

### 2.3.12.2 Diasporic Identity

Gilroy (in Brah, 1996, cited in Baldwin, Longhurst et al, 2004, p.177) questions whether perhaps, now, all individuals live in a “diasporic space” where all our interactions are influenced by the cultures with which we come into contact in our quotidian lives. As such, we are all touched by the experience of migration which in turn impacts on our identities.

Stuart Hall (2003), too, disputes the ‘old’ understanding of Diasporas as referring to “scattered tribes” who yearn to return home and posits rather a conception of a “hybridity” of identity, which is constantly undergoing transformation.
2.3.13 Summary of Identity

Identity, in the sociological sense, has undergone an evolution of thought in terms of the definition of the concept, and as yet remains somewhat chimerical and elusive.

For modernists, identity was regarded as something an individual was born with, akin to the personality, and whilst one might change slightly throughout the lifecycle, ultimately who one was remained constant. This was disputed by the post-modernists who stressed instead that identity was mutable, situationally dependent and fragmented. For them, identity was considered always ‘in progress’, never complete.

Stuart Hall and other proponents of cultural identity explained that identity encompassed all that which was common to a people that made them the same as each other as well as that which was unique to those individuals, or which made them different from one another. Identity furthermore existed both in reality, across time (past, present and future) and was simultaneously constructed in the imaginings of individuals. This belief in the construction of identity was reiterated by Social Constructionists, who also afforded primacy to the meanings that individuals attributed to the events in their lifeworlds. In this way, it was explained that knowledge was never absolute but always depended on the theoretical perspectives of the individual concerned.

Post-colonial theorists such as Fanon agreed that identity was constructed in historicity, but also questioned the effects that belonging to a dominated people might have on the construction of identity. Advocates of Narrative identity concurred with the constructionist viewpoint, adding that identity exists through discourse, in the stories that people tell one another, which are understood by means of shared references and lifeworlds.

Social Identity theorists emphasised the social dimension of identity, highlighting the significance of intergroup relations. For them, an important aspect in the process of identification was categorisation, which allowed individuals to act as cognitive misers,
paying attention only to the most salient features of another individual. This invariably resulted in evaluation, whereby those most similar to the self or one’s in-group are evaluated positively and those dissimilar to the self are regarded negatively, stereotypically.

Key components of identity such as ethnicity and felt ethnicity have been afforded priority by theorists who have researched the ‘politics of belonging’. It has also been disputed, within discussions of ethnic identity, though, whether ethnicity is primordial, ascribed from birth, or whether it is rather instrumental, used by an individual when it suits her.

The sense of belonging experienced by individuals in both an actual, physical space and the metaphorical feeling of being at home was termed place identity, and cognisance has been taken of the significance of this spatial aspect of identity. The spatiality of identity is ever more significant as migration increases as a world trend: it has been proposed that we all live in a diasporic space now, and no one truly ‘belongs’ anywhere, thus impacting on our ongoing constructions of identity.

Throughout the multiplicities of theoretical interpretations, then, it is apparent that common to all is the sense that identity is ever relational, influenced by both the groups to which one belongs as well as to the groups by whom one is ostracised or ‘othered’. As such, the migratory experience and subsequent settlement into a host community may be an important signifier in the identity construction and re-construction of a migrant woman.

Migration will now be discussed, with an overview given of migration theories, both economic and non-economic. Priority will be given to migration to South Africa, with particular attention paid to the experience of life in South African host communities and attempts at assimilation therein.
2.4 MIGRATION

2.4.1 Introduction to Migration

Migration entails the geographical movement of people from one locality to another, and as such, has occurred throughout time and across space. Migration was, and is, very often the result of wars and internal conflict, as well as, historically, a result of deportation and slavery (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995).

Most literature affords priority to the economic costs and benefits of migration, a focus which is gradually changing as the feminisation of migration is gaining prominence (Kihato, 2007). Furthermore, until recently migration research focused exclusively on male migrants, discussing women only in relation to their spouses: either that they moved to accompany their partners, at their partners instigation or that they remained behind in the home country, to become the recipients of economic remittances sent by men (Adepoju 1995; Gugler and Ludwar-Ene, 1995 in Kihato, 2007).

Migration does not only affect the individual who migrates, however. It impacts both on the family and community who are left behind, as well as the host community into which the migrant attempts to settle. Epps (2001, p.99) writes that

In every crossing, however solitary, there is something that implicates everyone, something that folds “us” into each and every individual, something whose complexity is also called complicity . . . It is the complicity . . . of the citizen in the (im)migrant, refugee, or asylum seeker; some of the many institutionally coded ways of figuring human beings in, out, and across national borders

The various theories explaining why migration takes place will now be discussed.
2.4.2 Theories of Migration

Migration may take place as a result of push or pull factors, or a combination of the two. Examples of pull factors are increased employment opportunities, democratic government, a perceived better quality of life, religious freedom or even a more favourable climate. Push factors are those factors which are perceived as being negative in the home country, such as political unrest, conflict or war, violence, famine and other natural disasters (Kendall, 2010).


2.4.2.1 Neo-classical Economics

This theory suggests that people migrate as a result of an unequal distribution of labour supply and demand (some countries have more employment opportunities than others) as well as differential wages (some countries offer more attractive remuneration for jobs than other countries). People are thought to weigh up the costs of moving, such as leaving family and community, the ‘known’ behind, versus the perceived benefits, such as employment, money and status. They are most likely to migrate to the area “where the expected discounted net returns are greatest over some time horizon” (Massey et al, 1993, in Kok, 2003, p.13). In sociological terms, then, this theory can be viewed as functionalist. Labour migration is seen as a positive trend, leading to greater development and increased innovation (Chant, 1989).
2.4.2.2 New Households Economics of Migration

Stark (cited in Massey et al, 1993, in Kok, 2003, p.14) suggests that migration decisions are undertaken by families, not by isolated individuals. Decision-making is viewed as “household risk minimalisation”, as opposed to the income maximization proposed by neo-classical economists, above. People are able to manage economic risks by “diversifying the allocation of resources like labour”, through the process of remittances sent back home. Labour migration is thus an informal coping mechanism which allows for stability between generations, as some family members migrate to towns, allowing families to pool village and town incomes, making them less vulnerable economically (Deumert, 2005).

2.4.2.3 Dual labour-market theory

This theory proposes that migration is driven by demand for labour, which is a structural need of the industrial economy. Migrants from low-income countries move to take up employment in positions which have no or very little scope for improvement or advancement; where employment is not secure and where migrants often work under hazardous conditions. Migrants from higher-income countries migrate for primary-sector employment – roles, for which skilled workers are remunerated attractively, complete with perks such as medical aid and bonuses (Kendall, 2010). The above situation was exemplified during the 1970s, when many skilled artisans were recruited to South Africa from the United Kingdom and Europe for primary-sector employment, and black migrants were recruited to work in the mines and on the farms in South Africa, from SADC countries such as Zimbabwe, for secondary-labour market positions.
2.4.2.4 World systems theory

World systems theory views migration as a natural result of capitalist expansion. People from rural, underdeveloped areas which are characterized by little or no industrialization flock to highly industrialized, high income areas in order to earn a living, where they are exploited by the ruling class (Massey et al, 1993 in Kok, 2003, and Kendall, 2010).

2.4.3 Non-economic reasons for migration

In addition to the above-mentioned economic reasons which exert a ‘pull’ of the cities on migrants, sociologists also focus on the non-economic reasons for migration, which might be either ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors. These non-economic reasons tend to focus on the micro- and macro- social phenomena which exert an influence on an individual.

2.4.3.1 Tradition of migration

Sometimes migration becomes a community tradition whereby the decision to migrate does not rest solely with the individual – it is “membership in a social network that facilitates that migration process” (Kok, 2003, p.26). This can be linked to the theory of cumulative causation, which argues that over time, migration becomes self-sustaining. A type of migration culture develops because of the existing social networks and the ever-increasing expansion thereof. Migration is accepted as a method of achieving social and economic mobility – it is expected that on completion of education, young people will migrate, in order to realize their ambitions for a better lifestyle, higher socio-economic status, and so on. In other words,

At community level migration becomes deeply embedded into the repertoire of people’s behaviour, and the values associated with migration become part of the community’s values (Massey et al, 1998, in Heering, van der Erf & van Wissen 2004, p.325)
2.4.3.2 Presence of friends and family at distant location

If the potential migrant knows of other family members or friends who have migrated to the same area, that individual is encouraged to migrate, as they are more likely to adjust and assimilate because there is the possibility of aid and ‘social back up’. This is in accordance with social capital models. According to Massey et al (1993, in Kok, 2003, p26)

> Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin. They increase the likelihood of international movement because they lower the costs and risks of movement and increase the expected net returns to migration.

Social networks, the inter-personal ties between potential migrants and former migrants, facilitate the emerging migration systems, lowering the risks of movement. Deumert (2005) explains that these kinship ties provide information about employment opportunities in the destination city. Many future migrants choose to migrate to a specific urban area because of the networks they have in this area.

> In the absence of access to adequate government support, social networks are constructed and maintained as collective survival mechanisms – as an alternative, informal ‘welfare’ system (Deumert, 2005, p.318)

This is reiterated by Staring (2001) in Ypeij (2005) – people tend to move to those countries where they have transnational networks. McGregor (2007) found that aside from the kinship ties mentioned above, entry to employment also reflected what Granovetter (1973) called the ‘strength of weak ties’, whereby Zimbabweans who had migrated to the United Kingdom assisted their fellow countrymen in their search for work, often pretending they were related in order to facilitate their compatriots integration into British employment.

Migration with specific regard to the South African context will now be discussed.
2.4.4 History of Migration in South Africa

People have migrated to South Africa for hundreds of years – the mining industry specifically as well as the agricultural sector has relied heavily on migrant labour (Clacherty, 2006; Crush 2008). South African mines, as an example, employ 87% of migrants from Botswana, 68% from Lesotho, 62% from Swaziland, 31% from Mozambique and 3% from Zimbabwe.

Figure 2.4.4 Map of Southern Africa

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3 www.un-instraw.org retrieved 13/03/09
4 www.africa-adventure.com/images/southern_africa retrieved 26/12/09
For most of the 20th century, according to McDonald (2000, p.17)

clandestine migration referred not to “illegal” crossing of borders, but to the process of
going to South Africa without documentation, identification documents and passports.
There were no border posts and people crossed whenever they wanted.

Until 1963, people could move freely between South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Furthermore, white people could move freely between South Africa and Namibia between the period encompassed by the end of the second World War and Namibia’s independence from South Africa in 1990) 5

This changed during the apartheid era when South Africa applied draconian pass laws and immigration legislation, effectively prescribing who could and could not enter the country, as well as restricting where and how people moved within South Africa’s borders. During this era, until 1991, a black African was not considered an immigrant – the official definition of an immigrant designated that (s)he had to be able to assimilate into the white population. Africans in this period came to South Africa as temporary contract migrants as part of the bilateral agreements between South Africa and her neighbouring states, Lesotho, Mozambique and Malawi. It was this system which resulted in the inhumane migrant labour system, which is currently still active. To illustrate the above, the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) reported in a recent survey that up to 83% of Lesotho’s citizens have parents and 51% have grandparents who have worked in South Africa as contract labour. Historically, this cross-border migration was believed to be temporary, with migrants merely working in South Africa, but returning home frequently, and returning to their sending country permanently on retirement (Crush, 2008).

When Apartheid ended, the restrictions on immigration fell away, giving South Africa’s citizens freedom of movement within South Africa, and also increasing South Africa’s attraction for refugee asylum seekers and those suffering forced and political migration, albeit South Africa only officially recognised refugees after 1993.

5 www.un-instraw.org retrieved 13/03/09
According to the South African government, there were approximately 160 000 refugee claims between 1994 to 2004, of which 74% were from African countries. Clacherty (2006) estimates that there are presently almost 150 000 refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa – approximately 30 000 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with increasing numbers from Somalia, Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea and, most recently, Zimbabwe. In addition, many people (over 5.5 million in 2005 alone) crossed South Africa’s borders legally from other African countries on visitor’s permits, to visit friends and family, and for tourism and business purposes (Crush, 2008).

2.4.4.1 Problems of Statistics

Actual statistics on migration are hard to come by in South Africa, as only a small minority of migration takes place through state-regulated frameworks. A Human Sciences Research Council (1996) study estimated that a figure of between 2.5 million and 4.1 million undocumented migrants reside in South Africa. The SA Police Services in its latest (2008/09) annual report estimated the number of undocumented migrants as varying “between three and six million people”.

Statistics South Africa estimates the number of undocumented migrants to be between 500 000 – 1 million, this in contradiction to the figure of between 4 and 8 million which the South African government cited (Crush, 2008). The Minister of Home Affairs, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, when pressed for a figure on the number of undocumented migrants at a parliamentary briefing on 12 November, 2009, retorted “I don’t know. If somebody’s here illegally, how do I know they are here?” thus refusing to guesstimate. Crush and Williams (2001) in Kihato (2007, p.404) state that a significant proportion of the movement across borders into South Africa are not registered in official statistics, either because long tracts of frontier areas are difficult to

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police, or because of corruption at the border posts. It is thus impossible to make definitive conclusions about the size and scale of migration in the country.

Of course, not all migrants cross the border illegally. Many enter legally, with correct documentation and then overstay their visa entitlement.

2.4.5 Removals and Deportation

An understanding of migration is incomplete if cognizance is not taken of removals and deportations from South Africa. Under the 2002 Immigration Act, police or immigration officers may arrest those individuals they believe to be here illegally, and may deport them. In theory, these individuals should still have the right to claim asylum, rights to appeal, and have defined time limits on detention for the purposes of detention. Research by Wits University and Lawyers for Human Rights found that in many cases, these laws are contravened, resulting in people awaiting asylum being arrested (Landau and Segatti, 2009).

The majority of those deported are people arrested soon after crossing the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. Many of these are would-be asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. Some are returned to an International Organisation for Migration centre in Musina, Zimbabwe, but most are just left on the Zimbabwean side of the border. The Human Rights Watch have documented the increasing numbers of deportations from South Africa to Zimbabwe, whereby migrants were sent back to Zimbabwe because they had entered illegally, numbers rose from 17 000 in 2001 in nearly 97 000 in 2005 (Human Rights Watch, 2007, in Bloch, 2008). It has been pointed out by human rights groups that these deportations are in contravention of international law, as these people face persecution when they re-enter their home country (Crush 2008).
According to Minister Dlamini-Zuma in a parliamentary media briefing in November, 2009, in 2008 there were approximately 110,000 applications for asylum, of which 10,000 were regarded as genuine asylum seekers, who were subsequently awarded refugee status.  

### 2.4.6 Reasons for migration to South Africa

Most evidence suggests that people migrate to South Africa for economic reasons – to make use of the economic opportunities available in South Africa. Landau and Segatti (2009) also point to the ‘three P’s of migration’ – most migrants come seeking ‘Profit’, others want ‘Protection’ from political persecution, disasters and violence, and the last group comes to South Africa temporarily, in transit to destinations outside of South Africa, such as Europe, North America and Australia, thus ‘Passing through’.

People often migrate to South Africa for the purposes of border-trading and street vending, thus seeking ‘profit’, according to Landau and Segatti’s (2009) terminology. Many women, of which approximately 47% are Zimbabwe women are involved in these small businesses, specifically crossing the border to trade in crochetware, in order to supplement the family income. The money earned in South Africa is used to buy goods which are in demand back home in Zimbabwe, thus will be resold there (McDonald, 2000).

However material rewards are not guaranteed in South Africa, as will be discussed later under the section on life in South African host communities. Generally speaking, migrants occupy the lowest paid jobs in the South African formal economic sector. Manual labour, as an example, occupies 18% of migrants from Mozambique, 14% from Swaziland, 9% from Lesotho, 7% from Zimbabwe and 1% from Botswana. Basotho women most often work in the domestic sector (44%), compared to only 6% of Zimbabwe women. In the agricultural

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sector, women are predominantly employed as harvesters, packers and pruners – all roles which are seasonal and generally poorly paid. 10

2.4.7 Demographic Profile and Spatial Distribution

According to a South African Migration Project (SAMP) survey conducted in Durban in post-apartheid 1999, most migrants were aged between 25 and 44 years (only 15% were younger than 24 years, and 4% were older than 55). The vast majority (74%) in this survey were male, showing a clear gender imbalance, which may reflect the perceived difficulties and dangers of travel and obstacles which needed to be overcome.

Most were fairly well educated – 45% had secondary education and 29% had tertiary education. Over 50% were single, while 32% were married, half of whom had left their spouses in their home country (Maharaj, 2004).

Many had homes and families in South Africa and most said they would remain in South Africa permanently, if they were able to. Still others maintained that even if they were deported, they would keep coming back to South Africa (Maharaj and Moodley, 1999, in Maharaj, 2004).

Since the 1990s, most migrants make their way to the urban areas of South Africa, most settling in Gauteng’s inner-city areas, such as Yeoville, Berea and Hillbrow. It is significant that Mpumalanga and Limpopo Provinces predominantly host Mozambicans and Zimbabweans, whereas Cape Town and Durban’s migrant populations are comprised of Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Congolese and Angolans. Somalians are also found in all major cities, albeit in smaller numbers (Landau and Segatti, 2009).

A disturbing trend is that of unaccompanied minors migrating from neighbouring countries to South Africa. There are no reliable estimates on total numbers; however it is believed that growing numbers of children embark on the perilous journey, due to death of parents, 10

lack of money and not being in school. These children are vulnerable to exploitation by police, who often return them across the border, as discussed earlier, or may detain them illegally in inadequate detention centres. Many children as young as seven are exploited through child labour, predominantly on farms or in domestic work (Landau and Segatti, 2009).

2.4.8 The Feminisation Migration

Although traditionally migration was dominated by men, migration is becoming increasingly feminized. According to UNFPA (1993) approximately half of the world’s migrants are now women (Kanaiaupuni, 2000, p.1312). Furthermore, the South African Census of 2001 reported that 37.4% of migrants born in a SADC country are women and 33.8% of migrants born in another country in Africa (excluding SADC) are women. It has also been recognized that women migrate for different reasons to men; as Ypeij (2005, p.111) points out, “migrants travel as gendered persons to new locations”, therefore cognisance has to be taken of the female experience.

Originally, women followed their husbands to the host country (Heering, van der Erf, van Wissen (2004, p.325) calls this the dependent position of “trailing spouse”) or accompanied their spouses (Boyd and Grieco, 2002, in Ypeij, 2005). More recently, women are found to be migrating independently of spouses (Kihato, 2007). In the South African context, the Southern African Migration Project (2008) reported that between 1990 and 2004 the gender ratios of those moving to South Africa changed: although male migrants still outnumbered female migrants, more women were entering South Africa, especially from Zimbabwe and Lesotho (Crush, 2007, in Bennett, Maharaj & Ncanywa, 2008).

Unfortunately, because most migration research is focussed on traditionally male dominated industries such as mining, there is still a dearth of information pertinent to, for example, the impact of gender on the migration experience, or the quotidian existence of migrant women (Bennett, Maharaj and Ncanywa, 2008).
Research which has concentrated on women has focussed almost exclusively on their ‘victimhood’: their experiences of being trafficked, or being forced into prostitution or domestic servitude (McDonald, 2000). Migration may well present additional challenges to women; rendering them vulnerable to exploitation or violence, particularly when they are seen to be “out of place” (Pettman, 1998, p.3), or beyond the protection of a male spouse or guardian. If they enter the country illegally, as undocumented migrants, they are even more vulnerable, as they are unlikely to seek assistance from the state. Representations of women solely as victims, though, perpetuate stereotypes and deny women agency, depicting them as invisible, as powerless to change their life situation.

Bozzoli’s (1991) research cited in Kihato (2007) challenges these stereotypical viewpoints of women and portrays her respondents, the rural women of Phokeng as having agency *in spite of* the oppressive circumstances of their lives. Kihato (2007, p.400) explains that binary dichotomies, such as victim/victor; or visible/invisible fail to explore migrant women’s complex multiple identities. These “multiple identities” employed by women are “sometimes use[d] strategically to her own advantage, sometimes bearing the burden of who she is”.

Women furthermore are transcending their traditional sub-ordinate statuses in society and are also travelling in order to discover more about other cultures. This is not restricted to the wealthy elites, but includes even women from poorer socio-economic backgrounds (Bauman, 1998, in Kihato, 2007).

### 2.4.9 Zimbabwean Migration to South Africa

The exodus from Zimbabwe began as a trickle in the 1980s, subsequent to the massacres which took place in Matabeleland, aggravated by increasing pressure created by the Structural Adjustment Programme as well as corruption in government. The economic decline and political crisis accelerated the migration from Zimbabwe, as did the increased levels of state violence directed against all political opposition, and the process of land
reforms (Bond and Manyanya, 2003; Raftopoulos, 2003 in McGregor, 2007). South Africa is currently the main migrant receiving country in the Southern African region. As Zimbabwe shares a border with South Africa, many migrants cross illegally into South Africa, not only because it is relatively easy to ‘jump the border’ but also because there is a demand in South Africa for cheap undocumented labour that can be easily disposed of.

Traditionally, migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa was predominantly a male-dominated activity, as young, healthy men flocked to earn an income in the mines on the Witwatersrand. Because of the deterioration in economic conditions in Zimbabwe, as cited above, it is increasingly common to find women from lower and middle economic strata migrating to South Africa, as well as further abroad, most specifically to the United

![Map of Zimbabwe](http://www.appliedlanguage.com/map_of_zimbabwe.gif) retrieved 26/12/09

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Kingdom, in order to survive financially, and to remit income to families and children back home in Zimbabwe (McDonald, 2000).

Zimbabwean migrants are often well-educated – many have worked as teachers and in other professional roles back home – and experience deskilling and subsequent loss of status after migrating (Bloch, 2006, 2008; McGregor, 2007).

The exact numbers of Zimbabweans in South Africa are unknown, because so many of them are undocumented. The South African government estimates the number at 3 million, which seems inflated, whereas other sources put the number at a more realistic 500 000 (Crush, 2008). The Human Sciences Research Council guesstimate that since 2000, in excess of 3 million Zimbabweans have fled their country’s borders.  

Medical coordinator in South Africa for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), Eric Goemaere stated in June, 2009 that

> The political and economic situation in Zimbabwe toay is far from stable, and the health system continued to exist in a state of near collapse. As a result, Zimbabweans will continue to flee to South Africa in desperation, and will require both guaranteed protection and proper assistance to address their medical and humanitarian needs.

In May 2009, the Department of Home Affairs, South Africa, announced the introduction of a 90-day visa, permitting Zimbabweans to enter South Africa in search of work, and allowing them access, in principle, to basic health care and education, providing they were in possession of a Zimbabwean passport. This effectively placed the visa out of reach of most impoverished Zimbabweans, as passports were priced at approximately US$820.  

Crush (2008) states that the Zimbabwean economy and many families still resident in Zimbabwe have survived purely on the basis of remittances sent home by those residing and working in South Africa. Again, exact figures of remittances are unknown, but the

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World Bank has proposed an amount of US$1 billion in both 2005 and 2006, which is remitted collectively to Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique.

In the present context, Zimbabwean migration to South Africa specifically could be viewed as diasporic, as they “distinctly attempt to maintain (real and/or imagined) connections and commitments to their homeland and recognise themselves and act as a collective community” (Bhatia, 2002, in Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004, p.213). This is exemplified by the sending of remittances, as discussed above, as well as the presence of bonding social capital, discussed later.

2.4.10 Life in South African Host Communities

Many migrants find that there are fewer opportunities available to them in South Africa than they had envisaged. They often suffer economically, eking out a living in the informal sector, for example, hawking and sharing accommodation in slum-like conditions, lacking basic amenities in the inner cities.

Kihato (2007, p.405) cites studies conducted by the Wits-Tufts survey which indicate that of the migrants participating in the study,

39.2% of respondents were unemployed; 27.9% were self-employed and run small businesses and income-generation projects. As migrants are often undocumented, they are unable to secure formal sector employment even though they are often relatively well qualified.

In addition to the poverty and lack of employment opportunities experienced by migrants, many have been subjects of xenophobic attacks, as well as exploitation by landlords and government officials. Kihato (2007, p.407) states that

they are vulnerable – many have no access to bank accounts, cannot speak a South African language, are targeted by criminals because they know that foreigners are unlikely to report them to the police.
This was borne out by further research conducted in Kwazulu-Natal where “almost all reported that they were discriminated against when trying to access public services at schools and hospitals” (Kanani, 2004 in Hicks, 2009, p.240).

### 2.4.10.1 Discrimination against Migrants and Refugees

Although legally refugees enjoy the same rights as South Africans, such as access to health care and education, and the right to work, but excluding the right to vote, in practice migrants and refugees are discriminated against by state officials. It is fairly common practice that health-care workers refuse to assist refugees, or insist that they pay fees for services rendered. The Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) report, as an example, brought to light several incidences of injured Zimbabweans being denied treatment by hospital staff, such as a 6 year old rape victim being denied follow-up medical care, and nurses refusing to treat a pregnant “foreigner”.\(^1\) It is well-documented in South African popular press that government officials accept bribes to process applications for asylum seekers.

As stated in Kihato (2007) credit facilities are also generally denied to refugees, thus hampering their abilities to grow their entrepreneurial pursuits beyond the micro survivalist enterprise (Steinberg, 2005).

Many South Africans reject the influx of migrants and refugees into their cities. A Southern African Migration Project (SAMP) survey conducted in 1997 found that 25% of South Africans wanted to prohibit all migration into South Africa and 22% wanted the government to return all migrants to their home countries. 45% wanted “strict limits” to be placed on migrants and 17% thought that migration policy should be linked to availability of employment. In the same survey, 61% of respondents felt that migrants placed an additional (unwarranted) burden on the already strained resources of the country. When surveyed again in 2006, two thirds of all respondents blamed ‘foreigners’ for the bulk of crimes committed in South Africa, and nearly half attributed the spread of

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HIV/AIDS to foreigners entering South Africa. Generally, the viewpoint held by respondents towards foreigners was negative. (Williams, 2008)

South Africans have labelled migrants, naming them *amakwerekwere*, a derogatory term which has been described, variously, as meaning ‘foreigner’ or ‘african immigrant’. Rob Nixon, a journalist with the Atlantic Monthly (November 2001) states that “South Africans claim to hear ‘kwere kwere’ when immigrants open their mouths” (Motsemme, 2003, p.231).

Some South Africans have stated that they are able to visibly differentiate between themselves and African foreigners, alleging that people coming from outside of South Africa’s borders are blacker in pigmentation than South Africans. They have further mentioned that there are physical signifiers, such as build, head-shape and ways of walking (Motsemme, 2003). All the before-mentioned serve to enforce difference between ‘them’ and ‘us’.

Kanani (2004, in Hicks, 2009, p.240) also found that migrants were “wrongly held responsible for the hardships facing poor and disadvantaged South Africans in terms of jobs, education, health and other opportunities”. Hicks (2009) explains that although South Africa’s post 1994 constitution has made great strides in improving the legal rights of women, the inferior, second-class status previously held by Black South Africans seems to have been transferred to migrants residing in South Africa. Migrants are constructed as ‘other’ by the majority of South Africans. The South African Migration Project (SAMP) survey of 2006, further revealed that South Africans are among the most hostile to outsiders in the world (Crush, 2008).

Williams (2008) offers the proposition that the xenophobic attitudes exhibited by South Africans may be attributable to that fact that South Africans, as a result of Bantu education may hold a skewed view of Africa and as such, tend to view themselves as separate from the rest of the African continent. This was created by the “continuation of an apartheid legacy of separate development and ghetto-isation of the African mind” (Motsemme, 2003,
South Africans, generally, do not identify with Pan-African consciousness, resulting in a dichotomous view of ‘them and us’.

Many South Africans are still waiting for the changes promised by the change in government in 1994, and have been disappointed by the continual failures in service delivery. The social circumstances of the vast majority of South Africans have remained unchanged; poverty and unemployment are high and most still reside in inferior township areas. Many migrants have, conversely, been successful on the small-scale in South Africa and have succeeded in establishing their own businesses. Williams (2008) explains that in the past, dissatisfied South Africans were able to blame an unrepresentative government for their lack of opportunities; now migrants fulfil the role of convenient scapegoats, handy targets of discrimination.

In South Africa, as mentioned above, there have been several incidences of xenophobia during which violence was perpetrated against migrants. In May 2008 over 70 migrants were killed and thousands made homeless as they were ‘hounded’ out of their communities (Crush, 2008). It is believed that this violence is both political and criminal – political in that it was motivated by dynamics of exclusion, as well as access to resources and nationalist identities, and criminal in that it may well have been opportunistic.

In these situations, women are particularly vulnerable as they represent a soft target, often lacking the physical capacity to fight back and defend themselves and their families. Furthermore, women are seen as the traditional carers of their families, those who provide homes and shelter for their children. As such they are targeted in xenophobic incidences as those “who make settlement happen”, while men may be seen by a host population as more transitory, less likely to lay down roots. Fuller (2008, p.8) states that “migrant and refugee women in the townships have been disproportionately affected by the recent xenophobia, not only because the violence has played out on the sites of their bodies, but also because the violence has been directed towards their homes which in many cases is symbolic of a woman’s family and is perceived as a place of safety and security.”
Migrants are often exploited by unscrupulous employers who pay them lower wages and deny them benefits such as pension and medical aid. As they are not unionised, they typically receive no protection from exploitation and thus are often fired, without proper procedures and in contravention of South Africa’s labour laws. Reitzes (1994, p.9) in Maharaj (2004, p.9) describes migrants as:

devoid of state protection, and denied any rights and entitlements, aliens look for jobs to survive. Because of their illegal status they are forced to accept employment whatever the payment, risk, physical demand or working hours involved. Exploitation of migrant labour carries the risk of social decay, with decreasing wages and deteriorating working conditions...The creation of such a rightless class also pushes many of them into the criminal underworld, either as a more attractive option or as a means of survival

2.4.11 Assimilation

Assimilation refers to the process whereby minorities are incorporated into the mainstream culture and by implication, the host community. Barry (2001) stresses that the need for differentiation between acculturation and assimilation; the former meaning to become more like the mainstream culture, and the latter emphasising the complete absorption into the dominant group, so much so that the ‘incoming’ culture no longer exists. The two concepts can thus to be viewed as points along a continuum, with assimilation being the furthermost point, at which the (formerly) two groups are so intertwined culturally that they become indistinguishable from one another.

Barry’s (2001) description of the process of assimilation is similar to that identified by Ferraro and Andreatta (2010) who differentiate between three sequential stages of assimilation, beginning with a cultural stage whereby aspects of culture such as language and behaviours are yielded to that of the dominant group. Secondly, minorities are socially assimilated into the mainstream culture, by means of attendance and membership in secondary groups such as churches and neighbourhood associations. Finally, minorities
are completely assimilated by means of intermarriage, at which point previously held differences between groups disappear.

Patterson (in Haralambos & Holborn, 1995) echoes Ferraro & Andreatta’s (2010) delimitation of sequential stages, above. Patterson terms the three phases of assimilation accommodation, integration and assimilation. During the accommodation phase only limited adaptation takes place in a one-way process, whereby the immigrants attempt to adapt to the host community, with little reciprocation from the host. The second phase of integration takes place when the immigrants become more permanently settled into the host community and are accepted by the host community, albeit they remain a distinctive culture. The final stage of adaptation is assimilation, whereby adaptation is complete and inter-marriage may take place. At this stage the previously separate cultures are amalgamated.

Complete assimilation may take place at varying rates, depending on the particular immigrant group attempting to integrate (Ember, Ember and Peregrine, 2007). Ethnic and/or racial identities prove the most difficult to assimilate as assimilation necessitates a ‘disappearance’ into the mainstream culture, which is problematised by the salience of racial or ethnic signifiers (Barry, 2001)

It is significant that in all explanations of assimilation above it is the minority culture who is involved in the act of assimilation. Very little or no effort seems to be made by the host community.
2.4.11.1 Theories of Assimilation

Functionals and Marxists differ in their interpretation of assimilation.

2.4.11.1.2 The Immigrant-Host model of Assimilation

Functionalist sociologists have generally focused on how well migrants integrate into the host community, terming their model of assimilation the Immigrant-Host Model. According to functionalists, over time, migrants will adapt to life in the host community and will be assimilated into it. It is believed then that the initial conflicts around issues of ethnicity will diminish and eventually disappear. It is stressed that although these initial conflicts do exist, the host community will learn to adapt to the migrants and the migrants will in turn be absorbed into their new community, leading to stability and slow evolutionary change (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995). This optimistic viewpoint has been decried by sociologists such as Robert Parks, and might also be indicated in Barry’s (2001) caution with regard to ethnic and racial diversity, mentioned above.

2.4.11.1.2.1 Criticisms of the immigrant-host model

Richardson and Lambert (in Haralambos & Holborn, 1995) criticise the Immigrant-Host Model on the grounds that the stages of assimilation rarely occur in clear-cut sequential phases which are easily distinguishable from one another, thus determining at which stage in the process migrants are is virtually impossibly, therefore the stages are effectively null and void. They furthermore question the desirability of assimilation. The fact that minorities have migrated to a particular host community might be attributable to forced economic and/or political conditions rather than due to a desire to be absorbed into a particular culture. The functionalist model is thus criticised as ideologically biased, as
assimilation is always one-sided, necessitating change on the part of the migrants only, thus supporting the cultural domination by the majority ethnic group.

Furthermore, in accordance with concerns raised by Barry (2001) and Parks (in Haralambos and Holborn, 1995), cited above, the functionalist model affords no cognisance to the very real existence of racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia present in many societies. As mentioned by Barry (2001) where racial and/or ethnic diversities exist, these are not easily swept under the carpet of assimilation, as it is possible that the host community may hold stereotypical views and prejudices towards the migrants, as identified by Social Identity Theory.

Finally, conflict theorists have criticised the functionalist model for its over-emphasis on consensus, stressing that this is unrealistic (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995).

2.4.11.1.3 The Marxist view of Migration

Castles and Kosack place emphasis on the inequalities of the capitalist system, instead of advancing a cultural theory of assimilation. In their research which compared the immigrant situation in four countries, they found that all immigrants were in a subordinate position in their respective host communities. All were located in inner-city, impoverished areas characterized by inadequate housing and poor educational opportunities; all experienced discrimination by authorities and by the host community generally. According to Castles and Kosack, this points to the fact that the diverse immigrant groups “had the same function and position in society, irrespective of their original background” (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995, p.672).

Castles and Kosack view migration as a product of the international economic system, whereby richer more developed nations exploit poorer nations as a source of cheap, unskilled labour, resulting in the under-development of the poor nations. The poor are utilized by the rich capitalist nations as a “reserve army of labour” during periods of high
employment. Migration results in ever-increasing inequalities – migrants are socialized and educated in poor nations but that nation loses them to richer nations just when they become productive. The impoverished origin nation thus does not benefit in any way from the future migrant, but carries all the costs. Castles and Kosack view migration as “a form of development aid for the migration countries” which takes advantage of the labour while investing nothing in its production.

Furthermore, immigration into a host community does not benefit everyone in that community – it often places increased competition for unskilled labour and prevents wage increases, as supply of labour exceeds demand. The real beneficiaries of migration are the capitalist bourgeoisie, with all costs being borne by the working class.

According to Castles and Kosack, the prejudicial attitudes of the host community towards migrants benefits the capitalist societies in that prejudice against immigrants legitimates their exploitation, keeping them in a subordinate, marginalized position. In this way, migrants remain scapegoats, conveniently blamed for social ills such as unemployment, increased crime and urban decay.

Furthermore, in line with general Marxist theories, the on-going discrimination of and stereotypical attitudes towards migrants results in a divided working class, which benefits the ruling capitalist class as it is then less likely that the working class will attempt to change the status quo, through collective class consciousness and revolution (Haralambos & Holborn, 1995).
2.4.11.2 Assimilation in the South African Context

Much of the research in the South African context remains somewhat pessimistic about full assimilation into the host community.

Migrants are often among the most vulnerable in society, because of their marginalized position coupled with lack of social support structures in the host community. They are often ignorant as to how to go about looking for work and/or how to access governmental services or social protection structures such as unemployment insurance or workers’ compensation. In developing countries specifically, the poor traditionally rely heavily on informal support structures such as kinship systems and community-based credit and savings schemes. When they migrate to a new area, they are unable to access these social support networks, and may feel increasingly isolated and unable to integrate successfully into the host community (Deumert, 2005).

This was borne out in a study conducted by Golooba-Mutebi in a Bushbuckridge village in 2001. Although Mozambican refugees had settled there permanently, they never integrated fully into the community, but remained a “fairly coherent and easily identifiable group” who even lived in a separate area from the mainstay of the village. Golooba-Mutebi found that the refugees were poorer than the other residents of the village and they did not socialize with the ‘native’ inhabitants of the community. “Most pertinently, South African villagers and Mozambican refugees behaved as if the stay of the latter in South Africa was temporary, their legal status ambivalent” (Steinberg, 2005, pp.17-18).

Atam (2004, in Steinberg, 2005, p.28) conducted research in Johannesburg and found much the same trend of isolation among Congolese refugees. Of his research subjects, none had friends who were non-Congolese; in fact they reported limited contact with South Africans. The Congolese refugees formed “tight-knit ethnic networks” – they even shared accommodation, effectively ghettoized within the inner-city of Johannesburg.

Generally, according to Bloch (2006) an individual’s ability to assimilate into a host community depends on her pre-migration characteristics and competencies, such as
linguistic ability, literacy and increased social networks, discussed below under Social Capital.

### 2.4.12 Social Capital

Social capital refers to the bonds that link individuals: the networks, shared understandings and day-to-day interactions between people (Narayan, 1997, in Takhar, 2006). The term was first identified by Putnam (in Woolcock, 1998) and was believed to have been coined by Hanifan (1920) who used it to refer to “those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit” (quoted in Halpern, 2005, p.6).

Halpern (2005) proposes three basic components that comprise social capital, namely social networks, ranging from neighbourly acquaintance to deep emotional support shared by friends; social norms or unwritten rules that govern relationships; and lastly, positive and negative sanctions. These components are found to be present in all social structures, across levels.

In accordance with the above, Evergeti (2006, p.360) claims that

> The homeland and specifically the community of origin is not only the basis of the family and ethnic roots but also provide an important source of social capital in the form of neighbourhood networks of support.

Gittell and Vidal (1998) further differentiate between bridging and bonding social capital, with bonding social capital referring to inward-looking ties, such as those between ethnically homogenous groups of people, such as Zimbabweans, in the South African context, and bridging social capital referring to bonds between diverse people, such as those which might develop between Xhosa people and Zimbabweans in a given area in Port Elizabeth. This distinction between bridging and bridging social capital is believed to be similar to the ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ ties identified by Granovetter (1985), whereby weak
ties exist between acquaintances and are utilised in the context of providing information regarding potential employment opportunities, where to live and so on; and strong ties exist between close friends and family members, providing emotional support to one another (Halpern, 2005). McGregor (2007) posits that Zimbabweans, who, for example, have immigrated to the United Kingdom to work in the care industry, make use of weak ties to facilitate their fellow compatriots entry into employment there, often referring someone to their employers, simply by virtue of the fact that they hail from the same homeland. Heering, van der Erf & van Wissen (2004, p.324) and Massey (1990, in Kanaiaupuni, 2000) concur with the research of McGregor (2007) explaining that these “micro-level behavioural factors . . . perpetuate international migration”, through the lowering of perceived and actual costs of migration. On-going bonding social capital between migrants and potential migrants provides a ‘safety net’ for potential migrants, affording migration an institutionalised status in the sending community.

According to Salih (2004, p.248) women in particular maintain ties between their countries of origin and their host country, enabling them to “construct a social personhood that encompasses boundaries and territorialised differences”, although this is insufficient to overcome the “sense of rupture” that is the result of being of both countries, yet simultaneously of neither.

Halpern’s research (2005) has evidenced that increased heterogeneity in an area, either/or social and ethnic, results in lower levels of social capital both inter- and intra-groups. Similarity or social homogeneity facilitates social bonding. Conversely, the more diverse people are, the less likely they are to interact positively socially. The greater the diversity, the greater is the potential for conflict, prejudice and discrimination, as discussed earlier under the section on Social Identity Theory. This is apparent in much of Africa – areas with greater heterogeneity; religiously and ethnically tend to have experienced more conflict.

Research has also shown (such as that by Crutchfield, Geerken and Gove, 1982; Lindstrom, Merlo and Ostergren, 2002; Kang and Kwak, 2003, all cited in Halpern, 2005) that areas characterised by greater residential mobility such as inner city flatlands tend to be typified
by lower levels of social capital. This exacerbates feelings of alienation and isolation experienced by migrants in the host community, and decreases potential for bridging social capital.

The improvements in telecommunications and cheaper travel have however allowed migrants to maintain strong ties with their sending community – these migrants are able to maintain strong bonding social capital (which as discussed earlier, can lead to a tradition of migration). While this may be a benefit in that it allows migrants to remain connected to their ‘past’, it may be to their detriment in that it slows down their integration into the host community (thus delays formation of bridging social capital).

2.4.13 Summary of Migration

Migration has always occurred, across destinations and throughout time, resulting from either push factors which propel individuals from their home countries; pull factors which attract individuals to a destination country, or a combination of the two. Although in the past migration was predominantly a male activity, with women, if they migrated at all, fulfilling the role of ‘trailing spouse’; migration has more recently undergone a feminisation, with increasing numbers of women taking the decision to migrate independently.

South Africa has a long history of migration, spanning the contract labour brought to work in the mining industry and agricultural sector, to the mass migration of many Africans to the democratised South Africa subsequent to the demise of apartheid. Demographically, African migrants have echoed the profile of their compatriots elsewhere in the world, being predominantly male and falling within the economically productive age range. This too, in accordance with international trends, is thought to be changing, becoming increasingly feminised, although accurate demographic migration statistics are hard to come by in South Africa.
South Africa has been imagined as the proverbial land of milk and honey for many African migrants, particularly Zimbabweans fleeing the political conflict and economic collapse of their home country. These individuals have upheld hopes for a better, more stable and profitable future for themselves and their families post-migration, only to discover that the reality of life in host communities has proven somewhat less rose-tinted. Migrants to South Africa have been the unlucky recipients of much xenophobic attitude and victimisation in the urban landscape they have come to inhabit.

Furthermore, migrants have generally found the assimilation process more difficult than they might have imagined, in spite of the presence of social capital available to most in the host community. Generally, migrants have shown a lack of assimilation in the South African context, which may be attributable, both to the lack of acceptance shown to them by many South Africans, as well as to problems of language, culture and perhaps a long-term dream of wanting to return to their homelands, their places of belonging.

2.4.14 Concluding Remarks

It is apparent from the foregoing literature review that the concept of identity has undergone an evolution of thought, moving from that which was believed to be relatively constant and fixed, to that which is more elusive, mutable and shifting, changing as it is influenced by the events which give meaning to an individual’s life. Identity has also been recognised to exist specifically in relation to others, both to those people with whom the individual shares her life, as well as the greater social groupings to which she belongs.

It has furthermore been appreciated that identity has a dichotomous aspect, comprising simultaneously those facets of an individual which are social, or shared by others within her grouping, which make her the same as them; and those facets which are unique to an individual, peculiarly her.
Stuart Hall and other cultural identity theorists alleged that identities are forged through group histories and shared meanings. In this way, ethnic identity may be of particular import, a construction, whether real or imagined, which allows those who share this ethnicity, understanding of common references and lifeworlds.

As such, migration as a liminal event of potentially great magnitude could be seen to impact on an individual’s perceptions of her own identity. Many migration experiences are characterised by trauma, be it the dangerous illegal border crossings attempted by many; the problems of assimilation associated with life in a host community, or indeed, life pre-migration in a country characterised by political conflict and economic hardship. Migration, too, is often associated with a loss of identity for many, as they are pushed into a situation of rootlessness and placelessness, a period characterised by transition, necessitating a reconstruction of identity and sense of self. This is exacerbated by the loss of sense of home, the loss of belonging experienced by many through the period of migration.

The impact that migration has on identity is of significance in the South African context, as South Africa has long been the destination country for would-be migrants. South Africa’s perceived attractiveness has increased post-apartheid, particularly for migrants hailing from other African countries. Zimbabwe, above all, has dispatched a Diaspora to South Africa, as young, economically productive, often well educated individuals have fled their home country, in search of a better life for themselves and their families. While traditionally these migrants were male, following global trends, more and more women are choosing to migrate independently to South Africa.

While migration may, and often does, provide relief from the situation of political and economic turmoil at home, it presents a host of new challenges for an individual. Many migrants experience deskillling, whereby they are forced to accept work in roles far below their educational and/or professional capabilities and qualifications, which impacts both psychologically on the sense of self and financially on the individual’s family, as most often these migrant men and women are responsible for the sending of remittances back home.
As indicated above, many migrants to South Africa furthermore experience immense problems of assimilation into the host community: problems exacerbated by a lack of shared language and/or culture, as well as the xenophobic attitudes of many of the inhabitants in that host community. Migrants thus often are increasingly marginalised in the South African context, forced to live in impoverished conditions, performing menial tasks for minimum or sub-minimum wages, as well as being ‘othered’ by the residents of the community in which they reside.

Migration and the ensuing possible reconstruction of identity have meaning within a feminist theoretical framework. As mentioned earlier, much feminist discourse has highlighted the oppression of women across most, if not all, societies in modern history. It has been recognised too, that in as much as women are oppressed because of their gender, they are often also oppressed as a result of their ethnicity, race and class. Women who have migrated to South Africa might then be expected to face multiple oppressions in their host communities: they might be oppressed as women, as migrants, as black, as ‘other’ ethnically and because of the lower class positions they often occupy in South African society. Migrant women are often invisible in society, denied voice, marginalised, silenced. A feminist theoretical orientation, examining the fluidity of a migrant women’s identity might well return that voice, recording their quotidian existences, triumphs and hardships.

In conclusion, an overview of the themes relevant to the research topic has thus been provided, in an attempt to explore how the experience of migration might impact on the construction and reconstruction of a woman’s identity. An outline of the major feminist schools of thought was also provided, in order to situate the research within a feminist discourse.

The methodology of the research study will now be discussed.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the methodological issues of the study. The principal aim of the study was to:

- Explore Zimbabwean migrant women’s perceptions of their identity.

Secondary aims of the study were to:

- To explore how gender had shaped and/or affected their lives
- To enable understanding of the lifeworlds of these particular migrant women
- To describe the themes of liminality, spatiality and relationality within the context of social identity.

This was a similar research focus to that of Bozzoli’s (1991) study of women who had migrated from rural to urban areas, which sought “to reveal the patterns of interplay between the inconsistent and fragmented aspects of identity, the myriad building blocks out of which a particular individual is constructed and the larger patterns she might try to present” (p.236).

A qualitative approach was chosen, which will be discussed later in this chapter. It will also be explained why this approach is inherently superior to the quantitative approach, in this particular context. In addition, the feminist epistemological orientation as well as the phenomenological paradigm will be expounded; additionally, the data gathering, recruitment and selection of participants, data analysis and ethical considerations will be explained.
3.2 The Advantages of Qualitative Research

Fox and Bayat (2007) describe the qualitative interview as being an avenue to uncover what people think, feel, remember and experience. This is effected by means of the researcher asking a number of unstructured, open-ended questions which attempt to elicit detailed responses from respondents; responses which ‘tell their story’. Respondents tell these stories in their own words, which are recorded verbatim, most often; transcribed and then interpreted.

The qualitative interview is therefore construed as a relationship between the researcher and respondent, however brief. The interview is thus a learning process for the researcher, often, as she is exposed to experiences and life worlds to which she would probably not otherwise been privy. The typical research process of academic as expert and respondent as ‘examined’ is turned on its head, revealing the respondent as expert.

The focus in qualitative interviewing is on hearing each individual’s story and recognising that it is unique, thus avoiding universalising tendencies.

The qualitative research paradigm assumes that the best way to learn about people’s subjective experience is to ask them about it, and then listen carefully to what they say. People almost always talk about their experience in storied form. Thus, qualitative research is based on textual data, rather than quantitative data, on stories rather than numbers (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, pp.23-24)

Qualitative research is most suitable, according to Auerbach & Silverstein (2003), to research involving marginalised, often silenced respondents, as it affords primacy to their often unheard voices. The use of qualitative research, furthermore, allows for the richness of the personal experiences and meanings of the respondents to be explored, thus allowing the researcher to uncover the variations between respondents, and to find potential patterns of similarity and difference among these individuals who share similar life experiences, from the perspective of the outsider, looking in (Miles & Huberman, 1994;
Silverman, 2001). Do they, in their own reflection, feel the same way about these experiences, and indeed, about themselves, their identities?

This approach has also been found to be less threatening to respondents as it decreases the power differentials between the researcher and researched, in that there is no survey or questionnaire to be answered, wherein it might be construed that certain answers are right and others, wrong. In this way, the research is perceived as being a partnership, in which the research participants have knowledge which the researcher does not possess, thus the respondent may gain in the telling, in the sharing of the story; and the researcher gains in the listening. Moreover, the qualitative approach, particularly when situated within a feminist epistemology, “offers a challenge to other partial accounts” which tend to fragment the respondents’ life experiences (Letherby, 2003, p.89).

Furthermore, and again in accordance with feminist epistemological stance, discussed later, qualitative research allows for a reflexive stance to be assumed, permitting the researcher to examine her biases, which decreases the likelihood that the research might be exploitative, benefitting the researcher only (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

3.2.1 The Limitations of Quantitative Methods of Research

Quantitative methods of research attempt to measure and enumerate, reducing data to statistics and numbers. Maree (2007, p.145) defines quantitative research as a “systematic and objective” process, which attempts to “generalise the findings to the universe that is being studied”. The researcher attempts to be as detached and impartial as possible, in order for the data yielded to be valid and reliable, thus representative of the greater population. This was not the intention of this research study.

It was stated in the aims of the study that the purpose was to “explore the self-perceptions of migrant women’s identity”. Identity is not an objective entity which exists outside of a woman, a tangible thing which can be measured. Synonyms of ‘explore’ are to ‘open up’,
‘to lay bare’ or ‘expose’. It is this researcher’s opinion that for exploration to be conducted on a woman’s lifeworld, this would necessitate listening to the nuances of a respondent’s story, interpreting the emotional subtext and subtleties of her experiences as shared, and entering into her construction of her remembered reality, as allowed. It is apparent that a quantitative paradigm would therefore not allow the necessary depth needed to explore migrant women’s identity, and a mechanistic answering of a questionnaire would almost deny them voice, which would further exasperate their situation as ‘unheard’ in society.

Hicks (2009, p.241) concurs with the foregoing, emphasising the marginalisation of migrant women, stressing that “women refugees form an especially vulnerable group because of their particular social location at the intersection of marginalized gender, race, class and citizenship positions,” as does Bozzoli (1991, p.3), who speaks of the need for “the analysis of consciousness” in her research on the women of Phokeng, stressing that “conventional sociological methods – the structured attitude survey, the questionnaire, or the rigid interview – are poor tools for understanding this elusive force”.

### 3.3 The Phenomenological Paradigm as Chosen Approach

A phenomenological paradigm was followed, whereby it was understood that the meaning attributed by respondents to their circumstances was an interpreted meaning, an interpreted reality, based on their own understanding(s), memory and feelings. Phenomenology, furthermore, emphasises that there is no objective reality which exists ‘out there’, but rather that the world has to be understood through studying individual experience, which is constructed (Maree, 2007; Schwandt, 2007). Because cognisance is given to individual experience, it is accepted that there is no one reality, but rather that there are multiple realities and all are valid.
Adams and van Manen, in Given (2008) explain that “the phenomenological attitude keeps us reflectively attentive to the ways human beings live through experiences in the immediacy of the present that is only recoverable as an elusive past” (p.617).

Maree (2007) expounds that when we understand how meanings are attributed to particular phenomena; we can comprehend these meanings and thus engender more holistic understanding.

As a phenomenological researcher, it was also recognised that the researcher’s own knowledge and understanding of phenomena influenced the type of questions which were asked, and indeed the area(s) in which knowledge was sought, namely identity and migration. Miles and Huberman (1994) agree with this statement, acknowledging that researchers also exist in a particular socio-historical time and geographical space which unavoidably affects their understanding and interpretation. In this way, the re-construction of any event, whether remembered by the respondent or heard and interpreted by the researcher will always be a “co-elaboration” (p.8). This is reiterated by Maree (2007, p.60) who writes that

> As we proceed through the research process, our humanness and knowledge inform us and often direct us, and often subtleties such as intuition, values, beliefs or a priori knowledge influence our understanding of the phenomena under investigation.

The research focussed on the everyday experience of migrant women – the actual migration itself may have been viewed as an extraordinary event in their lives, it may well have been catalytic, but it was their everyday existence that was explored in rich context. The phenomenological epistemology was most suitable in this regard, in that it allowed the emotional to take precedence. Phenomenology “banishes the myth of a dispassionate and unemotional scientific observer, by locating the feeling subject at the centre of all intellectual endeavours” (Finch, 2004, p.64).

This particular paradigm also, as Bozzoli (1991, p.3) writes, allows the researcher to explore the “intimate private domains within which power is fought over, and consciousness born – those of personal life, family, community and experience“.
3.4 The Feminist Epistemological Orientation

This research was situated within a feminist orientation, in accordance with which, the researcher partnered with female respondents in the research process in a non-exploitative manner, so as to reveal and understand women’s realities (Letherby, 2003), thus restoring their agency as “social actors” (Chase, 2005, p.655). It was acknowledged that what makes research specifically feminist is

It is “always a complex combination of their author’s interests and intentions, their ability to provide insights and solutions to feminist problems and issues and their potential for improving women’s lives.” It is the ability to connect feminist discourses rather than a single aspect of, or approach to, or interpretation of these issues (Jody Dean (1997) in Gouws, 2005, p.2)

Much of feminist research (Geiger, 1986; Bozzoli, 1991; Chase, 2005) affords primacy to giving women voice. Lesley Northrup (1996) in Rakow (2004, p.103) alleges that the stories that women tell allows them to relate to other women, creating community, building bridges between women and “telling the truth about their lives for the beneficial impact of talking about both painful and joyful experiences”. Rakow (2004) goes on to caution, though, that giving women voice does not only mean letting them talk, but necessitates taking their meanings into account, thus ensuring that their phenomenological understanding is ensured.

Bozzoli (1991) acknowledges the importance of allowing women to speak, particularly those women who are often silenced in society. She stresses that in telling their stories; women place themselves at the centre of their narratives, and share that which is of significance to them, in their reality. It is recognised that events do not have to be of historical or societal importance to matter; it is often the quotidian existence which takes precedence for a woman who defines her identity in terms of her family, her standing as a wife, herself as a mother. Gluck & Patai (1991, p.1) reiterate that “women’s experiences have value, and their voices must be heard”.

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Women are often disempowered and disenfranchised throughout life as women, and African women in particular, being black and women, are further disempowered. It is believed that migrant women, by virtue of their marginalised status in society are even further disenfranchised – they suffer the triple oppression of being black, and women, and marginalised. Thabisa Dumisa, a Gender Equality commissioner cited in Hick’s (2009) research acknowledged this, stating that “if black South African women are triple-oppressed, refugee women are in an even worse situation with regard to the vulnerability of their status” (p.247). For this reason, a feminist epistemological orientation which is described as “écriture feminism” meaning that it “transgresses structures of domination – a kind of writing which reproduces the struggle for voice of those on the wrong side of the power relationship” is particularly suitable (Clough, 1988, in Denzin, 1989, p.82).

Letherby (2003) expresses the opinion that feminist research is always political in that it attempts to bring to light information which will make a difference to women. The topic chosen, the research population and even the research paradigm are politically imbued, with the goal of “challenging the silences in mainstream research” (p.5). Olesen (2005, p.236) expresses the viewpoint that “feminist inquiry is dialectical, with different views fusing to produce new syntheses that in turn become the grounds for further research, praxis and policy”. This is reiterated by Hatch & Wisniewski (1995, cited in Kim, 2008) who suggest that women’s narratives may result in social change by virtue of the fact that they, previously unheard, are given voice, thus bringing to societies attention the human and social phenomena not afforded primacy before.

In light of the fact that much of feminist research is conducted on marginalised women, researchers need to be particularly sensitive to the possibility of unintended consequences, that the researcher might have impact on their respondents’ lives, by virtue of being there and asking them to tell their stories, and by implication, reveal themselves to us. Cognisance was taken of this possibility, in this research.

A further aspect of the feminist epistemology is the belief that a woman’s reality is different to that of men’s: it is, of necessity, gendered (Bozoli, 1991). Neuman (2006,
p.102) emphasises that feminist researchers do not view the world in a positivist, androcentric manner, but rather as a “web of interconnected human relations”. In as far as reality and respondents are gendered, so too is the researcher, reflexively influencing her research topics and methodology, as mentioned earlier.

It is argued by Oakley (1981) in Letherby (2003) that a feminist orientation invites a sharing between researcher and respondent, a relationship in which the researcher is fully present, answering questions about herself, if asked, thus engaging in reciprocity. Thapar-Bjorkert & Henry (2004) and Olesen (2005) reiterate this, explaining that feminist sociological research requires a strong element of reflexivity, that the researcher must not attempt to examine the respondent but instead the researcher must participate with the respondent and engage with her. Binaries are thus collapsed, such as those of subject and object; researcher and researched. This sharing re-balances dynamics of power and affords agency to respondents. The reciprocal, reflexive orientation followed during this research was found to put the respondents at their ease: a number of the women who presented initially as tense and somewhat wary of the researcher opened up and visibly relaxed why they discovered that she was ‘just a mother’, like them.

Geiger (1986) suggests that although ‘woman’ is not a monolith, women do often share certain everyday relational experiences, a “familial embeddedness” by virtue of the fact that they lead lives of interconnection with others (in Letherby, 2003, p.90). This is reiterated by Stanley and Wise (1990) in Letherby (2003) – that although we have many differences, as women, not least racialised socio-political experiences; we do also share commonalities, which serve to bind us. This, again, was evidenced by the shared experience of motherhood, mentioned above.


3.5 Type of Research

The research conducted is classified as descriptive, in that no generalised conclusions were drawn from the responses gathered. The researcher endeavoured to garner the idiographic story of each woman’s perception of her identity, in order to search for reoccurring themes within the narratives of respondents, in an attempt to ascertain if there is similarity of perceptions. These themes were then further explored as scaffolding to identity.

Schwandt (2007, p.64) explains that descriptive studies are merely “accounts of what we perceive”, which are grounded in our ways of understanding the world. The researcher, in this context, “sees” (or hears, as the case may be); interprets via her theoretical background, culture and so on, which allow her to understand; and finally describes what she has understood to be reality, which is therefore constructed.

Maree (2007, p.4) reiterates that descriptive studies make no attempt to develop statistically valid samples, but intend rather to develop an understanding of the meaning(s) imparted by respondents- a ‘seeing through the eyes of the participants’ so that the phenomena can be described in terms of the meaning that they have for the participants.

It is acknowledged that the world does not exist ‘out there’ but is constructed by people, thus by listening to the voice and stories of others we can understand and even enter into, their reality.

3.6 The Case Study Approach

The multiple-case study (Yin, 1994) approach was utilised, which Denzin (1989, in Chase, 2005) also categorises as a life story approach. In accordance with this approach, the research study contained a number of cases; namely, nine women who had a number of
factors in common. Firstly, they had all migrated from Zimbabwe to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape. Secondly, they were all recent inhabitants of Gqebera, having relocated there in the past three years. Finally, they all fell within the economically productive age-band, namely 25-55 years.

Yin (1994, p.52) posits that the multiple-case design is preferential to that of the single-case design, analogous to that of the superiority of multiple experiments over single experiments. Multiple-case designs allow for “replication logic”, whereby each case is selected because of its similarities to other cases (the selection criteria, as mentioned above), predicting similar results. In terms of this research, it was expected that because the women all hailed from Zimbabwe, all resided in Gqebera in similar socio-economic conditions, and were all of a similar age; that their lives and experiences post-migration might also yield certain commonalities.

Yin (1994) explains that replication logic is not synonymous with sampling logic, whereby it is expected that the sample is representative of the wider population. The women selected in this research study were not expected to be representative of all Zimbabwean migrant women, hence the sample size (or numbers of multiple cases, in this instance). The researcher originally considered interviewing five women, but later decided to interview more women until data saturation, or replication logic, in Yin’s terminology, was reached. At this point, no significant amount of ‘new’ information was being yielded by the interviews, thus the cases were considered literally replicating one another.

The data yielded from the multiple-cases was then sorted into re-occurring themes, which occurred across women, which were then analysed. Fox & Bayat, (2007, p.70) explain that

Whatever technique is used to collect data, the concern is not merely to describe what is being observed, but to search, in an inductive way, for consistent regularities and recurring patterns.
3.7 Data Instrument and Data Gathering

The researcher made use of unstructured in-depth interviews to obtain the necessary data from the research participants. This method was selected so that the interview setting was entered with a broad outline of themes to be discussed, thus providing structure, but also allowed a large degree of flexibility in that the researcher could probe deeper where necessary, and was also able to take cognisance of the ‘unsaid’ – the pauses and silences in the conversation. Gluck and Patai (1991, p.17) express the opinion that this method of interviewing is superior in that

If our questions are general enough, women will be able to reflect upon their experiences and choose for themselves which experiences and feelings are central to their sense of their past.

Bryman (2002) adds that conducting research by means of listening to people’s narratives of their life experiences aids in our understanding social change, as well as how that change impacts on individual’s lives at the micro- and macro-level. Plummer (1983, 1995a) in Bryman (2002) asserts that the contributions of life stories to sociology include the “subjective reality of the individual”; “process, ambiguity and change” in the quotidian existence; and the “individual experiences within the context of the group” (p.19). The individuals themselves can gain an understanding of how they made sense of their own life experiences, which can be cathartic, and beneficial (Birch and Miller, 2000). Atkinson concurs, explaining that

Sharing one’s story is a way of purging, or releasing, certain burdens and validating personal experience; it is in fact central to the recovery process...Life stories can help other people see their lives more clearly or differently and perhaps be an inspiration to help them change something in their lives (Atkinson, (1998) in Bryman (2002, p.20)

From a feminist perspective, the case study approach and use of unstructured interviews has particular advantage in that it allows woman’s stories to be heard, allowing them to make sense of their experiences, especially in as far as it gives voice to the marginalised in society (Birch and Miller, 2000). Auerbach and Delamont (2006) allege, furthermore, that
life stories are social phenomenon and the women sharing their narratives are social actors. In this study, the researcher was graciously allowed to be privy to the respondents’ life stories, in as far as they related to the topic, and also encouraged the respondents to convey their stories in their own words, thus revealing their voice(s). The researcher concurred with McAdams (1993) that

I ask people to tell me the stories of their lives because I believe their verbal accounts hold the outlines of internalised personal myths. I know there is much that will remain untold, no matter how successful our interview and how intimate our rapport.

Data were mostly recorded by means of digital-recorder, although two respondents declined permission to be recorded, and in these instances, notes were taken.

One respondent was initially quite apprehensive with regards to the digital-recorder, fearing that it could take photographs of her, thus permitting identification. Her fears were allied and the digital recorder demonstrated prior to embarking on the interview. Research notes were made by the researcher immediately subsequent to all interviews, recording the researcher’s feelings with regard to the interview and personal emotions with regards to the research respondent’s stories.

The interviews were conducted in English by the researcher. Although all respondents were fluent in English, this having been their language of instruction in the Zimbabwean education system, it became apparent from their comments during the interviews that they would have been more comfortable had they been able to converse in Shona (Zimbabwean language), as this was their home-language and thus the language they were most comfortable in recalling emotional content.

Every effort was made to create a comfortable, safe environment, as it was acknowledged that the information they were being asked to recall was often emotionally charged as well as politically sensitive, as many of the women were living in South Africa illegally. Within twenty-four hours of the interviews having taken place, the data were transcribed verbatim by the researcher and stored as computer files.
Interviewing as a method of collecting data was also utilised as the researcher felt that asking the respondents a few broad, open-ended questions allowed them to remember the events of their past, their journey, both literally and figuratively; as well as providing them with space to discuss traumatic or sensitive topics, either from their past or in their present lives. Rakow (2004, p.95) states unequivocally that

It is important that the talk and stories of people who have not been heard are now made available. What we learn from them can enrich our understandings of the human experience.

Atkinson (1998, in Bryman, 2002, p.3) states that a life story is “the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it”. It is thus apparent that the story the respondent tells of her life depends on her honest recollection and her willingness to share those memories. This differs from the quantitative type research where data must be valid and reliable – able to be ‘proven’ as far as possible.

As the research hinged on women’s perceptions of her own identity, these are neither verifiable nor confirmable, nor was any attempt made by the researcher to verify the historical occurrences recounted, such as the starvation experienced by the people in Harare, as, again, the women were recalling their stories, their version of what transpired in their lives. Perceptions remain intangible and chimerical (Bruner, 2001). This is also in accordance with the feminist orientation which resists the androcentric, positivist notion that personal narratives are useful in corroborating historical events and which rather emphasises the significance of women as “social actors in their own right and in the subjective meanings that women assigned to events and conditions in their lives” (Chase, 2005, p.655).
3.7.1 The Interview Schedule

As the researcher utilised unstructured interviews, there was no interview schedule of questions per se, but rather broad questions pertaining to each theme were asked. This method was selected so that the interview setting was entered with a broad outline of the themes to be discussed (as indicated in Appendix A), thus providing structure, but also yielded a degree of flexibility in that the researcher could probe deeper where necessary, and could also take cognisance of the ‘unsaid’ – the pauses and silences in the conversation.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Biographical details
- Experience of life post-migration
- The decision to migrate (including responsibility for migration decision)
- The experience of migration (how the border crossing was effected)
- Initial accommodation process post-migration
- Assimilation into Gqebera; problems of assimilation
- Employment pre- and post-migration
- Gender roles (motherhood; marital roles)

3.8 Data Source

This research consisted of primary data as respondents were interviewed by the researcher and the subsequent data analysed. A tabular representation of the biographical data pertaining to the research participants follows on the next page.
Table 3.1: Biographical Details of the research participants in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>Employment In Zimbabwe</th>
<th>No. of Children</th>
<th>Employment in SA</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>O-Levels</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>A-Levels</td>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Admin/Waitress</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>O-Levels</td>
<td>Entrepreneur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leila</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>A-Levels</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>A-Levels</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>A-Levels</td>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyce</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Teaching Diploma</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francesca</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>O-Levels</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Chemist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chemist</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short descriptions of each respondent will be given later, providing additional explanation of the information above.

3.9 Data Collection Techniques

Nine respondents were interviewed who fit the criteria of being women who have migrated to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, South Africa from Zimbabwe in the past 3 years, and who were aged between 25-55 years of age. These particular delimitations of the study were selected as it was thought that subsequent to 3 years, the women would be more likely to have assimilated into the South African community and society. Also, memory is somewhat flawed and temporal – it is possible that, over increased time, some of their
memories regarding their life pre-migration as well as the migration process itself might have faded. It was believed by the researcher that the time period of 3 years was thus ‘not too long’ that their memories might not be as salient anymore, but was ‘long enough’ that some amount of adaptation to host community might have taken place, albeit the process of assimilation would not be ‘complete’. In line with phenomenological research, the commonality between these women was that they have all experienced the same phenomenon: in this research, they had all migrated to South Africa from Zimbabwe.

A pilot case study was conducted with one respondent one week prior to the actual data collection to allow the researcher to ensure that the interview questions to be asked were suitable; that they yielded the anticipated rich data, and to make any amendments, if deemed necessary. From this the researcher was able to infer that although the broad themes, discussed earlier were suitable, a modicum more ‘interaction’ on the researcher’s part was necessary. The researcher had expected that the respondent would share freely her experiences, once rapport was established, but it was apparent that the respondent expected more directive-type questioning from the researcher, which was duly noted and more specific, open-ended questions asked. The pilot case study itself lasted approximately 2 hours during which time the respondent’s story was captured both digitally and by means of note-taking (supplemented with interviewer’s impressions of the interview immediately after the interview). The respondent was informed that she was the first woman to be interviewed, and that her interview was the pilot case study, which seemed to put her at ease – that this was a ‘first’ both for the interviewer and interviewed.

Data collection took place during the month of November, 2009. The women were contacted telephonically and appointments were made for a date and time which suited the respondents. They were given the option to choose where they would like to be interviewed, whether they would prefer, for example, to meet at their homes, or at the researchers home or office, or at a coffee shop. All opted to be collected at the ‘entrance’ to Gqebera, and to be interviewed at coffee shops. This meant that potentially the interviews were conducted in less privacy than might have been possible if they were
interviewed in their homes, but every effort was made to select an area where the researcher and respondents were able to talk without interruption. Moreover, the ‘public places’ in which researcher and respondents met might well be construed as being ‘more private’ than being interviewed in their homes which often, as was discovered in the interviews, comprised only one room, hence the likelihood of interruption by family members might have been great.

The research respondents were encouraged to recall their lives pertaining to migration and their perceptions of identity chronologically, beginning with their lives pre-migration, whilst still residing in Zimbabwe; then the decision to migrate; the migration experience itself; their initial perceptions upon relocation and lastly, their present day lives in Gqebera; however, their stories did not naturally unfold in this sequential fashion. This was also found by Bozzoli (1991) in her research, when she noted that her respondents did not retell their life story as curriculum vitae, and by Kihato (2007) in her research on migrant women in Johannesburg’s inner city areas, who also attempted to structure her respondents’ narrative journeys through chronological windows and found that women do not recount their experiences so sequentially.

3.10 Research Population and Sample

The research population comprised all Zimbabwean migrant women residing permanently in the Gqebera area of the Nelson Mandela Metropole, South Africa. Gqebera is a lower socio-economic class area of Port Elizabeth and is the original township of the area, which initially formed part of Welbedaght farm in the late 1800s. Very little demographical data exists on the area, other than that it was proclaimed a residential area in 1948, having developed through the process of urbanisation, when Black Africans migrated from the rural to urban areas in search of employment\(^{16}\). Many of the inhabitants remain impoverished and some of the area remains unserviced, lacking proper infrastructure (such as

\(^{16}\) [http://iaps.scix.net/cgi-bin/works/Show?0103bm042](http://iaps.scix.net/cgi-bin/works/Show?0103bm042) accessed 08/08/09)
as tarred roads, piped water to the houses and electricity) and consisting of informal housing. This area was selected for research as it was known that Gqebera has a migrant population, specifically a Zimbabwean population. Furthermore, Gqebera is an area where the researcher had an established network, thus enabling purposive sampling to take place.

The actual size of the female migrant population in Gqebera, and indeed in the Nelson Mandela Metropole is unknown as no accurate statistics exist – as stated earlier in this document, many migrants either enter the country illegally or stay in South Africa after their visas expire.

This is reiterated by other authors, such as Adepoju 1995; Zlotnik 2003; and Crush and Williams, 2001, all in Kihato, 2007, p.404) who states

Much of the migration on the continent occurs outside state-regulated frameworks, making migrants bureaucratically invisible and almost impossible to trace or capture in data. A significant proportion of the movement across borders into South Africa is not registered in official statistics, either because long tracts of frontier areas are difficult to police, or because of the corruption at the border posts. It is thus impossible to make definitive conclusions about the size and scale of migration in the country.

Nationally, Statistics SA estimates the number of undocumented migrants at between 500 000 and 1 million (in contradiction to the figure of 4-8 million cited by the South African government (Crush, 2008). A Human Sciences Research Council (1996) study estimated that a figure of between 2.5 million and 4.1 million undocumented migrants resided in South Africa.\(^\text{17}\) The SA Police Services in its latest (2008/09) annual report estimated the number of undocumented migrants as varying “between three and six million people”.\(^\text{18}\) It is thus apparent that the number of undocumented migrants is anyone’s guess. It is, furthermore believed that females comprise approximately 50% of the total migrant population in South Africa (Crush, 2007, in Bennett, Maharaj & Ncanywa, 2008).

\(^\text{17}\) www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=87032 retrieved 16/11/09

Zimbabwean migrant women were chosen as research respondents because of the researcher’s interest in the unprecedented influx of Zimbabwean migrants into South Africa, and because of the access to an existing network. Migration has been attributed to, variously, the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in Zimbabwe which has resulted in a massive economic decline (and accompanying crippling unemployment and inflation rate) as well as the oppressive political regime of Zanu-PF and general deterioration of human rights since 2000 (Bond and Manyanya, 2003; Raftopoulos, 2003 in McGregor, 2007).

The Zimbabwean migrant population in Port Elizabeth is believed to be large, and growing (according to Rodrick Chimombe, executive director of the Eastern Cape Refugee Forum and provincial chairman of the Zimbabwean political party Movement for Democratic Change). Zimbabweans, generally, are literate and conversant in English (furthermore, previous research has shown that Zimbabweans, on average, have a higher level of qualifications than migrants from other African countries) (Kirk, 2004; Chetsanga and Muchemje, 2003, in Bloch, 2006, p.73), thus facilitating interviewability. Zimbabwean migrants have been victimised in the xenophobic attacks of May 2008 in Cape Town (Fuller, 2008) and most recently again in late 2009 in the De Doorn area of Cape Town, Western Cape; thus indicating on-going problems of assimilation into host community (Fuller, 2008). It was expected that the Zimbabwean women in Port Elizabeth might have also been ‘victims’ of weak social capital, exacerbated by either a perceived or actual lack of acceptance by the host community.

### 3.10.1 Sampling

The research design made use of non-probability sampling, whereby the sample was purposively selected. All respondents interviewed had certain characteristics in common – all migrated to South Africa from Zimbabwe and all respondents were women aged between 25 –55 years of age, currently residing in Walmer Township/Gqebera. Women in
this age bracket are most likely to migrate as they are still potentially economically active (Chant, 1989; McDonald, 2000; Kihato, 2007; Bennett, Maharaj and Ncanywa, 2008) and are also most likely to have a desire to ‘start again’, or to have a desire to “return to a full life”, as Eastmond’s respondents (1993) indicated, cited earlier.

It was the researcher’s intention to select participants on the basis of snowball sampling, whereby one woman would agree to be interviewed, and would then refer the researcher to one or two other respondents, and so on; however this proved difficult. Although all respondents mentioned that there were a large number of Zimbabweans living in Gqebera, they were all extremely hesitant to divulge any information pertaining to other Zimbabweans, such as telephone numbers or contact details. A few of the women said they would ‘check’ with their friends to ascertain whether they would be interested in being interviewed, however this did not transpire. Only one woman provided the researcher with a ‘lead’ and contact number of a friend, who agreed to meet only to decline to be interviewed at the last minute, stating that she had “changed her mind”. It is this researcher’s opinion that the general hesitancy at providing friends’ contact details stemmed from the women’s fears that the researcher might be involved in something ‘political’, a fear possibly exacerbated by the reality that many were in South Africa illegally; or as a result of their perceived victimisation by the host community in which they found themselves.

Because of the problems mentioned above, the women who were interviewed were recruited by means of convenience sampling, whereby the researcher sampled from those women referred to her through her existing network of acquaintances in Gqebera. As such, it was acknowledged that certain respondents had a greater chance of being selected than others, in that all respondents had to be part of certain social networks in the Gqebera area.

The researcher made the decision initially to sample a minimum of five women, because this number would allow for “replication logic” to be followed (Yin, 1994, p.45). This number may be increased to comply with the principle of replication logic. Replication logic
implies that each case is selected in order to predict similar results, which would indicate literal replication. This is not the same as survey sampling logic, whereby the sample size is chosen with the expectation that it is representative of the larger population. According to Yin (1994), each case in the multiple-case study is a replication which will allow the researcher eventually to achieve certainty (that each respondent’s experiences predict similar results). Yin indicates that “... if you want a high degree of certainty, you may press for five, six or more replications” (1994, p.50). The sample was kept as homogeneous as possible, by making use of stringent criteria, as mentioned earlier.

The researcher eventually interviewed nine women in total, at which point data saturation (or replication logic) was reached, in that much of what the women was disclosing was very similar and no new information was being yielded (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003).

The sample size was specifically chosen in order to allow for the richness of the in-depth interview which yields large amounts of data to be categorised. This suited the researcher’s phenomenological orientation – that there is a preference for depth of response from fewer respondents, as opposed to an increased number of respondents yielding a greater breadth of data.

**3.10.1.1 Biographical Descriptions of Participants**

Brief biographical descriptions of each of the respondents will now be given, so that understanding can be garnered of the women as individuals. Pseudonyms have been used, to ensure the anonymity of respondents.

**Gloria** is a 43 year old woman who hails from a rural area in Zimbabwe. She was divorced not long before she migrated three years ago; in fact her migration was as a direct result of her change in marital status, as previously she had been a house-wife and mother. She has four sons ranging from 9 years to 20 years whom she left back home, with the eldest in
Gloria was initially very shy and reserved during the interview, but opened up over the course of our conversation, particularly when she discovered that the researcher is also a mother with children of similar ages to hers.

At 26 years old, **Brenda** is of the youngest of the respondents. She has never been married and was also the only one of the women interviewed who was not a mother. She migrated from Harare to join her widowed mother, who was at the time working in the cross border informal sector, buying and selling crochet work and wooden sculptures. She holds down two jobs, one as a waitress at a local pub-and-grub where she works in the evenings and on weekends, the other where she works full time during office hours in an administrative position. She is a very positive, confident, cosmopolitan young woman who benefitted from a middle-class, liberal upbringing in a stable family unit, and portrays herself as someone with financial goals and plans for her future. She was very verbal and articulate in the interviews, and very willing to disclose.

**Linda** was initially very apprehensive at being interviewed, although she relaxed during the research interaction. She asked a number of times whether the research was political in any way, or if the researcher was affiliated to a politics department at the university, as well as why the study was specifically studying Zimbabweans. She is a 38 year old single mother of a 12 year old daughter, who recently joined her mother in Port Elizabeth. Linda crossed the border illegally with her sister, whom she currently lives with. She was one of the most vociferous about her dislike of her present employment as a domestic worker, and her isolated life in South Africa, where she has few friends and no recreational interests.

**Leila** is a 33 year old married mother of 3 young children – a six year old and twins of 4 years. She was employed as a teacher in Zimbabwe and was deskillled subsequent to her migration, presently being employed as a domestic worker in Port Elizabeth. Of all the women interviewed, she seemed most unhappy in her current circumstances and very dissatisfied with most aspects of her life. She expressed disappointment in her present home which she described as a “shack”; worried about crime and her children’s safety;
hated her job which she said made her “physically sick” and articulated great feelings of loneliness in Gqebera, without extended family or any friends. She seemed the least assimilated of all respondents and the most likely to return to Zimbabwe in the near future, even if it meant leaving her husband here.

**Prudence** is a 38 year old married mother of two children, both of whom are in primary school in Port Elizabeth. Her story of life back in Harare was one of the most harrowing – her home was destroyed during the forced removals a number of years back and she and her family were starving in Zimbabwe. She explained that if they had remained in Zimbabwe, her marriage would not have survived, as all their energy was consumed by “hunting for food” on a daily basis. She explained that the situation did not only affect their immediate family, but also affected their extended family, as she would only encourage her children to spend time with her mother, while her husband attempted to persuade the children to spend time with his mother. She feels that subsequent to the migration, her children have gained “two grandmothers”. She seems to have assimilated well into the Port Elizabeth community, probably the most fully of any of the other respondents, and it is this researcher’s opinion that this was largely due to her positive attitude. She seemed to view the migration to Gqebera as a blessing, as it had enabled her husband and herself to form a close marital unit again, and their children have settled in well to the schools in Port Elizabeth. She runs her own tailoring business from home and this, too, has facilitated her assimilation, as she has made many acquaintances through business. She portrays herself as a deeply religious woman, and her church, too, has provided her and her family with much assistance, both tangible, in the form of money and food when they arrived and intangible, in the form of love and community.

**Miriam** is a young married woman of 26 years, with a young son. She is related to Prudence through marriage and spoke much of how the migration to Port Elizabeth had created strong familial bonds between Prudence’s family and her own, specifically between the children who regarded one another as brothers. For Miriam, the migration has been a positive experience, facilitated in much the same way as Prudence’s, by their
church which has provided her with community and religious belonging. Her husband is employed in South Africa as a computer technician, so has not experienced any deskilling, and is currently studying for a further tertiary qualification. She, too, like Prudence, runs a small business as a tailor, and the two women assist one another in their businesses, giving each other the overflow of work when the load is too great. Miriam travels backwards and forwards between Port Elizabeth and Harare every 3 months to renew her visa and to visit her family back home.

She also mentioned, after the interview and when the digital recorder was no longer switched on, that in Harare, the economic situation at home was such that the marital roles were largely reversed, as her husband was no longer earning any money nor bringing in any food and the financial burden for the family rested solely on her private work as a tailor, creating much role reversal. This created huge tensions in their marriage, as her husband felt emasculated by his inability to provide for the family and she resented him, because in their culture, as she explained, it is the man’s duty to provide for his family. The migration to South Africa has enabled her, in her own words, to have “respect” for her husband again, as he has resumed his role once more as the head of the household.

**Joyce** is the oldest woman at age 44 years. She is the mother of 3 children, the eldest of whom has subsequently migrated to Port Elizabeth and found employment here in a Laundromat. The other two children, boys aged 16 and 8 had been left behind in a child-headed household in the rural areas. Joyce is a married woman whose husband had initially, while she was still residing in the rural area outside of Bulawayo, migrated to Johannesburg, in search of work; however after three years of his continuous unemployment in South Africa, Joyce took matters into her own hands and migrated to Port Elizabeth to join her sister here. Joyce’s husband had subsequently relocated to Port Elizabeth and had found employment here, with the assistance of Joyce’s employer. Prior to migrating, Joyce had never worked outside of the home. She is now employed as a domestic worker which she initially found difficult but seemed to have become accustomed to. She spoke highly of her employer and with great affection for her
employer’s young children. Her one area of great sadness was that her two children had to remain back home in Zimbabwe, as she had entered South Africa illegally after bribing a customs official. She worried daily whether her children had sufficient food, whether they are going to school and whether they are alright. She was only able to contact them telephonically once a month because of financial restraints and had not seen them since she migrated. She sends money home as often as she can, but this too has been fraught with hardship, as most recently, the R1000 remittance she sent home was stolen by the money transporters.

**Francesca** is a 34 year old divorced woman from Harare, who is the mother of two teenagers who had remained in Harare with her parents. Her children were being educated in private schools there, and while she missed them and worried about them growing up without her, she believed they were safe and well cared for. In Harare, Francesca was employed in a Non-Governmental Organisation focussing of the empowerment of women, but she was retrenched when the political and economic situation in Zimbabwe declined. Francesca is currently employed as a domestic worker and nanny to her employer’s young child, a role which was not ideal but which she regarded as necessary, as she expressed the opinion that she would find it difficult to secure any other type of work, because of her inability to speak either Afrikaans or isiXhosa. Francesca had a life-strategy; she knew she was only in Port Elizabeth to provide for her children back home and to amass enough funds to open a business in Harare, which her sisters will run for her while she remains in South Africa until such time as the business has stabilised and can support her financially. She portrayed herself as an independent, entrepreneurial woman who missed her children desperately, but who was doing the best she can to provide for them. Francesca was very lonely in Port Elizabeth and seemed to live a very isolated, insular life, keeping herself to herself and not attempting to integrate with the community around her.

**Irene** is a 31 year old professional woman who is married with three children. She moved to Port Elizabeth initially on her own; secured employment and then was joined by her
husband and children. Her husband had been unable to find employment in South Africa although he also had a professional qualification. Irene had found it incredibly difficult to assimilate in Port Elizabeth. She and her family had an affluent lifestyle back home in Harare, where she had a career and lived in close proximity to her family. She expressed concerns they did not belong in Gqebera; however this was all they could afford while they were a single-income household. She was very aware of the high crime levels in Port Elizabeth and had not made any friends in the community in which she lived, because felt they had nothing in common. Irene was very emotional in the interview, breaking down when she spoke of her mother and her “increased sensitivity” towards others in Port Elizabeth.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

The researcher was aware at all times that the women who participated in the research study comprised a marginalised, vulnerable section of the population, and that as such, particular care needed to be taken to ensure that the participants rights were not compromised in any way, nor their vulnerability increased as an unintended result of the study. Ethical clearance was sought for the research proposal and ethics clearance obtained\(^\text{19}\) prior to the researcher embarking on the data collection phase of the research process.

It was explained to all respondents that participation was voluntary and that they should only share information that they felt comfortable and/or willing to share. Prior to participating in the research, an explanation of the nature of the research was provided to the potential respondents: the purpose of the research, what was to take place and their role in the research. It was explained both verbally and in writing that some of their responses would be published in a written report of the research, but that their anonymity would be respected at all times, as well as that pseudonyms would be used.

\(^{19}\) H/09/ART/SA-003
Each participant was provided with a written informed consent form and it was explained the meaning of informed consent, prior to the respondent’s completion of the document. Most of the respondents opted to provide only their first names on the informed consent form, and this was agreed to by the researcher, in order to further safeguard their anonymity. It was explained to the respondents that were free to withdraw from the research process at any stage, without them having to justify their reasons for withdrawal. Moreover, the researcher’s mobile number was given to all respondents, to ensure that they could access the researcher at all times, should this be necessary.

Furthermore, the intended audience of the research and purpose of the research was explained – that the research was being conducted as part of a Master’s degree, and as such, confidentiality of response could not be guaranteed, in that it was not known who would read the completed document, but it was reiterated that their anonymity would be guaranteed, as pseudonyms would be used in the research report. It was also explained that any part of the research might be used for the writing and publication of journal articles. They, as respondents, had the right to impose any ‘operational restrictions’, thus determining if and when they want to speak ‘off the record’.

It was stressed that the researcher was aware of the sensitive nature of the topic, which could trigger strong emotions and psychological reactions, and that they would be encouraged to seek psychological support, should this be necessary.

Finally, it was explained that the interviews, should they agree to digital recording thereof, would be transcribed personally by the researcher and that they as respondents had the right to view the transcribed interview, as well as the completed research material, should this be their request. Only one participant indicated an interest in obtaining feedback with regards to the completed document, and she was assured that this would be made available to her.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the researcher collected and returned the respondents to and from their residential area, so that they did not have to incur any financial costs in being interviewed.
3.12 Data Analysis

Data from the interviews was captured by means of digital recording as well as manual note taking. The data was then transcribed verbatim by the researcher, albeit that only the informational content of the narrative was captured, meaning that any non-verbal utterances were omitted.

Data analysis was initiated by reading and re-reading the transcriptions of the interviews, as well as the research notes. Three main themes, plus that of biographical information, were utilised as heuristic categories (Given, 2008), highlighted from the review of literature as significant components in the construction of identity. A list of low-level descriptive codes (see Table, below) was then developed from the transcriptions, in order to analyse the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The codes were generated by modifying and applying Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992) typology (in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.61) whereby codes are divided into the following:

- Settings or contexts
- Respondent’s perceptions of the setting
- Relationships
- Events
- Strategies
- Processes and transitions

These codes were then grouped into the wider themes, as mentioned above, which formed the scaffolding for an understanding of identity.

Through the process of coding, the data was “decontextualised” from the original interviews and “recontextualised” into recurrent themes. Both within-case analysis (analysis of each case separately) and cross-case analysis (a search for similarities and differences across cases) took take place (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008, p. 130).
The method of colour-coding was used, as explained by Stake (1995), which allowed for visual, easy identification of categories or themes, allowing for large amounts of information to be sorted. As alluded to above, the process of categorisation into themes was ongoing and dynamic, taking place throughout the research process, from the initial phase of literature review, through the interview phase and continuing throughout the data analysis phase. As Ayres indicates, “although thematic analysis remains descriptive and is not designed to uncover an essential structure or develop a grounded theory, nevertheless, investigators are challenged to present findings that are both meaningful and useful” (in Given, 2008, p.868). The process of coding was regarded by the researcher as complete when sufficient regularities between respondents occurred, and saturation (or replication logic) was evidenced (Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Themes identified both in the analysis of respondents’ interview data and in literature reviewed allowed for crystallisation of data, thus deepening credibility of research findings.

Table 3.2: List of initial themes and low level codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Theme</th>
<th>Low Level Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biographical Details</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marital status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Employment in Zimbabwe &amp; in SA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liminality</td>
<td>First thoughts of migrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons for migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The migration experience (legal/illegal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assimilation – has it happened?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Spatiality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memories of home (affective and actual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present house – descriptions of place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where is home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes somewhere home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future space – where will they settle?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future plans (life strategies)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.12.1 Challenges experienced and Recommendations

A number of challenges were experienced during the research process. These will now be discussed.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier, all interviews were conducted in English, by the researcher. It was expected that all the respondents would be fluent in English, as this is the language of instruction in Zimbabwean schools, and all respondents were at least educated to O-Levels. Although the women were fully conversant in English, this was not the language that they were most comfortable in, as it was not their home language, nor was it the language they ‘thought in’. A common issue raised by the women in the interviews was that they had few friends in South Africa that they could just talk with ‘as themselves’, because they had to converse in English to make themselves understood by non-Zimbabweans. This could be extrapolated to evidence that, even in the interview situation; they were not completely ‘talking as themselves’, as they had to respond in English. It is this researcher’s opinion that possibly the responses garnered from the participants might have been more emotionally detailed, had they been speaking in their native tongue of Shona.

A related concern was that the respondents did not always seem to understand the researcher’s phrasing of questions relating to perceptions; identity and self-definition. This
may be, variously, because of the researcher’s phraseology, and attempts were made to re-phrase the questions, so as to engender understanding. It might also be attributable to the possibility that these types of questions, relating to aspects of self-actualisation in psychological terms, were not issues these women commonly thought about, as their lifeworld might well have been focussed on survival as opposed to self-actualisation. This resulted in some questions being re-phrased, as mentioned earlier, until understanding was reached and the questions answered, but also meant that in some instances, the researcher had to ‘move away’ from these misunderstood questions, so to a certain extent, some aspects of the interviews remained ‘at surface level’. Again, it is the researcher’s opinion that possibly had the questions been phrased in their native Shona, the questions might have been more adequately and fully answered. In spite of this recommendation, it is however acknowledged by the researcher that even had the interviews been conducted in Shona, this would have presented additional problems in that the interviews would then have had to have been translated into English, thus potentially altering or even losing some of the original meaning and content.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the researcher experienced some problems in recruiting respondents willing to be interviewed. Although the researcher had access to a few networks active in the Gqebera area, enabling convenience sampling, snowball sampling did not take place as expected, as the women interviewed were extremely hesitant to provide the researcher with any contact details of fellow Zimbabweans. This is most likely because of the undocumented status of many of the migrants; because so many are in South Africa illegally, they do not wish to draw attention to themselves or their fellow country-women. The researcher thus made acquaintance with the participants via three main networks, which might indicate that these respondents might be more similar than women from other networks.

Moreover, the researcher experienced some difficulty during the initial telephonic contacts with respondents. Because research respondents had to have certain criteria in common to qualify as respondents in this study, namely they had to have migrated during the past 3
years, they had to reside in Gqebera, and had to be within a certain age bracket, the researcher had to attempt to acquire certain information telephonically, which was met with extreme suspicion from the potential respondents. This was understandable, as so many of the migrants were undocumented and most had experienced some degree of xenophobia in South Africa. This resulted in the researcher having to set up appointments with certain potential respondents, in order to explain the research study and allay their suspicions, only to discover that not all the women met in fact matched the criteria.

The interviews did not always flow as easily as the researcher had hoped. The researcher had expected that the women would openly tell their stories, which might indicate a certain naivety on the part of the researcher. As opposed to the flowing, unstructured story-telling which was envisaged, sometimes the interview seemed more like a question and answer session, with the respondent answering as fully as she seemed able, and then waiting for the next question to be asked. This indicated that the researcher was not in control, and may be a feature of the feminist phenomenological orientation per se as opposed to a limitation (Atkinson, 1998). This reiterates the issue of the balance of power relationship, discussed in more detail below. In as much as the researcher relied on the respondents’ willingness to share their stories, the respondents held the upper hand, so to speak, as the research progressed at their discretion.

This process might, again, have flowed more easily had the women been interviewed by a fellow Zimbabwean woman, speaking Shona, as it is possible that the lack of flow was a result of perceived unequal balances of power within the research relationship – the researcher might well have been viewed by the respondents as holding more power than them by virtue of the fact that she is the white “researcher” representing academia. She might, thus, have held a particular identity, according to the respondents’ perceptions. This would be in accordance with mainstream dichotomies which tend to polarise the researcher and the researched (Thapar-Bjorkert & Henry, 2004, p.377). This research subscribes rather to the feminist viewpoint that both parties hold power in this relationship, and that the flow of power is fluid, moving between researcher and
researched - the respondent had the ability to withhold any information that she does not want to share. As such, the researcher was powerless, or less powerful than the respondent – this research depended on her (the participants) willingness to impart her knowledge gained through her experienced reality. The researcher was thus also vulnerable in this process, dependent on her. As Thapar-Bjorkert & Henry (2004, p377) state, “While we are aware of the ways we were able to take up power at different stages of the research process, we do not suggest that we are always in positions of power”.

In terms of feminist standpoint, the researcher also had attributes which entered and affected the research situation – a gender and a race and a class (Lincoln, 1997, in Olesen, 2005, p.248). It thus could not be assumed that gender was the most salient characteristic for them, and that they would sense commonality in the researcher, as a fellow woman. For the respondents, race or perceived ethnicity might well have been the most salient characteristic. As stated earlier, the researcher did feel that the women relaxed somewhat during the interview, specifically when they found commonalities between themselves and the researcher, such as the bond of motherhood.

Furthermore, the respondents might have tried to ‘please’ the researcher and might have attempted to respond in a way that they think they are expected to respond. This was a particular concern of the researcher when the women did not immediately understand the phraseology, and the researcher had to attempt to re-phrase, leading to a concern that the questions were becoming leading questions, thus potentially nullifying the responses.

It was also acknowledged that during the research process, the researcher ‘filtered’ her respondent’s stories through her understandings and experiences to her written account of what they have shared – thus the final product, the research document itself can never be absolute and objective. As Letherby (2003, p.142) says “biographical writing is a representation of self and other and it is likely to have connections for the researched, the researcher and the reader but does not represent the “truth”, yet is a “privileged” version of the truth.”
3.13 Summary of Methodology

In order to realise the aims of this study, the researcher utilised a qualitative research design, as this was deemed most apt in order to uncover the emotions, recollections and remembered experiences of the female respondents. The qualitative research design, furthermore, has been regarded as most suitable in instances where the researcher endeavours to explore the rich meanings of respondents’ private realities, as the research process is viewed as a relationship between researcher and researched, a privileged learning experience for the researcher, whereby she is permitted glimpses at lifeworlds to which she would not otherwise have been privy.

The research was situated within a phenomenological paradigm, whereby it was acknowledged that the meanings that the respondents attributed to the various events recalled in their stories were interpreted, based on their own emotions and thus also on their own realities. It was furthermore realised that the meanings the respondents ascribed to the life events and experiences which shaped them were situated socio-historically – that meaning does not exist as an objective reality. So, too, was the researcher situated in a particular socio-historical time and place, and this in turn influenced her understandings and interpretations of that which was shared with her.

The research process was construed as a partnership between researcher and researched, as mentioned above, in accordance with the feminist epistemological orientation followed. As such, the research relationship had a reflexive orientation, whereby the researcher also answered questions posed to her by respondents. The interviews themselves thus involved a sharing between women, in blatant contradiction to the more androcentric, positivist approach which demands a distance to be kept between researcher and researched.

The feminist epistemological orientation, furthermore, recognises that women’s reality is different to that of men’s; that their experiences are themselves gendered. Women, by virtue of being women, are often unheard in society, and women, who are marginalised,
such as Black, migrant, lower socio-economic status women are further silenced, denied voice. The feminist research orientation followed aimed to restore voice to these particular women, and to allow their stories to be heard. In so doing, it was also recognised that as a marginalised group, migrant women are particularly vulnerable, and as such, ethical practices were followed, such as gaining informed consent; ensuring their anonymity and encouraging them to seek psychological support if necessary.

The multiple case study approach or life story approach was employed, in order to uncover the rich detail of women’s lives. This best permitted the researcher to collect data by means of unstructured interviews (which were mostly digitally recorded), thus to listen to the idiographic stories of the women, as well as ensuring replication logic amongst respondents. The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and data was sorted into heuristic categories believed to be important signifiers in the construction of identity. These themes then formed the scaffolding for the understanding of identity.

Finally, a number of challenges were experienced during the research process, the most salient being that of language. Although all of the respondents were fluent in English, their home language, the language of their emotional content and thought, was Shona, which might have limited their sharing of emotional content somewhat.

In the following chapter, the data will be analysed and the research findings presented.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the research findings of the study. The data were analysed by means of identification of main themes which provided the framework to the broader category ‘identity’. Transcriptions were made of the in-depth interviews conducted and data were reduced into these themes. The goal of the research was to explore the self-perceptions of women who had migrated from Zimbabwe to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, in terms of their identity.

Hook (2003) posits that identity comprises those understandings that enable us to know ourselves, that permit us to answer the question ‘who am I?’ These understandings are of necessity social, as individuals reside within society and amongst other individuals who might belong to one’s own cultural or ethnic grouping, or might yet be ideologically opposed to one. Identity is seen as mutable, as open to negotiation, and as affected by differential power relations in a given society. Identity also encompasses those aspects of the personality which are unique to the individual, as well as those which are common across individuals.

For the purposes of this research, identity will be analysed according to three main themes, namely:

- Liminality – the periods of transition in the respondent’s life-story, of which migration was believed to be one.
- Relationality – encompassing social capital and assimilation into the host community
- Spatiality – the explanations of lived space; sense of belonging and feelings of being at home, either literal or figurative
A biographical background of the respondents will be provided, as scaffolding to the study. For the purposes of this study, pseudonyms will be used, to ensure anonymity of respondents.

4.2 Biographical Information of Respondents

Nine respondents were interviewed, all of whom resided in Gqebera, colloquially known as Walmer Township. All of the women were aged between 25 and 55 years of age, a range chosen for sampling as individuals of this age-grouping are most likely to be economically productive, and work is a signifier of identity. Two of the women were in their late twenties – both being 26 years of age. Five respondents were in their thirties, ranging from 31 years to 38 years. Two respondents were in their early forties, aged 43 and 44 respectively.

All of the women had a minimum of 10 years of formal schooling. Three of the respondents left school after completing their O-Levels, while four of the women had completed A-Levels. One respondent had a teaching diploma and one respondent was a graduate, with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry.

All of the women were employed in Port Elizabeth. Five of the research respondents were employed as domestic workers and/or child-minders, working for White employers in the private sphere, cleaning houses and looking after their employers’ children. Two of the respondents worked in the informal sector, taking in sewing work in their homes – repairing clothes and offering tailoring services. One respondent held down two jobs simultaneously – during office hours, she worked in a home business for an employer, filing and performing administrative duties. After hours and on weekends, she worked as a waitress in a small ‘pub-and-grub’ in the city. One respondent was employed in a professional capacity as a chemist for a sea-food exporter.
Although all the women were employed, employment itself often created much unhappiness and dissatisfaction amongst the respondents. Of the five women employed as domestic workers, two had never worked before, but had been housewives and full-time mothers to their children.

*I was not used to work in the house, it is my first time, to work in the house, and it is difficult. I was just working in my garden, back home. I’ve got a big garden, back home. Because in Zimbabwe, I don’t stay in town, I stay in rural areas (Gloria)*

Most of the women in Park’s (2008) study had also not worked pre-migration, but were forced post-migration to seek employment, to provide for their families. Initially, in Park’s study, work was viewed as disempowering, as her respondents explained they were unable to care for their own children during the day, a role which was part and parcel of their identities as mothers. This is echoed by one of the respondents in this study:

*I was a wife, a housewife, and a mother. It is very difficult working for someone here, there is no other way, it is difficult, yes (Joyce)*

One woman had worked in Zimbabwe as an entrepreneur, buying goods such as bedding, duvets and cushion covers and selling these goods in Mozambique.

*It was tough to cope up with domestic work; it was difficult, very difficult. It is a bad experience. It is boring work to me but I’ve got no choice, I have to make a living, I’ve got no choice, I’m coping up (Linda)*

One respondent had worked for 8 years as a primary school teacher, only to find herself unable to secure this type of employment in South Africa.

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20 All research participants have been given pseudonyms
No, we want to look for a job here, but at first in that place in Greenbushes [an outlying peri-urban area of Port Elizabeth], they said you must do six months voluntary work first, work for free, and from there we can arrange something for you, so it was difficult for me, because I have got children, and they want to eat. Now I do domestic work – I don’t like it, I am just doing it for the sake of having to do that type of work, but I never enjoy it (Leila)

One respondent had worked as a quality assurance officer in the chemical industry and another was employed in a clerical role for an international Non-Governmental Organisation catering for women’s rights and empowerment of women.

It is apparent from the above that the work experiences of the women interviewed and those noted by Park (2008) in her research are not monolithic, as women themselves are not monolithic. It must be mentioned then that, as argued by Park (2008, p.38) work can be either empowering, as in the case of the respondents who stressed that their employment enabled them to feed and care for their children and families, or disempowering as evidenced by Linda and Leila, above.

All but one of the women were mothers and this too, created great sadness for these women as not all were able to bring their children to South Africa. Three of the women had left their children in Zimbabwe – one of the respondents had left her two children in the care of her parents in Harare, where they were being educated in private schools, due to the dire state of governmental education. One of the women had four children, aged between 20 years and 9 years who were living on their own in the rural areas, tending the goats and chickens and growing the families’ vegetables. One of the respondents had 3 children, one of whom was 21 years and had joined her in Port Elizabeth earlier in the year. He had completed his A-Levels and had found employment at a Laundromat, although he had intended to go on to university on completion of his education in Zimbabwe. His siblings, aged 16 and 8, both boys, were living in a rural area near Bulawayo, in a child-headed household, along with a number of young cousins. This caused the respondent immense pain and suffering, as she was only able to contact them telephonically once a month to ascertain if they were surviving and attending school.
Five of the women had brought their children to Port Elizabeth, where they had been enrolled at local schools. This in itself had not been easy as the children were not able to attend the schools in Gqebera because of their inability to speak isiXhosa, the local South African language. The mothers generally were disparaging of ‘township education’ anyway, choosing rather to send their children to the schools formerly reserved for white children, in and around Walmer, a suburb of Port Elizabeth. One mother had elected to send her daughter to a private school, although the cost was exorbitant, relative to her meagre salary earned as a domestic worker.

Five of the women were married and living with their husbands. Of these, two of the women had initiated the move to Port Elizabeth independently, and their husbands (and children, in one of the cases) followed. This presents a significant variation of the “trailing spouse” dependent position in which normally married women follow their husbands to the migration destination (Heering, van der Erf & Van Wissen, 2004, p.325). Both of these women who initiated to migration to Port Elizabeth first found employment here and then brought their husbands to join them. One of these women’s husbands was still unemployed, although he had a post-graduate qualification. One of the women travelled to Port Elizabeth with her husband to see what it was like and then returned to fetch their three children. Two of the women followed their husbands here – their husbands travelled to South Africa, found accommodation and work and then sent for their families. Two respondents were divorced and two respondents were single, having never been married. The migration of these women on their own, without the accompaniment of spouses or partners, confirms the trend labelled the ‘feminisation migration’, namely that migration is becoming increasingly feminised (Kanaiaupuni, 2000 and McDonald, 2000), and also corroborates other research conducted in South Africa, such as that of Kihato (2007) and Crush (2007, in Bennett, Maharaj & Ncanywa, 2008).
The accommodation of the respondents was a matter of concern and dissatisfaction to many of the respondents. Only one of the respondents lived in a house. Three respondents each lived in a single room rented from a landlord and a further three women lived in shacks built haphazardly onto a main house.

All respondents had resided in Port Elizabeth for less than 3 years. One respondent had initially migrated to Knysna, a coastal town in the Southern Cape, to join her mother there, so her migration was stepped.

All respondents cited economic reasons for migrating, except for one woman, mentioned above, who migrated at her mother’s instigation, to “come and see”.

The biographical information of respondents as described above serves to provide a framework for the study. The analytical themes within identity will now be discussed.

4.3 THEME 1: LIMINALITY

Stuart Hall (2003, p.234) considers that identity is a “production”, something which can never be said to be done. One’s identity is never fixed, complete; rather it is perpetually “in process”, “in context” of the framework of history. Hall proposes that “they undergo constant transformation . . . subject to the continuous play of history, culture and power” (p.236). According to Hall then, identity is, in itself, liminal – a period of transition.

The process of migration, too, from the instance of the first thought of leaving one’s home country until one’s eventual arrival in the host community, is often viewed as a liminal time, a period of transition, a time outside of time. Eastmond (1993) explains this time as the “phase between separation and reincorporation” and as such, it is a time of much ambiguity, where one feels one does not belong in any space.
For many of the research respondents, this period of liminality began when life grew unbearable in Zimbabwe:

*Life was, maybe, we thought it was going to, it was tough. We thought it was going to get better – we worked harder and harder so we can, but we ended up, you know, that things were worse, worse because the income, the money, at times we would have money but no food, you could go to the supermarkets with money, but there are all empty, you see, nothing to buy, and it extended to, you know when there is no food, you are starving, there is a lot of illness due to the situation; the hospitals, nothing was operating now. Every day when you wake up, there is something new, every day you feel there is something harder, it is harder. Like you, maybe, the value of the [Zimbabwean] dollar, when you, maybe there are vendors who are selling food, you go there, and you find it is up, it has gone up, *ja,* [yes] it is double yesterday. You go another day next, it is doubled again. So it was hard, to get money, you cannot work when you are hungry. And no one wanted to employ someone because they were also in a hard situation, so we ended up with no food (Prudence)*

As mentioned earlier, for all but one of the respondents interviewed, the reason for migration to South Africa was economic. This is in line with research conducted in other areas of the country, such as that of Landau and Segatti (2009).

*What made us to leave was, you see our salaries were now poor, so that we couldn’t afford to live with our children. We are still getting salaries but it was so little, and the food prices were getting higher and the way we used to live . . . that is when my husband resigned at first, but I said no, I am not going to resign, but later on, because the situation was just going down and down where we stay, then . . . finally I resigned. It was a combination of a lot of things, you see, our salaries were too little and they were no foods in the shops, *ja,* [yes] it was difficult, to stay there. Because when the salaries were a little bit better, we used to come this side[to South Africa] to buy our own food, to *Musina* [a South African town close to the Zimbabwe border], but when the money was so little that we can’t afford to buy, this food, that is when we decided to leave (Leila)*
One of the respondents interviewed crossed the border illegally from Botswana, a small country which neighbours both South Africa and Zimbabwe, into South Africa:

No, I had a passport, so I went through Botswana, because there was no visa in Botswana from Zimbabwe, so I went through Botswana, then from Botswana to South Africa - we jump to South Africa. The most difficult thing that Zimbabweans are experiencing, it is their risk. So that is why we came through Botswana, because it is a short distance from Botswana to South Africa, it is a short distance. There was just a fence, so we crawl under the fence, it was a small fence, not that big fence, it was a small fence. We are watching if there is any vehicle coming, we are seeing what vehicle is that, is it police? If it is police, we hide, then we start to run, (laughs) it was difficult! Ah, I don’t want to do that again! [She starts to talk of those Zimbabweans who attempt to cross the border illegally by swimming across the Limpopo River]. Those who swim, they come across the border from Zimbabwe to South Africa, so they have to cross the river, by swimming, people are dying there. So difficult, and people are dying, and after swimming they have to walk about, I don’t know...from here to I don’t know... Crossing the border? I was so scared, I tell you (softly). We crossed the border at about 6 o’clock, it was getting dark by that time, at 6, we have our small bags with clothes, so we have to cross, it was a difficult time, you can imagine. Difficult, because we be scared of police and those tsotsis [colloquial derivative for township gangsters], and these animals from the bush, so we were scared of everything. Me and my sister, we were thinking, no, life is now difficult here in Zimbabwe, let’s go to South Africa. Now which way? Okay, we can jump. My sister say “okay we can go, so long as we have money, we can go”, then we decide. We went to the border, we went to another village from Botswana to South Africa, it was in South Africa just after Botswana, there was another village there, so we asked a woman for a place to sleep, then she said “it is difficult now for me to accommodate you because the police know there is too much border jumpers here and they stay here in this village, so it’s difficult to accommodate you”. So we said “we have nowhere to sleep, we don’t know anyone here”, then she said “pay me R20 to sleep, R20 to sleep” and that other man who brought us here, we paid R100 to sleep. It was cheap at that time. And then we slept there, early in the morning we take a bus, it was about 4 o’clock, half past 4 to 5, it was still dark at that time, then we take a bus to Zeerust, [a small South African town not far from the Botswana border] they say we mustn’t. We take a bus; it will drop somewhere, so we took a taxi from there to Jo’burg [colloquial abbreviation for Johannesburg, a major city in Gauteng, South Africa] (Linda)
Another respondent bribed an official at the border post:

Oh, it’s too expensive because when I came, I didn’t use I.D. [identification document] to cross borders. I didn’t have a visa; I’ve got a passport but I don’t have a visa, so I had to cross . . . it was R1800 to bribe a policeman. You pay that person when he comes to fetch you, and you had to pay him, that is all of his money, so you don’t do anything at the border, you only sit and listen to his instructions. He only say, this time, we are going to cross the border. If I tell you that you must look for that policeman, don’t look any others, go straight to that policeman, and we will go straight there. After doing that, the policemen will contact each other via cell-phones and he will say pass. They only knew that one, two, three, four, (indicating there might be four people sitting in a line) there are those people there in line. You only pay that policeman and you can go inside. Across the border, to Jo’burg, [Johannesburg, Gauteng] and then from Jo’burg, [Johannesburg, Gauteng] I had to catch a train. Yes, they had to put me in the train and from there . . . 7 hours in the train and I could not sleep, I was just . . . maybe there is just something which is going on . . . maybe I am not going the way I should be going. I couldn’t have any cell phone, I couldn’t know anything. My heart was going . . . (Joyce)

Other respondents entered South Africa on a 3 month visa and overstayed.

But me, I don’t do that, I am going to tell you, but it’s my little secret (laughs) because if I come here, I stay for a year, and I just give my sister my passport back, and they see that she is still in Zimbabwe, but I am here, so that’s what I do. That time, because of that visa, it was R2000, it was a lot of people who swam across the river or jumped the border, it was a lot of money (Gloria)

For Irene, the decision to migrate to Port Elizabeth was one of expedience, not design:

First of all, I went to Jo’burg [Johannesburg, Gauteng] with my papers in order to sort out a work permit. I was determined to do everything the proper way. I had to organize a passport for myself and the only way to do this was to bribe an official – there was no other way. Nothing in Harare [capital city of Zimbabwe] worked the way it should anymore – everything was corrupt. Even children in the classroom would be haggling, selling sweets! I spent 2 weeks in Jo’burg [Johannesburg, Gauteng] trying to participate in the process of registering for a work permit. I had gone there with a fellow Zimbabwean, a chemical engineer. I met a man in Jo’burg [Johannesburg, Gauteng] who said it was easier to get a work permit in PE [Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape] so we came down here. I knew nothing about PE [Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape] at
this stage. I came here in August of 2008 and within 1 month had a job where I am currently working in the IDZ [Industrial Development Zone] at Coega [industrial harbour development on outskirts of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape] (Irene)

One respondent explained how she is always ‘in transition’ – between Port Elizabeth and Zimbabwe, because she is in South Africa on a three month visa:

Ah, normally after 3 months, every 3 months, I go back, and then stay here for 3 months, then go back to Zimbabwe for maybe 2 weeks, then come back, because the visa is for 3 months, so I spend all the 3 months here, so that I can go back and get the passport stamped at the border (Miriam)

Stuart Hall (2003, p236) stresses that “cultural identities are . . . the unstable points of identification, or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture”. The liminality of migration is often accompanied by a fluidity of identity. Irene describes how she has changed through the experience:

I miss my mother so much, and she won’t come here even for a holiday. I think I have become “too sensitive” here – I feel different to the people here. I can’t fit in here and wish I could go home. This will never be home for me – I am only here because my children must be educated, and for the money.

4.3.1 Liminality of children

The migration to South Africa impacts on all the members of the family, including children, therefore this is a period of transition for them too. Some respondents commented specifically on their children’s need to adjust, and indeed, their ability to adjust, to the schools here:

Ja [yes], you know, at a school when you are a newcomer, they toss you, they do what what, but I am very grateful they adjust. I think they got their adjustment because back home they have gone in a situation which is far, far
worse, so it was a minor thing for them. You know, back home, the border, worries whether you have got papers, they can arrest you, so they have gone in that situation, so this is not a new thing for them, it doesn’t irritate them, they just take it, you see. So I think the opposite thing again (meaning that although adjustment is difficult, it is of far less consequence than the situation in Zimbabwe they grew up in) (Prudence)

Prudence goes on to explain that registering the children in schools in Port Elizabeth was problematic because of the decline in the Zimbabwean educational system, exacerbated by a shortage of teachers there:

_It was a challenge, a big challenge, because back home school was no more, the time we came, school was no more, because people, children weren’t attending classes, because teachers had gone, the teacher is not there, because he is out hunting for something, because the teachers weren’t getting paid, you see, so school, when they came here, for my bigger son it was okay, but for this one, the little one, he has never been to the pre-school, but his age, he was too big in grade 1, so it hard for him to just start from grade 1, and then when I talked to the principal, he said, “I think I will help you, and when he really start, we can take him back to grade R, [the official first year of schooling in South Africa, prior to Grade 1] but to tell the truth, I don’t know what really happened there, he just coped up. It was hard for the first 3 months, but then he just coped up (Prudence)_

4.3.2 Assimilation

The functionalist Immigrant-Host model of Assimilation (in Haralambos and Holborn, 1995) reasons that over time, migrants will adapt to life in the host community, bringing about eventual assimilation. Assimilation, in the social sense, is defined as the ability to be absorbed and incorporated into the dominant culture (Barry, 2001). When complete assimilation has taken place, the assimilated group would have been absorbed completely into the dominant group. This does not appear to have happened, in the case of most of the migrant women interviewed. This may be attributable to the fact that they were all relatively new in-comers to Gqebera – they had migrated in the last three years or less, or might be indicative of the general problems African foreigners face in terms of assimilation
in South Africa, exacerbated by lack of acceptance by South Africans, discussed more fully in Chapter 3 of this research study, and indicated, below.

The model mentioned above claims they will assimilate ‘over time’, but does not offer how long ‘over time’ is. Patterson (in Haralambos and Holborn, 1995) proposes that assimilation takes place in three phases, namely accommodation, a one-way process during which migrants attempt to adapt to the host community with very little reciprocation from the host; integration, during which the migrants become more settled and are more accepted by the host community and finally, assimilation whereby the adaptation process is complete, resulting in a melding of previously separate cultures.

This has not been borne out elsewhere in the South African context, such as Golooba-Mutebi’s 2001 study of Mozambicans in Bushbuckridge; Atam’s 2004 research conducted on Congolese refugees in Johannesburg (both cited in Steinberg, 2005) and Kanani’s (2004) research conducted in Kwazulu-Natal (cited in Hicks, 2009). In South Africa, it would seem that migrants generally do not assimilate well or easily into host communities.

Bloch (2006) expresses the opinion that a migrant’s ability to assimilate into the host community is largely dependent on her pre-migration characteristics and competencies, such as linguistic ability, literacy levels, and an existing social network that she can utilise during her initial ‘settling in’ period.

It became apparent through the interviews that for many, this existence in South Africa is in itself a liminal experience, one which is expected to be transient, and that one day, when things return to normal in Zimbabwe, they will return to their everyday lives, to their homes and their families. Assimilation would thus not appear to be the goal of these women – their stay in Gqebera was, for them, a time outside of time, and becoming melded with the South Africans whose space they shared in Port Elizabeth was definitely not part of their life strategy.
One of the women interviewed was asked whether she would ever get to the stage where she could say, this is her country and she replied, adamantly:

*No, I will not get to this stage. Here, we are suffering, we are suffering, but when we go home to Zimbabwe we are not suffering (Gloria)*

This liminal existence was most salient in the case of Leila – of all the women interviewed, she seemed least assimilated, possibly because of her extreme dissatisfaction in her employment and loss of professional status. For her, the memories of Zimbabwe were not all negative- although there were the obvious problems of obtaining food and the devaluation of their money, she was happy in every other aspect of her life. It seemed that she migrated only because her husband had decided this was a necessity, it was not a strategy that she would have considered for herself, as her identity, her place of belonging, was back home in Musvingo, Zimbabwe. The ongoing sense of liminality was echoed by Francesca:

*I will not stay here in South Africa, as soon as the situation improves in Zimbabwe, I will return to my family and children. Obviously I will get more used to South Africa the longer I stay – I have picked up some Xhosa [a local South African language, one of the eleven languages] words here and there and can understand a bit more but it is not likely that I will get a decent job here, as I cannot speak this Afrikaans [one of the official eleven languages of South Africa] at all, not sufficient Xhosa. This will never be home for me (Francesca)*

Martin (2007, p.178) describes migration as a “fracturing experience” for women, particularly when it is not really voluntary, but is as a result of economic or political circumstances beyond their control. More positively, Bhabha (1994) in Tehranian (2006, p.421) indicates that migration can be a period of fragmentation resulting in “a new and empowered sense of identity”.
For a few of the Gqebera respondents, the decision to migrate has been a positive one.

Well, it changed me. I’m, even though I was responsible, I am more responsible, I’m more independent and I’m stronger than I was before and I’ve learnt not to mind what everyone says, like just do your thing, if you feel like you want to start something, I’ll go to the right people, find out what I need to know, and go for it. Don’t give up. I must say my self-esteem has grown. Yes because we, when I was in Zim [colloquial term for Zimbabwe], I didn’t think I was going to stay this long, so I maybe thought I’m going to go, get myself a husband who is going to take care of me, but now I say, no a marriage is not something that I have to do, now I say I don’t need to marry, just because I need someone to take care of me, you know something like that (Brenda)

I think…it is better than staying in Zimbabwe, it is much better, because I can manage to buy food; to send my daughter to school, though it is difficult, but at least she is going to school, what I want is going to school, she is going to school, ja, Ja, [yes] I don’t know what the Lord has in store for us, I don’t know. Ja, maybe God has other plans, but we suit wherever, wherever he says go, we do that, but what we are feeling now is that, sometime one day when we are feeling that things they are now okay, now okay, we go back, but we don’t mind leaving our kids here, because they will be grown up and in their professional jobs, you know, which maybe they cannot do it, there, you see? (Prudence)

One respondent spoke specifically of how well her children had assimilated into the South African context:

But as long as they are still learning here, we are not worried, it will – we were discussing as a family – if we were to go back, we, Mummy and Daddy, were to go back and they stay here, because they were raised here, if means, we don’t care, because they fit here (Prudence)

Our main aim and objective is that we want to work and we will go back to our country and live there. So we are trying to work harder so that we will have something, investment and all this stuff, so that we can go back and open our own businesses, back home (Miriam)

We are purified by fire now, we are purified (Prudence)
It is thus apparent from the above comments that the migration experience as well as the stay in Gqebera, Port Elizabeth has been a liminal time, a period of transition for many of the respondents.

The theme of relationality within the framework of identity will now be discussed.

4.4 THEME 2: RELATIONALITY

The sociological interpretation of identity has a strong relational component: Schwartz (1999, p.160) alleges that “we all have paradigms which allow people and ourselves to make sense of us”. The Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1981), furthermore, gives credence to this social dimension of identity, focusing on the significance of both inter- and intra-group relations in the on-going process of the formation of identity.

Relationality as a dominant theme in this analysis comprises the myriad of relational aspects that complete the jigsaw puzzle that is a woman’s identity. Social Constructionism proposes that we experience ourselves “through the lenses of other people” (Jackson, 1998, p.173), in dialogue with others, in a reflective process.

4.4.1 Motherhood

All but one of the respondents were mothers, however three of the women were forced, through circumstance, to leave their children behind in Zimbabwe. This was an exceptionally difficult choice to make, as for most of the women, being a mother was part of their self-definition.

*When I was in Zimbabwe, I am proud to be a mother, of especially the twins, because I managed to have them there, when I was still working as a teacher. Being a teacher was important to me, because I could afford to look after the children, at the same time I could afford to look after my children. It was both important because I could be home with my children in the afternoons, and I*
made a difference in the other children’s lives. Being with little children and at the same time, I enjoyed myself with my children (Prudence)

My children are not here with me, which is hard. It is so hard. I left them back home with my parents, so they can go to school. They are aged 15 and aged 14. It is difficult not to have them with me, but necessary for us to survive financially. This is my main difficulty in life, not to have my children. My daughter, she is 15 years, and is growing to be a woman. There are many things I want to tell her, I want her to know that she must first know herself as a woman before she gives herself to a man and to a relationship. A mother needs to be there to tell her child these things – I got married too young and my husband, he took advantage of my youth and inexperience (Francesca)

They stay by themselves. The 20 year old looks after them all (Gloria).

(Speaking of her children) One child is doing form 6 and I have got another one, a boy who is doing grade 3 at this time. That is like grade 12, he was doing his A levels (speaking of her eldest child who is has joined her in Port Elizabeth) and this one, the 16 year old boy, is doing his O levels. They are still there, and we have to post the money for them. The 16 year old is looking after his brother and they have their cousins there. It is very difficult, especially when you have got an 8 year boy. You can see there is no other way but I have to face it, like that. Ah, it is hard, that is only I can say, because we don’t know whether he is eating, whether he is having enough, whether he is sleeping, whether he is in good condition, but I can’t know, I can’t know (Joyce)

Joyce also spoke of her work, which entails looking after her bosses’ two young children. She was asked what it was like, looking after someone else’s children, when her own are back home:

Yes, sometimes yes, it is difficult, but we have to face it, sometimes you can think, ah, where is my baby, where is my kids when I am here?

Some of the woman stressed that they would have not been able to leave their children at home, possibly starving, while they were here in South Africa:

My family joined me in PE [Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape] in January of 2009. Initially, my children stayed behind with my husband and mother until I found a job and somewhere to stay. I could not have survived here if my family were
not here. I could not have been eating food here, wondering if my children were starving at home (Irene)

Yes, I stayed here for 1 month and 2 weeks, but I was sick because I had left my children behind. Yes, that is the thing we won’t do. My heart was so bad. My husband stayed a few months away from home, four months, and he, like, started to get depressed, and he just had to come back home, yes, he developed a continuous headache, he couldn’t work, from stress (Leila)

(Speaking of whether she considered leaving her children at home, until she found work here) At home? I can’t do that, because you know the situation back home, so I can’t be here, and I know my child is there, I don’t think it will go down well. You know what I mean, it was hard, you can’t leave behind, they are your kids. It’s different because you know, maybe some other people, they don’t have their papers, so you cannot border jump with kids, you see? It is hard, with kids, so that is why, I think, women do that, but with us, you see it was different, we had our papers were sorted, and then we came here (Prudence)

Migrating with children and attempting to assimilate with their host community has its own set of problems for these mothers.

At first, they were at a crèche, the twins they were going to a crèche in the location, [township] the big boy, he was going to a crèche there in 8th Avenue, [in Walmer, Port Elizabeth] it is [a local pre-primary school in Walmer, Port Elizabeth] that is where he was going. But it wasn’t good for me, especially that one in the location, [township] they weren’t learning anything, they were just going there for play and there were many complaints, in the afternoon, especially the girl, she say, you see those people who look after us, when they are giving us our food from our bags, for example fruits, they will bite the fruits first and then they give it to the children, so I felt so sore, so always I wish I was at home, I could have someone to help me with the children, they are still young, they can’t cope . . . and I can’t afford to put them in a crèche – I saw that one at [a pre-primary school in Walmer, Port Elizabeth] but I couldn’t afford the fees, so later on I said no, we had someone who was helping me with the babies at home when I was still working in Zimbabwe so we arranged for that person to come, so she is the one who is looking after the babies (Leila)
Generally, though the assimilation process, specifically relating to education and language, has been easier for children than for their parents.

My children are at school at [a local primary school in Walmer, Port Elizabeth] which they like. At first it was difficult, especially for the 10 year old, because their standard of education was so bad. He should be in grade 6, he was in grade 6 in Zimbabwe, but he had to go back to grade 5. Also, here they have to learn Afrikaans and Xhosa [local South African languages]. Although they were being educated in English in Zimbabwe, their English was very bad and they mainly only spoke Shona, [one of the languages of Zimbabwe] so this has been difficult for them, with all the languages. They are learning fast though, the eldest is apparently quite good in Afrikaans [local South African language] now (Irene)

4.4.2 Social Capital

Social capital refers to the inter-connections between individuals: the networks, relationships, bonds and ties which create linkages and associations. The term, identified by Putnam (1998) and initially coined by Hanifan (1920) describes those “tangible assets that count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit” (Halpern, 2005). Differentiation can be made between bridging and bonding social capital; bridging social capital extending to those connections between mere acquaintances or those outside an immediate network, such as that of the family, and bonding social capital being the ties between family members. Both bridging and bonding social capital seem especially pertinent in the case of migrants attempting to assimilate into a host community, as it decreases the risks associated with migration (Kanaiaupuni, 2000; Deumert, 2005).

Most of the women interviewed relied on a network of fellow Zimbabweans, either family or friends, who had already moved to Port Elizabeth, who facilitated their moving here: either by providing them with information; offering them accommodation until they ‘found their feet’; or by assisting them in finding a job - even providing the money to enable them to
leave Zimbabwe. This is evidence of a pull factor, a reason to migrate to Port Elizabeth, in this instance, as discussed earlier in Methodology (cited by Kok, 2003; Deumert, 2005; Ypeij, 2005; McGregor, 2007).

No, I came here, because my sister, she was here, she’s the one who called me to come here. At the time when I came here I was very scared. After I got divorced, my sister said to me, you can’t stay here, doing nothing, because I was married and now I needed something to do, and she gave me money to get a passport. She did everything for me; she is very clever (Gloria)

The trend to relocate to areas where a network of relatives exists was observed by Chant (1989) and was typified by many of the research respondents in this study:

Actually, my brother was here first, so that was why we came, because he had found accommodation there, and got information, if there is anyone you don’t know, it is difficult so you need someone who can accommodate you and assist in the first few days, because you are not going to have a job, so that is why we came to PE [Port Elizabeth] straight (Prudence)

My sister says, she came here in 2007, and she worked, and after working she came back in December last year, and she said, you know, this way you are living, it is horrible, I will have to speak to my baas [Afrikaans word for boss], my boss, and I will let you come to PE [Port Elizabeth]. She had to send money for me, and I came here. My sister organized everything, because she had friends (Joyce)

Ja, [yes] because that’s where she was, my mum, ja that’s where she was, and then we moved. Because how we came here, the boss that I’m working for, my mum is also working for that same person, she is doing the domestic work, and I’m doing the filing. And, um, they wanted to move from Knysna [a town in the Southern Cape] to Port Elizabeth to open this business, so they say, do you want to come? and my mum said, ja, I would love to come, but the problem was, they knew that if I stayed there, then she’s going to come back, exactly, if she was alone, and most of her friends were in Knysna, [town in the Southern Cape] so the only way they felt like, that she would move here with them, for a long time, was to bring me from Knysna, and that’s how I came here (Brenda)
These stories of assistance by family members exemplify the strong normative bonding social capital (Gittell and Vidal, 1998, cited in Halpern, 2005) found among the Zimbabwean community. Although all the examples cited describe bonding social capital amongst family, there is much evidence that as community within the greater host community, Zimbabweans (and indeed, other foreigners within their ethnic enclaves) tend to facilitate each other’s settling in process – assisting one another in finding employment and providing initial accommodation until suitable housing is found.

When I came here, I stayed with a friend until I found work. I knew nothing about Port Elizabeth - I just knew this one person was here and that she would help me (Francesca)

There was someone who knows. I stay with them, Zimbabweans, then later I moved on . . . to my own house (Linda)

From the time we came here, she was so lovely to us, she was giving us everything, because this country, it’s like this, it’s like this, and I say to her, I am looking for a job, and she say, there is a job here, don’t worry. I just sit for one month, the second month I was working (Gloria)

A common theme is that respondents who were themselves assisted by fellow Zimbabweans to settle in, in turn assist others in a similar plight. This has been aided by improvements in telecommunications, relatively cheap travel and ‘fluidity’ of the border crossing (Halpern, 2005). It is micro-level informal behavioural factors which facilitate the transmission of social capital between those back home and those who have migrated. Heering, van der Erf & Van Wissen (2004) argues that the flow of migrants to South Africa, to specific host communities such as Port Elizabeth will continue as bonding social capital minimizes risks for potential migrants.

When I go back home in December to my children, there are friends of mine there who want to leave Zimbabwe to look for work. They will travel back with me and stay here with me until they find something of their own. Someone helped me; we must do this thing and help our fellow Zimbabweans (Francesca)
Ja,[yes] like family members, we have got, some came about 2 weeks ago, my brother, the last born in my family, I have got 4 brothers here, and my mum is left alone there (Prudence)

The above-mentioned social capital does not only extend to those who have migrated to South Africa. In all instances, the women interviewed regarded as their responsibility the sending of financial remittances back to family members remaining in Zimbabwe. This is a positive effect of migration – albeit the women may well (and most cases of the interview respondents, are) in low paid employment in Port Elizabeth, the monies earned enable them to send remittances home which relieves some of the financial pressure of their family members still residing in Zimbabwe (Bloch, 2006). This process was facilitated by fellow Zimbabweans who travel frequently between South Africa and Zimbabwe, and who transport the monies for a fee.

You know what, the Zimbabweans they are like this (squeezes her hands together, to indicate closeness), another old woman, she comes every month here, she came again yesterday, she is the one we give our money to. If she is there now, she phone those people and comes and collect the money. I send such money and then they come and get that money. We trust each other. And that woman, it’s a long time now (Gloria)

Every month I send money home to my children (Gloria)

Money or food, right now we send money because food is there now, so they need money, there is food but there is no money, where will they get that money? There are some people who come here with their bakkies [utility vehicle] and collect the food; you pay money for the quantity of food (Linda)

I have got a sister who is in Polokwane, [a northern province of South Africa] so sometimes I deposit the money into her account, then there are always people from Zimbabwe who are going back home, so they take it back, to our parents (Leila)

Ja,[yes] it is better now, because when we come here, when we got jobs, because we are sending back for them, we have to send money, we have to send food, like, my sister, she travels back, she normally travels back to see how they are doing there. She goes, she comes, she goes, she comes (Prudence)

I send money nearly every month, as often as I can, to my children (Joyce)
One of the respondents, however, moved here with her husband and children, knowing no one. She describes how difficult the initial period was:

*We were alone. When we came here, my husband and I had to walk door to door, asking people if they had any room in their homes to accommodate us. We didn’t have anyone . . . up to now I don’t have any members of my family with me (Leila)*

One of the research respondents seems to indicate less of a need for social capital – for friends to talk to and provide community.

*It wasn’t a big thing, because I’m kind of like, a reserved person, I don’t have so many friends. The way I am living here, it’s the way I used to be back home, so ja, I do have people I call and talk to, you know, hi, how are you, like that, but I can’t say, I had…it was difficult for me…it wasn’t (Brenda)*

Prudence and Miriam are of the few respondents who feel they are assimilating into their host community:

*Mm, since we are…I think we have got an advantage – the church and our job, you know people, they are coming to fix their clothes, and more Xhosas, we are becoming friends, because they come to like us, you know, our relations are building up through the work we are doing (Prudence)*

### 4.4.3 Community in Church

For most of the respondents, their church and the community they have found in their church has provided them with both tangible assistance, such as assisting with work and providing with food and donations for family remaining in Zimbabwe, as well as a more intangible benefit such as a sense of comfort and belonging.

*From the time we came here, she was so lovely to us, she was giving us everything, because this country, it’s like this, it’s like this, and I say to her, I*
am looking for a job, and she say, there is a job here, don't worry. I just sit for one month, the second month I was working (Gloria)

You know what, that time when we go home, sometimes they donate money, sometimes they donate clothes, sometimes they donate food (Gloria)

Not myself, personally not. Because when we came here, the church, the Latter-day Saints, it is the same church we were going to, it is our church, so when we came here, it was very much helped by church members, because everyone helped us and we were friends, and we had security, and we were so comforted. And they are still helping, even, to ask us, are there problems at home, how can we help, we will find a way, so we can thank our Lord Jesus Christ (Prudence)

Ja, [yes] normally, the churches, is a place of refuge, if you go to Jesus Christ, he will give you custody, unless you go the other way in the world, you will see what the world gives you (Prudence)

Very often religious belonging forms an important component of identity. Although the church may be viewed by some, particularly feminists as an instrument of patriarchal domination it has offered immense spiritual sustenance to many of the women interviewed. Motsemme (2003, p.235) holds that it provides “imaginary space of spiritual time” during which women are able to rejuvenate themselves spiritually and energetically, giving them strength for their day to day lives.

Ja, [yes] being a Christian, that is one the things that makes me go, the fact that I have that, everything is possible, because in my life, I never thought I would be in South Africa, I never thought so, I used to hear about South Africa but I never thought I will be here like I am here, but I believe that the Lord, you know, the faith that I have in me, that the Lord, the possibilities that I have, he is there for us, he is our uplifter and our saviour and he wants us to be happy, and so we are. There have been those sad days, I cannot say they are sad, but they are there so that I exercise my faith. If I don’t have those things, I don’t exercise my faith, so faith keeps me going (Prudence)
All of the women spoke of an on-going link to home, to relatives and family members that they had left behind, as well as to a sense of connection created merely by meeting their fellow Zimbabweans, however fleeting these meetings might be.

_We call here and there so stuff like that has changed the relationship because I don’t call every day, I can’t call as much as I should, so sometimes I’ll call and say hello, how are you, as long as I know that they are fine (Brenda)_

For one respondent, these transitory meetings were sufficient to instil a sense of connection:

_Exactly, and because the fact that we are here, if I see another Zimbabwean, if it’s a he or a she, I call him my brother, or my sister, or my father or my mother, because we know the situation at home, and we know what put us here. It gives us, a sense of belonging, I can’t speak Shona there and if I hear someone in a taxi saying, ja, [yes] hello, like in Shona, I’m like, wow, that’s my brother, that’s my sister, you feel like you are at home, ja,[yes] that’s how it is (Brenda)_

The above comment would indicate a diasporic identity, which Bhatia (2002) describes as occurring when migrants “distinctly attempt to maintain (real and/or imagined) connections and commitments to their homeland and recognise themselves and act as a collective community” (in Lindridge, Hogg and Shah, 2004, p.213).

_Yes, it is better, it is better, but the thing is, we always miss home, we miss home. Normally our parents and our friends back home, our sisters, our brothers, our...most of our relatives; we miss them (Miriam)_
4.4.5 Experiences of Loneliness

One of the strongest themes which emerge from many of the women’s narratives is the overwhelming loneliness they experience in their host community. This is exacerbated by problems of language, loss of support systems such as extended families, different values, loss or change of status and loss of community, to be discussed further under the section on culture.

*Where I live, I just stay there by myself, with the owner of the house. And now, last week, she say, I don’t want to see any of your friends here; I just want to relax, to stay by myself. And my sister, she stay in the next, in the next road, so every time, I just go to see my sister. They won’t come in again, to my house, they won’t come again* (Gloria)

These experiences of dislocation coincide with research conducted by Kanani (2004, in Hicks, 2009).

*Well, sometimes I feel lonely, you know, it’s a normal thing, I’d like to catch up with the kids of my age and all that, but there’s nothing I can do, I need the money, I need to work, I have a goal that I’ve set for myself and until I get that goal – (shrugs)* (Brenda)

*I go to work and then I come home to my room at 17h00 again. I do not go out here to friends. I see other Zimbabwean people at church on Sundays, and then I come back home* (Francesca)

*The first time I came here, even to go to the shops, I can’t. I just sent someone. When I came from work, I’m bathing, eating; lock my door, until tomorrow morning* (Gloria)

Most of the respondents commented on the sheer drudgery of their everyday lives, comprised only of work and survival.

*Nothing, just sitting at home, Monday going back to work, Friday going back home. If it is month end we go shopping, go back home, nothing fun!* (Linda)

*No, you see where I stay, so it’s just that I go to work and I go back home. Maybe Tuesday night I go to see a movie so I don’t have any chance of*
meeting anyone. On Sunday, I go to church, but it is only to the church service, “hello, hi, how are you”, and then I come back home, to get ready for work (Brenda)

No, I don’t have a boyfriend, because to be honest, I don’t have the time because when they want to see me, I’m saying, sorry I can’t, I’m working, you see, or maybe when I want to see them, they will be having other plans, or something like that, so it’s difficult for me, I don’t have a sort of social life, it’s that (Brenda)

Everybody needs a life, you know, people to just, you know, talk to, and that kind of thing. I think, ja, I do need that, but I’m too busy (laughs) (Brenda)

I am lonely. I don’t think I will get married again, but I would like someone to come home to, someone to share things with, a partner to talk to about my day (Francesca)

It is quite difficult here, to get friends, because they always call you names and all that, but as for me, I don’t mind what anybody thinks and if I am here with you, talking to you, I see you as who you are, and if you have got a problem with me, I cannot change that and there is no way I’m gonna force you to like me when you don’t. You have to sort your own problems and that’s that. That’s how I see everyone, so, ja, [yes] friends, ja, I do have my work colleagues and that but friends, really, I don’t go out, so that’s the thing (Brenda)

One respondent commented on the lack of family interaction here in Port Elizabeth, comparing her activities on weekends and holidays in Zimbabwe which was spent with family members; to her present situation which was isolated.

I also say it is better because we used to stay with our parents always, especially on weekends or during holidays then we go and visit our parents. My parents, they are in the rural area, but my husband’s parents, they are like in the township, like this, so we visit (Leila)

The same respondent commented that although she and her husband had met other Zimbabweans during the time period they had lived in Gqebera, this did not result in increased interaction, because of distance.
Ja, [yes] we know one another, we can easily identify one another even without, you see, but you see, we are living in different areas. Some we knew only when we come here...we know them, we just know them, but we don’t live close to each other. We see each other once in a while, you can even stay for 2 months and you don’t see each other, we don’t live close (Leila)

Even when some Xhosa neighbours of Gqebera made an effort to socialise with the Zimbabweans; it was insufficient to satiate the deep loneliness experienced by one of the respondents, possibly because of the language barrier and the cultural differences.

As for me, I am lacking socialization very much, because I don’t have friends here. After work, I just go into my house, and that is it until tomorrow, only for Sunday that is when we meet those people that we know at church. We have some Xhosa people that sometimes, but not always, they come to me in my house once in a while. The area where we are living they have got friendly people but you see they are not people that I can say I can share my problems with (Leila)

The unsettled feelings and general sense of dissatisfaction described by Leila concurs with that experienced by Salih’s (2004) research respondents. Salih (2004) explains that women who migrate on the instigation of their husband’s and not of their own volition often exhibit greater feelings of ambivalence and or dissatisfaction with their situation in the host community.

And too, you see, in the morning he will go somewhere where he is meeting people, socializing (speaking of her husband), and he will come back late, unlike me, I just wake up from the house, I go to someone’s house, I stay there, I am alone the whole day, no one to talk to, until I finish, then I am on my way back home, just to sit with my children in the house...I don’t have anyone to talk to. I can talk to these Xhosa people, but you see the type of conversation, it is different, it is just how are you, I am fine, okay, bye I am going (Leila)

It is difficult when you are not speaking to anyone all day, especially when you are used to that. In the morning we have assembly, we are talking, then we go to our classroom, and we are busy, ja, we are kept on busy all the time. Now, I just have my husband, and sometimes he doesn’t want to talk, he want to watch the news and whatever. One day I was thinking, so when do we have
the conversations together with him, because in the morning, I go at 7, I leave him sleeping and the children as well, and when I come in the afternoon, he is not yet at home, then he will come later. And then he says “I want to see this, I want to see that” so we are only have little time to talk. So I was thinking there is no difference if I go back home, when he wants to work here, because we always have a limited time to see each other (Leila)

I don’t have many friends here; I have a neighbour who seems nice, but other than that only have some Zimbabwean friends. I feel I have nothing in common with them – they do have the same family unit. They don’t believe in marriage, they all just are boyfriends and girlfriends, even if they are as old as my mother. They all seem to sleep around even on a daily basis. They are lazy and don’t like to work. Zimbabweans are hard workers (Irene)

4.4.6 Culture

Schiff and Noy (2006) explain that people construct their identities, and understand and relate to others on the basis of shared meanings. Meaning is shared through a common past- through understanding each other’s socio-historical background, having shared recollections of experiences, on both a personal and societal basis, on common stories. Schutz and Luckman (1973) term this the “social stock of knowledge” and state that this allows us “a shared horizon of meaning”. Paul Ricoeur (1992) goes on to write that “the life history of each of us is caught up in the histories of others” (both in Schiff and Noy, 2006, p.399). This shared meaning is lacking in interactions between migrants and the inhabitants of a host community; a lack which is noted by virtually all of the respondents. They commonly relate this shared meaning to culture, or cultural differences.

The problem I think is the cultural differences, things that they like, these women, most of them they like to go to taverns and drink, you see, we have different cultures. These girl friends . . . boyfriends . . . we are not like that . . . so we can’t talk in depth, you see, because we don’t have anything in common, ja, we don’t have anything in common. When you think of keeping your husband, someone is thinking of scratching that husband . . . always is different with those people . . . because we can talk, but not long (Leila)
One of the respondents explained that the Xhosa people’s dilemma was that they were attempting to assimilate into the White people’s culture (in her opinion) and that people generally are unable to do this.

They leave their culture, they are taking your culture, but they cannot do it. It’s not working to do that, to take the culture of other people. Like here, I come here, and I can’t take the culture of here, it’s not good (Gloria)

4.4.7 Language

Motsemme (2003) posits that language is yet another indicator of identity. Fanon (1986, in Hook, 2003, p.115) states that “to speak a language is to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization”. All of the respondents mentioned how language impacts negatively on their ability to communicate with their host community: the respondents experience difficulty in understanding and speaking isiXhosa, and point to the reluctance of Xhosa people to communicate in English. This may be attributed to the fact that most of the host community would have been subjected to the inferior racially segregated education system and thus might not be fluent in English. It might also be attributable to the Xhosa’s sense of ethnic identity – isiXhosa is their language, their site of cultural memory and transmission.

Language is a big issue. I can’t talk Xhosa although I hear a bit of it now, and they don’t speak English. They think you think you are better than them if you want to speak in English. We are not the same (Irene)

Ja, ja, [yes] but the grannies . . . you know. The other Xhosas, they don’t want to respond in English. Even if you talk to them in English, they want to reply you in their language, because they don’t want English, they don’t like it. They want you to talk Xhosa (Prudence)

Yes, but it is . . . most of the time . . . the language is, it’s difficult to learn (Joyce)

I can hear them, what they say, but when it comes to reply, it is difficult (Prudence)
Kanani (2004, in Hicks, 2009, p.240) asserts that “language is the primary cause of discrimination”, alleging that South Africans are often reluctance to make any effort to teach foreigners their language. Hicks (2009) goes on to explain that “In South Africa, refugees encounter at the very least an unsympathetic response to their experiences and the difficulties they face”.

*I can’t speak their own language, so it’s like when I get into a taxi, going to work, I am just quiet. They can also easily identify us, from the complexion, even before you speak, they can identify us, they know we are not from here* (Leila)

*Yes, to speak to them in English and some, they don’t understand it.* (Leila)

Rob Nixon, a journalist for the Atlantic Monthly (November 2001), cited in Motsemme (2003, p.231) writes that “South Africans claim to hear ‘kwere kwere’ when immigrants open their mouths”. One of the women tells her experience of how the Xhosa inhabitants have regarded her native Shona language:

*Yes, yes, they say, your language, we can’t hear it, because we will be talking fast. We said, we are not talking fast, it is our language, and you, you are talking fast, we are not understanding you. These days, I can understand some of the words, but first time, I didn’t even hear a word, but this time, now I can, I can. They said, if you talking there in your house, we think you are shouting, but we are not fighting* (Gloria)

Some respondents explained that although they themselves were fluent in English, because they were educated in that language, it was not the language they felt comfortable communicating in with specific regard to emotional content; it did not give them that sense of belonging that talking in their native tongue, the language of their “root culture” (Hook, 2003, p.115) did.

*Ja,[yes] of course, my language is very important, because you feel comfortable when you are speaking, like right now I am speaking English but I’m not comfortable (laughs)* (Linda)
One respondent described the dilemma of language for their children who were being educated in South African schools and were expected to learn isiXhosa and Afrikaans:

*Like mine, they are a bit confused with language, because at school, they are learning Afrikaans,* [local South African language] *and the Xhosa* [local South African language] *again for the big one, it is a subject, and at the same time, English is their main language, like on the bus, they will be speaking in English, when they come home to Mummy it is Shona* [Zimbabwean language]. *Because when I am angry, I cannot shout in English, I use Shona,* [Zimbabwean language] *I make sure that they understand. So they are speaking, even with their fathers, they are speaking Shona* [Zimbabwean language]. *(Prudence)*

### 4.4.8 Sense of Difference

Generally, the respondent seemed to view themselves as different from the people with whom they shared a geographical community. Joireman (2003) writes that ethnicity is often one of the cornerstones of identity, comprised variously of common language, ties to a homeland, shared memories of a country and common culture. Although it is possible that while in Zimbabwe, the respondents would not have identified themselves first and foremost as Zimbabwean, now that they resided in a country where they often felt targeted, they viewed themselves as a collective, as ‘Zimbabweans’. This can be explained by means of social constructivism, which states that although aspects mentioned earlier, such as language, belief systems and religion and the like are key components in the formation of identity, these are inadequate in and of themselves. People actively choose their ethnic identity, which is informed by social, political and economic conditions. In this way, ethnic identity is “partly ascribed and partly volitional” (Nagel, 1986, in Joireman, 2003, p.56).

The research respondents in this study regarded themselves as apart from the Xhosa people (thus as having a separate ethnic identity) and seemed to view themselves as morally superior to the others in the township.
I would never marry a Xhosa man – they are very promiscuous, their HIV rate is so high and they do not respect women (Francesca)

Another respondent believed that Xhosa men enacted this lack of respect for women in a physically abusive manner:

Other thing which I saw here, someone I saw here, said “why you Zimbabweans, you don’t like us, but your Zimbabwean boys, they like our sisters”. I say, “No, I no love you, because you will kill me, and beat me, and that’s the truth”. And they say, “Ah ah, we are not like that, it is not everyone”, and I say “You are like that, you are all like that to everyone” (Gloria)

Ja, [yes] we have different values to the Xhosa people. Like education. As Zimbabweans we want to work, these Xhosa people they don’t want to work (Linda)

We are more respectful, not like these women. Our dresses, we will mind the way we sit. These people, we are afraid, if they come there, then we always look to our husband, these women are looking at our husband, I don’t trust them (Leila)

I feel I have nothing in common with them – they don’t have the same family unit. They don’t believe in marriage, they all just are boyfriends and girlfriends, even if they are as old as my mother. They all seem to sleep around even on a daily basis. They are lazy and don’t like to work. Zimbabweans are hard workers (Irene)

Ah, no no, I cannot marry a South African man; they are full of shit these people. They don’t consider marriage here in South Africa, they just want to be boyfriend and girlfriend here in South Africa, just like that, that’s one thing, until they divorce and they just want to drink and drink, no other life, ah, no no. It is normal, back home, to drink it is not for women, it is for men, a few of them, not like here, where every woman can drink (Linda)

I am not like these Xhosa women. They all seem to drink too much and behave badly. In Zimbabwe, some women do drink, but it is in their own homes and with friends. We do not drink so much that we fall down or pass out or behave badly, like these Xhosa women. And they are all promiscuous; they have more than one boyfriend at a time. The HIV rate, I have read it is so high here, but the people are not doing anything to curb that rate, their behaviour does not change (Francesca)
If I get the right man, yes, I would only marry a Zimbabwean, I cannot marry a South African, unless if he is a different person (Linda)

When asked if possibly the Xhosa people as a nation were being judged on the behaviour of some, and whether this ‘Xhosa culture’ they spoke of might be indicative rather of township living, one respondent retorted:

Yes, yes, you see, it is different for us, in Zimbabwe, even those who are staying in town, they are behaving well. And also us being Christians, we have a lot of different values and a lot of things that we do and we don’t do because of that. That’s why I would like to go home again to mix with other church goers, my sisters, ja (Leila)

The men, here, I am telling you, they are not good, because these men, they like to drink too much, they like to drink, and many of the women here, it is them who are working, the men, they stay at home drinking, they do nothing, just waiting for the woman to come home from the work (Gloria)

They can’t even want to work for themselves, they want people to feel sorry for them, and give them money, so they cannot work, they have the thing of doing crime all the time, and drugs, everything (Linda)

These men are no good. They drink too much and then just sleep where they are, on the street, wherever. They don’t work and they don’t treat their women properly. They think it is their right to have sex with a woman, if she is married to them, no matter what the woman wants. I know a woman has rights and that she can say no. This sex is an abuse of women and Xhosa women should know more about their human rights (Francesca)

Few of them, the old people, they still have it, but few of them, few of them, they cannot do it. I’ve got another guy here, that I work with, he has not forgotten his culture, I say, you are not a South African, because he still has it. He grew up there, in the rural areas. I say to him, you are like a Zimbabwean; you are not like the other people here. And he don’t drink, he just married now, but he is 50 now, he is old (laughs) (Gloria)
A common trend amongst the women was a tendency to mix only with other Zimbabweans. Although all respondents lived in the midst of Xhosa people, there was very little integration between them.

*Mm, I haven’t met many people staying there; I only meet with Zimbabweans most of the time (Joyce)*

*I only have some Zimbabwean friends (Irene)*

*Ja, we know one another, we can easily identify one another (Leila)*

Barth (1998, in Joireman, 2003, pp.43-44) explains that constructing and re-constructing one’s identity involves creating boundaries between who one is and who one is not. It is possible that all the respondents regard themselves more ‘more Zimbabwean’ now than they would have in the past, in an effort to distance themselves from the Xhosa population. According to Joireman, 2003), one’s answer to the question ‘who am I’ will identify the group to which one feels one belongs.

*Maybe I could say I am a Zimbabwean that is the first thing, I am a Zimbabwean. Ja, I am a Zimbabwean, then I could say I am a married woman, ja, [yes] I am a mother, like this (Miriam)*

*Being Zimbabwean is very important, very important, I love my country, I love it (Prudence)*

*If I see another Zimbabwean, if it’s a he or a she, I call him my brother, or my sister, or my father or my mother (Brenda)*

*You know I belong to Zimbabwe; I am a Zimbabwean by origin (Linda)*

*I will remain a Zimbabwean (Leila)*
Motsemme (2003, p.228) explains the above statements by the respondents in terms of identification with others. It is also this connectedness to others that we use to make claims about our place in the past as well as the future. For instance, for an individual identifies herself as a ‘Xhosa woman’ or a ‘Muslim woman’, she is connecting to a community that shares ideas of a historically rooted past.

Identification with a community may also occur as a result of others defining a specific segment of the population (such as the Zimbabwean migrants in Gqebera, in this case) as a collective. In this way, although in Zimbabwe, individuals might have defined themselves by virtue of tribal allegiance, such as Shona or Matabele, outside of Zimbabwe all individuals from that geographical space are grouped together as Zimbabweans. The emergence of a group identity, according to Joireman (2003) often occurs as a result of that group being marginalized or treated as scapegoats, in order to legitimize inequalities in society. The tendency to associate only with fellow Zimbabweans who are seen, by virtue of being Zimbabwean, as the same as them, is an important signifier of categorisation, according to Social Identity Theory (Howard, 2000), allowing us to act as cognitive misers, reducing all information to only the most salient (such as sharing an ethnic identity, for example) and regarding those who belong to the same group as us as more similar to us, and those who are outside our group as more different to us than they might actually be. In order to construct a positive self-identity, we view those members of our-group, and by implication, ourselves and our culture favourably, and those who are not in our group, negatively (Pickering, 2001). There is much evidence of this tendency in the comments made by the respondents below; in terms of the way they view the Xhosa inhabitants of Gqebera.
4.4.9 Othering

Many of the women have experienced ‘Othering’ by their host community, in varying degrees of severity. This may indicate stereotyping, the negative labelling of an out-group by the dominant group (Maalouf, 1996; Pickering, 2001). These xenophobic attitudes may also be attributable to the “continuation of an apartheid legacy of separate development and ghettoisation of the African mind” (Motsemme, 2003, pp.231-232). South Africans, as a result of racially segregated inferior education may hold a skewed view of Africa, and may view South Africa as somewhat separate from the rest of the continent. South Africans, generally, do not identify with Pan-African consciousness, resulting in a dichotomous view of them and us.

You know what, if we are here, we are not rude for them. If we are rude for them, they will do something to you. So we just accept it, everything that they say, we just accept, there is nothing to do. Because you know what, they give us a name, maybe you know that name, they call it, mkwerekwere (softly). Yes. But when they are there in Zimbabwe, we don’t give them name. No. No, we don’t give them name, we don’t (Gloria)

The people do not like Zimbabweans here. I don’t know if we are being judged for what happened in 2000 (meaning the farm killings) but that is not how Zimbabweans are, it is not a reflection of us (Irene)

Kanani (2004) in Hicks (2009) points to the unsympathetic of South Africans towards foreigners, explaining that the migrants are often blamed for the problems experienced by the impoverished in South Africa, such as unemployment, crime and inadequate healthcare. This is borne out by the comments made by the respondents:

They don’t like us. Us Zimbabwean, we can work very hard. They said it’s because we work for not too much money. Because we don’t waste our money, our money, we are just sending it home. Exactly, our money we are just sending it home. Especially me, I don’t waste my money, because I know, I’ve got a family. Especially at work, they say, the Zimbabwean, they are taking our jobs, because they don’t want more money, they just want small money, they just want to work for nothing. And we accept that small money, because our country, it’s not good. And they are lazy, they like to sit back. I
According to Foster (2006), stereotyping allows dominant groups to justify their treatment of out-groups, therefore regarding Zimbabweans as ‘stealing our jobs’ or ‘working for little money’ fulfils this ideological collective action. Categorisation of individuals into group identities such as Zimbabweans, allows individuals to make these sweeping generalizations about them, ignoring the specifics pertinent to each woman and permitting the above-mentioned ‘othering’ of these marginalized groups (Howard, 2000)

"Mostly because they know, you come here for money, and they know you have got it, we want money, so they target you. Ja, we don’t waste the money, Zimbabweans don’t waste the money, no no, if you see that one who is wasting money, eh, she is always out of your mind, otherwise you have to work for your family at home, or your family" (Linda)

According to Motsemme (2003), South Africans have stated that they can identify a non-South African, a foreigner, by virtue of the fact that they are darker-skinned than South Africans, as well as by secondary signifiers such as physical build, head-shape, clothing and even styles of walking. This is borne out by the comments of the respondents:

"They say that we are too much black. Yes, they just know that, that one is a Zimbabwean. Even our bodies, they can see us when we are walking, we are very strong, we are not like this, like this (demonstrates a ‘sloppy’ way of walking), they see us walking very strong, and they say this one is a strong walker. If they stop you, they hear you talking English, and they say, you see, I told you this one is a Zimbabwean, even the police" (Gloria)

"Through speaking they can see you are not South African" (Brenda)

"They can also easily identify us, from the complexion, even before you speak, they can identify us, they know we are not from here" (Leila)

"The Xhosa women look different to Zimbabwean women, they are smaller and curvier, Zimbabweans, we are taller and our bodies are stronger" (Francesca)
One respondent believes that the term mkwerekwere has become part of local parlance, used as a descriptor of anything that is foreign:

*Ja,[yes] they call it! In location? [township] Ah, it’s their language! It is their language (laughs) Ja, [yes] they cannot say it direct to you, but that is their word, if they want to say go somewhere, they say go to that mkwerekwere and go something, go to that mkwerekwere shop, especially the Somalians, they have got shops, they call it mkwerekwere shop, that’s their name they use (Linda)*

One respondent lost her home because of ‘othering’ by the host community:

*I was chased from my house where I was staying, because they say I cannot stay there anymore, I am mkwerekwere (Francesca)*

*We are treated badly by these people. Even the men, they watch you, to see if you have a husband, and if you do not, they will target you, because you have no protection (Francesca)*

Francesca tells how, even if they do not overtly call you names, Zimbabweans are discriminated against:

*Even on the taxi, they will say no, no – you must stand up, that seat is taken, that seat is for a Xhosa person*

This dispossession of identity serves to affect how the target of discrimination and marginalization may view the self. Fanon (1990) in Motsemme (2003) describes the effects of cultural oppression on those who are devalued by the colonizer, but this can be extrapolated to the South African context, with the ‘othering’ of the foreigners by the South Africans. This othering leads to a “continual sense of dissonance’ and “constantly problematised sense of identity” causing “pathologies of liberty” (p.217). Every interaction between South African and Zimbabwean (in this context) is fraught with fear of rejection. Gilroy (1994), cited in Hook (2003, p.117) terms this “double consciousness” and explains it as the sense of examining the self from someone else’s perspective, and finding oneself
lacking because of a marginalization in society. The marginalized individual experiences a
double consciousness as they hold an allegiance to their own family and ethnicity, but are
devalued by the wider culture within which they are situated. Furthermore, as Pickering
(2001, p.48) contends “stereotypes create barriers across their social interactions and
relations, over both time and space”. In this way, chances of Zimbabweans and the Xhosa
residents of Gqebera finding commonality and increased interaction opportunities are
reduced.

Two of the women have been able to ‘rise above’ the attitude of the host community.
Instead of the label mkwerekwere causing them to feel inferior, they have learnt to accept
it, even to cast it off as meaningless:

I was not feeling well, but these days, I just say, yes, I’m a foreigner, but I know
what I’m doing. Because I am used to it now (Gloria)

You always see them, when you are walking on the streets, saying
mkwerekwere, and you just say, that’s me (laughs). They say it to mock you, to
intimidate you, you know when you are disciplined the way you are, when you
have the gospel in your life you don’t care about that, it doesn’t harm you, it
doesn’t do anything, me I just smile at them when they say that, because they
will be angry you know, but I just say, “[yes] a, I am mkwerekwere”, and it kills
them, and next time they see me, they know I don’t care. It is those who it
hurts, their hearts, you know they are after people who takes it hard, then they
can carry on, but us, we just say, “ja, [yes] we are mkwerekweres” and we
smile. Even our children we have told them, if they say you are mkwerekweres
you just say, ja,[yes] I am, please them (Prudence)

For these women, then, the label mkwerekwere has become a positive identifier,
almost a badge of honour that they wear with pride.

4.5 THEME 3: SPATIALITY
Spatiality, the aspect of identity relating to a woman’s perceptions of space includes memories of her past geographies – where she has come from, where she grew up, her ‘life before’, as well as her sense of belonging and feelings of rootedness, or conversely, rootlessness, in her present geographies. Very often, the terrain one regards as home becomes, in Benedict Anderson (1990, cited in Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken et al, 2004, p.159) states, an “imagined community” which negates the very real divides which exist in that community and exists as a space in which the country’s borders include some people, those within, and exclude others, those outside of that nation.

4.5.1 Memories of Home

Many of the women in the study remembered fondly their homes in Zimbabwe. Home in this context was remembered not just as the physical place where they lived, loved and reared their children, but also the “symbolic conceptualization of where one belongs” (Salih, 2004, p.246). Cuba and Hummon (1993a, 1993b) in Howard (2000, p.382) name this aspect of identity “place identity . . . identities based on a sense of being at home”. Yi-Fu Tuan (1990) in Tehranian (2006, p.426) refers also to “sites of topophilia . . . the affective connection between human beings and places”. These remembrances of the place where they lived provide the women with a safe resting place, a mental “imagined space of belonging” which allows them to carry on with their day-to-day lives.

_Where we used to stay, it is just closer to town, so we just walk to the town, but you don’t hear of anything like that (talking of crime) . . . And we can even travel freely (Leila)_

_My life was a little bit better, because I and my husband were both teachers there in Zimbabwe, so at least we were earning a better salary, to look after our children. Especially when we first started working, we buy our own furniture, we are staying in a good house, we could always travel where we want to. Our house was near the school so break time I would go and see my children, and lunchtime was long because after 12h00 then we go back for sport or whatever activities at 14h00 and after school I always go back to my children. So I had enough time with my children. My house was just closer to_
the school. I also say it is better because we used to stay with our parents always, especially on the weekends or during holidays, then we go and visit our parents. My parents are in the rural area, but my husband’s parents, they are like in the township, like this, so we visit (Leila)

My life was very pleasant and very sociable. I had a very good job in Harare – I have a degree in chemistry and worked as a quality assurance officer in the chemical industry. My husband also worked, he has a Bachelor of Science Honours degree and he worked as a production manager. We lived in a four-bedroom house and had everything we needed. We were very comfortable; we had everything we needed and a car (Irene)

Prudence recalls her formative years in Zimbabwe:

Let me tell you, when you were growing up, you thought, like my father, he had a car, and you know, we grew up like we didn’t receive clothes just on Christmas, but during the year, and he was working by National Foods, he brought food, and I never thought . . . I never grew up thinking that the car used petrol, I knew it took petrol, but it wasn’t something that I thought, ha, petrol, it’s very important, you know?

The recollections of the research respondents, though, were interspersed with more recent memories of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe of their childhoods, that idyllic place, changed as the political and economic conditions declined. Prudence goes on to tell of the Zimbabwe that her children know:

. . . But now, you know, this other life, that my kids know that “Mummy, the car is dead, it’s dead petrol”, that’s what we say, when you say there is no petrol in the car, you say it is dead petrol. So if you see car dumped there, or dumped there, it is petrol. Because there was nothing, so they grew up knowing there was nothing. And they didn’t even see a thing being put on the . . . on the filling station, you know, you would see someone holding a 5 litre from the bushes there, “Here is petrol, I am selling petrol”. So you just take and put petrol, but at times it is not real petrol, it is something else, so you put it in the car and it doesn’t work, so a lot of things . . . you know. And a lot of things – like a security guard, he is to keep the door there (gestures) and now in Zim [Zimbabwe] a security guard will be the master because if he says you cannot get in to the supermarket, you will not get in, and you will need to pay the security guard, so that you can get in and get that packet of sugar which is
there, which has just arrived. And you can give the money to the security guard to buy for you, and you know that others . . . will go without.

My life was horrible, there was hunger and ill-treatment, I couldn’t stand it, because it was very difficult for me to stay (Joyce)

You know what, Lesley, you don’t know . . . (laughs) . . . the situation in Zimbabwe, made many people to divorce, and it brought many complications between a husband and a wife, because when there is no food at home, when there is no money there, when the kids are crying and the husband is coming in with nothing, you know there is no love. And you don’t talk to each other, you look like strangers, you don’t talk . . . Most of the time when you are at home, you are out hunting for something and he is out hunting, and at the end of the day, you will bring something, and he doesn’t eat for the whole day like this . . . it was tough, it was really tough. The worst thing was that we had to hunt even for water, you just wake up and turn the tap on, and you find that there is no water, so you need to go somewhere and find water, maybe at churches where there are boreholes, and you have to walk, and you can imagine walking maybe with a babe on your back, and you are hungry. You are hungry and the babe is hungry, and you come back maybe with 5 litre or something, but you will be drinking it all the way back home, you see? It was tough. Even the teachers, they are not paying good, so the teachers, sometimes they are more interested in having some extra lessons with the children at their homes, private, private extra lessons, so most of them they will be focusing on their extra lessons, not on school, ja. So if you have got the money for extra lessons, your child will be on the better side, but if you don’t have money, so . . . (Prudence)

These sentiments are reiterated by Irene:

In about 2005, things began to go very wrong in Zimbabwe. Education started to deteriorate rapidly. Zimbabwe had always had excellent education; children were educated in English and sat the Cambridge exams. In 2005, money started devaluing. Many teachers were either not being paid anymore, or were not earning sufficient to cope with the rising food prices. Many teachers exited Zimbabwe at this time, to work in London or South Africa. The teachers that were left were not focused on educating children anymore – many would try selling things at school, in order to earn more money for themselves and their families. Others would be trying to source food, as at this stage there was nothing to buy in the shops or supermarkets. The teachers who were subsequently employed were not proper teachers with degrees or diplomas – they were makeshift teachers who were not educated. If you could read and write, then you could be a teacher. Sometimes we as parents were asked to contribute groceries for teachers in order to motivate
those who were being underpaid or not being paid at all, to encourage them
to come to work and to stay in their jobs.

At this stage, the children’s education was suffering. I have three boys, aged
10, 8 and 6. The 10 year old was barely able to read. At school, they were
just playing, not doing any work, and often there would be no teacher there
to educate them anyway, as they were out hunting for food.

Also at this stage, food was so short. The normal labour market was not really
functioning anymore, only the black markets were thriving. So food would be
reach the supermarkets, instead a rich person would buy a truckload of food
and sell it somewhere. If you were working, you could not be out trying to
hunt down food, so it became impossible to feed my children.

Medical services in Harare were virtually no more. The very expensive
private hospitals still provided for the wealthy, but public hospitals had no
nurses, as many nurses left to work in London. You had nurses’ aides working
as nurses and there were no medicines, no tablets available (Irene)

Leila also recalls the hardships of Zimbabwe in the latter days, before they left:

Really, there was nothing. It was empty, empty, and every time we have to
queue for sugar, queuing for bread, for everything we had to queue, and
you see, like for us, it was an unfortunate thing because we have twins and
we couldn’t even find the soap for washing. We also have responsibility to
look after our parents, the mother and father are not working, yes, and
there is no - this fund for the elder people, nothing, so to live through that,
we are supposed to share the little we have with our parents.

Prudence and Miriam, who are sisters-in-law, have few fond recollections of home, of
the home that Zimbabwe had become. They were forced to move back in with their
respective parents after the demolitions of their homes in Harare and the forced
removals in 2004. Prudence tells the story of the demolition:

So when the time came for the destroying of houses, we used to rent our own,
not from the parents but on our own, but when the houses were destroyed . . .
they didn’t want like, here you will find home and you will find some shack,
those houses built not on a plan, they are not on a plan, they are just built, to
accommodate people because there were more people, so they were
destroyed. They knocked them down, they didn’t build for us to . . . to take us
somewhere, to accommodate us, and each one has to find somewhere to go. And we had to go to our parents, those who were in our parents houses had to be moved, and see where they could go because they wanted to accommodate their children, you see? It was in 2004, because I am 2005 there.

The difficulties of life pre-migration are recalled by Linda:

*Ja,[yes] everything was bad, and we were struggling to live by that time. You end up doing something that you don’t want to do, because of life, difficult life, that’s why us had to move. Ja,[yes] you end up doing that thing, because if you think they way we are living, you end up doing that thing (talking of prostitution), because you have no choice, you want to stay home, you want to buy food for your kids, so you end up doing that thing* (Linda)

For many of the women, the impact of the decline in their homeland’s economy is most poignant when they relate it to their children:

*No, the very first day we came here, we came with my son, the young one, the very first day me and my husband, when he was working, we went to Pick and Pay,[a local supermarket] and he saw the food, and his face was bright, in the supermarket, and he was saying “Sweets! Mummy! Sweets!” and my husband, you know, he dropped a tear because he has never seen those things in the supermarket* (Prudence)

*They are too little; they are too little, they are so young, so they grow up in that difficult situation. That is why now in Zimbabwe there is a lot of crime, lot of street kids, but by the time we grew up, there was not that crime. The children only know that in shops you find tissues, and maybe other cleaning stuffs, but not food. It is hard for your kid to eat an ice-cream or a sweet; if you find money, it is for basic things, you cannot spoil your children. It is difficult for your children to understand* (Joyce)

In spite of the reality of life in Zimbabwe, all of the women still spoke of it as home. Nettles (2004, p.56) writes that “the search for home is also to find one’s self, to find a place that gives meaning to who you are . . . so the search for home is about a politics of
identity and place . . . most often in combination not easily articulated. Prudence exemplifies this in her explanation:

> You know the truth is, Lesley, home is home, you know what I mean? Now we have a lot to do here, so that we can mend all the wounds that we left there, they are still heavy, and you know Rome isn’t built in a day, so we still need to work here. But one day, when things are settled, we feel like, ha, now we can go, like, and maybe do something like, husband can, say I can do my own company, like refrigeration, he can do his computers, he has got better money, we can go back home.

When asked what makes a place home, it was apparent that home is a ‘feeling’, as opposed to a place.

> You know what, when you are at home, you feel ‘I’m at home’, but if you feel, if I go out there, they say something to me, they say “what what what”, [meaning the negative comments that are made to Zimbabweans by many South Africans] it’s not a home, it won’t be your home, like staying there. But we are staying here, because we want money, we want money (Gloria)

> It’s not about a place (Brenda)

> It’s a safe place, I think. I want to go back to Zimbabwe. Home is best (Linda)

Home is where you are accepted, no matter what, where you are among your own people. Home has “emotive connotations of solidarity with those inside and the exclusion of those outside” (Johnson, 2003, p.92).

One of the women expressed her desire to build a house back in Zimbabwe, even although she was ambivalent as to whether or not she wanted to return to Zimbabwe. This house, her home would give her roots, show others that she belonged, and allow her children to know her origins.

> If I have a house, and like, in time I will see, I just want to have a property there, to visit, or like, let’s say, if I get married and have children, then I’d like my children to be able to say, this is where mummy grew up,
something like that, so that they know where I came from. Even if I had a job here, or if I get married here or wherever I’m going to go, I can’t tell them I am a South African, I can’t tell them I’m from South Africa, they have to know my roots (Brenda)

This same respondent commented earlier that:

*Home is wherever I am. I can make anywhere my home. For me, home is relative. If the money is there, I would go there. Even if you say, Iraq, I would say, come on, let’s go*(Brenda)

These comments would seem to indicate a sort of rootlessness, that she has no needs for roots, but is rather part of the global community. This contradicts her desire for her yet unborn children to know “her roots”.

Leila was asked whether this (Port Elizabeth) could ever become home for her and she emphatically stated:

*Ooh, never, never - no matter what comes. I will remain a Zimbabwean.*

This was reiterated by Joyce:

*No, I don’t feel like I belong here, because my heart is at home, because my children are at home. If my children were here, it would be different* (Joyce)

It is thus apparent that the notion of home is ‘tied up’ with the emotional connotations of home, not least the sense of being a mother.

### 4.5.2 Sense of Belonging
Migrant women constitute a marginalized group of individuals who do not yet belong in the destination community. Tehranian (2006, p.241) describes the spatial experience of migrancy as “about movement across geographies of otherness and living with the ever-shifting lines of cultural and emotional in-betweenness”. This is exemplified by the stories of the women interviewed. Because so many of them are here illegally, either having crossed the border illegally by climbing the fence or bribing officials, or having overstayed their visas, they remain in-between, living in constant fear of deportation:

*Ja,[yes] that is the one thing that is worrying me, because I am here illegally, so anytime we will be sent back home (Linda)*

*No, that asylum paper, my employee goes to get that paper, 2007, 2008, 2009, this year I go there, they say come tomorrow, come tomorrow. In May my boss say that I can’t keep on leaving my work, I need to decide to go to my paper, or to work here, so I decide to go to work, and now, I don’t have that paper. If they see that you don’t have that paper, they will deport you (Gloria)*

Many of the respondents stressed that deportation of illegal Zimbabweans is a meaningless exercise by immigration officials.

*Yes they come back. They just put them there at the border, and then they come back again, because they can’t go home, there is nothing for them to do, they can’t go home (Linda)*

Home no longer exists, for many Zimbabweans, so they remain in a liminal space, belonging nowhere. This is reiterated by Salih’s (2004) research, that women who have migrated seem to straddle places, their old home and country of origin and their destination country, yet belong to neither.

Holloway and Hubbard (2001), and Cosgrove (2003) in Attanpola (2006) stress that if people have positive experiences in a place, they will feel that they belong to that place. Conversely, negative sense of place results in people feeling lack of belonging. Fear of deportation would result in migrant women experiencing a lack of belonging.
Even those women who had migrated to South Africa legally felt no sense of belonging in Gqebera, but rather constantly felt ‘out of place’:

*I can’t fit in here and wish I could go home. This will never be home for me – I am only here because my children must be educated, and for the money*  
(Irene)

It is thus apparent from the comment of the respondent above that residing in South Africa is a matter of expedience only, a means to an end.

4.5.3 Descriptions of Present Space

The process of migrating and attempting to settle into a new socio-cultural environment involves an accompanying change in identity, as the migrant moves from all that is known, embodied in the concept of home, to a foreign space (Hedberg and Kepsu, 2008). The space that they have migrated to is typified by the houses they dwell in. Most of the women in the study felt that the quality of their homes – the space within, the construction of the house and the basic amenities provided, were inferior in South Africa to those they inhabited back home. One of the respondents remembered fondly her home in the rural areas, where she had a large garden, grew her own vegetables and kept chickens and goats. In South Africa, she was reduced to living in a single room at the back of someone else’s house. Initially, she was grateful for this space but felt that the attitude of the landlord changed towards her recently, as she was now denied any visitors to her room.

*No they cannot give us that space, and that room is very small, very small*  
(Gloria)
Another respondent protested vehemently when she was asked whether she was living in a house in Gqebera:

_No, it is not a house, it is a shack. It is only one room...when I started staying in the shack, at first I couldn’t eat properly, because it is not well built, that thing, and truly, I was so scared, in summer it was very hot, but I couldn’t stand for the door to be open, because I was scared of the people. And even if you close the door, there will be just like an opening_ (Leila)

It is meaningful that she refers to her present home as “that thing”, as though it is beneath her contempt, so far beneath her standards that it made her physically ill and unable to eat.

She goes on to comment negatively about the amount of space available to them, which she feels impacts on the children as they have nowhere to play, hampered further by the weather which is “almost always windy” and her fears for her children’s safety.

_Ja, [yes] you see, especially the house, there is no room to play, for children to play, so they sometimes play outside but you see, the weather in this country, it is almost always like it is windy, so we always say play inside, so it is like we are putting pressure on the children. And the place is small – for three children to play and we are also in there_ (Leila)

She expresses her dissatisfaction and disappointment with her life in South Africa, symbolized by the shack she is living in. She seems to project this disappointment and longing for home on to her children, saying that they are missing out on the good life they had in Zimbabwe, which we know to be imagined, as her child is only six years old, and life ‘turned bad’ in Zimbabwe in 2005, when he was only two – hardly old enough to have fond memories of home.

_Most of the time I am thinking this is not my place. I am staying in a shack, it is disappointing to me, I always feel sorry for my children. What do they think now? My first born was saying to me, “Mummy, when we go back home, are we going to bath in the tub or are we going to play with our toys_
in the tub”, and I say “yes”, and he say “do we have a tub at home”, and I say “no, we are going to give you a big basin and you are going to go in there”. It is like; they are missing some of those things. So sometimes I speak like it is just normal conversation with the children, but it hurts me (Leila)

Another of the women describes her situation of lack and hardship in Gqebera:

I hate where we stay. We live in a house, but is nothing like our house we had back in Zimbabwe. We have nothing – we had to leave everything behind. My mother has my stove and my fridge, my sister has some of my stuff and we had to leave our car. When I first lived in that studio in Walmer, I had nothing; I was sleeping on the floor and had no furniture. Then I bought a bed and beds for the children. Now all we have in the house is a stove in the kitchen, a TV in the lounge – no furniture – and beds. We have nothing else (Irene)

Francesca describes her room as:

. . . basically a wall between me and the house and then a shack. There is no bath or shower in the house; here people just wash themselves in a bowl of water. There is a toilet in the house, which is okay because there are not too many people living in the house, but in some houses this can be a problem as there are many people and only one toilet.

Crime and perceptions of crime is a constant presence in the migrant women’s reality.

I am scared all the time in Walmer, crime is so high. Some people have said there is more crime in Walmer than in Motherwell even. I am too scared to walk around with my handbag and only have the oldest cell-phone in case it gets stolen. When I walk I put my handbag in a plastic bag, because they watch and they see you are going to work. I don’t let my children play with the children in the township, because I am afraid for them (Irene)

You see, the number one thing is about the crime rate. I was talking again soon with my sister, that at home, when it is summer like this, we can afford even to sleep on our verandas, there is nothing going to happen, but here you can’t do that. We are always scared, of being robbed, or raping, we are always hearing stories, there is this open space, from the Shell Garage and
behind that Star Bakery, it is almost like every weekend that someone is robbed there or died there . . . and you hear of someone saying he went to a place where the Zimbabweans were staying and they break the door and they went inside, and they raped everyone in there, and took their things and went away. A mother and a child were raped by seven guys about two weeks ago, and also about two weeks ago, we had a friend who was robbed when he was just walking – they took his cell-phone and stabbed him several times, a Zimbabwean, and there was a white guy who was passing through and he called the police and the ambulance. And there was a lady who is working here in the Checkers [a local supermarket], and she was robbed here on her way to work, she was just passing through a valley inside the location in a place where there are old graves, she was just passing through that area, and a guy came and grabbed her. The other guys tried to chase them, but weren’t able to (Leila)

It is difficult living now without a husband, it is not safe (Francesca)

A common comment made by respondents was that Zimbabwe was regarded as safer than South Africa. This was also borne out by McDonald’s (2000) research.

It affects me because I won’t feel free when I am walking. I don’t feel free, comfortable like when I was in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, you feel safe, there is crime there, of course, but here it is too much. People are always fighting, thieves . . . if you back home during the night, they will take all your clothes, they will rape you, whatever they want to do to you. Ja, it isn’t good, it is not a safe place in terms of crime, it is not a safe place (Linda)

Francesca also commented a great deal on feeling unsafe in the township:

A woman was raped last weekend, and the police were not even interested in helping because she was a Zimbabwean. It is a different story if it is a Xhosa woman who is raped. There have also been Zimbabwean men who were stabbed and killed in the township. I do not feel safe here – even on the taxi, the Zimbabweans are targeted. When you go to sit down, you are told, “no, do not sit here, this seat is for a Xhosa person”. Men, they watch to see that you are a woman on your own, and then target you, because they know that you do not have anyone to protect you.
Irene had a terrifying experience of crime first-hand when she initially moved to Port Elizabeth:

At first I stayed in Motherwell, [a township on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth] but it was terrible there. One night we were sleeping – those houses in Motherwell are just one big room, and the lady we rented from had made a divide with a curtain where she slept with her boyfriend. Suddenly, these men with guns bashed the door down and came into the room, shouting and shooting and telling us to give them cell-phones and money. The woman’s boyfriend came out of the room and he had a little axe and he managed to chase these men away – he hit one of the men on his shoulder and he was bleeding and they left, but we were too scared to stay there in case they came back, so we had to find somewhere else to stay.

Not all the women are dissatisfied with their present living situation though. It is interesting to note that respondent 5, who has children of approximately the same age as Leila’s, describes her son’s wonderment at South Africa, this metaphorical land of milk and honey:

So you know, when we first came, he took us, my husband, to the [local restaurant in Port Elizabeth] for a meal, the first time, because we were first here and he surprised us and there was food for the little one, and he was “Woah!” (Shows shocked face with hands over her mouth), “So this is South Africa?” And we said, “Ja, [yes] this is South Africa!” (Prudence)

Prudence also lives in a shack, like many of the other respondents, but for her, this is not viewed as a negative. In this little space, they have community, they have love, and they have togetherness. This is reiterated by her sister in law who says, of her shack:

Ja,[yes] we are sharing. My child, we’ve got some couches, these we join together and he has a bed, and we have our own bed, we are comfortable. The thing is, we are happy in our families (Miriam)

Even Prudence and Miriam, though, who appeared most satisfied with their existence in South Africa, did not feel they belonged here. This may well be because, as Hedberg
and Kepsu (2008, p.114) explain, “Identity is often stronger at a distance”. In living away from home, from their own country, they feel more Zimbabwean and identify more with other Zimbabweans (discussed in Relationality). It may also be because identities are constructed through memory, and memory is flawed. Memory itself is but a construction, reliant on the teller. Einagel (2002) stresses that war; conflict and displacement affect ones sense of belonging. The individual is left to search for home in both physical space and within her. Nettles, (2004, p.58) expresses this as “this homecoming is not about comfort, but it is about longing, about a desire for a space where people could affirm one another”.

Gloria tells of how she has made others, her fellow inhabitants of Gqebera, understand what life was like back in Zimbabwe, saying:

You know, we have told them, here we are suffering, but at home, we have everything. There was a friend of mine, he wanted to marry here, and she said “first let’s go home and see where you come from” and then she came back and said “no, I am not going to marry you” and he said “why?” And she said “no, you are too rich, here we are staying in a shack, back home you stay in a nice house, and I cannot afford”. So they divorced.

4.5.4 Future Space

Eastmond (1993) expresses the experience of spatiality of a migrant succinctly – “looking forward is always looking back”. She is permanently in limbo – between the old place and the new, existing in both and simultaneously in neither. They long to return to a place which no longer exists:

It is getting better there (in Zimbabwe). But I was thinking of, whatever the situation is there, I just like to be home. I think that would make me not feel disappointed anymore, especially when I go back to my work . . .That’s why I would like to go home again to mix with other church goers, my sisters (Leila).
For the most part, the comments made by the women interviewed are aligned with research conducted by McDonald (2000). Few of the women expected to remain in South Africa permanently:

*When things change, yes, I have to go. The way I left it, I can’t see it changing. It will only change when that man is no longer in power. Zimbabwe used to be nice, we used to live a good life, but now because of that man, [referring to the Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe] things changed. So maybe if he is not in power, maybe someone gets in there and things will change and we can go back home* (Joyce)

*Unless I got a better job, especially teaching, if I don’t get, I don’t think I am going to . . . keep on staying here* (Leila)

Nettles (2004) explains this desire to return as a “journey toward a more grounded sense of self and identity” – a life that was once known, when she was a person she knew.

*Me, my goals – I want to work, and have some money to have my own home, so that I can have my family under one roof. I would prefer to be back in Zimbabwe, because home is best. If I have my own property and have my fields to grow some crops again, it will be home. And my children* (Joyce)

*I think if we could get better jobs, it would be better. I mean, then we could change the accommodation and all that, we change places, if our kids go to better schools and we could afford something better . . . because you see, sometimes when things are not right in a foreign country, you think on back home* (Leila)

For all of the respondents, then, home remained that imagined space from where they originated, the mythical place of their hearts.
4.5.5 Future Plans

Traditionally, migration research which affords cognisance to women has focussed on labelling them victims; rendering their unique experiences and the creative life strategies they have employed, invisible. According to these accounts, they were denied agency, regarded merely as domestic servants, or “trailing spouses” (Heering, van der Erf & Van Wissen, 2004).

Although many of the women interviewed in this research study might well presently be employed in work which is un-stimulating and mundane, a number of the respondents discussed their visions and dreams for future work which would enable them to better themselves, while also resulting in an improved life for their children:

* I can’t stay here forever and do domestic work all the time, all these years, to me it is difficult. Right now, I am planning something that is not buying and selling – to have a salon (Linda)

* It is my ambition to save up enough to buy assets, such as hairdryers, chemicals and towels, enough to open a hairdressing salon back home in Zimbabwe. My younger sisters will work in the salon – I have told them this is my plan and have told them they need to learn to braid and whatever. They will keep the business running back home while I supply the capital and work here a while longer, for my children (Francesca)

It is evident from the interviews conducted that these women, like Bozzoli’s (1991) women of Phokeng, are not victims. Even although they are embroiled in difficult life circumstances, they are in control of their destinies, making plans and focussing on creating a better future, for themselves and their children.

* I will build a house, or even if I can buy a ready built house, maybe a 2 bedroom house, or even just a small, you know, in a location and that’s fine with me, starting small, that’s for starters (Brenda)

None of the women, no matter how dire their present life circumstances may be, lacked agency. They are survivors, all of them.
4.5.6 Summary of Research Findings

In this chapter data collected from respondents by means of the interviews was analysed and findings discussed. Biographical detail pertaining to the respondents was provided, in order to provide scaffolding to the exploration of their perceptions of their identity, in accordance with the research aims of the study. Pseudonyms were provided, in order to ensure the respondent’s anonymity.

The above mentioned perceptions of identity were described by means of the themes of liminality, or periods of transition within the women’s lives; relationality, encompassing social aspects such as assimilation into the host community, as well as social capital, both bridging and bonding; and finally, spatiality, or explanations of lived space, the sense of belonging experienced, the sense of being at home, both the literal and figurative space.

Much commonality was found amongst the stories of the Zimbabwean migrant women interviewed, particularly in their experiences post migration, including their overall problems of assimilation into the host community of Gqebera, Walmer Port Elizabeth. It was also apparent that social capital, particularly the social capital experienced between fellow Zimbabweans functioned both to influence the decision to migrate to Port Elizabeth and to ease the settling in process in Gqebera, in practical terms, such as assisting in finding a residence and in some cases, in finding work. The aspect of relationality was further evidenced by the support, both spiritual and practical, provided by many of the women’s church communities.

In some cases, the women were forced to migrate without their children, leaving them with extended family in one instance and in child-headed households, in others. These stories, told by mothers of their reality in Gqebera, childless, crystallised for the researcher that these women’s’ lives in South Africa could only ever be liminal, transitory, and that home would always be where their children were.

A common thread throughout the stories of the respondents was the intense loneliness that they experienced on a daily basis in Gqebera. This was rooted both in their rejection,
perceived or otherwise, by the inhabitants of Gqebera; in their rejection, in turn, of the Xhosa inhabitants of the host community, as well as in their oft expressed longings for home. All women, no matter how well assimilated, wanted to return home, to the place they felt they belonged, the imagined space of Zimbabwe.

The research findings, as well as the assumptions and limitations of the study will be further explained in the concluding chapter, which follows.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

It has been recognised by researchers in the social sciences that the definition of identity has undergone some changes in recent years. Originally firmly defined as a psychological concept, something fixed which the individual ‘has’, it has more recently been recognised that identity is mutable, situationally dependent; comprising both individual and collective elements – that which makes us the same as others within our group as well as that which is different, unique to us.

Identity is sculpted, as indicated above, by life events. The aspects of the self which are regarded as particularly salient in one context might be of less import in another instance to an individual. It has been posited by various authors that migration, the geographical wrenching of an individual from her homeland, from all that she knows, often impacts directly on her self-identity, as she undergoes an extensive period of liminality during which time she struggles to assimilate into the host community in which she finds herself. The migration process, furthermore, often casts her into the role of the ‘other’, whereby she is regarded as ‘different’ by the members of her host community – she may speak another language, possess a different culture and/or be of a dissimilar ethnicity to them. Othered by those in the country in which she resides, migrant women are furthermore often marginalised, both socially and economically. They are furthermore often denied voice, silenced even. For this reason, it is necessary to allow these women opportunity to be heard, to regain their voices.

The primary aim of this study was to explore the self-perceptions of Zimbabwean women who had migrated to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, in terms of their own identity. Identity was viewed as being composed of various aspects such as relationality, or the self in relation to others, encompassing social capital and assimilation; spatiality, meaning the experience of lived space, and incorporating sense of belonging and literal and figurative sense of home;
and finally liminality, meaning the periods of transition which characterise an individual’s life, such as migration.

Secondary aims of the research study were:

- To explore how gender has affected their lives
- To enable understanding of the lifeworlds of the migrant women in the study
- To describe the above-mentioned themes of liminality, spatiality and relationality within the context of social identity.

The data presented in Chapter 4 explored the topic of identity, within the context of Zimbabwean migrant women who currently reside in the Gqebera township of Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, in terms of their perceptions of themselves and thus, their identity. The discussion which follows will attempt to draw conclusions from the foregoing data analysis.

5.1 Liminality

Overall, the entire period - from the time when life started to become difficult economically, and the food shortages began, as well as since the forced removals from their homes in Harare, in some of the women’s instances - has been one of liminality, a period of transition characterised by much ambiguity and feelings of rootlessness, of not belonging anywhere, for the women. This was exacerbated by the dangerous and daunting illegal border crossings experienced by two of the respondents.

It is also apparent that this period of liminality did not end for most of the women when they reached their destination, namely the host community of Gqebera, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape. They are in fact still in transition, because it is their intention to return home to Zimbabwe as soon as it is plausible for them to do so. It can thus be inferred that this liminal phase of these women’s lives is indefinitely extended, potentially causing a “fracturing experience” (Martin, 2007, p.178), which affects their sense of self.
Moreover, this liminality is further evidenced in the lack of assimilation experienced by most of the women. It would appear that in as much as the South African inhabitants of Gqebera do not facilitate the process of assimilation for the migrants, neither do the Zimbabwean women themselves really try to integrate with the South Africans. Two of the women, Prudence and Miriam, are the exception to this, and attribute their greater assimilation to both their sphere of work, namely working as tailors in the community, as well as their church involvement.

5.2 Relationality

Relationality, the social component comprising one’s relationships and interactions with others, forms one of the cornerstones of identity, particularly when identity is analysed in terms of the Social Identity Theory of Tajfel and Turner (1981).

Social Constructionism stresses that individuals form opinions of themselves by reflecting on how others view them. This has implications for migrant women, residing in a host community where they are perceived negatively by their South African neighbours. The lack of acceptance experienced by most of the women in the research study seemed to result in mixed emotions. For most, it made them self-identify more strongly as Zimbabweans, as an ethnic grouping separate to the South Africans whose space they shared. Their ethnic identity was thus strengthened by the experience of migration, as well as by their categorisation by the South African in-group. Many of the women expressed almost a stubborn pride in being termed ‘mkwerekwere’, as though this was a badge of honour identifying them more strongly as Zimbabwean, and in their own group definition, as superior to the Xhosa-speaking South Africans. This sense of superiority that they held to their South African neighbours was conveyed strongly by many of the respondents, particularly in their negative comments of South African men, who were regarded by most of the women interviewed as promiscuous, lazy drunkards, lacking any sort of culture. The respondents also denigrated the majority of Xhosa women, whom they
regarded as heavy drinkers who opposed the sanctity of marriage, choosing rather to cohabit with their male partners; and generally as acting in a culturally unacceptable fashion (to the respondents).

The aforementioned also draws attention to the notion posited by Schiff and Noy (2006) that identities are constructed on the basis of shared meanings, which is facilitated and communicated through shared recollections and common understanding of background. This shared meaning and indeed, common understanding is lacking between recent migrants and the host community. The Xhosa inhabitants of Gqebera and the Zimbabwean women do not perceive themselves as sharing a culture, which leads to misunderstandings and categorisation.

A negative effect of the categorisation of Zimbabwean migrants by South Africans was, furthermore, the heightened levels of fear described by many of the inhabitants, who seemed to live their lives, outside of working hours, locked inside their rooms, for fear of being targeted in xenophobic attacks. This fear, coupled with the sense of being different, as ‘other’ resulted in the extreme loneliness experienced by many of the women, whose lifeworld had effectively shrunk to their place of employment and the size of their rooms.

For many of the women, an important component of their self-identity was motherhood, yet three of the respondents had been forced to leave their children behind in Zimbabwe. This had an extremely negative effect on the women: although they felt they had no choice but to migrate without their children, they worried about them daily, wondering whether they were eating, whether they were attending school, whether they would indeed be able to grow up successfully, unharmed, without their mother’s love and protection.

The deskilling experienced by three of the women had also affected their self-identities negatively, as they felt that the domestic work they were forced to resort to in South Africa was beneath their intellectual level of competence; was boring but simultaneously excessively physically challenging. Domestic work further exacerbated the loneliness
experienced by the women, as they were effectively locked into the private sphere, invisible, with no one to talk to or to share their feelings with.

All but one of the women had experienced the benefits of bridging social capital, whereby their migration to Gqebera, Port Elizabeth; the securing of a residence and sometimes also employment, was facilitated by fellow Zimbabweans. In some instances this assistance was offered by extended family members but sometimes even by mere compatriots willing to assist. Although the social capital experienced assisted in the practicalities and intricacies of migration, it did not compensate for the loss of family members and friends described by many of the women. Even though the existence of other Zimbabweans was acknowledged, often the geographical distance between their homes as well as the realities of their quotidian lives meant that the positive relational component of their identities was not met.

The loneliness experienced, as well as the lack of assimilation, was problematised by language barriers. Even although some of the women mentioned that Xhosa women attempted to befriend them, they were unable to truly communicate because of the Zimbabwean’s inability to speak isiXhosa, and the Xhosa women’s lack of proficiency and/or seeming unwillingness to converse in English.

All of the women spoke of an ongoing link with home, facilitated by remittances sent regularly to family members to assist them financially in the hard economic times experienced by Zimbabweans. These links, though necessary, are in some ways counter-productive, as they maintain the strong bonds between migrants and their homes, thus preventing their full assimilation into the host community.
5.3 Spatiality

Spatiality, that aspect of a woman’s identity which incorporates her sense of place, her sense of belonging, as well as her memories of home, whether this is an actual geographical space or an imagined homeland, was explored by the women interviewed.

All of the respondents displayed topophilia, namely, a strong emotional tie between themselves and their homeland of Zimbabwe. Even although most of the respondents described a Zimbabwe which was typified by starvation, forced removals, unemployment and economic hardship, they still self-identified as Zimbabwean and expressed a heartfelt desire to return home. All described home as a feeling, a safe place, where you can just ‘be’. This would indicate that not being at home, or being in Gqebera, in their specific instances, entails not really being one’s true self, necessitating the figurative wearing of a mask, perhaps, or having to develop a thicker skin to protect oneself from the negative perceptions of others. Home represents the comfort of ‘being’; Gqebera, conversely, seemed to represent a constant attempt to be something else, or to defend what one is.

This was exacerbated by ‘hints’ given, as well as actual stories told, that not all the migrant women interviewed were here legally, thus resulting in increased feelings of insecurity and wariness, because they might be found out and forced to return to a Zimbabwe still characterised by economic and political upheaval. It stands to reason that if one is in a country illegally, the chances of that country coming to be regarded as home, as one’s own place, are slim, as one is constantly figuratively holding one’s breath, lest one has to leave. This results in ongoing feelings of impermanence, of liminality and rootlessness.

Most of the women described their present residences in Gqebera in negative terms. For most, the type of house in which they resided in Gqebera, described by many as a “shack”, was inferior to the homes they had in Zimbabwe. Some, too, had hailed from rural areas where they spoke of large gardens where they could cultivate their vegetables, a safe haven where they tended their chickens and mothered their children. Many were reduced, post-migration, to renting a single room in the township, a small space where
they had no access to a garden; where they lived solitary lives, merely existing to send money home to their children and families.

For most, this was made bearable only because it was believed to be temporary. As mentioned earlier, all the women interviewed intending to return home to Zimbabwe; their time in South Africa could be described as ‘treading water’ only.

More positively though, in spite of the difficulties of South African life, most of the women portrayed agency; they were not passive victims waiting to be rescued, but all had a future plan for themselves and their families and were working for the future, to achieve their goals of homes back in Zimbabwe, thriving businesses and complete families.

5.4 Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

The researcher realised that there might have been much within the respondent’s lives which they did not share, either because it was too private, too politically sensitive, too emotional, or because the researcher did not ask the right question to elicit the response. This may have been exacerbated by the intimation that many were here illegally and thus feared deportation. It may also be attributable to the fact that they were interviewed in English, as was discussed more fully in the Methodology Chapter. It has to be questioned whether the research has indeed altogether succeeded in giving voice to these migrant women, if their preference would have been to speak in their own language.

Because relatively few women were interviewed, it is not expected that this research will be representative of all Zimbabwean migrant women, or even all Zimbabwean migrant women in Gqebera, thus the findings are not generalisable to the greater population. However, as this research followed a phenomenological, interpretive orientation, the focus was on exploring the self-perceptions and meanings, rather than on generalising findings.
5.5 Concluding Remarks

The aim of this research was to explore the self-perceptions of Zimbabwean migrant women, in terms of their own identity. It is this researcher’s assertion that the aim has been met, as an increased understanding of migrant women’s self-perceptions has been reached. Through the in-depth interviews employed, the women shared their experiences of migration, as well as their realities pre-migration and post-migration. As Denzin (1989) states:

This sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate all of us.

Secondary aims were to explore how gender has affected the respondent’s lives; to enable understandings of the lifeworlds of the migrant women in the study and to describe the afore-mentioned themes of liminality, spatiality and relationality within the context of social identity.

It was apparent from the stories of the women that they lived as gendered beings. As indicated earlier, according to feminist theory, women are frequently oppressed not only as women, but also by virtue of their class, race and ethnicity. This was clearly evident in the experiences of the women interviewed. For some, the decision to migrate was necessitated by divorce instigated by their male spouses, leaving them economically exposed and unable to sustain themselves and their children in Zimbabwe. Some of the women also indicated that life subsequent to migration to Gqebera was problematised by their vulnerability as single women, as women outside of the protection of a male guardian. For some, this resulted in lives lived largely locked indoors, out of harm’s way.
For those women who were forced to leave their children in child-headed households in Zimbabwe, their gendered reality as mothers had specifically impacted on their lives. They made the decision to migrate for their children, to provide for them in the absence of male protection. They lived frugally in Gqebera in order to remit as much as possible to their children, and largely failed to assimilate because they intended to return home to these children. Their lives were lived, very definitely, as gendered – as women, as mothers.

With regards to the second of the secondary aims, notwithstanding the challenges of language as discussed earlier, the unstructured, open-ended interviews allowed for the lifeworlds of these women to be understood. The researcher was permitted entrance to the realities of life both pre- and post-migration, as well as the migration experience itself, through the stories of the respondents.

Finally, the three predominant themes of liminality, relationality and spatiality were apparent in the data obtained from the respondents. It was clear that the women had experienced, and were experiencing, extended periods of liminality from the time when they decided to migrate, continuing to the time of the interview. It was the expectation of the researcher that this period would only end when the women had returned home to Zimbabwe, if indeed this was possible, as the Zimbabwe they remembered might not exist in reality anymore.

Relationality as a theme was dominant in the women’s stories, not least because all but one was a mother. For all that the aspect of relationality could be seen as excessively problematic, in terms of assimilation into the host community and perceived lack of acceptance by that host community, relationality too was also strongly present in the social capital extended to the women interviewed. For most, their presence in Gqebera was facilitated through ties with fellow Zimbabweans, whether family members or virtual strangers.
The theme of spatiality too, was much explored by the women and indeed, was crucial in the construction of their identity. Home, both the literal and figurative place, remembered and imagined, was again, both a source of joy and pain. Home reminded them of what they had in the past: they imagined returning; but also made them more aware of what they had lost – their houses, their belongings and their families.

It is this researcher’s assertion, then, that the secondary aims of the research have also been met.

Finally, in as much as the research findings cannot be extrapolated to a wider population, and cannot be seen in any way as indicative of all migrant women’s reality, the research has succeeded in engendering greater understanding of these women. It is apparent that migration, itself a liminal event, impacts on a women’s identity, resulting in a reconstruction of her identity, as she goes about her quotidian existence.
LIST OF SOURCES


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Appendix A: Data Collection Instrument

Theme of Liminality

- Tell me about your experience of migration
- Has your perception of yourself changed since you migrated?
- Are you still the same person that you were before you migrated?

Theme of Spatiality

- Describe your home in Zimbabwe
- Where do you feel you belong?
- Describe your home here
- Where is home?
- What makes somewhere home?

Theme of Relationality

- Do you still have close ties with family or friends back in Zimbabwe?
- Do you have close ties with people in your host community?
- Do you feel you have a community here in Port Elizabeth?