

University of Zululand

Faculty of Arts

Department of Anthropology and Development studies.

**A study of Independent African migrant women in KwaZulu
Natal (South Africa):
Their lives and work experiences.**

A research project submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the **Degree
of M.A. in Anthropology**
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Submitted
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CERTIFICATION

**This is the work of Mrs Ojong Vivian Besem, student number 014296, of the
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Signed_____

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Abstract

African migration to South Africa is not a recent phenomenon but in recent history, dates back to about one hundred and fifty years when African men migrated from some southern African countries to work in the South African mines. During this period however, the apartheid regime restricted African entry into the labour market of South Africa to contract mine workers, who were obviously men. Due to the abolition of apartheid, African migration to South Africa now has a gender profile. Skilled, professional and businesswomen of African origin are now migrating independently to South Africa.

This new face of African migration is transforming South African society and culture. African women from other countries have migrated to South Africa with parts of their cultures (their dresses and their food). In South Africa, these women have acquired both positive and negative identities. The negative identities expose them to discrimination in South Africa. On the other hand, the positively acquired identities have given the women economic independence in their families and an occupational identity in their professions. In their attempt to adjust to life in South Africa, African migrant women encounter difficulties as a result of the restrictionist immigration policy of South Africa. These women are not happy with such a policy which is based solely on economic considerations. African women claim that they struggled alongside South Africans to bring apartheid to an end and were promised by the ANC-in-exile that they were going to be welcome in an apartheid-free South Africa. These women claim that they are here to make a contribution, which is clearly portrayed by their occupational experiences.

This study portrays the fact that African migrant women are impacting on South African society and are being impacted by it as well. As tempting as it is, it would be a mistake by the South African government to dismiss the current contribution made by these women both in the formal and informal sector of the South African economy. Coming from other African countries which have been plagued with political turmoil, degrading poverty and worsening of peoples living conditions (especially with the consequences of the implementation of the structural adjustment programs), migrant women have learnt to use their initiative, especially in the area of small businesses. This has enabled the women to transform their financial situations in their families. Diverse strategies have been utilised in this transformation; the inherent but powerful social networks which aided in relocating to new or particular areas in South Africa, financial and social support from their “fictive kin” system.

As a “modus operandi” for Ghanaian migrant women hairdressers, countrymen/women are employed from Ghana and brought to South Africa to work in their hair salons. Since South Africans believe that Ghanaians are the best hairdressers, the migrant women have decided to employ as many Ghanaians in their salons as possible, to keep their businesses busy even in their absence. Some of the migrant women have opened food shops where indigenous West African foods are sold to the migrant population. These shops are placed in strategic places, like in central Durban which is accessible to all living in KwaZulu-Natal.

In the formal sector, most of the migrant women were among the first black women to occupy certain positions, which were previously occupied by white South Africans. Positions such as supervisors in catering departments in hospitals, lecturers and head of departments at some universities are examples of the empowering contribution of migrant women to South African society.

These women's lives have also been impacted by South African society, especially in the apartheid era. Considering the precarious conditions under which migrant women from Zambia lived in KwaZulu-Natal in the apartheid era (they were considered as spies because Zambia hosted some of the A.N.C-in-exile and I.F.P dominated this area), it was in their best interest to watch every step they took because they could have been killed. However, they live to tell of how they narrowly escaped death.

Migration to South Africa by migrant nurses which once was considered as an opportunity to "have their own share of the gold" has turned to disillusionment. They have been caught in the web of the immigration policy of South Africa. The conditions for a migrant to stay in South Africa depend on how scarce his/her skill is. Nursing which was considered a scarce skill in the 1990s is no longer scarce. This has led to a second migration to England by the nurses. Despite the recent increase in this second migration, some have decided to use the opportunities of working and studying in South Africa to obtain university degrees, which they believe will improve their financial situations. According to the remarks made by some of the migrant women, they are happy to be where they are, for, comparatively, South Africa still has the best to offer migrant women in the African continent.

However, the migration literature shows that researchers in the field of migration have been gender-blind. Independent skilled, career and businesswomen of African origin have been side-lined in scholarly research on migration in post apartheid South Africa. In collecting data used for this study, the snowball method of sampling was used because other methods were not appropriate. The population of study was made of a core sample of ten women, although interviews were conducted informally with a cross-section with other migrant women. The study of independent African migrant women is an example of an ethnographic account at its best.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late mother, Nkongho Lucy.

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Chapter one

1.1 Introduction

African people have always migrated over long distances either to trade or to work. Men, usually unaccompanied by their wives and children, move long distances to work for a few months or a few years in factories, mines and farms in their own or neighboring countries and then return home. In West Africa the migrants were attracted to the mining areas of Ghana and the Jos Plateau, the cocoa farms of southern Ghana and western Nigeria.

In south and east Africa in the early 19th century, migrant labor took place on a large scale. Grove (1967) stated that in Malawi, for instance, of the total number of able bodied adult males, one-third at any one time were working abroad as wage-earners, mainly in Rhodesia and the Republic of South Africa. He further explained that the basic reason why Africans moved from their areas of origin into employment as wage laborers was the growth of mining, industrial, and agricultural enterprises in Southern Africa.

Some distinguishing factors between the 19th century and 20th century trend of African migrations are examined below:

19th century migration had the following characteristics;

- Migrants were predominantly male
- The governments and the companies employing labor were anxious to avoid responsibility for establishing communities of immigrants, and the expense of housing them. The migrants were provided with bachelor quarters only and there was little opportunity for them to lead a normal family life.
- They had to return to their country at the end of their contract.

On the hand, the 20th century African migration has the following features:

- Men and women are independent migrants

- When they migrate, their families often accompany them
- The government or employment bodies often re-locate such migrants as well as their families
- Migrants are given the opportunity to apply for permanent resident permits.
- Some migrants are given permanent employment.

Looking at the complete picture of African migration especially to South Africa, one will be tempted to ask the question: when did it begin and what is the present day situation? Indeed, African labor migration to South Africa is not something new. The large-scale employment of non-South African labor by the South African mines goes back 150 years. Migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Lesotho came on foot to work on the Kimberley diamond mines. When the Witwatersand gold mines opened in the 1890s, migrants from other parts of southern Africa, (Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Angola) joined migrants from the above mentioned areas. Migration for work preceded the drawing of colonial boundaries and cross-border migration continued after those borders were established.

During the period when the white- dominated apartheid regime employed cheap labor from some southern African countries, some African governments prevented their citizens from coming to South Africa. In Cameroon, for example, if one obtained the international passport, it had the clause "enter any country except South Africa". Actually this was implemented as part of the struggle against apartheid. So, immediately after the abolition of apartheid, African migration took on a new face.

The issue in the migration nexus in post -apartheid South Africa is the nature, and the gender composition of its migrant population. Present-day South Africa seems to have encompassed the whole of the African continent. Anybody on the streets of Ulundi, Durban or Johannesburg will be quick to recognize the diversity of dressing of the people. If the different types of dressing do not "ring a bell" in the head of that individual, the different accents of the peoples on the streets and in the shops, hospitals,

churches, will “throw light” on the presence of people, especially women, from other countries of Africa.

As a prelude to the migration of the peoples of other African countries to South Africa is the fact that the states of Africa have experienced dramatic change since colonial rulers transferred power to their African successors. African economies have been vulnerable to changing international markets, corrupt appropriation of limited resources, rising debts, and external direction of their policies. These governments continue to be burdened by high debt repayments. In 1999 their total external indebtedness amounted to approximately US\$236,000 million (Williams 2001). What actually happened is that during the 1970s governments in Africa borrowed money, far beyond their capacity to repay, from commercial banks, foreign governments and the World Bank. During the 1980s, they were confronted with declining exports and high real interest rates for their long and short-term debts. The debt crisis both created the need, and provided the opportunity for the introduction of structural adjustment policies (SAP) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The implementation of the SAP policies saw many citizens of African countries being retrenched.

Since achieving independence, more than one-half of sub-Saharan African countries have been caught up in civil wars, or uprisings, which ultimately have led to large-scale migrations. Under these circumstances, the government of South Africa has taken a stand on limiting the number of people entering the country from other African countries on a purely economic basis. This is because most of the would-be immigrants from the rest of the African continent are always in need of employment. In a comparative overview, the South African economy is blossoming more than those of the other African countries, which have either been torn by war or civil unrest, SAP and poverty. Looking at the present state of African migration to South Africa with the end of apartheid and the institution of democracy, the government which took over power should have anticipated the flocking in of foreign African workers because of the promises that were made to the other African countries during the years of the struggle. African migrants in South Africa expected to be welcomed because of the part played by their various

governments during the apartheid struggle. Migrant women indicated their participation in the struggle by mentioning the generous donations that they gave to support the ANC-in-exile. In return, they were promised that they would be welcomed in South Africa should South Africa obtain its freedom.

In connection with the promises, therefore, the government of South Africa, specifically the Department of Home Affairs should rethink the sacrifices made by other African citizens before embarking on such a restrictionist immigration policy. As can already be seen from the heated debate in Parliament over the implementation of the new Immigration Bill for South Africa, the treatment of migrants from other African countries has drawn serious attention and must be handled with care. Migration around the African continent has taken new forms especially after South Africa became open to the rest of the African countries. Earlier forms of migration to South Africa saw men as mine/plantation workers from SADC countries on a contract basis but the contemporary picture shows that skilled men and women are working in South Africa on a temporary and permanent basis. African migrant women in South Africa have attained high echelons at their work places and in certain occupations, like hairdressing, they have acquired positive identities.

This new phase of migration in the African continent is transforming South African society and culture. African migrant women are now importing their indigenous foods to South Africa. Where possible, they have planted their indigenous vegetables and tubers in KwaZulu-Natal. Cultural groupings have been formed which are replicas of what happens back in their home countries. These are one of the means they have used to adjust to life in South Africa. This African migration is creating and developing transnational identities. By transnational identities, I mean the feeling of belonging to two societies at the same time. In his/her country elsewhere in Africa, a person is a citizen, but in South Africa the migrant is known as "kwerekwere". This means that you are a stranger and exposes the migrant to alienation and discrimination. The situation of black African migrant women is worst because, being a person with a dark pigmentation, an African migrant woman is expected to be able to speak, for instance, the Zulu language

in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Failing to respond to remarks in Zulu, she will be referred to as "Mlungu Mnyama" which actually means "a white black" in the Zulu language. A black person who cannot speak Zulu.

Moreover, the migration literature reveals that researchers in the field of migration in South Africa have been "gender blind". Arguably, gender is one of the oldest forces shaping human life. It distinguishes between male and female activities, tasks, dress and so on (Glenn 1999). Conceptualization of gender as a process yields a more praxis-oriented perspective wherein gender identities are fluid, not fixed. Recognizing the fact that gender becomes embedded in migration studies lays the foundation for constructive analyses of present-day African migration to South Africa.

If one agrees with this evaluation of gender, then it is difficult to accept the fact that skilled, educated, professional and businesswomen of African origin have been sidelined in scholarly research on migration in South Africa. Indeed, the migration literature reveals that both black African migration and the research on black migration to South Africa have been gendered processes. Early studies focused exclusively on male migrants while women played passive roles as companions (Crush 1991, Breytenbach 1979, Bohninh 1981). Some initial corrective that was applied, simply redressed male bias by adding women as a variable, not as central focus (Peberdy and Oucho 2000, Mattes et al 2000, Crush and McDonald 1999). However, researchers with a more feminist angle have produced publications that document the predominance of women in the migration flows of South Africa, but with African migrant women seen as traders (Dodson 1998, Muzvidziwa 2001).

My aim then, is not simply to document or highlight the presence of African migrant women who are present in South Africa, or to ask the same type of questions that are asked of immigrant African men, but to study the lives and work experiences of the women from the social actors' point of view.

This study seeks to fill a strategic gap by analyzing in depth not only various features of the lives of African migrant women abroad, but also the background to the migration of these women, which is often ignored. Morokvasic (1983) noted that any behavior perceived as different from the stereotyped image of a traditional (immobile) woman is then attributed to the new milieu, whereas it is not impossible that it existed before emigration took place. For many writers on migration, it is as if all women come from a condition of firm roots and unquestioned values and as if no social changes affected them before they moved abroad (Morokvasic 1983).

Many studies on migrant women have neglected any reference to their background. They are treated only as immigrants; their lives analyzed only from the moment they enter the new country. Their experience prior to emigration is vaguely referred to as “traditional” irrespective of their origins. Failure to take background into consideration is a particular drawback when it comes to interpreting the effects on women of the migration process (Morokvasic 1983).

It is also important to note that this work is focussed on independent African migrant women whether they be married or single. The title independent as defined by Chant (1992:14) refers to the physical act of migration, which is undertaken alone. Synonymous with autonomous migration, Abadan-Unat (1986) states that this type of migration represents an individual decision and should be accounted for as a product of an emancipatory process.

With regard to foreign African professional, business and career women in South Africa, there is presently little literature available. This is because researchers in the field of migration have concentrated mostly on African migrant men. Where women were treated as subjects, they were often seen as cross-border traders (Dodson 1998, Muzvidziwa 2001). Also, all of these studies end up with quantitative materials without much depth. The literature available does not give a thorough reflection of the lives of women migrants in South Africa *per se*. This lack of literature makes background research on the lives of African migrant women particularly difficult in South Africa. Without life

histories and extensive interviews, and observation, it is virtually impossible to say any conclusive thing about the lives and work experiences of African migrant women. In terms of depth, questionnaires and other pre-structured measuring instruments can shed light on certain aspects of the lives of the migrant women in South Africa but when it comes to actually portraying the real picture of the life of an African migrant women, these instruments are not useful.

In getting a sample for my study, there were several complications, which came about partly as a result of the fact that many foreign women of African origin did not want to be interviewed due to the sensitivity of immigration related issues in South Africa. (This applied even to professional migrant women who are here legally and hold top positions with employers). Also, due to the nature of the research, it was really difficult to find African women who migrated without the company of men or being guided by a male family member. This is because in the African continent men usually migrate and leave their wives behind and women were always dependants of men.

These constraints did not stop me from carrying out the research but instead gave me the courage to develop strategies for getting the required information. With these constraints in mind, I decided to use the snowball method of sampling. This was because other methods of sampling were not practical for this type of study. Since I was looking for professional, career and businesswomen of African origin, I used personal contacts to build up a sample of these migrant women (Haralambos and Holborn 1995). Once I got in touch with one of them, through her, I was able to meet more migrant women. Also, after a discussion with an informant, I then asked her to suggest another woman, with a background similar to hers, who might be willing to talk to me.

Truly, such a snowball sample cannot be representative since, to have any chance of being included in this study one must be part of a network of personal contacts. But to study such a group of women, it was not easy to use other ways of obtaining a sample. I used in-depth interviewing and participant-observation in gathering the stories from the different informants. The richness of the data comes from the fact that I was involved in

getting to know my informants over a twelve-month period, which allowed me to follow the events in their lives. I also collected additional information from numerous informal contacts and situations with other migrant women.

My population was made up of a core sample of ten women, five being key informants. However, interviews were conducted informally with a range of other migrant women. Significantly, the analysis is detailed enough to show a real picture of the many dimensions and different experiences of the lives of the African migrant woman in South Africa. Information like this will provide a useful reference and guidelines to other researchers. Besides the depth of the analysis, as the findings portray, the work experiences of black African migrant women are rewarding.

1.2 Background to the study

The number of people in today's world who have left their home country and moved to a completely different environment is far larger than ever before in human history. The migration of earlier centuries involved far smaller numbers of people than the present migration waves. People think nothing of accepting a job offer in another country or on the other side of the globe. In earlier times, the decision to migrate to another country was a major consideration. It was fraught with danger and risk. Undertaking such a move might also mean never seeing parents, siblings, other family members and friends again. It was a very big decision.

It should be noted that the nature, volume, direction, causes and consequences of migration have changed over the decades (Samuel 1989). Anthropologically speaking, migration is an irrepressible human urge. People have always wanted to move to places with more spiritual freedom, greater political liberty or higher standards of living.

According to Cholewinski (1997), the satisfaction of basic needs in their country of origin does not constitute a threshold at which the urge to migrate suddenly vanishes or loses legitimacy.

Today, over 125 million people live, temporarily or permanently, outside their country of origin, according to United Nations figures. That is one in every 50 human beings. International migration is rarely permanent, but is relatively long-term in order to justify the risk and costs involved in moving to work abroad (Chant 1992). International migration flows are almost invariably from poorer to richer countries, and are particularly proximate (close to each other). Examples include the migration of people from Lesotho, Botswana and Malawi to South Africa (Chant 1992). Also, the international migration of professional workers has increased in scope over the past years, as skilled workers are needed when companies' activities cross national borders (Willis et al 2001).

There are often significant differences between men and women in their motives for migration and in their volume of movement. The consequences for the people who migrate and those who remain behind also differ. Although economic pressures for migration are frequently the same for men and women, men commonly migrate in larger numbers than women (Turshen and Holcomb 1993:58) and when African women migrate, they are most likely to join their husbands already in settled jobs.

However, migrants of both sexes do face challenges not faced by nonmigrants. To leave the relative security of the known and of kin, however materially deprived the conditions,

and to migrate to a novel environment, however rich in possibilities for improving one's quality of life, requires adaptation to new expectations, mores, values, skill requirements, language and ways of communication, daily habits, and so forth. International migrants face the confusion and often corruption surrounding visas, passports and employment agencies (Turshen and Holcomb 1993).

The contrasts between the place left and the place to which one migrates often may be greater for women than for men because the destination is usually more modernised than the place of departure and thus the societal expectations about gender roles has begun to change in the new abode. Obviously, this may result in greater ultimate advantage for women, but it also creates greater challenges to adapt (Turshen and Holcomb 1993).

International migratory movements of our times show a significant change in their occupational composition. These movements are no longer "expressions of a trend towards equalisation of economic density" (which is the relationship between the number of inhabitants and the resources at their disposal). Today manpower goes where not only economic but also social opportunities are better (Jackson 1969:15). The migration process involves growing awareness of another country and the opportunities afforded by it; increasing appreciation of the other society, its institutions and future, development of new contacts, networks and support mechanism, integration in the area of destination, permanent or temporary (Samuel 1998).

1.3 Motivation for the study

Migration in contemporary South Africa is characterised by the immigration of men and women from other parts of Africa. A lot has been documented about international migration but most often as Morokvasic (1983) and others in Buijs (1993) noted, until the mid -1970s women were invisible in studies of migrancy, and when they did emerge, tended to do so within the category of dependants of men. This observation is particularly true in the migration field. Many studies of migration dealt with women as a residual category, as those "left behind". Where they crossed borders, women have generally been treated as dependent or family members. There is a considerable body of literature dealing with migration in South Africa, but with little mention of women as migrants.

Research on women migrants in the 1980s and early 1990s emanated mainly from Botswana (Izzard, 1985; Peters, 1983) and Lesotho (Kimble, 1982) and although there is an extensive literature dealing with migration in South Africa, there is little mention of foreign women as migrants, except for Lesotho (Buijs, 1993).

Turning to the present period, one might well want to ask why women are still so invisible. Several hypotheses are worth entertaining. These range from the idea that skilled women do not migrate internationally or that if they do, they give up their careers. Another explanation might be that males fill the shortage skills and so it is difficult for women professionals and managers to cross borders. Finally, we might want to argue that

although women have gained access to professional occupations and managerial positions, they have not risen to the echelons where they might be expected to take up overseas assignments.

An interesting comment made about the current trend of skilled migration to South Africa is where Peberdy and Ouchou (2000) conclude that women comprise a small but significant and growing segment of skilled migrants. Unfortunately, they did not expand on this point. Also in current research in South Africa where African women have been mentioned as skilled migrants, their numbers are small compared to those of men. Mattes et al (2000) in their study of skilled migrants and immigration policy in post apartheid South Africa, concluded that only 21% of the sample population were skilled African migrant women while 79 % were men. An important but distorted picture is being painted about African migrant women in South Africa. In her study, Dodson (1998) noted that men and women migrate to South Africa for different reasons. Men migrate primarily in search of employment, whereas women migrate largely to trade.

One cannot fully understand this recent pattern of African migration to South Africa without including studies of women as skilled and professional migrants. There is a need to single out women as independent migrants with their unique experiences and opportunities.

This study intends to fill this gap by singling out independent foreign African migrant women, not the poor, but career, educated and business women in South Africa. Research

of this nature will be an “eye-opener” to the fact that skilled and professional African women do migrate to South Africa and though they migrate independently, can be successful without the surveillance of men-folk

1.4 Objectives of the study

The study is intended to describe in depth the lives and work experiences of professional, business and career women of non-South Africa origin residing in some of the urban areas of KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. A central focus was to explore how certain forces in their countries of origin and the economic conditions in South Africa as well as the social conditions in South Africa have shaped the lives of the women, together with the education, training and the wealth of experience they possess. In this regard, I investigated the possibilities of black African women’s empowerment through the migratory experience in South Africa.

Living and working in the KwaZulu-Natal province, I also tried to examine the events that have shaped their work experiences and their daily experiences as black African migrant women. It was important at this point to explore how being African women has affected that identity and how their specific identity has affected their lives. Due to the fact that migrant women are found in different occupations, I decided to analyze their experiences to enable me to understand how they have been able to adjust to their new milieu.

The study was also developed to understand the reasons why African women migrated independently to South Africa and the extent of their social networks. Due to the fact that African women migrated to South Africa to live and work, it was also important to understand the ways in which the immigration policy of South Africa has affected the lives of the women.

1.5 Methodology

Methodology refers to the systematic ways of producing and analysing data so that theories can be tested, accepted or rejected. It is concerned with both the detailed research methods through which data are collected and more general philosophies upon which the collection and analysis of data are based (Haralambos and Holborn 1997). The methodology embodies the area of study, research design, sampling and data collection techniques used. It was very important for this research to be qualitative because of the nature of the research problem. This type of research which had to uncover the nature of people's experiences could not have been possible using primarily quantitative methods.

Qualitative research refers to any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can give intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Hammersley (1990) argues that conceptualising the social world in terms of variables and the relationships among them abstracts away the character of social life and produces distorted, inconclusive, irrelevant, banal, or even plainly false results. He suggests that if we

are to understand the social world, rather than aping the natural sciences, we must attune our methods of inquiry to its nature.

The qualitative method is often seen as richer, more vital, as having greater depth and as more likely to present a true picture of a way of life of people's experiences. One of the major setbacks of this method is that such research uses a small sample, which makes it difficult to generalise its results.

A focal concern in collecting data for my research was to explore how the migration experience has shaped the lives and careers of black African migrant women. Coming from a background, in the African continent whereby the woman is seen as immobile or a trailing spouse or better still, as a cross-border trader, it was necessary for me to find out the circumstances and events that have made African women migrate independently, and most importantly, having in place of trailing wives, trailing husbands.

In this regard, I needed to know the changes that have taken place in South Africa (being the recipient country both economically and politically), which have enabled these women to gain access to both formal and informal employment. It became necessary for me to try to get behind the media reported behaviour of African migrants in South Africa and look at the issue of contemporary African migration from the social actors themselves.

1.5.1 Area of study

The study was carried out in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, in various urban areas such as Durban, Empangeni and Ulundi. These areas have a larger immigrant population of African origin because of the job and business opportunities in KwaZulu-Natal. It was for these reasons that I decided to conduct the research in these three urban areas. Durban particularly is known for its cosmopolitan immigrant population and was even chosen to host the last world conference on racism.

1.5.2 Population of study

The population of study was made up of a core sample of ten women, five being key informants. All were women who migrated independently and are residing in the three urban areas where I carried out the research. Among these women, there were married, separated and divorced as well single women. The core women for the research were: Maria Mokilabai, Silvia Akua, Cindy Mundai, Doreen Makomba, Amina Esua, Margaret Dayo, Dina Kijamba, Benedicta Tanyi, Bridget Lukiya and Golda Dnong. However, interviews were conducted informally with a range of other migrant women.

1.5.3 Sampling procedure

A sample is a small part of a larger population and is usually selected to be representative of the larger population. However for this study, the snowball method of sampling was used.

This was because other methods of sampling were not practical for this type of study. Since I was looking for professional, career and businesswomen of African origin, I used personal contacts, being a fellow black African migrant woman, to build up a sample of these independent women. Once I got in touch with one of them, through her, I was able to meet more migrant women. Also, after discussions with an informant, I then asked her to suggest another woman with a background similar to hers (any woman who undertook the immigration process alone), who might be willing to talk to me. Snowballing is the only useful method of sampling in studies of difficult-to-find populations like independent African migrant women in South Africa (Haralambos and Holborn 1995). This method was perfect for the study because this category of women is most likely to be in contact with one another. Such a sample cannot be representative since to have any chance of being included in the study one must be part of a network of personal contact. But to study such a group of women, it was not easy to use other ways of obtaining a sample.

1.5.4 Method of data collection

A combination of methods of data collection, including unstructured in-depth interviews, participant observation and life histories were used in this study. Unstructured indepth interviews provide a framework for a subject to speak freely on his or her own terms about a set of concerns which the researcher brings to the interaction and whatever else the subject may introduce. Generally with in-depth interviewing, the researcher has an idea of what basic issues he or she wishes to cover in interviews. Although free narration by the subject is encouraged, such narration must be guided if the interviews and the data that are collected

are to contribute to the research objectives (Mouton and Marais 1993). A pilot study was carried out before the main research. This was because of the following reasons:

i). Since interviews were to be used, the questions were tested to make sure that they made sense to the respondents and that they produced the required information. However, it was discovered that they were inadequate for such a study that needed depth. The fact that these individuals were not prepared to write about their personal lives on a piece of paper, made questionnaires obsolete for this study. Also, when asked a question on the questionnaire such as "why did you come to South Africa?" Respondents quickly filled in "to look for employment". The questionnaire does not bring out the researching skills of the anthropologist and so renders her helpless. Real life experiences could not be got through the questionnaires.

ii) The pilot project also helped me in developing ways of getting full co-operation from my informants. However it should be noted that the pilot study was carried out on independent foreign African migrant women who did not constitute part of the later sample.

When I started this research, I really did not know how far I was going to be consumed by it. Dealing with people's experiences is not as easy as counting the number of people in an area or asking where they live. It is a very sentimental issue because such research into the lives and work experiences of women who are not in their countries of origin, has the consequences of unveiling covered wounds, bringing out people's real emotional state and the realities of what happened before the move as well as their daily encounters in their

country of abode, which can never be known through quantitative research. Structured interviews are inadequate in analysing subjects that deal with human behaviour. Since qualitative data are usually presented in words, they provide a full and in-depth account of the way of life of people. Carrying out such research that has to do with women's experiences with the approach applied is seen as richer, more vital, as having greater depth and as more likely to present a true picture of a way of life of people's experiences, attitudes and beliefs (Haralambos and Holborn 1995).

In carrying out this research, the importance of the use of life histories was realised. Life histories are a recollection of lifetime experiences, which provide a more intimate and personal cultural portrait than would be possible otherwise. Life histories reveal how specific people perceive, react to, and contribute to changes that affect their lives. Such accounts can illustrate diversity, which exist within any community, since the focus is on how different people interpret and deal with some of the same problems (Kottack 1994: 26).

During the pilot project, the life histories assisted in the following ways:

- i. In developing an understanding of concepts that were used by the migrant women.
- ii. In seeing the world from the social actor's point of view
- iii. In giving me inspiration for future research in related areas.

Although extensive life histories were collected, when writing, shortened versions were used to illustrate specific issues. These were constructed to explicate the process of change and method of adaptation to life in South Africa. This provided a useful guide for analysing anthropological information with its minutiae of interpersonal actions and reactions. The life

histories collected illustrated changes in the social identity of the women. This was achieved through description of their lives in their countries of origin before migrating to South Africa, as well as accounts of their experiences in South Africa.

It is important to note here that information was collected from each person on life in their countries of origin, including stories about memorable events as well as information relating to household composition and family life, and occupation among other issues. In these interviews, the women decided what aspects of their lives were important while I guided the interview and asked probing questions.

Information was collected over a period of twelve months. This information was gathered about the rural background of the women, their education and career and marriage. Each set of interviews was arranged for a particular month, even-though I always went back to the informants when I needed more information, or when some important aspect of the study was left out. Usually, their homes were used as the venues for the interviews except in a few cases where the informants decided to visit me and the interviews were conducted at my home. Most of the time, I stayed for a few days at the informants' home and where more than one person was to be interviewed at a particular town, I spent one week there.

Depending on whether the woman to be interviewed was my key informant, background information about her was already known to me upon arrival at her home from the one who introduced the informant to me. In a few cases when I was about to finish the collection of data (these women were not expected to give detailed explanations about their lives unless

they wanted to do so). I had no prior information about them, except the fact that they were introduced to me as independent African migrant women.

With the common anti-immigrant attitude in South Africa, it became necessary for me to explain to my informants the purpose of the research and assure them of confidentiality. Even though this was assured, many women who could have been very helpful in this research became scared of either being deported or harassed. Some abandoned the interview process halfway or just refused to disclose information, which they deemed crucial for their survival in South Africa.

The very nature of the research was such that the private life of the informant had to be known. With all of these obstacles in mind, I tried to create an intimate relationship with ten of the women I interviewed in order to gain their trust. This made the whole research process very expensive because money had to be spent most of the time to maintain these relationships by phoning and visiting even after the research process had ended. At times I had to phone some of the women's husbands in Zambia and encourage them to visit their wives. So these women now saw our relationship not on the basis of researcher and respondent, but as friends. They became very open and did their best to give me the required information. One of the informants even made a joke and remarked "after revealing every secret of my life to you, when you get a job the first salary will be used in eating at the best restaurant", meaning I should buy her a good meal.

The use of a small tape recorder was very important because as we spoke the recorder recorded every thing we discussed. It would have been impossible to collect such rich data with any other instrument. However, lengthy hours were spent after each interview in transcribing the information from the tapes. Some of the things that no researcher would ever anticipate to happen to their tapes happened to mine. After the second day of interview with Maria M. (a key informant), when I got home and put on the tape, it was so noisy that I could barely hear a thing. I had to make another appointment and repeated the interview. The second problem I encountered was the most embarrassing one. Before travelling to Durban to interview Carie K. the tape recorder was checked and it was working well. After the interview I travelled back to Empangeni. The following day when I wanted to listen to the tape, it was with much shock when I found out that there was nothing recorded on the tape. Totally disappointed, I had to make another trip to Durban and this time, used a different tape recorder.

Apart from using a tape recorder, notebooks were used into which information got through observation was written. Observation helps in the development of intuition, the gathering of dependable data and the formation of a holistic viewpoint (Johnson 1978). Also, a still camera was used in getting photographs of events, items and places, which were deemed necessary in giving an understanding of the concept with which I was dealing.

1.5.5 My personal experiences during the research

It is important to understand what African migrant women have endured in order to understand the way such research affects the anthropologist. My reactions and my emotional state during and after the research portrayed the fact that I was not just a researcher but a human being and fellow African migrant woman, albeit not an independent migrant.

It is a complicated issue to study the lives of people because in the process, the anthropologist becomes involved in the lives of the very people she is studying. As hidden wounds became uncovered, I found myself most of the time with the women crying. What can one do in such a situation? The subject of discussion had to be changed and at times it meant staying longer at the informant's home to be sure she had recovered before leaving. At other times, due to the emotional states of some of my informants, I had to phone their husbands back in Zambia and encourage them to visit their wives. It was an enriching and empowering experience at the end and prepared me for further research.

1.6 Limitations of the study

Due to the sensitivity of immigration related issues in South Africa the process of data collection was not an easy one. Some of the women who migrated independently and are in well-placed jobs and well-established businesses did not want to be interviewed. These are the migrant women who would have made the findings very rich because they have

been in South Africa for many years and are already well established with all their immediate families and some of their siblings in South Africa.

Also, this study would have been more revealing if it was carried out in an urban area like Johannesburg or Port Elizabeth, which has a majority of the immigrant population of African origin in South Africa. However, being a student with meagre resources, it was impossible for me to carry out this research beyond the boundaries of KwaZulu-Natal. Even within the area of my study, there were times that I really found it expensive to stay longer at my informant's home.

Dealing with an immigrant population, which is a very mobile one, I encountered some problems. Some of the migrant women nurses whom I had started interviewing for the research migrated to England to work there, while the medical doctors went to Belgium. In such circumstances, the interviews were aborted. HIV and AIDS was another stumbling block. Some of the women whom I started interviewing became ill and consequently died.

What really helped me collect detailed information was the fact that the women I was dealing with were in one way or another in contact with one another and this made it possible for me to meet with more migrant women, whenever I wanted to. The women are connected to each other because living in a foreign land, they need someone who will help them both economically and socially should the need arise. This is clearly demonstrated among the Ghanaian migrant women. They have formed a community of

migrants from Ghana and each person's contact details are available in case of an emergency. It helps them to relocate to certain areas for businesses and for moral support.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This study reviews literature selected from an extensive bibliography relating to issues on migration to South Africa of Africans from other African countries. A key objective of the review was to develop an understanding of the experiences of independent migrant women in South Africa and the connection between their home countries and South Africa. Therefore much of the literature reviewed focuses on the push and pull factors surrounding African migration to South Africa as well as the adjustment experiences of migrants. A review of literature about the immigration-related issues has enriched the projects' understanding of African migration to South Africa from both a historical and contemporary perspective.

Reviewing this literature has also helped to clarify the relevance of a comprehensive study of independent African migrant women's experiences in South Africa. The review process has revealed a limitation in much of the literature due to the tendency to categorise African migrants as a homogenous group. This study has attempted to address this limitation by focusing on independent African migrant women.

The literature reviewed here includes the cultural aspect of migration, African migration to South Africa, African female migration to South Africa, the importance of migration for women, migrant women and the regeneration of their indigenous culture, reasons why African people migrate to South Africa and social networking in international migration as well as the immigration policy of South Africa.

2.1 The cultural aspect of migration

It is commonplace to find women migrating with their husbands or under the surveillance and protection of men-folks. As far as gender differences in individual migration are concerned, it is probably true to say that independent movement is more likely among men than women, especially where there is strong cultural pressure for women to remain under the protection of menfolk. It is important to note that while women might migrate as individuals, decisions on their movement may be strongly circumscribed by other members of the family unit or kin group (Chant 1992). In the Philippines for example, migrating decisions of young single women are usually structured with respect to potential benefits for the household as a whole. Here fathers often decide on the migration of daughters, and daughters who move are expected to provide substantial assistance thereafter to parents and siblings (Chant 1992).

When people move from one country to another, one can expect them to experience a certain amount of confusion, disorientation and emotional upheaval. For example, a woman who moves from Cameroon to South Africa will require some degree of adjustment. We expect such a woman to experience culture shock. She will have to adjust to differences that include language (Cameroon has two official languages - English and French, with 250 dialects), mode of dressing, and food, just to name a few.

Culture, in its broadest sense is what makes you a stranger when you are away from home (Bock 1970). It includes all those beliefs and expectations about how people should speak and which have become a kind of second nature to you as a result of social learning. When you are with members of a group who share your culture, you do not have to think about it, for you are all viewing the world in pretty much the same way and you all know, in general terms, what to expect of one another. However, direct exposure to an alien society usually produces a disturbing feeling of disorientation and helplessness that is called "culture shock" (Bock 1970)

If someone brought up in Swaziland moves to South Africa, that person will find most of his expectations about people's behavior fulfilled with only minor adjustments, he will be able to operate in the new situation and interact with the people there. This is because the culture of the Swazi is similar to that of the Zulus. If on the other hand, someone from Nigeria moves to South Africa, he will find his habitual systems of expectations so unreliable. In general, the more "exotic" the alien society and the deeper one's immersion in its social life, the greater the shock. The outstanding features of culture shock include inability to make any sense out of behavior of others or to predict what they will say or do. One's customary categories of experience are no longer useful, and habitual actions elicit seemingly bizarre responses. A friendly gesture may be treated as a threat, whereas a serious and sensible question may provoke laughter or uncomprehending silence. For a brief time, the novelty of the situation may be pleasant or amusing. But the person subject to extreme culture shock is often unsure whether he has gone mad or whether all the

people around him are crazy, perhaps both. Even the experience of not being able to communicate with others does not help one's own situation (Bock 1970).

Migrant adjustment can be defined as the process by which a migrant responds to a change from one place to another in the physical, economic and social environment (Goldscheider, 1983). All migrants do experience change. Adjustment is most difficult when migrants go to a culture very different from that of their home country. These problems intensify when migrants do not share a common language with the people at the place of their destination. It is a major stress and challenge to adjust to a new society with different social structures, institutions, cultural values and expectations, different politics and economy, different food, and new and unfamiliar beliefs and practices. There are also the challenges of trying to learn a new language, trying to find employment and perhaps getting qualifications recognised. These tasks may be complicated by language barriers. Some women must learn to live without male protection and support for the first time. Rebuilding their lives alone, or with limited support from informal networks, can reinforce the feeling that they are caught between two cultures and belong to neither.

International migration represents a situation in which the newly arrived individuals are required to cope with substantial cultural change. All individuals in a new cultural milieu share common adaptation experiences. All are "strangers" to a foreign land and no one can completely escape from the demands of the new life setting (Kim and Gudykunst 1987:8).

Being aware of the risk, moving into a new and unfamiliar land makes cultural strangers alert and quick to learn. Sooner or later, the migrant comes to structure, or better make sense of a personally relevant situation in the host society.

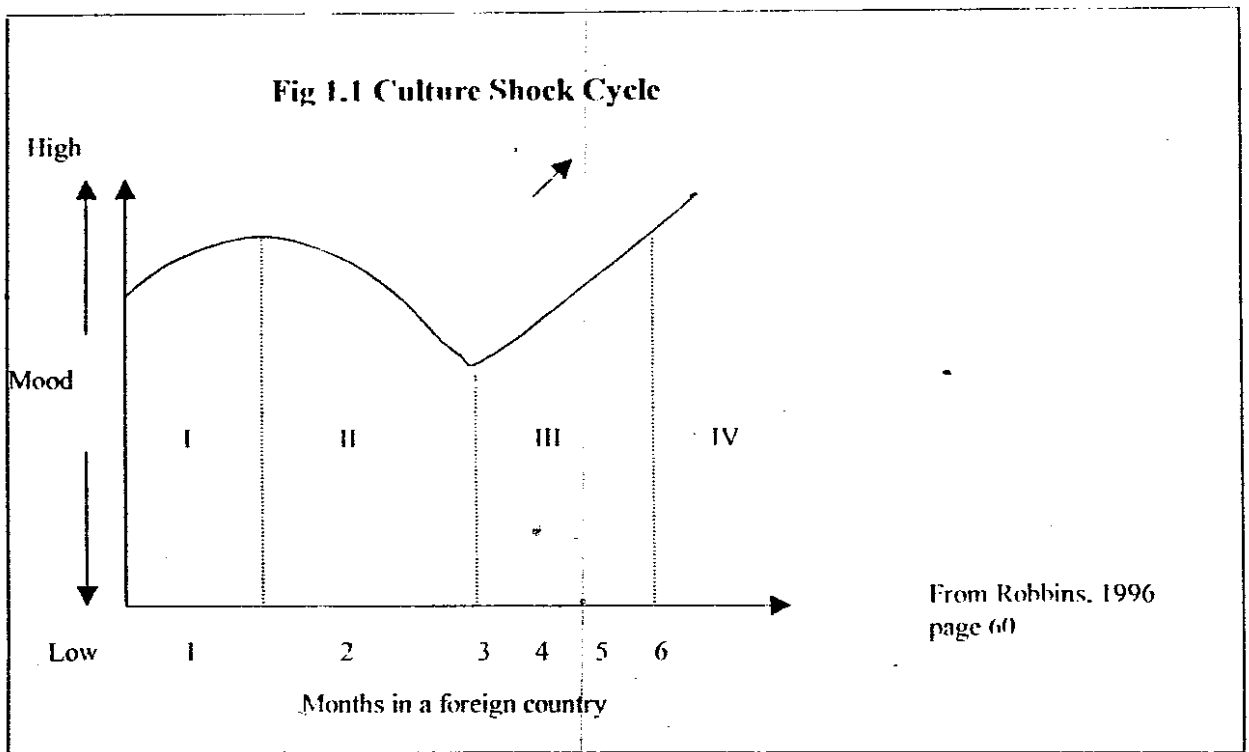
The immigrant adaptation process is influenced by pre-migratory conditions, the transitional experience in moving from one country to another, the characteristics of the immigrants themselves, and the conditions in the receiving country, including economic factors as well as government policies (Richmond 1988). Some other important determinants of immigrant adaptation include age on arrival in the new country and the education and qualification of the immigrants concerned (Richmond 1988). The aspects of migration constitute another factor to be taken into consideration. Independent, economically motivated migrants may travel alone or with their immediate family only. If they do not have pre-arranged employment, they may be compelled to depend on their own initiative and resources in order to establish themselves at first. (Richmond 1988). The government or employers may assist others in this category in these early stages of adjustment. Subsequently, migrants may sponsor family members (Neuwirth and Clark 1981 in Richmond 1988).

The reaction of members of the new community toward the immigrant will have diverse influences on how the new immigrant settles in and adapts (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989). It cannot be ignored that the local community feels the impact of the newcomer, for his/her presence modifies the group structure, can throw doubt on the community's moral, political, or scientific ground-rules, and can destabilize the existing group

organization. Therefore, the community will find it a difficult task to incorporate the presence of a stranger in their midst. It is not only the migrant who feels his identity endangered; in a different way the community on the receiving end may feel that its cultural identity, the purity of its language, its beliefs, and its sense of group identity are also threatened (Grinberg and Grinberg 1989). In my study, the migrant women were often labeled as outsiders (KwereKwere) especially with their inability to communicate in Zulu. The migrant women however took this challenge and learnt the Zulu language. This in a way made some of the Zulus feel threatened because they realized that they can no longer discuss in their language without the migrant women understanding. This was the case with one of my informants, Cindy, who became fluent in Zulu and her colleagues asked her to stop speaking Zulu on the pretext that she was going to forget her own language.

Recent economic crises and wars in most African countries have aggravated the problems of adaptation facing immigrants while at the same time, increasing hostility towards them by those who feel threatened by foreigners (Richmond 1988).

The adjustment to a foreign country can be modeled as following a u-shaped curve that contains four distinct stages of mood. This is shown in fig 1.1



Stage I is one of novelty. The newcomer is excited and optimistic. His or her mood is high. For the temporary visitor to a foreign country, this stage is all that is experienced. However, a person who makes a permanent or relatively permanent stay experiences euphoria and then disillusionment.

In stage II, the “quaint” quickly becomes “obsolete” and the “traditional” inefficient. The opportunity to learn a new language turns into the reality of struggling to communicate. After a few months, the newcomer’s mood hits the bottom.

At stage III, culture differences have become blatantly clear. Frustration and confusion are highest, and mood lowest at this stage. Finally, the newcomer begins to adapt and the negative responses related to culture shock dissipate.

In stage IV the newcomer has learnt what is important and what can be ignored about the new culture. So after about four to six months, most people adjust to their new culture (Robbins, 1996).

Among the people who enter any country, some plan to stay permanently, others plan to return and others have uncertain plans. Whether or not persons desire to go back to their country of origin or to another country, is a reflection of their own unique experiences. The decision to move depends on the duration of stay. The shorter the duration, the greater the desire to move and the longer the duration, the greater the chance of settling (Chant 1992)

Migration implies movement of individuals and groups between two societies; that which they have left and that to which they have come (Jackson 1986). To say that someone is a migrant implies emigration from one population and immigration into another (Taylor and Lasker 1988). Before becoming an immigrant, the migrant is first an e-migrant and the sociology of migration must therefore start, not from the receiving society, but from the structure and contradictions of the sending society (Pierre and Loic 2000). Immigration occurs when the movement takes place from one country to another for a sufficiently prolonged period of time such that one would consider the person as living in another country, and taking up the activities of daily life (Kernberg 1989: 17).

2.2 African migration to post apartheid South Africa

In post-apartheid South Africa the context of migration has changed in important ways. Not only have influx control measures within the country been abandoned but also political changes across the Southern African region have wrought new political rights and freedoms, and the economic context has generated greater need for access to employment opportunities (Larsen 2001). Politically speaking, South Africa has been reabsorbed into the bigger continent, and immigration from many other African states has added a new international dimension to the patterns of migration that are emerging in South Africa.

The volume of migration in post apartheid South Africa has increased, as has the diversity of immigrant origins and experiences. Contemporary immigration conjures up old images but also some new ones. Migration in the Southern African region is not a recent phenomenon and dates back to pre-colonial times. The creation of national boundaries and the development of national economies during the colonial years saw the growth of a regional market, which, while focused on South Africa also encompassed Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Namibia as countries whose economies include significant numbers of migrant labourers from neighbouring states (Peberdy and Oucho 2001).

This market centred on the mining and agricultural sectors, but encompassed workers in other countries; Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and Botswana were significant suppliers of labour.

Since 1994, South Africa has seen a flood of immigrants from the rest of Africa. Many are economic immigrants who are highly qualified and want to make a contribution to the new South Africa (Larsen 2001). International experience shows that skilled immigrants and migrants make important contributions to any country's economic growth and development. Immigrants can fill the gaps created by emigrating skills or the inadequacies of a country's education and training system. Even more important, skilled immigrants bring innovation to the economy through new ideas and skills. In this regard, there needs to be greater awareness of the profile and contribution of South Africa's current stock of skilled immigrants (Mattes et al 2000). One way to assess the potential value to South Africa of a more open attitude towards skilled migration and immigration, is to examine the existing immigration population. If these immigrants conform to the negative stereotypes (drug dealers, illegal immigrants and many others), there is reason for caution. If, on the other hand, they are making a valuable contribution then the case is strengthened for further immigration. Mattes et al (2000) noted that South Africa is in a position to capitalise on its comparative developmental advantage over the rest of the African continent as an attractive destination for skilled workers.

2.3 African female migration to South Africa

As far as gender selectivity in overseas migration is concerned, women tend to constitute a smaller proportion of international migrants than men (Chant 1992: 8). However, women are an increasingly important part of the migration nexus, and their experiences and aspirations with cross-border migration differ in many aspects from those of men (Crush and McDonald 1999). Morokvasic (1984: 89) claims that international female migrants are much more vulnerable than their male counterparts, having not only to contend with discrimination on the basis of race and class, but also of gender. Women affect migration and are affected by it in complex ways. Improved status and education for women increases migration (Samuel 1998: 6). While a more educated wife would improve family income and welfare, she would also tend to encourage migration by being less conservative, more aware of and adaptable to life elsewhere, and more helpful in acquiring the resources needed (Samuel 1998). Dodson (1998) noted that female migration from outside South Africa appears to have undergone a significant increase since 1994. She explained that as a range of economic opportunities that were once only the domain of male migrants begin to open up for women, migration may have an even greater appeal. Also, as difficult as migrating into countries like South Africa may be at a personal level, many women may be prepared to endure personal difficulties in order to secure benefits for their families and the wider communities (Crush and McDonald 1999: 24).

2.4 The importance of migration for women

Migration seems to have a generally empowering impact on women in terms of higher self-esteem and increased economic independence both as family members and as economic actors. For all migrants, moving country is a life-altering event. For some women the burden of migration will even be greater than for their male counterparts. This may particularly be the case for women who come from societies with highly prescribed gender roles, where the woman is traditionally house-bound. Also, for women who have been restricted to a limited area for most of their lives for social and/or economic reasons, the opportunity to travel out of the country may be an extremely empowering experience (Crush and McDonald 1999).

Current studies on migrant women show that women move across international boundaries for precisely the same reasons as men (economic) and that marriage and other social or psychological motives are relatively unimportant in the decision to migrate (Chant 1999: 96). According to my findings, unsuccessful marriage related reasons accounted for part of women's decision to migrate to South Africa. Divorce is not accepted in most of the cultures in west Africa. The social stigma placed on it goes as far as making it impossible for a divorced woman to remarry. Migration became the only option for these women, for in a new environment, no one knows about their history. Also, the physical distance prevents the husbands of the women who were in a battered relationship from seeing their abusers. Other studies also show that women migrants who have acquired economic independence abroad increasingly handle their own income.

savings and investments. While abroad, they have their own bank accounts and feel free to invite their own relatives or friends for lengthy visits, sometimes without even consulting their husbands (Abadan-Unat 1986). Migration increases women's economic participation, mobility, status and educational opportunity, as well as the sharing of household chores. Such improvements in women's status have a multidimensional impact, leading to lower fertility and higher levels of social development (Samuel 1998).

Transnational migration can change the way women think about work and how it affects their lives and social position. Buijs (1993: 48) noted that in a new society women's social world is expanded, as they gain a broader repertoire of roles, including a greater participation in economic and other public spheres. Employment for women brings not only their own income and necessary contribution to the family economy, but also an occupational identity, together with greater self-reliance and confidence.

2.5 Migrant women and the regeneration of their indigenous culture

When women migrate, they migrate with some aspects of their cultures. The way they eat, dress or speak reflects their country of origin. Wherever people emigrate as a family, they try to maintain their values from the culture of origin inside the family. For example, as a family, they cook indigenous foods and speak their indigenous languages. Buijs (1993: 12) noted that Asian women in Britain wear clothing representative of the areas their families originally came from, and such clothing makes a statement of identity.

Also, Palestinian women in West Berlin baked their own bread with traditional ingredients from Palestine in a bid to avoid eating German bread, which they considered inferior (Buijs 1993: 12).

2.6 Reasons why African people migrate to South Africa

Migration is a result of many underlying factors that affect an individual. The causes can be summed up as limited resources and personal dissatisfaction (Abadan-Unat 1986). The specific motives that induce individuals to leave their homes must certainly be very numerous and diverse. Perhaps the question most asked and least understood about migration is "why do particular people move and go abroad and why do they go to a particular country?" In a majority of cases the actual migrants themselves do not know the answer to this question and when asked in surveys they may give vague and general reasons like "work, family, studies " (Jackson 1969). It is true that to the individual migrant their decision to leave may appear as their own decision or as one influenced by other individuals. However, whatever the migrant may tell the interviewer in answer to the inevitable question "why did you leave?" the individual reasons and migration projects must be appreciated within a broader context and framework of structural factors and social forces (Morokvasic 1983).

Economically speaking, migration usually represents for the individual an escape from poverty (relative or absolute) (Cholewinski 1997). Many studies of migration indicate

that migration occurs mainly because of economic reasons, that is to say migration takes place because of opportunities elsewhere to earn income, and other related reasons. Thus it can be asserted that migration is an effort to improve the quality of life. With respect to migration to South Africa, most of the African migrants are economic immigrants who have heard that the streets of South Africa are paved with gold (Larsen 2001). Economic factors are primary in influencing migration for these migrants. These include factors like mobility in rank, opportunity for high pay or high wages, better employment opportunities etc. On a basic level, migration for employment is caused by complementary "push" or "pull" factors, the push being the poor living conditions in the country of origin and the pull, the availability of well-paid work (in relative terms) in the country of employment. For some migrants, the decision to leave the country of origin for the purpose of employment is more about survival itself (Cholewinski 1997). Economic conditions in sending countries may be so harsh that migration becomes the only resort; motivated by the desire to improve the migrants economic status or the prospects for his or her children (Richmond 1988).

Generally speaking, the reasons for current migrations are wars and other political upheavals, as well as poverty in one's place of origin versus presumed riches in another. However, looking at the present trend of African migration to South Africa in relation to the whole continent, the motives for migration will include political, economic, social and environmental factors.

There is a gruesome phenomenon in several central and west African countries, with the rise of well-organised large-scale killings and/or mutilations of people considered subversive, disposable or simply "in the way" by armed groups, especially in Sierra Leone (Taran 1999). The direct destruction of lives of community members and sustainable political, economic and environmental conditions through armed violence remains the most dramatic cause of African migration to South Africa. Civil wars in Angola and Mozambique led to the movement of large numbers of people to South Africa. Also, the resurgence of conflict in Angola and the recent war in the Democratic Republic of Congo are forcing significant numbers of people to flee to South Africa (Peberdy and Oucho 2001).

Historical memories of past conflicts, oppression and exclusion from power are still strong in many African countries. The growing tendency to create or organise nations exclusively on ethnic grounds - and outbreaks of "ethnic cleansing"- threatens the possibility of living together as a human community with people of different ethnic backgrounds. Rwanda and Burundi are examples of people of different ethnicities sharing the same terrain and confronting each other with deadly violence.

Today, many African governments face a situation where over half of their country's export earnings must go to pay the servicing of debt while the principal, the original amount borrowed remains untouched. The International Monetary Fund requires the imposition of structural adjustment policies that include devaluation of national currencies, reduction of public sector spending, cutting back jobs and services (Taran

1999). The repression that often accompanies the implementation of structural adjustments policies lead to people leaving their countries for political as well as economic reasons (Taran 1999: 7).

Structural adjustment measures, applied by most African countries, have reduced health, education and social services. Consequently, more people are being driven beyond marginalization to exclusion. Within these countries, a growing number of people are excluded from meaningful participation in the economic and social benefits of society. Rather, they are relegated to an existence of absolute misery and privation, even as the global capacity to produce goods continues to grow. With inflation driving up the price of food at the same time that unemployment rates increase and government social programmes are cut, more and more people have no option but to leave their countries of origin in search of work and food. These economic factors clearly have an impact that ultimately fuels migration (Taran 1999).

Another important reason why Africans leave their countries and come to South Africa is because of the abuse of power/corruption in their countries. Repressive dictatorship drives people away. Lack of democratic rule, good governance and respect for human rights are some of the root causes of migration. In a scathingly critical analysis of four decades of African post-colonial leadership, Taran (1999:15) concludes that state power and privilege is monopolised for personal gain and glory; " the verdict is clear: the primary cause of African migration is bad and undemocratic governments".

Crush and McDonald (1999) found that citizens of other African countries do not only come to South Africa for jobs. They argue that the new South Africa has a moral obligation towards other African countries and citizens who lent their support during the anti-apartheid struggle. African migrants expect the South Africans to "pay back" for the sacrifices other Africans made. They argue that during the apartheid era, the ANC-in-exile created the impression that their hosts would be welcome in a post-apartheid South Africa (Crush and McDonald 1999). Therefore, African migrants in South Africa expect to be treated well by South Africans and their government.

2.7 Social networking in international migration

It should not be overlooked that migration generally is a dynamic process usually taking place between countries with close historic, colonial, economic and cultural ties, which constitute migration systems. Contributing to this process are inter alia, migrant social networks of family and friends which have been established over time and which link cities and labour markets in receiving countries (Cholewinski 1997). Ethnographers have traditionally defined human groups as disjointed collections of individuals who are linked to each other by regular interaction, shared perceptions, and affective ties. They are internally differentiated: some members occupy a central position in the group while others are on the periphery, and yet others are somewhere in between.

For migrants, social networks are crucial for finding jobs and accommodation, circulating goods and services, as well as psychological support and continuous social and economic information. Social networks often guide migrants into or through specific networks of

interpersonal ties surrounding migrants. In my study, it was the social network of most of my informants that enabled them to either have a hair salon in a particular town or a job. Before Maria (one of my informants) got her job as a nurse in one of the hospitals, Hilda (one of her friends, a fellow migrant from Zambia) gave her all the necessary information which was needed and when she came to South Africa, she lived in Hilda's house for some months before getting a house of her own.

Social ties in pre-migration networks are related to factors affecting which people migrate, means of migration, the destination and future prospects for both physical and occupational mobility. The networks utilized by migrants vary depending on the history of migration, and national conditions. High occupational groups, for instance, rely more on networks of colleagues or organizations and less on kin-based networks than unskilled workers. Some people have many direct contacts while others have few. A person in contact with thirty others of widely differing social background would have a wider range network than a person in contact with thirty people of the same general social background (Mitchell 1969). The links between an individual and the people with whom he interacts come into being for some purpose or because of some interest which either or both parties consciously recognise. The content of links in a person's network may be, among other possibilities; economic assistance, kinship obligation, religious cooperation or it may simply be friendship (Mitchell 1969). Jin-Kyung (2000) noted that a higher educational background and membership of religious organisations are crucial for the establishment of social networks, which generate essential resources for business establishments.

A network exists in the recognition by people of sets of obligations and rights in respect of certain other identified people. At times these recognised relationships may be utilised for a purpose- to achieve some object, acquire or pass on information, to influence some other person in a desired direction. Although there is an inverse connection between social distances and frequency of contact between kin, geographical distances seem unimportant particularly because the provision of economic assistance depends more on the social network than on the distance between homes. The network as a whole, therefore, provides a covert or informal structure composed of inter-personal links which spread out and ramify in all directions, criss-crossing not only the whole of the local community but knitting together people in different towns and countries.

Emigration is by no means a chaotic and disorganised process for these skilled, professional and businesswomen. From their home countries these migrants identify new markets. They plan their trips, bring their own money and are immediately collected by their relatives from the airports. Once in South Africa, a network will provide shelter, a couch in a house, food and a job in a field they have made their own through decades of practice in South Africa, for example hairdressing. The word brethren (which means brothers and sisters) frequently used by immigrants may not necessarily mean people from one's family. This type of relationship is called "a fictive kin system". Defined by Ebaugh et al (2000) it is a family-type relationship, based not on blood or marriage but rather on religious rituals or close friendship ties. It constitutes a type of social capital that many immigrant groups bring with them and that facilitates their incorporation into

the host society. A fictive kin system expands the network of individuals who provide social and economic capital for another and thereby constitutes a resource to immigrants as they confront problems of settlement and incorporation. Systems of fictive kin constitute an important part of the social networks that draw immigrants to a particular area and provide them with the material and social support that enables them to become incorporated into the new society. Migrant women offer each other help and services. New comers are taught how to use public transport and how to use shops. Such networks establish rules that new comers have to adopt, and organise through gossip and exchange of information (Abdulrahim in Buijs 1993: 62). The network created by earlier emigrants offers information on the better life in other countries and how to access it. Family (and to a somewhat lesser extent friends) are a major source of information for migrants. Social support networks of family and compatriots are frequently assumed to be fundamental to the newcomer's adaptation, easing their transition to a new way of life through an exchange of material, information and emotional resources

In South Africa, migration networks display regional differences for African migrants. A vast majority of migrants from the Southern African region have a place to stay, and friends and family in South Africa, before arriving while migrants from the other parts of Africa are less likely to have these networks in place (McDonald et al 1999).

2.8 The immigration policy of South Africa

The immigration policy of South Africa is formulated and implemented by the National Department of Home Affairs. The central purpose of the immigration policy of South Africa is to determine which foreigners can become part of the community of the people of South Africa either on a temporary or on a permanent basis. In theory, the migration policy could choose to shape the future composition of the South African population by giving preference to certain types of individuals who are deemed to be more desirable as members of their national community than others. The policy could choose to give preference to professionals or people with skills or higher education or, alternatively, could choose to prefer people from certain geographical areas. Looking at the immigration policy of South Africa after the abolition of apartheid, (this is the period which has seen a large scale emigration of black Africans from other countries in Africa to South Africa) one will realise that it has become increasingly restrictive since 1994. The legacy of South Africa's racially sullied immigration history under white rule was that legal immigration was confined to whites only, primarily from Western Europe. This policy was not officially removed from the statute books until 1999. Black people from the rest of Africa were allowed legal entry to South Africa only under strictly controlled conditions usually as migrant contract workers who were required to return home as soon as their employment ended. Immigration is therefore associated in many minds with South Africa's racist past and is seen as of little relevance to the new state (Crush 2000).

South Africa's process of nationalism has placed great emphasis on defining the boundaries of citizenship and membership. The corollary of this process is identification and exclusion of those "who do not belong". Africans who lived side-by-side with black South Africans before 1994 found themselves increasingly alienated thereafter. South Africa has no policy of immigrant integration and no vision of a national identity that would welcome and embrace new members (Crush 2000).

South African and multi-national employees seeking to introduce foreign skills on a temporary basis have also become increasingly frustrated and critical of the South African government. Immigration is not viewed as a public policy tool that could benefit South Africa. Rather, immigrants and migrants (even the most highly skilled) are more often stereotyped as a threat to the economic and social interests of South Africans (Crush 2000).

Despite the fact that South Africa owes many nations of Africa a debt for the assistance during apartheid years, these immigrants have often found their reception in the country less than welcoming. Larsen (2001) has stressed that South Africa's immigration policy must carry some the blame for the xenophobia the immigrants experience.

The South African government's position seems to be that immigration should be treated with great circumspection since it has the potential to exacerbate South Africa's employment problem by taking away jobs from South Africans. The Draft White Paper on International Migration suggests reasons why South Africa should be wary of

immigration. It argues that South Africa has too many people and too high a population density to sustain its existing population. It also argues that every position occupied by a non-South African is one job less for a South African. Also, immigration is viewed as likely to be a drain and burden on the state. The South African Minister of Home Affairs (Mangosuthu Buthelezi) has on different occasions portrayed this aspect of restrictionist policy. Some of his speeches are examined below:

- "On the immigration policy I would say that the Department's functions regarding international migration relate to the control over the admission of aliens to their residence in and departure from the Republic. The existing immigration policy is first and foremost directed towards the protection of the interest of the sovereign worker and creation of employment opportunities" (Buthelezi 1996).

- "The department cannot, in the light of the grave unemployment situation in the country, grant work permits to aliens who do not possess special skills or qualifications not readily available in the Republic of South Africa, thereby depriving South African citizens and other permanent residents of their just expectations of earning a livelihood" (Buthelezi 1996).

- "In South Africa, we need to acquire large numbers of skilled people to support our economic growth, for we are aware that only through economic growth will our country be able to provide a long-term solution to its severe social problems. However, the relocation to South Africa of skilled people on a temporary or permanent basis is often perceived as threatening scarcely available job opportunities for our nationals. Obviously, this might be true in the short term in respect of specific or even anecdotal situations. However, in a country such as ours, which is still on its way towards development, the

macroeconomic impact of additional skills leads to greater employment generation and the broadening of the economic basis (Buthelezi 2000).

According to the Department of Home Affairs (2001), employment opportunities are, as a result of the prevailing economic climate in South Africa, extremely limited and there is at present no special drive or project to attract foreign workers to South Africa. Even as far as the so-called scarce employment categories are concerned the position has worsened to the extent where professionally and technically qualified persons are being laid off and are finding it extremely difficult to secure alternative employment. It is for this reason that it is currently a prerequisite that foreigners wishing to take up employment in South Africa, be in possession of firm and acceptable offers of employment commensurate with their training, qualifications, and experience before a work permit can be considered. Employers wishing to introduce foreign workers to South Africa must obtain the permission of the Department of Home Affairs and be able to satisfy the Department that they were not able to obtain the required personnel locally.

Looking at such a policy, one is then compelled to ask the following questions: who should benefit from immigration? Is it the host country, which is in need of immigrant workers, or is it the immigrants themselves, who are in search of a way to escape economic poverty or other situations? Stefano (2000) argues that a sustainable immigration policy should be able to reflect the interests of both parties: immigrants and the resident citizens. In turn, such a stance raises the fundamental issue concerning the so-called model of immigrant's integration into the host society. Given that neither

assimilationist nor multiculturalist strategies are effective under present day conditions, a better strategy might be the common core of values and principles that comprise universal human rights. Samuel (1998) calls for a balanced intake from varied cultures, based on economic, social and humanitarian considerations, using fair and non-discriminatory criteria that recognise that immigration is not solely a domestic matter but has wide international implications.

An objective of this review has been to present literature that raises theoretical questions and presents analyses which would be complementary to some of the qualitative data presented elsewhere in the study. It is therefore hoped that this review, along with data presented in other chapters, will enable us to have an understanding of the experiences and situations of African women in South Africa. Viewing the literature from a historical perspective brings an understanding of the changing patterns and issues. Writing about independent women migrants from other African countries in South Africa contributes towards increasing awareness and understanding of the distinct experiences of women.

Chapter Three

3.1 The acquired identity of the migrant women/victims of circumstances

Whichever African country they came from, or their level of achievement in South Africa, all migrant women of African origin have many things in common: they are a skilled, ambitious group of women who left their friends and families and migrated to South Africa to make a living.

While in South Africa, the predicaments of these women are not a cause of concern to South Africans in the midst of unemployment, homelessness and rape. Thus, in a formal or informal situation, a woman with a dark pigmentation, having a strange accent and an unpronounceable name is not going to be taken seriously, no matter the circumstances she finds herself in. Whether migrant women find themselves in a taxi and are trying to tell the taxi driver where they want to be dropped, just because they do not ask in the Zulu language, or the very fact that their different accent betrays them as foreigners, no one is prepared to help them out. Many a time, migrant women in South Africa have been taken by taxi drivers to places they were not going to because they failed to communicate their request in the Zulu language.

3.1.1 Who are these women?

The women who were selected for this research are residing in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. They all migrated independently (without the company of men) from different African countries. Fifteen women were interviewed for the research and I have divided them into groups, which represents the different conditions under which they migrated to South Africa. The division further suits the different times of arrival (apartheid and post apartheid). The first group are those who had either academic or professional qualifications before coming to South Africa to look for employment during the apartheid era. The second group is made up of those who came to South Africa during the post apartheid era and had obtained a job in South Africa before arriving. The third group are those who came to South Africa to pursue studies for a career and who are now working in South Africa and the fourth group are those who came for business purposes.

Before migrating to South Africa some of these women were already married while others were single. Doreen and Cindy are sisters (both unmarried at the time of migration, Cindy is now married), who came to South Africa in 1992 in the company of one of their mother's sisters who has been a cross border trader from Zambia to South Africa for many years. She encouraged them to migrate, convinced that they were going to be better off in South Africa than in Zambia. Their mother's sister had many friends whom she had been connecting with over many years of trading in South Africa. She assured Doreen and Cindy that they were not going to lack a place to sleep while in South Africa. They both did not have a problem raising the large amount of money needed for their air tickets because of their country's

proximity with South Africa. They simply got into buses and got their passports stamped at the border post.

The other two women are Carie K. and Dr Golder N., both migrant women from Kenya who came to pursue a career in South Africa and are now working. Both are single. Carie K. came to South Africa in the year 2000 to pursue a career in e-business and is now working as a facilitator for foreign students at a university. Dr Golder N. came in 1996 to study at the same university in the Department of Sociology and she now possesses a doctorate degree in Sociology. They both came with a study-work permit and have been able to get good jobs.

Next there is Bridget L. who left Uganda at the start of the war in 1987, immediately after she married a priest. Her husband was dismissive about the idea of a woman migrating alone to a country where blood was frequently shed on the streets. However, she was determined and came at the heart of the apartheid struggle in South Africa. She decided to make the move and with a first degree in computer science from Makerere University, she knew that it would enable her to get a job. While in South Africa, she obtained a master's degree in computer science and is now a lecturer in computer science at a university.

Margaret D. is a Nigerian who came to South Africa with a first degree in mathematics from the University of Ibadan. She teaches mathematics and science in the Christian Centre high school in Richard's Bay and is also the head of that department.

Maria M., Caroline K. and Hilda K. are all nurses from Zambia, presently working in South African hospitals. All of these women had obtained employment in South Africa before leaving Zambia.

Benedicta T., Amina O., Cynthia A., Ada K., Dina K. and Seyi A. are businesswomen. Benedicta emigrated from Cameroon. Ada and Amina are professional hairdressers from Ghana. Dina is from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Seyi is from Nigeria and Cynthia is from Ghana.

3.1.2 The negative acquired identity

The life of the African migrant woman in South Africa can be compared to that of a chameleon. Its colour is green but as it moves around, whenever it comes across a brown environment, its colour changes to brown. It changes its colour with changes in the environment. The changes the African migrant woman experiences are related to place, career, and her physical appearance in South Africa, resulting in her acquiring a new identity. However, irrespective of the different colours of a chameleon, it still remains a chameleon. These changes in the identity of African migrant women do not wipe out their original identities, even whilst in South Africa.

For most people living in their countries of origin they may tend to take their identity for granted. However, when the identity of an individual is perceived by she or he as threatened

or suppressed, especially if the identity is essential to the person's personal, economic or social well being, then "a crisis of identity" has been created. This is the situation of migrant women from Nigeria whose identity has already been painted by the media. The moment these women disclose their real identity as Nigerians, "eye brows are raised". In South Africa, Nigerians are seen as "419" (a section of the Nigerian penalty code which means stealing by tricks), drug dealers etc. In such situations, the migrant woman's identity is distorted. It brings mixed feelings as Seyi, a Nigerian remarked "the fact that rape is very rampant in South Africa does not make all South Africans rapists".

As skilled, career and businesswomen from countries like Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) travelled to South Africa, they became aware of their identities because South Africans do not understand their accents or sometimes the languages they speak, especially those who migrated from the DRC whose medium of communication is French. As a result of this, they felt handicapped. This made them draw closer to migrant women from other African countries.

These women became very conscious of their identities as either Ghanaians, Nigerians etc, especially on those occasions when they were discriminated against in South Africa. African women face discrimination at all stages in their lives: whether in their countries of birth or at the country of abode. In most West African countries, girls go to school with their brothers and when they come back home, girls are the ones to prepare the food. In situations where some families could not afford to pay school fees for all their children, the girl children were the ones to drop out of school. Even when women decide to migrate, this discrimination still

follows them. Why? Because of their identities as women. Discrimination has been embedded in the life of African women to the extent that even when they migrate to South Africa, it is still evident. At their workplaces in South Africa, they feel special disabilities on account of their gender and discrimination in employment. Bridget K. has on several occasions been frustrated on account of her gender. Requests for equipment for student research were not seen as important by management, until she asked another colleague who is male to request for the same equipment, whereupon it was bought.

Among the women, those who have acquired permanent residence permits are eligible to apply for bank loans to purchase either a house or a car. Ironically, these women who migrated to South Africa and invited their husbands to join them cannot sign for these loans except with proof of approval by their husbands. Bridget once remarked "every time I walk into the bank and I am confronted with this problem, I feel like hitting the ceiling".

These women are not only discriminated against in South Africa because they are women but because they are migrants. Dina, my informant from the DRC, once applied for a job with a Richard's Bay recruitment agency and was short-listed for an interview. On the day of the interview, she was asked for her South African identity number and when she told them she was a foreigner with only a passport number, the interview was cancelled.

Similarly, the African migrant women pursuing a career in all the universities in South Africa have been denied financial assistance to finish their studies on the basis that they are not South Africans. On some occasions however, those with permanent residence permits

are given financial assistance but unfortunately, none of my informants who were studying qualified for one.

These women who are pursuing a career in South African universities, face problems like alienation, marginalisation, difficulty in understanding South African accents, lack of friends. They are often misunderstood and are often labelled as having an accent. These women indicated their feeling of always being under interrogation because of their different accent, having to account for their being in South Africa and not any other country. The traumatising effects of isolation and loneliness are the daily experiences of these women.

The African migrant women living in Kwazulu-Natal have acquired a unique identity, which is different from other migrant women in other provinces in South Africa. Being women with a dark pigmentation and coming from African countries, migrant women can never see themselves as South Africans, even when they have acquired South African citizenship. This is because the South Africans don't recognise them as one. Any black foreigner living in South Africa is known as a "Kwere Kwere", but in Kwazulu-Natal, migrant women are referred to as "Mlungu Mnyama", meaning a "white black", who cannot speak the Zulu language. This identity further alienates migrant women as outsiders who are therefore exposed to discrimination in South Africa.

Without this discrimination, or if the African migrant women were given the opportunity, life in South Africa for the migrant women would be a far more enriching experience than

that of African migrant men. Even with all the discrimination they face as migrant women, these women are pleased to be where they are and show a great deal of flexibility and adaptation to the many social contexts that they participate in during their life in South Africa. Margaret once remarked "we should stop complaining, after all, what are we doing here? If our countries were better we would not be here". Whatever the situation, African migrant women in Kwazulu-Natal have decided that, despite the level of hatred of migrants and discrimination, there is no need to fear and hate South Africans merely because they are different from them. They say that they really proud of who they are and are comfortable being just themselves and not prone either to aggression or hatred of people who are not like them. "We know who we are and where are going and that is what is important to us " some remarked.

3.1.3 The positive acquired identity of the migrant women

Migration to South Africa for African migrant women on the other hand has meant "cutting edge breakthroughs" in terms of the new identities they have acquired. For those who are married, they now act in many instances as the heads of their households. As they migrated to South Africa and found themselves in more highly paid jobs than their husbands, these women have "broken themselves loose" from the traditional African marriage pattern where there is always a domineering husband and a subordinate wife. These women have gained authority in their households because they now have the money to do what ever they want and have an edge over their husbands in deciding what is important and vice-versa. Three of

these women fall under this category: Cindy, Caroline and Maria who all come from Zambia.

I spoke with Cindy's husband, Vincent, who visited his wife during the period of my study. He wanted her to abandon her job and go back to Zambia and that is the reason why he did not want to visit her but after realising that was not possible because Cindy threatened to not send money home, he had to surrender. When I asked him where he really wanted his wife to live, he told me that the choice was his wife's. He is not happy with the way he is living now because there is no difference with when he was not married. He remarked "I am a married but single man". Back in Zambia, he was a community nutritionist with World Vision (a non-governmental organisation) at Lusaka, but lost his job about a year ago and has not been able to find another job either in Zambia or in South Africa. Since then Cindy has been responsible for paying his house rent, telephone bills, food etc. Caroline's husband was retrenched like Cindy's, but he was a nurse and he is still jobless. She is the sole breadwinner of her household.

For the women whose husbands joined them, the situation is not very different. They have got separate bank accounts and in situations where they have to acquire assets like a house or a car, these women stand as the heads of families because they are the ones with stable jobs (a typical example comes when they have to apply for permanent residence permits). This is true for Bridget and Margaret. As in the literature reviewed, Abadan-Unat (1986) noted that women migrants who have gained economic independence abroad increasingly handle their own income, savings and investment while abroad, have their own bank

accounts and feel free to invite their own relatives and friends for lengthy stays. This aspect is clearly portrayed in the lives of African migrant women in South Africa. Migration to South Africa has boosted the self-esteem of these women. It has given them an occupational identity.

For the migrant women from Ghana, this is very evident. In South Africa, Ghanaians are seen as the best hairdressers. Thus any migrant woman from Ghana is automatically considered as a professional in this field. Actually, they are professionals indeed. How do I know this? From the accounts of Amina and Ada (both hairdressers from Ghana). To qualify as a hairdresser in Ghana, one has to spend three years as apprentice in a hair salon whereas their counter-parts in South Africa spend just three months. Migrant women from Ghana have actually made hairdressing their field through years of practice in South Africa and this has given them an occupational identity which will be difficult to change (this is examined in detail under the occupational experiences of the women).

From an in depth interview with Amina and an informal session with Ada, it became clear that they have succeeded in this field in South Africa. As Amina explained, they have developed survival strategies as well as adjustment patterns in order for them to succeed. These women who back in Ghana might have been considered as failures because most of the women who go into hairdressing do not complete high school and are mostly drop-outs from school, in South Africa, they are now respectable women. Their identities have been changed from job seekers to employers because they now employ people to work for them. Back in Ghana, Amina completed her training but

because of lack of substantial capital to start her own business, she tried working in someone else's salon, but the salary was too low so she resigned. Fortunately for her, her elder sister Asa, (a dress designer) who is living in East London promised to assist her to utilise her skills. She was told that if she came to South Africa she would never think of poverty again. Too poor to raise even the money to pay for the air ticket to South Africa, Asa paid for her. Now Amina not only works but for the first time in her life, she has her personal bank account and as she remarked "I now have my ATM (automatic teller machine) card and can go to the bank at any time to withdraw money".

Ada has a similar story and is also successful. She was brought to South Africa by Irene (a Ghanaian migrant woman) to work in her hair salon at Ulundi and when Ada realised that she was making a lot of money for Irene and earning as little as R500 per month, she decided to save money and open her own hair salon. Now she owns one of the biggest hair salons in Durban and has fifteen employees. She drives her own car and has bought a house in Durban and has been able to build a house for her parents back in Ghana.

3.1.4 Migrant Women, "Victims of Circumstance" In the Apartheid Era

The world which seems,

To lie before us is like a land of dreams,

So various, so beautiful, so new,

Hath, really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain,
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night
Mathew Arnold, "Dover Beach"

The impact of apartheid has left scars on the lives of migrant women in South Africa. This is particularly true for those African migrant women who migrated from Zambia to South Africa during the apartheid era. They live to tell the tale of how they narrowly escaped death. They were "victims of circumstance" because during the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, Zambia was one of those countries that harboured the ANC-in-exile (African National Congress). Thus, a woman coming from Zambia and living in the Kwazulu-Natal province of South Africa had to go through hell. Why? Because this province was the stronghold of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Therefore, anyone coming from Zambia to reside in this province was taken to be an ANC spy.

It is worthwhile to mention here that these women left their county of origin and migrated to this province, ignorant of the party politics of South Africa (at that time, the ANC was at logger heads with the IFP and anyone suspected of being an ANC spy could easily be put to death by the IFP members).

My informant Doreen and her younger sister Cindy were two such victims. At the time they arrived in South Africa, Doreen was a secondary school teacher and her sister Cindy had just got her diploma in catering. Cindy was fortunate because immediately they arrived, she got a job before her elder sister with a company called Sappi (a paper company) in Mandini. So both of them moved to live at Mandini.

In Mandini, they ignorantly rented a house in an ANC residential area. According to the rules set by both parties at the time, any one living in an IFP residential area was not supposed to go to an ANC residential area and vice-versa. These women were not aware of this and used to go to anywhere. Just the fact that they came from Zambia meant that they could have been killed. When they became aware of it, they used to be scared of death at any time, but they said that God protected them. Sayer (1991: 62) is very accurate when he said that this is a world of unintended consequences in which social relations appear as natural circumstances, not the product of human consciousness or activities.

Doreen and Cindy were the first migrant African women to live at Mandini, which was a mainly black residential area. At Cindy's workplace, no black South African could speak the English language. It is interesting to know that all her colleagues were black South Africans except her bosses who were white. To these black South Africans, it was strange to find someone with a colour like theirs coming from an African country who was unable to speak the Zulu language. Their ignorance can be linked to the fact that they were brought up in a system where their country was isolated from the rest of the world and as a result they knew nothing about other African countries (this is evident even now). When some South

Africans meet with a migrant from a country like Cameroon, they will ask whether Cameroon is in America.

During the apartheid era, there used to be lots of strike actions against the government and since Cindy was working in the catering department, even when there was an organised strike action, she had to go to work because the people needed food. She had no choice but to go because she was scared of losing her job since it was their only source of income at the time. She got up one morning when there was a strike action going on and everyone had been asked to stay indoors. She was scared because there was no one moving on the streets and since there were no taxis at that time to take her to her workplace, which was a long distance away, she asked her elder sister Doreen to accompany her. Just as they gone a short distance, people started throwing stones at them and asked them if they did not hear that they were supposed to stay at home. They were lucky that neither of them was hurt and they successfully ran away. This incident took place in 1992, the same year that they came to South Africa.

Getting a work permit as a teacher was another bad experience for Doreen. In 1993, all the medical doctors from Zambia were refused work permits and were subsequently told to leave the province. Doreen was the only teacher among this group. Cindy did not have any problem getting a work permit but when her sister went to the capital of KwaZulu-Natal at that time Ulundi, "hell broke loose" for them. She went through session after session of interviews and was asked why she had decided to work in the province. The fifth time that she was called up to Ulundi, without her knowledge, she had been scheduled to speak with

Minister Mangosuthu Buthelezi himself and while she was there, some policemen were sent to Mandini to Cindy's workplace to check whether they were spies or not. Doreen was scared of either being killed or repatriated when she was asked to appear before the minister. After this interview, the minister asked her to go back to Mandini and wait for the result. In exactly two weeks after the interview, she was called up to collect her work permit and this ended her ordeal.

Generally, the lives of African migrant women were characterised by fear and a lot of uncertainty during the apartheid era in KwaZulu-Natal. They learned how to survive in a hostile environment and this made them draw closer to God whom they saw as the only one who could protect them and provide for them. Despite the negative identity these women have acquired in South Africa and the discrimination they encounter, they are happy with what South Africa has to offer because they believe that they are better off here than in their countries of origin.

3.2 The adjustment patterns of migrant women

People can only adjust when they find themselves in a new environment. Adjustment begins with the process of migration, when people migrate, they have to adjust to a new culture, they have to survive. Bock (1970:20) defines culture as "what makes you a stranger when you are away from home". The migrant adjustment as defined by Goldscheider, (1983), is the process by which a migrant responds to a change from one place

into another in the physical, economic and social environment. However, there is a correlation between adjustment to the country left and the country of abode. If someone brought up in Swaziland moves to South Africa, (KwaZulu Natal) the person will find most of his expectations fulfilled with only minor adjustments, he will be able to operate in the new situation and interact with the people. Some women must learn to live without male protection and support for the first time, re-building their lives alone, or with limited support from informal networks (Bock 1970).

With contemporary migration to South Africa, migrant adjustment is complicated because most of the migrants, especially from west, east and central Africa have moved to southern Africa, which is very different in terms of the physical, political and social environments which they were accustomed to. Adjustment for the women in my study was difficult because in order for them to adapt to this new society, they had to interact with the Zulu-speaking people.

3.2.1 Language acquisition

The most difficult years of the lives of the migrant women abroad are the first years. No matter how talented and enthusiastic these women were, they all ended up with the same experiences, "the stigma of not understanding the language spoken by the people". Coming to reside with such a powerful people, "how is it possible that you don't understand the Zulu language? What language do you speak in your country?" Migrant

women encounter this interrogation in their first years of stay in KwaZulu-Natal. Their skin colour probably makes Zulu people think that these women are Zulu indigenes and failure to respond in Zulu is immediately interpreted in two ways:

- "She is proud" –or "she doesn't want to learn our language". Most of the time these women are compared with other migrants who have been in this province for quite some years who are now fluent in IsiZulu.

Cindy's experience is part of a larger picture that shows how women are stigmatized for not understanding the language and how later, her being able to interact in Zulu changed the way people think of foreigners. From her experience, I found that moving to a different country and acquiring a new language could provoke a thoughtful reevaluation of how "outsiders" are perceived.

When Cindy left Zambia and traveled to South Africa in 1992, she got her first job at Mandini. She and her sister Doreen were the first foreigners to live there. She was forced to learn the Zulu language because, where she was working, no one could speak a word of English. All her other colleagues were black South Africans. Only her boss and the managers were white people. Among the chefs, there was only one who would speak English very well. So if someone had to speak to Cindy or if she had to speak to someone, this chef would interpret. She had to interact with the people in the neighborhood especially because it was during the apartheid era and she and her sister needed to know what was going on. What she learnt was that as she tried to speak the

peoples' language, they now started coming closer to her and seeing her as someone who saw their culture as important.

This experience helped her to learn the language and when she got another job in Ullundi, the people there did not know that she now understood the Zulu language because she was introduced to them in English. The other workers who were supposed to be her subordinates were very angry when she was introduced as a migrant woman from Zambia. They started speaking in Zulu and saying things like: "How can you bring someone from faraway? How are we going to communicate with her? We are a difficult people and a small girl-like Cindy cannot manage us". They were very angry but didn't know that she understood everything that was said about her. After one week in her new job, she decided to address them because they kept on intimidating her and did not want to cooperate with her. Her address was in Zulu. The people became scared because they now knew that she had understood everything they had been saying about her. From then on, she started speaking to them in Zulu and they became very cooperative and have started telling her to stop speaking so much Zulu, that she is going to forget her own language.

Amina whose hair salon is in Umlazi township had her own share of this experience. She really needed to learn as fast as possible because her salon is in an area called "Skebenga" in Zulu, meaning a place where there are many thieves. At the beginning when she opened the hair salon in 1997 it was very difficult for her to communicate with her customers so she hired a Zulu-speaking lady who was her interpreter. Through this

lady (her name was Phumla), she has been able to learn a little Zulu to the point that she no longer needs an interpreter.

Maria founded herself working with both white and black people and she could communicate neither in Afrikaans nor in Zulu. Also most of her patients could either speak one of the languages or the other. Caught in a fix, she decide to learn the most spoken one, which was Zulu. It was very exciting when for her when she could understand the complaints of her patients and was able to speak to them in Zulu.

For women like Seyi, Dina, Silvia and Bernedicta, learning the language was their last option when they finally realized that they could not only sell their goods to people who speak English. However, those who are pursuing studies for a career really do not have to struggle to learn because most of the people they interact with speak in English. The only problem they have is when they have to carry out their fieldwork. Migrant women who are teachers in the secondary schools have realized that most of the children who are attending the schools where they teach have been exposed to English for the first time. Therefore, teaching and learning becomes easy at this level when the women are able to speak Zulu. "It makes you feel good when you are able to meet each child's needs" Doreen remarked. The experience of those of the women who have been able to learn the Zulu language has proven that the best way to adjust to this society is to learn the language no matter what occupation one is in.

Despite the fact they struggled and learnt the Zulu language, they nevertheless did not abandoned their own culture. They have imported certain aspects of their culture to South Africa as a means of adapting. This has been possible either by physically bringing their foods and clothing or by “apeing” the social practices of their home countries.

3.2.2 Planting of food crops

“When it comes to what I eat, I don’t miss home” (Margaret)

Migrating to South Africa and residing in KwaZulu-Natal has given migrant women unique opportunities to be able to eat indigenous foods. Why? The temperatures in KwaZulu-Natal are very high, similar to those of most West African countries. So most of the food crops that grow in West Africa are able to grow here, especially due to the fact that winter in this province is not very cold. Migrant women have taken the opportunity of a favorable climate and emigrated with some aspects of their culture.

Seed of some vegetables like *amaranthus*, bitter herbs, “*okonyobong*”, “*awedu*”, and huckleberry and some others have been successfully grown here in South Africa at the back of their houses. Tubers like yam cocoyams (which are considered as a flower by South Africans) have been successfully grown. Plantains, which look like a banana plant, have also been planted. Since these vegetables grow very well during summer, what the women do is to harvest and refrigerate during winter when most of the vegetables die.

When spring comes, they plant again. By so doing, they have a continuous supply of their indigenous food. (Some of the photographs of these plants can be seen in the appendix).

3.2.3 African food shop

“All roads lead to El-Shaddai Traders” (A Hebrew word which means the Lord my God.

This is a shop where west African foods are sold but the owner, a migrant woman from Ghana chooses to use a biblical name being a Christian, which she believes will give her protection and success).

The shop you can rely on for your real African foodstuffs.

Situated at the center of Durban, this shop is a real answer to west African migrant women's indigenous food needs. The owner of this shop is a migrant woman from Ghana. She imports the foodstuffs from Ghana and freights them to Durban. The range of African foodstuffs include: *Yam, palm oil, cream of palm fruit (for palm-nut soup), salted fish (koobi), gari, smoked fish, egusi (melon seeds), oghono (wild mango seeds), yam-flour (elubo), cassava flour (kokonte), kenkey (Maize flour cooked in banana leaves) and fried fish, shito, mashing bowl (asanka), mortar and pestle (for pounded yam), bitter leaf, oha, beans, and many more.*

Individual migrant women get their food supply throughout the year from this shop. Also, the Nigerian migrant women who run African restaurants in Durban get their supply from

El-shaddai traders. Whenever there is a West African function in KwaZulu-Natal, bulk purchases are made from El-shaddai. This shop has made migrant women adjust to life in South Africa and eat food as if they were back in their home countries. (Photograph of some of the items sold at El-shaddai and a migrant woman purchasing palm oil in the appendix).

Amina explained how she prepares “kenkey”, which is also sold at El-shaddai traders. When she wants to eat maize meal, she prepares it the way it is prepared back in Ghana. She soaks the maize flour in water for about three days to make it sour and then drains the water. After draining the water she ties the flour in a banana leaf and cooks it. This is what she calls “kenkey”. When prepared, it has a sour taste and is very nice when eaten with fried fish. That is why at El-Shaddai traders, it is sold with fried fish.

3.2.4 Cultural groupings and network with other migrants

The migrant women’s ability to meet and connect with other migrants from their home countries and from other African countries has enabled them to succeed in adjusting to life in Southern Africa. For a deeper understanding of how cultural groupings facilitate migrant’s adjustments, I will illustrate using a group of Ghanaians in Durban. “The day I came to South Africa, I immediately felt out of place”, said Amina. Bock (1970) defines culture as what makes you a stranger when you are away from home. “Since then whenever I meet with a South African, I feel foreign to him/her, but when I meet a fellow African migrant woman, especially if she is from Ghana, then I feel at home”. Amina

probably feels this way because, with the people from Ghana, the world is viewed the same way, and they all know in general terms what to expect of one another. In Durban the Ghanaians have formed a community of Ghanaians whereby they practice solidarity and reciprocity. Whenever there is a birthday party or funeral, they all come together to feast or to sympathize with the family of the deceased and to assist both financially and emotionally. When a Ghanaian who is resident in Durban dies, they all will contribute R50.00 if the deceased is to be buried in South Africa, but if the corpse has to be transported to Ghana, then each of them will be expected to contribute R100.00. Apart from this, those who were very close to the deceased will contribute about R500 or R1000. At times close friends may decide to provide drinks for the funeral or part of the food that will be eaten at the funeral.

After the funeral, if the deceased was single, his belongings are sold and the money is sent to his parents back in Ghana. If he was married and his wife decides to go back to Ghana, the community will contribute money to pay her air ticket back to Ghana. Should she decide to continue living in South Africa, the money that is collected will be given to her. Among the Ghanaians living in Durban, community life is as solid as it is back in Ghana. They have a community list whereby each person's name, contact addresses both in South Africa and Ghana are written, as well the next of kin in case of an emergency.

As a community, they don't only come together during these occasions. When any one of them is facing deportation, they come to his or her rescue. If any one of them is sick, every member is contacted, and in many other cases. It is worth emphasizing here that,

for migrants, social networks are crucial for psychological support and continuous social and economic support (Poros 2001). For these Ghanaian migrants, the network among community members exists in the recognition of the sets of obligations and rights in respect to the entire community.

The members of this community see themselves as brethren (brothers and sisters). The word brethren as used by migrant women may not necessarily mean people from one's family. When I got in contact with Amina, whenever we met with anyone from Ghana, she usually said, "this is my brother (or sister)". She introduced me to many brothers and sisters and at this point, I asked her how she was related to them. She gave me an interesting response "we all come from Ghana". It is important to note that this type of relationship is called "fictive kin system". Ebaugh et al (2000) noted that it is a family-typed relationship, based not on blood or marriage but rather on close friendship ties. It constitutes a type of social capital that many immigrant groups bring with them and that facilitates their incorporation into the host society. It also constitutes a resource to immigrants as they confront problems of settlement.

Social networks enable the migrant women to be able to relocate to particular urban areas in KwaZulu-Natal. For those who are in business, it enables them to get their goods from their home countries and also through it, they are introduced to new business ventures. These women do not have access to loans from the banks because most of them do not have permanent residence permits. As a result, they resort to their social networks to get loans to start new businesses, which are normally interest free.

The social networks are important means by which migrant women find jobs and accommodation in the first few months of stay in South Africa. These networks of family and friends have been established over time and link cities and labor markets in receiving countries (Cholewinski 1997). While in Zambia, Maria asked Hilda who was already working as a nurse in KwaZulu-Natal about the procedures of getting a job. Maria was told to apply through the Nursing Council of South Africa, which she did. The forms were sent to her by the Nursing council of South Africa to be partly filled by her and the authorities of the nursing school where she graduated. She was then asked to come and write the examination. She came to South Africa and lived at Hilda's house, wrote the examination and went back to Zambia. While in Zambia, Hilda told her of a vacancy in a hospital, which she applied for, using Hilda's address. Hilda later phoned her and told her that she had been short-listed for interview. Before leaving Zambia, Maria was advised by Hilda to bring most of her clothes because she said that Maria stood a high chance of getting the job. So Maria came, attended the interview and was asked if she was prepared to start working the next day, which she gladly accepted. She lived at Hilda's house for four months before renting her own flat at Empangeni.

Coming from other African countries which have been plagued by either political unrest or suffering from the consequences of the application of the structural adjustment programs, migrant women know that they must do everything to survive and therefore have utilize diverse strategies to adapt (apart from learning the Zulu language and importing and planting indigenous foodcrops) to life in South Africa.

3.2.5 Bringing of other kinsmen from home and applying for permanent residence permits

When women decide to migrate independently, they may travel alone or with their immediate family only. If they do not have pre-arranged employment, they may be compelled to depend on their initiative and resources in order to establish themselves at first (Richmond 1998). Should they migrate alone, subsequently, they may sponsor family members. Doreen and Cindy (both sisters) migrated to South Africa together. Since they did not have pre-arranged employment, a distant relative of their mother who had been doing cross-border trading (from Zambia to South Africa) for many years encouraged them to come with some African printed fabrics, which they sold and used the money during the first few months of arrival in South Africa to sustain themselves.

For most of the migrant women, it was the same pattern; bringing African printed fabrics to sell, except the Ugandan migrant women who came with no item to sell. The Kenyan migrant women who came to pursue studies for a career came with handbags and crafts. This was very important because it provided them with money for daily survival in the early months of stay in South Africa and for those who continued in business, it served as capital. Even after some of the migrant women had settled in formal jobs, they continued selling. In the office of Dr Golda, crafts from Kenya are displayed as samples for sale, "It subsidizes my salary and reminds me of home," she says.

When the women migrated as sisters, they easily adjusted to life in South Africa. This is because, in times of crisis, one was always there for the other. I will illustrate here, using the example of Bridget Lukiya and her elder sister Jennifer Endoula to show it was easy for two sisters to adjust to life in a foreign land.

When Bridget decided to come to South Africa in 1987, it was easy to take this decision because she knew that she had her elder sister Jennifer who was already working as a medical doctor in a hospital in South Africa. Although Bridget came with money from Uganda to sustain her for the first few months, she had to live with her sister while looking for a job.

In 1988 when her husband (Joseph, who was still in Uganda) visited her, she fell pregnant. It was thanks to the assistance given to her during and after delivery that she was able to maintain her job before her husband subsequently joined her in South Africa. Living in South Africa with Jennifer, Bridget knew she always had "a shoulder to cry on" when she had difficult moments with her husband. On the other hand as well, Jennifer has on many occasions used Bridget's house as a place of refuge when her relationship with her husband is bad. Since they both are living with their children, these children have close relatives with whom they can always spend their holidays. Financially, these two sisters help each other in times of need and send money home to their parents and siblings. For instance they could choose to each send \$200 and this when converted to the Ugandan currency, is enough for their families back at home.

Applying for permanent residence permits was essential for some of the women who intended staying longer in South Africa. With the residence permits, they had access to bank loans and were able to bring some of their family members to South Africa. The churches also helped them to adjust because through their membership, the women knew whom to call on in times of need and for those who are doing business, church members were amongst their first customers. These women have devised diverse strategies to survive. They are very successful and courageous and serve as examples for other migrant women.

3.3 The occupational experiences of the women

"The life of a migrant is very challenging. You have to be very strong in order to survive" (Dr Golda N., informant)

Independent movement among African women is now very common and is used as a survival strategy. Since 1994, more and more women are now migrating to South Africa to meet their professional, social as well as economic needs. Some of these women leave behind their spouses and children, and when they are well settled in South Africa, they invite their spouses and children to join them. In some cases, however, their spouses are

reluctant to do so and are prepared to receive just the remittances sent to them by their wives.

Despite the enormous differences in the economic and social circumstances of these women, there is some general consensus on the overall goals the women set for themselves: making a living. In achieving these goals however, the African migrant women are conscious to make these goals within the framework of the labour policies of South Africa.

These goals include:

- . Enhancing and improving their skills through further education and training whilst in South Africa.
- . Building more networks of relationships for further career advancement.
- . Improving the living conditions of their families (both nuclear and extended) in their country of origin and South Africa, with special attention given to those members of their families who are still at school.

Speaking about the occupational experiences of these women, there is no doubt that they have achieved a lot in general terms. However, the impact of the occupational experiences of African migrant women seems to be underestimated by the South Africans as well as the South African government. The presence of African female engineers, hairdressers, lecturers, head of departments, etc. even when it goes unnoticed, has affected and will continue to affect the status quo.

It is for this reason that the South African government, especially the Department of Home Affairs should re-consider the relative advantages of having African migrant women in South Africa. Their presence of course can be used as an opportunity for capacity building among South African women.

"When confronted with the truth, there is always the tendency to react against it. My appeal to the South African government is that, instead of reacting against it they should respond to this new challenge and relax their policies on African labour migrants" Dr Golda remarked.

In analysing the occupational experiences of the women, a wide range of other forces come into play. In this section, I will examine why African women from particular professions are found in particular locations in South Africa. I will also examine the different forces that have pushed the women to particular workplaces. However, it is important to note that these forces are complex in nature, especially those militating against migrant women from reaching their full potential despite their motivation and commitment in achieving their goals in South Africa.

The success of the occupational experiences of the migrant women lies in the fact that before emigration, most of them had a basic high school education (Standard Ten or Matric by South African standards) and a majority of them also had a tertiary qualification or a university degree. The salient factor in their success in South Africa as revealed through in-depth interviews is the fact that they didn't just rely on their certificates for survival, especially during the early months of arrival in South Africa (as seen under their adjustment

patterns). They were so ambitious and confident that the hardships they experienced at the onset of their career in South Africa could not act as a disincentive for them. Coming to do work, study for a career or to do business was a matter of choice and their experiences varied with their different occupations.

3.3.1 The experiences of Ghanaian migrant women

As for the migrant women from Ghana, their occupational experience, especially in the field of hairdressing is that which South African women have to emulate. Walk into any hair salon in Durban, Ulundi or Empangeni, whenever you find a large crowd queuing for service, the probability that the migrant woman who owns such a hair salon is from Ghana, is high. The Ghanaians have made hairdressing their field in South Africa through years of practice. The fact is that the South Africans themselves see migrant women from Ghanaian as the best hairdressers. How did they arrive at such a position? Here, I use Amina's story to illustrate how they have been able to excel in this field.

Amina is a migrant woman from Ghana, living in Durban and working at Umlazi. She migrated to South Africa in 1993. Before emigration from Ghana, she had studied as an apprentice in a hair salon for three years. After completing her course, she was unable to raise enough capital to start her own business and as a result, her elder sister, Asa, who is a dress designer in the Eastern Cape, invited her to South Africa.

When Amina came to South Africa in 1993, Asa opened a hair salon for her, where she worked for four years. Asa was paying Amina R500 per month. The agreement was that Amina wasn't going to pay for rent, food, and the electricity bill, among others. She was supposed to save the money she received every month, which she did. Amina worked and lived there for four years and when she realised that she had saved enough money to open her own salon, she decided to leave East London and come to Durban. While in East London, apart from the R500 that she earned every month, she used to sell hair products from Ghana and other cosmetics. Whenever she saw someone going to Ghana, she would send money to buy the products, which she sold in the hair salon.

Before she came to Durban, she had a friend called Margaret who is also a migrant woman from Ghana. Margaret first had a hair salon at Ulundi before moving to Durban to open a bigger hair salon. Margaret encouraged Amina to open a salon in Durban. She told her that she would make more money working in Durban. When Amina came to Durban town however, she realised that the rents were too expensive so she decided to buy a container.

Her idea of buying a container came from the fact that in Ghana, a container can be used for doing many things different things. With this in mind, she didn't hesitate to buy one. When she went ahead and bought it, she had no idea where she was going to place the container. This container was bought for R25, 000. In Margaret's hair salon, there was a certain lady working there called Phumla who advised Amina to go to the townships to see if she could find a place to put her container. Since Amina was not familiar with the environment, and coupled with the fact that she could not speak Zulu, Phumla accompanied her to Umlazi.. At

Umlazi, Amina decided to place her container at a busy spot known as "skebenga", meaning a place where there are many thieves. The piece of land where she put her container cost her R250 per month in rent. Since opening her hair salon, she has never had any incident of theft even though it is in a high crime area.

When this salon was opened at Umlazi, it meant that she had to commute every day to work because the flat she rented was in Durban. Amina said that she has been running this hair salon for just four years and has accomplished a lot. From the money which came from the hair salon, she has been able to pay the air ticket of another lady from Ghana, who is a professional in braiding and her younger brother who is also a hairdresser. All of them live in town and pay R10 for transport every day to work. She has also been able to employ some Ghanaians who migrated to South Africa but were unable to raise capital to start their own businesses. She has also employed South African hairdressers but said that she pays the Ghanaian hairdressers working in her hair salon more than the South Africans. She explained that, with the other migrants in the salon, even when she is not there the salon still runs well. But if she leaves only the South African hairdressers, most of her customers go away. Customers always want their hair to be done by foreigners.

At the end of each month, Amina pays Ada (the lady she brought to work in her salon) R1000. She pays two other Ghanaians R1,200 each, she pays her barber R600 etc. At the end of each month, her own income after all the people have been paid is R7000 and from this amount, she saves R2000 every month.

From the proceeds she gets she and her senior sister Asa (whom she worked for before opening her own salon) have gone into a joint business. They have bought a very big hair salon in Port Elizabeth (this recent development took place two weeks after I finished my interviews). This hair salon was bought for R35000 and they have already employed six people to work not for a steady monthly income, but for a 20% commission.

The other hair salon that Asa opened for Amina when she just arrived was closed down a few years after Amina left for Durban because the lady whom Asa brought from Ghana to work in the salon misused the money and Asa was unable to pay the rent. Both Amina and Asa have realised that working together as sisters payoff so they have decided to work as partners. This new salon is very large in terms of space and equipment. So Asa will be able to sew her African fabrics in one section while Amina will be managing the hair dressing section. When I asked her how they were going to share the profit, she said they have decided to share it on a 50/50 basis.

Amina explained that the reason why Ghanaians know how to do hair perfectly is because they take up to three years as apprentices in hair salons while their counterparts in South Africa spend just three months. Also, Ghanaian hairdressers are patient with their customers while South African hairdressers get angry easily with customers. "We are here to work so during public holidays when hair salons owned by South Africans are closed, we work till very late and that is how we have an advantage over them and make more money" Amina remarked.

3.3.2 Migrant nurses from Zambia

Due to Zambia's proximity to South Africa, it is very easy for Zambian nurses to come to South Africa and write the examination with the nursing council and be admitted. Being admitted into this prestigious organisation facilitates migrant women from Zambia in getting jobs. Also, due to a possibility of an existing network in South Africa while still in Zambia (Zambia has a long history of cross-border migration to South Africa either as mine workers or cross-border traders), these women are au fait with the events taking place in South Africa. Maria's case, which has been examined under adjustment patterns, is a typical example. Before Maria left Zambia, she worked in both the government and the private sector. She worked in the government hospital in the copper belt province before moving to work at the Luanshya mine hospital. When she was working with the government, she used to earn 400 Kwacha per month and with the private sector, she earned 300.000 kwacha. Since she came to South Africa in 1999, she has been working in her first job, which was pre-arranged. Maria likes working as a nurse and insisted that one must like nursing before getting into it because the uniform looks nice but it is a dirty job. She earns R5000 per month as her gross income and because she has realised that she can earn more if she gets a degree, she has enrolled in one of the universities to get a degree in nursing. She once said that, "for me, the sky is the limit".

At her work place however, Maria has encountered some problems. She said that her white bosses treat her like the black South Africans whereas her white colleagues are treated differently. At my work place she said, "When I ask for a day off-duty, my boss will expect me to come to the hospital and put my complaint in writing even if I am sick". On the other hand, she explained that when her white colleagues find themselves in the same situations, such arrangements are done on the phone. "This makes me feel that I am not being treated fairly".

On the side of the black South Africans, "They see me as a threat. What they don't understand is that even if I leave the job my salary will not be added to theirs". "However, because I have been working with them for quite some time, they have begun to accept me".

3.3.3 Migrant women in tertiary institutions

The migrant women who are working in the different tertiary institutions have the penchant to succeed. How they achieve this depends on their personal abilities and the motivation offered them by the different institutions. When most of the women started working, they immediately enrolled for higher degrees, which they believed will enable them to rise to higher echelons.

When Dr Golda enrolled for a master's degree in sociology in 1996, her intention was to complete the degree and start working. During the period of her study, she was offered the position of tutor and by the time she completed, she started working as a junior lecturer. This motivated her to enrol for a doctorate degree, which she got early this year.

Presently, she is a lecturer and is still carrying out more research to become a professor. She said that it has not been easy for her to come this far. It has involved a lot of sacrifice and hard work. Preparing for lectures, marking scripts and at the same time doing her research has not been easy. She said that at times she sleeps just for few hours to keep up with the pace of her work.

She has had difficult times at work, especially when she was a junior lecturer, when she almost thought of quitting her job. Since she studied at the same university, some of her colleagues couldn't reconcile the fact that she was now a lecturer, and not a student. They used to give her instructions on how to teach certain modules, especially her colleagues who used to teach those modules before. She said that it was frustrating her because she wanted to introduce her own method. For the whole of 1999, she was not in good terms with Dr Rosabel, the lecturer from whom Golda took over the module. This problem was solved the following year Dr Rosabel moved to another university. However, this incident helped her in the sense that she learnt to take decisions as a lecturer. She is now confident that she has achieved a lot and is in the position to move to another institution, should the need arise.

Similarly, Bridget who came to South Africa with a first degree in computer sciences now is lecturing with a master's degree. This is not the end for her because she has already enrolled in one of the universities for a doctorate degree in wireless communication systems.

These women are working hard to achieve their goals in South Africa. Since all the universities they are working in are offering to pay for their tuition, there is no reason why they shouldn't take this opportunity and study. These opportunities are rare elsewhere in the continent.

3.3.4 A migrant caterer from Zambia

Here I will use Cindy's occupational experience to demonstrate how migrant women's lives were affected in the apartheid era as well as in the post apartheid era. Her experience is an example of the fact that when these women leave their home countries, they are determined to succeed, no matter the circumstances they may find themselves in South Africa. Back in Zambia, immediately she completed school, Cindy got a job at TASARA, a railway company as a bookkeeper. She started working at the age of seventeen. She worked there for a while and then moved back to Ndola to Doreen and got another job at the tax department. She became bored with the job at the income tax department and left. She said that she was very lucky finding jobs. She used to get a job, resign and just get another. When she resigned, she went back to Lusaka and worked as a tour guide. She said that this job was very interesting. She was working for a safari company. It was called Big Five Travel and Tour. When tourists came to Zambia, she would guide them to areas they wanted to visit. Cindy was involved in the arrangement of accommodation, transportation etc. She used to get a lot of tips, which were in dollars. This made her like the job very much. She left this company when another company came in doing the same type of business, which she joined. She left this job because the

money that was offered to her was better. She didn't work here for long because she decided to go back to college from 1990 to 1992. She attended a hotel and catering training institute and graduated with a diploma in hotel catering and management. Immediately she finished, she left for South Africa. In South Africa, she lived in Durban with one of her mother's sister's customers. Cindy was then introduced to a girl whose parents lived at Mandini. This girl told Cindy of a certain company called Sappi which was looking for a chef in their club. She advised Cindy to apply for the job. She took Cindy to Mandini where she was interviewed and given the job. They offered to pay her R900.00 per month and Cindy said that then, it was a lot of money. She said that at the time, she used to buy a loaf of bread for 80 cents. She worked there till 1995. Cindy got a job before her sister Doreen, so her sister moved in with her.

Cindy and her sister were the first foreigners to live at Mandini and it was a mainly black residential area. Cindy was forced to learn the Zulu language because, where she was working, no one could speak a word in English. All her other colleagues were blacks. Only her boss and the managers were white people. Among the chefs, there was only one who could speak English very well. So if some one had to speak to Cindy or if she had to speak to someone, this chef would interpret.

Cindy's experience as a pregnant woman and a worker in a foreign land

When Cindy left Zambia, she knew that she was pregnant but since her boyfriend refused to accept that he was responsible for the pregnancy, she was very hurt and decided to keep the baby. She was hurt because she hadn't planned this baby and she was not sure whether her parents were going to accept this baby. When Cindy got her first job in South Africa, she hid the fact that she was pregnant, but because the baby had to grow, her stomach started bulging. She made up her mind to tell her boss when the pregnancy was seven months. Her boss had already noticed that she was expecting a baby and so she tried and negotiated to have a two months leave without payment, which was given her. She said that her boss was a very nice woman.

Fortunately for Cindy, when she was nine months pregnant Doreen got a job. She went and lived with Doreen to deliver the baby and there after, lived there for two months. She then went back to work. Cindy used to have a maid who came to look after the baby while she was at work. There were days when her maid did not come and she had to go to work. She said that she used to cry then because she was scared of losing her job.

During this period, she had not even told the baby's father about the child. She said that she was just naughty and wanted to prove that she could support herself and the baby without his assistance. He only saw this child when the boy was two years old and Cindy then told him that the child belonged to him. He was shocked by the fact that this girl could take care of that pregnancy and didn't tell him of the birth of the baby for so long.

He however, couldn't deny that the baby was his because this little boy looks exactly like him. Interestingly, this is the same man who is Cindy's husband today.

Cindy worked at Sappi till 1995 when she had a problem and had to go Zambia. The problem was that, she had been working with a work permit and had been renewing it every year. When she went to the Home Affairs office to renew it the third time, she was told that the work permit could not be renewed again and that she had to apply for a permanent residence permit. (What used to happen in South Africa at that time is that, even if you came with a visitor's visa, if you got a job and brought a letter from your boss showing that you have been offered employment, you were given a work permit, without paying anything. So that is how Cindy got her work permit). She went back to Zambia because she had to bring certain documents like a police clearance. While in Zambia, she couldn't get all the documents in time so by the time she came back to South Africa, she had lost her job and the residence permit couldn't be processed because she had no job.

Then Cindy moved to Empangeni and got a job in Richards Bay. She cannot remember the name of the place now but it was a Chinese restaurant, which is no longer there. She worked there for almost two years and then moved to a clothing factory but the owner went bankrupt and sold the industry to one white man who started treating her badly. The guy told Cindy that her salary was too high (she was earning R900 a month) and that he was going to reduce it to R800.

So Cindy left and got another job at the Richards Bay harbour in a restaurant. She used to go to work at 10am and return to her house at Empangeni at 11pm. She used to go work every day and would be given a day or two off duty every month. She explained that, being a restaurant, the owner did not want to employ many people and they were being exploited. Also, in those days there were no trade unions that they could go to report this issue so they just used to work. Actually, she used to stop working at 10pm but because the only bus that used to carry people from Richard's Bay to Empangeni arrives at 11pm, she had no choice but to wait for it. She would arrive home and find Doreen still awake waiting for her before she could even eat.

There was a day that Cindy went to work and some people attempted to break into their house. Doreen fled and left the door open. She was panicking in her hiding place outside the house. She feared that Cindy might just come in and be raped by these guys. When Cindy came home that night, she saw the doors wide open and she was wondering what was happening. When Doreen saw her, she quickly ran back to the house and closed the door. Then she told her what happened. Cindy wondered what would have happened to her but she said that God was always on her side.

She didn't work here for long when she saw an advertisement in the papers for the position of a supervisor in the catering department in the Richard's Bay hospital. She applied and was called up for interview. She got the job and she was happy because, the working conditions were good as well as the salary. She used to go to work at 6am and close at 2pm.

Cindy's work experience in a purely white environment

Cindy was the first black person to work as a supervisor in the Richard's Bay hospital and she had to work closely with the managers who were all white people. They all shared the same office and these other people didn't like her. They used to do a lot of strange things that made her feel bad. The manager at that time, who was a white lady, disliked black people and wanted to get Cindy fired. This continued to the point that Cindy couldn't bear it any longer so she went and reported to the area manager. The area manager came and spoke to the two of them and this white lady said that Cindy was incompetent and could not do the job, but the area manager said that he personally interviewed Cindy and from her past work experiences, he found her competent that is why he took her to do the job. So he advised the lady to stop being racist. The manager got a warning and was told that if she does not want to work with a black person she must leave. Cindy continued working with her until one day, the other staff got fed-up with the manager because of the way she was treating Cindy and so they started treating her badly she would speak to them and they wouldn't respond. The other staff organised a strike action which did not materialise but they wrote their complaints and sent them to her. She told them to put everything in writing and she would call for the operation manager. These people decided (without telling Cindy) that if she calls the operations manager,

they were not going to hand in any complaints and if he asked them anything, they would say that they were not aware of what the manager was talking about.

During this period, Cindy used to go back to the house from work crying daily, knowing that she had done nothing wrong but things were not going on well with her. So she, Doreen, and one of the black pastors of Thandaza covenant church at Empangeni Moses, (who has now started another branch of New Covenant churches in Ngwelezana, near Empangeni) decided to fast and pray for one week because she said that she needed that job and there was nowhere she could go to. It was during this period of their fasting that the manager called in the operations manager and said that the staff was going to carry out a strike against the management of the Richard's Bay hospital. The operation manager came and called for a meeting. Cindy said that they could see from his face that he was angry. He then asked them why they had called for him. When every one kept quiet, he asked Anita (Cindy's manager) what was happening. Anita then told him that the staff was complaining and they asked her to call for him. The staff said that it wasn't true and with that, the operations manager became furious and asked Anita to see him immediately. Consequently, she was fired from her job. So that is how Cindy continued working there but she said that she prayed that God would give Anita another job, which she got. After Anita, another white lady was brought in who was really nice to Cindy. So she never had any problems at her job and was promoted to the position of catering manager. She worked in this position for only two months and left because she got another job with the South African Breweries at Empangeni and she was offered a better pay package (R2500.00).

At the South African Breweries, she was happy because there was no one to supervise her. There was only one area manager who used to come once in a week. Also, she had very good clients. When this area manager left, Cecilia (a close friend of Anita) took over. Cindy said that she believed that Anita must have told her every thing about Cindy. So Cecilia came to her and said, "so you are Cindy, the one who worked at the Richard's Bay hospital" Cindy just said to herself that things were not going to be nice any longer. She said that Cecilia tried to make things difficult for her but she had very good clients who told Cecilia that they were not going to accept any form of racism. They told her that if she wanted to do business with them, she had to work with Cindy. So Cecilia had no choice but to change and became nice to Cindy.

Cindy worked with Cecilia until Cecilia was told to resign. (Cindy says that Cecilia was not on good terms with her bosses). When she resigned, she lost the contract. She went and got another contract and started looking for managers. She then came to Cindy and asked her if she wanted a change in her career and to earn something better. So Cindy decided to go with her and that is how she got the job at Ulundi where she is still working till today. She was offered R3000.00 per month.

Cindy's work experience in a purely black environment in South Africa (Ulundi) since 1999

She started by saying that she is not happy now with the job, that she needs a change. She said that the reason why she really needs a change is because, where she is working now cannot be compared to where she had worked before. When she was working at the Richard's Bay hospital, it used to be clean and it was a big hospital and she used to have part-time catering at Garden Clinic in Empangeni.

Ulundi is a purely black inhabited area. She said that if one goes to set up a business there, that person will be expected to employ the local people. She explained that almost all of the people working in the hospital are from around Ulundi; from the cleaners, to the nurses and even those who cook the food for patients. These people, she said, are so reluctant to do their work. What surprises her is that the people who are admitted to that hospital are their relatives but they don't care. If they don't want to come to work, they stay at home.

Presently, her bosses are her clients and Cecil. She said that working at Ulundi has taught her lots of things. She doesn't work under the government but the government employs the people she works with. These people are aware of this fact and it is difficult to discipline them. She said that these people are very intimidating and at times they will say things to her like; "we are difficult people, and a small girl like you cannot manage us, we have been working here long before you came and there is nothing you can do to us" etc.

The day Cecil took her to Ulundi and she was introduced as someone who came from Zambia, these people started speaking in Zulu language and saying things like: "how can

you bring someone from faraway, how are we going to communicate with her?". they said that they couldn't be forced to a lifestyle where they will speak in English. They did not know that Cindy speaks the Zulu language. They were very angry.

Cindy was lucky because the medical superintendent at the hospital at the time came from the Democratic Republic of Congo and he too was happy to have a foreigner around. He didn't last for a long time in that hospital because the local people didn't want him. They said that he was too strict on them and didn't care how they felt but only wanted them to work hard. Cindy said that at that time the hospital was very clean and the superintendent used to discipline the staff if they didn't do their work. One day they went on a strike action against him and he was sent away.

Cindy now finds herself in a situation where her subordinates are older women. She that some of these women are as old as her mother and one of them was born in 1936 and is still working. This old lady is supposed to start working at 7am but most of the time, she comes at 9am. At times she even comes to work at 12pm. She will tell Cindy " my daughter, I cannot wake up early because I am an old woman and if I resign, I may die before the money will reach me". Cindy said that it takes the government a long time to process pensions for old people. She said that, looking at this woman, she wants to discipline her, but on another thought, it would be like trying to discipline her own mother. She says that it is a difficult job for her. Now she has decided to make these subordinates her friends and her discipline is in the form of advice. She tells them how important their job is to them and how important it is for them to keep the hospital clean.

For the first two weeks that Cindy worked in that hospital, the people didn't know that she understood the Zulu language. She called a meeting and addressed them in Zulu. She told them that they all have been employed and that they knew exactly what they came to that hospital to do. She told them that she was not going to force them to do their work and that they should not make any body's life miserable. These people were astonished and ashamed of themselves because they now realised that she had heard every thing they had been saying. She said that presently when she is angry with them and shouts in Zulu, they will tell her that she is now speaking too much Zulu and that she must go back to her country before she forgets her own language.

African migrant women's participation in the labour market of South Africa is currently a huge success. By drawing upon their different occupational experiences it brings their economic activities to light and their level of contribution to South African society. Also, by describing the insights regarding their work and social environment, the dynamics of the lives of African migrant women is portrayed.

Chapter four

4.1 Background to the migration of the women

In studying the lives of African migrant women in South Africa, the researcher encounters many problems. One of the major obstacles is that there is little literature that has to do with the background to the migration of African women. Probably the reason for this handicap is that these African migrant women are seen in the eyes of those who are interested in the study of migration in post apartheid South Africa as migrants, only analysing their lives from the moment they enter South Africa.

Another serious obstacle is that of the social actors themselves. In investigating the motives for their migration to South Africa, one realises that they are unaware of the exact motives of migration themselves. It is only after anthropological techniques of investigation have been used that these motives became known. (Jackson 1986) noted that the rational choice of the migrant is the immediate apparent cause but what determines the choice situation are specific events which have brought the migrant to the point of decision often without he or she being aware of them.

It is interesting that some twenty years ago no one would have dreamt of African women migrating to South Africa independently. This is because only men were allowed to migrate to South Africa to work in the mines, leaving behind their families. However, certain circumstances in the other African countries and in South Africa have resulted in a feminisation of African migration. The increased presence of African women from other

African countries in South Africa is an indication that one's gender is becoming less important in international border crossing.

It is important at this juncture to look at the circumstances in the other African countries and those in South Africa that made the migration to South Africa the choice of African women. It is also important to understand why African women are now migrating independently.

Looking at the geographical layout of South Africa, one realises that it is situated at the foot of the African continent and is readily accessible especially to people in the southern African countries. It has a large landmass with all types of vegetation, which is an indication of the fact that every type of food crop grown in the other African countries can be grown here. It is a country that every African would like to visit because of its multi-racial population and its ability to still remain one nation.

Economically speaking, South Africa is the "super power" in the African continent. When compared with the other African countries, its infrastructure as well as road network is well developed. Its political system is advanced democracy. It is the "jewel of Africa" as seen in the eyes of African migrant women. It is a country, which has moved from a "wicked" regime called apartheid to a "new birth" regime with democratic principles where the black person is being given his or her just rights. Looking at where South Africa is coming from and where it is going, the rest of the African countries want their own share of this "jewel". In the eyes of African migrant women, South Africa is the only country that can give them the opportunity to make money.

As in the literature reviewed, the economic, social as well as the political situation in most African countries is such that it puts these women "on the move". Their countries are plagued with civil wars, abuse of power, corruption, lack of democratic rule and the lack of good governance.

Many of these women come from a situation whereby over half of their countries' export earnings must go to pay the servicing of debt while the principal, the original amount borrowed remains untouched. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) requires the imposition of structural adjustment policies that include the devaluation of national currencies, reduction of public sector spending, cutting back jobs and services (Taran 1999).

Most African governments borrowed money far beyond their capacity to repay, leaving their citizens retrenched, graduates jobless and most of the time with very low salaries. This makes it impossible for these women to cope with the level of inflation in their countries. The women who subsequently migrated to South Africa were left with no choice but to leave.

Most of my respondents gave responses related to their financial position to the question why they migrated. In the literature reviewed Cholewinski (1997) noted that migration represents an escape from poverty (relative or absolute). This escape when closely linked to new opportunities in another country, will enable us to understand why Larsen (2001) stated

that most of the migrants in South Africa from other African countries are economic immigrants who have heard that the streets of South Africa are paved with gold.

Thus with all the networks of African migrant women in place before leaving their countries of origin, each of them came to have their own share of the gold. As one of my informants, Silvia stated, "South Africa is a fertile ground for every type of business. In anything one does, one prospers". From the various responses given by my informants, one can conclude without any hesitation that South Africa as seen in the eyes of other Africans, "is a piece of cake that each African wants a share of".

Margaret, a Nigerian migrant woman teaching mathematics and science in one of the secondary schools made the following comments:

"The South Africans have no reason to send us away. We have every reason to be here";

- "The position I presently occupy was advertised and there was no South African able to be employed and that is the reason why I was given the job. We are here to make the South African women know that other African women can also do the sciences and excel".

- "When we were in secondary and high school back in Nigeria, we were often asked to donate money to take care of the ANC refugees in Nigeria and in return we were promised a home in South Africa when the struggle ends."

Maria M. a Zambian nurse presently working at the Richards Bay hospital said that the Luanshya mine hospital where she was working in Zambia was privatised in 1998 and the people who bought it could not manage it properly and because of this there were many

problems. These problems ranged from drug shortages in the hospital to irregular payment of their salaries. Patients were given prescriptions and asked to purchase the drugs elsewhere (which was not the case before privatisation). The salaries of those working at Luanshya hospital became irregular and the workers were paid every two months instead of every month and at times were owed arrears, which were never paid.

When these problems intensified, Maria could not look for a job elsewhere in Zambia because she had worked for the government of Zambia before and left because their salaries were slashed as part of the implementation of the structural adjustment program (SAP). Finding herself in the private sector in an era where people who were working for the government were being retrenched or encouraged to go on early retirement, it became difficult for her to get a job in Zambia. Coupled with the inconsistency in the way she received her salary, inflation was rising and life became unbearable for her so she decided to leave.

During this period in Zambia, that is, 1997 to 1999, there was much retrenchment and many people were encouraged to apply for early retirement. This made the situation worse for those who had just graduated from school and were looking for jobs. The people who were among the first to be retrenched and those who were also among the first to apply for early retirement received all their benefits. All the others who applied later have not received their benefits from the Zambian government till now. Maria was among the people who applied later for early retirement (that was before she got the job at Luanshya mine hospital) and did not receive any benefits.

Some of the women, especially the professional hair dressers from Ghana, did not have money to open up their own hair salons and realised that working in other peoples salons to be paid at the end of each month was as good as not working at all because the money that they got was not enough to take care of even their daily needs. These women were fortunate because through their social networks in South Africa they were informed that they could earn higher incomes in South Africa than working in Ghana.

The situation of the Kenyan migrant women who came to South Africa and are now working is also far from being an escape from poverty and unemployment. Carie K. was working with a computer company called "Today's On Line" with a first degree in economics. She explained that, back in Kenya she felt threatened by the fact that a lot of people with first degrees could not get jobs. Working with a first degree she feared being "kicked out" of the job since many people were being retrenched in Kenya. So she really wanted to get another degree in a new field (e-business) so that she could easily get a job or at least have an edge over people with just a first degree.

The literature I reviewed did not portray breakdown in relationships as one of the motives for migration, yet I discovered this was important. I found that about 75% of my sample migrated to South Africa because of either unsuccessful marriages or marriage related reasons or unsuccessful relationships with boy friends. Even among the women who on the surface genuinely gave financially related factors as the reason why they came to South

Africa, I discovered that marriage related reasons were a salient factor that triggered the move to South Africa.

In West and East Africa, an educated woman is highly esteemed, especially if she has a university degree. If such a degree is in the sciences, the admiration is even higher. Such a woman is expected by her friends and family members to be married either by some one with a higher qualification or the same qualification, or a rich businessman or a politician. So, for a woman from Uganda with a degree in computer science to be married to a priest meant social degradation. Every one was surprised to see Bridget marrying a priest. Her parents tried to persuade her not marry Anthony but she did not listen. Her friends openly told her that she was doomed to be poor (priests are seen as low paid). To escape the social stigma, she left Uganda the same year that she got married and came to South Africa.

Seeing a Nigerian woman with a doctorate degree in the sciences but who has a husband who is not fluent in the English language then you will begin to understand why some of these women migrated to South Africa. Some of the reasons why an African woman will decide to make the move definitely are far from being either politically or economically motivated.

Some African women did not migrate to South Africa because they wanted to. Morokvasic (1986) noted that the reasons for migration must be appreciated within a broader context and framework of structural factors and social forces.

Many scholars have explored migration using statistical methods, the reason why people migrate. However, statistical studies carried out by formal questionnaire can never reveal the actual personal reasons for women's migration decisions.

In this study, with the use of life histories and in-depth interviews and also the fact that my informants were not just informants, but became my friends, it became clear that there was a difference between the reasons claimed for migration and the real reasons.

When I began the research, open-ended questionnaires were used and the respondents filled them in and return them. Below are some of the responses they gave as to the reasons why they came to South Africa:

- To look for a better job
- To improve on my career
- To utilise the skills I had acquired
- To look for business opportunities

However, contradictory responses were obtained through a long period of informal and intimate relationship with my informants. As I started getting close to them and sharing my own experiences as a fellow migrant woman, the real reasons or the reason that triggered the move came to light. Below are some of the responses, which were collected, not during the formal interviewing period, but through informal occasions (participant observation).

Bernadicta T., a Cameroonian businesswoman residing in Durban had this to say:

"I got married to Tanyi because I loved him. What I did not know was that he got married to me because he knew that I could "make money out of stones" (meaning that she is very enterprising). He is naturally a very lazy person and all the money I made through the small grocery shop I opened, he always came for it. When I even bought a car, which was to be used as a taxi with all the documents in my name, he was the one using it".

"From when we got married, any time that I refused to give him money he demanded. I ended up with a swollen face by the following morning. I had to hide myself in the house for the wounds to heal in order to avoid embarrassment from my neighbours and friends. I was in a battered relationship. At times I would run to my parents house but he always came back to fetch me and would even apologise to me and my parents that he was not going to beat me up again. This however was not true because he would do the same thing the next month. So, leaving Cameroon to come to South Africa was the only way to effectively run away from that "animal husband". He cannot come here to look for me and he even tried and got my telephone number from someone and called me one day. The moment I heard his voice, I warned him never to call me again and immediately I changed the telephone number".

Silvia A., a businesswoman from Ghana who is presently living at Ulundi in South Africa has a similar story:

"My husband was a "mummy's boy" (her husband was her mother-in-law's favourite child) and when we got married, she decided to live with us. She blamed me for every thing that went wrong between my husband and me and even when he did not spend the night in the house, it was just okay, he was just being a man. After all, she said that her own husband did the same things to her. What worsened the situation was the fact that my husband was only concerned with taking care of his brothers and sisters and did not care about me. I blame myself for having entered into this against the wish of my parents. I practised marriage before getting into it and when I got into it (meaning that she was having sexual intercourse with him and became pregnant and was forced to marry him because she feared being humiliated in her village), it failed from the beginning. So I decided to leave him and start my life all over again in South Africa".

Doreen, a Zambian single migrant woman living at Empangeni left her job in Zambia and came to South Africa because of marriage related reasons as well.

"I met my boyfriend Eric at the university in Lusaka in 1984. He did promise to get married to me and so we moved in and lived together until I completed my degree. When I became pregnant with my daughter Makomba, he started being unfaithful to me. When Makomba was born, he married another woman. I accepted it as part of life and moved on with my life. However, Eric made sure that he frustrated every relationship that I had with any other man. What he used to do was that when he found me with a new boyfriend, he would go to the man and tell him that I was his girl friend and even warn the man never to come to me again. Whenever Eric met with me at the pub he would ask me to go back to the house to

take care of his child. I couldn't continue with this situation so I decided to come to South Africa to keep him out of my life".

Cindy M. a Zambian migrant woman living at Ulundi had a similar story. She was in-love with Vincent whom she married in 1999. She first met him in 1991 and in 1992 she became pregnant. Vincent made her pregnant. This coincided with the period when Cindy's elder sister Doreen decided to migrate to South Africa. Since she had just completed her diploma in catering, Cindy decided to come to South Africa with her sister. Coming from a family with strict Christian values, she could not bear the shame. When she came to South Africa and delivered and people told Vincent that the baby (Mundi) looked exactly like him, that is when he decided to be reunited with Cindy and finally married her. For Cindy, migration was form of an escape from shame and disgrace from her parents and friends.

For African migrant women in South Africa, emigration was as a result of poverty at their home countries as well as distress. For some of them, migration was seen as an opportunity to escape from unsuccessful marriages or relationships with boyfriends. However, on arrival in South Africa, these women took advantage of employment as well as business opportunities and improved their social status and positions in their families. It can be concluded however that one single reason cannot solely account for the migration decisions of African women

4.2 The life histories of the women

Life histories as a method of research in the social sciences is an important way of getting data, which is very rich, and has depth. In collecting life histories, the researcher has the opportunity of using a variety of methods to get every iota of needed information, but most of the time extended unstructured interviews are used. These are also important in studies like this because they give the researcher an idea of why people behave the way they do, and factors that have shaped individuals' lives. Without the use of life histories, it would be practically impossible to study the world from the social actor's point of view. It 'aids as a sensitising tool' and helps the researcher develop an understanding of the meaning of concepts used by those she is studying (Haralambos and Holborn 1997:833)

Information was collected about the areas where the women grew-up, went to school, marriage, family life, migration history, residential history, religious life, and the changes they have seen in their life time. It is important to note that as one gets to know about the events that have taken place in an individual's life, the way of life of a whole group of people also comes to light. The life histories of African women who migrated independently to South Africa and are residing in the KwaZulu-Natal province are a demonstration of this fact. The information collected about the life histories of the women has been written under the following sub-headings to bring an understanding of the events that have taken place in their lives in their country of birth before emigrating to South Africa. These are as follows: the rural background of the women, their education and career, marriage and their social obligations.

4.2.1 The rural background of the women

Most of the women in this study were born and spent their entire childhood in some rural areas in Africa. They originated from places where agriculture is the mode of subsistence. Most of their life histories refer to their rural upbringing. However, it is worth emphasising here that, despite the fact that they came from rural areas, they were not the poorest of the poor. They came from families which produced both food and cash crops on a large scale and were able to save enough money to pay school fees for these women. Among the farming families that my informants come from there was a lot of buying and selling taking place both on a retail and wholesale basis. This explains the reason why these migrant women before immigrating to South Africa were already in possession of at least a high school qualification in one area or another. A profile of their life histories is examined below.

Whenever one meets someone, one of the inevitable questions is "where do you come from?" In the African continent, where one comes from is not only important for survival, but also for role expectations, norms and values etc. It also gives you a sense of belonging or not belonging to one place or another. According to a typical African tradition, when you originate from a particular area, then you have the right of ownership of land and other property, depending on whether you are a male or a female. This varies with different societies, whether matrilineal or patrilineal. When it is a patrilineal society, inheritance of

land is on the father's line of descent, but when it is a matrilineal society, inheritance is from the mother's line.

From when she could understand the question, where do you come from? Silvia would answer Jesikan. Silvia is a businesswoman presently residing at Ulundi in KwaZulu Natal. Born into the royal family of Dankwa, in 1969, she spent her entire childhood in Jesikan. Jesikan is a rural town in southern Ghana, in the Volta region and is inhabited by the Buem people. If you want to understand what a typical tropical West African town looks like, go to Jesikan. There are beautiful thick forests with very tall trees and dark soil with heavy rainfalls. These make the area very fertile and both food and cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, cashew, pepper, pineapples, plantain, cassava, cocoyams are grown.

Silvia Akua, named according to the tradition of the people of southern Ghana, was born on a Wednesday, and automatically bears the name Akua, meaning a female born on that day. (In Southern Ghana, children are given names depending on the day they were born and also whether they are females or males).

Silvia is the second of the two children that were born to Dankwa Kweku (her father) and Comfort (her mother). They lived in linear settlements in Jesikan. This is the normal pattern of housing in Jesikan whereby each person builds his or her house on either both sides of a road or a river. This pattern is different from the housing pattern here in KwaZulu Natal where the houses are scattered. On a closer look, the people on both sides of the road in Jesikan are related to each other.

In the course of Silvia's life in Ghana, she lived in different places. From when she was born until when she completed primary and secondary school at the age of 18 years, she lived at Jesikan, about 165 miles from Accra, the capital of Ghana. She lived as a child in houses built with mud, which had thatch roofs. Nowadays, one can find only a few of those houses. Most of the houses now are built with bricks. Silvia said that in Jesikan, people build whatever they want on their land and it is possible to find one person's sitting room facing another person's toilet, as there is little or no town planning.

Silvia has pleasant memories of her childhood in Jesikan. When she was growing up with other children in the village, they used to have many adventures. They would wake up early especially during the rainy season and go to search under mango trees (which do not belong to their parents) to pick up the ones which have fallen. Their parents will not allow them to do this, so what they normally used to do is that around 5 am they would sneak out of their houses. They used to use torchlights to look for these mangoes. They also used to collect black berries in a group with other children and sell them. They did this with children of their age group. They also used to go to the rivers to look for crabs. Silvia used to be scared of putting her hands under the stones to look for these crabs but she said that there were some bold children who put their hands without being scared of being bitten by the crabs.

She has some memories of the short period that she lived with her mother in Jesikan. Her mother had farms that were far away from home and because she and her brother were schooling, they normally went to these farms during the weekends and holidays only. These

farms were in an area where cars could not reach, so they had to go to the farms on foot. When their mother told them in the evening that the following day they would be going to these farms, Silvia would not sleep well that night. Even if by morning it was rainy, they still had to go. They would have to wake up very early at about 5 am to start walking before daylight. She and her brother would not want to walk ahead since they were using a footpath. The dew on the grass or the water on it when it had rained soils the person who walks ahead. Their mother normally volunteered to be ahead since she had to encourage them. They had these far-away farms because the soil there was very fertile and because of this, they used to produce huge bunches of plantains, cocoyams, yams, cassava etc. After harvesting, the food had to be transported on their heads since there were no cars. Men carried the food in baskets and women carried in basins. The baskets are made from palm branches.

Before they left their house for the farms, they normally prepared beans and when they got to the farms, they would fry ripe plantains and eat them with the beans. At times they carried *garri* (*garri* is a type of food in a semi powder form made out of cassava) and when they got to the farms, they would soak it with water and add sugar before eating. However, most of the time when they arrived at the farms, the labourers who lived there would kill a chicken and cook it for them with other food.

Memories of her childhood have influenced her life, even now she has travelled to South Africa. Growing - up with a lifestyle of planting food-crops has made her to bring some of her indigenous foods and plant them in South Africa, like plantains and some other

vegetables. She enjoys working on her vegetable garden behind her house in Ullundi. She once remarked that she can never live without planting, even if it means planting in flowerpots.

Silvia moved to Accra to attend University at the age of 18 years. She spent three years at the university and graduated with a degree in geography. When she met Kwesi at the university and they decided to get married, they both moved to Kumasi, where she had lived most of her life before coming to South Africa. Kumasi is a typical example of a West African town. From Accra, the capital of Ghana, to Kumasi is about 200 miles. There is a lot of buying and selling taking place on the streets and the town has many open markets where almost everything is sold. The inhabitants make many things locally: shoes, earrings, soaps, creams, hair products etc. There are also what is called "bush markets". People go to these "bush markets" very early in the morning. They are located at the train station. Villagers who come from faraway villages arrive at this train station very early and are impatient to sell to go back on the train to their homes. So they sell what ever they came with at low prices to the retailers who come with large baskets to buy, in order to sell in the open markets. The retailers buy food crops like okra, tomatoes, plantains, maize, pepper, cocoyams, cassava. The bush market starts at 4 am. The women involved in this retailing wake up very early and go to the main markets and prepare the spaces they are going to use in selling before going to the bush markets. This type of business is not possible in Jesikan because it is a rural town. People from the farms carry their food crops directly to the open markets. There are no middlemen in Jesikan.

Living in an area like Kumasi where buying and selling was the order of the day motivated Silvia to start her own small business. It wasn't difficult for her at this stage because she grew up with one of her mother's sisters, Anna who was a trader in African printed fabrics. Silvia was already used to selling in Anna's shop and knew how profitable it was before moving to Kumasi. She didn't open a shop like Anna but moved from one office to another selling. At times she went to the open markets and sold her fabrics, which she bought from Accra.

Similarly, Bernedicta Tanyi originated from an area with tropical rainfall, tall trees, thick forest, dark soil, with linear settlements like Silvia's birthplace. Presently, she lives in Durban, in South Africa. Her story is different because she comes from Mamfe in the south west province of Cameroon with English being her first language and Bayang her dialect. Because of its rich climatic condition, cocoa, coffee, cola-nuts, palm trees (from which palm oil as well as palm wine is produced) and many other food crops common to the cultural background of the Bayangi people are grown there. This group of people produces cassava as their staple food. They grow it in large quantities and through the cassava tuber, which they process locally, produce "water fufu" (the cassava is soaked in water for three or four days and then grated. It is then tied in bags with tiny holes in order for the water to be drained. It is sold and served as a soft or hard porridge) and "gari", which is prepared a bit differently from cassava. When the cassava is brought from the farms, it is peeled and immediately grated. After grating it is tied in a bag also with small holes and heavy sticks and stones are placed on it to enable the water to come out. It is then fried and its final state looks like sand. It is served either as a hot or cold porridge.

Bernedicta grew up in a cultural setting where a woman is supposed to be docile. Polygamy is the order of the day among the Bayangi people and her own father married two wives, but never really lived with both of them at the same time. Her mother was the first wife and she left Bernedicta's father immediately the second wife came. Having many children in this community is seen as a vital source of labour, being a typically agrarian community and her father married a second wife to have more children.

Growing up in a community and family where survival was based on agriculture, has left Bernidicta with some memories which can never fade especially because she has some scars on her legs which remind her of the wounds she got from the farms. Going to the farms was one of the things she never liked as a child. With no motorable roads, they had to walk to the farms. This also meant that whatever was harvested was carried on their heads.

However, during the planting seasons, her parents joined what she called "jangi" (where the members worked in turns on other members farms). This made life a bit easier for them because, when it was the time for clearing the farm, her father brought men to their farms and during the planting period, her mother brought women to till the soil. In both cases, Bernedicta and her brothers and sisters worked along-side these people. Whether it was rainy or sunny, they had to work.

When it was time to prepare either water fufu or gari, she knew that she was going to end up with wounds on her fingers. They used graters in grating the cassava and from time to time,

her hand would slip and instead of the cassava being grated, she would grate her hand. Blood would ooze out but she still had to finish her own share of the grating.

On market days, Bernedicta and her siblings had to carry the gari on their heads as well in basins where their mother would sell and buy whatever was needed in the house. In order to prevent the gari from spilling, they put it in bags before putting it in the basins. Whenever they got to the markets, that was when they pour it out into the basins (gari was like sand so if they allowed it to spill, there was no way of picking it up because it was going to be mixed up with soil).

However, Bernedicta also has pleasant memories as a child who grew up in an agriculturally based community. During the rainy seasons it was harvesting time for mangoes. This was normally her happiest moment because she knew she was going to collect alot of mangoes. Ordinarily, Bernedicta would not want to walk ahead of the others because of the water on the grass but during mango season, the water on the grass meant nothing to her. On their way to the farms, she and her brothers and sisters would run ahead of their parents because the person who got under the mango tree got all the fallen ones. She said that they didn't pick only from their farm but they used to go and steal from other people's farms as well. Their parents did not approve of this and that is one of the reasons why they used to run and leave their parents behind.

Maria Mukelabai also comes from Zambia and was born in 1955 in the Namwala district in the southern province. Her village of origin is Lunga, about 15km from Namwala town. Her village chief is called Shezonga. Lunga is in the agricultural region in Zambia and the farmers produce a lot of maize. The people of this village keep poultry and cattle. Unfortunately, because of changes in the climatic conditions (less rainfall from one year to another), the crops as well as the cattle are dying and foot-and-mouth disease is killing the cows. Almost every family in Lunga village depends on farming for survival and maize is their staple food.

Not all my informants grew up in an agricultural setting. Cindy Mundi, unlike Bernedicta, Maria and Sylvia, was born in a different environment. I met her in May 2001 at Empangeni when she was visiting her sister Doreen. Although she lives at Ulundi and I live at Empangeni, since then, we always have been phoning and visiting each other. Through my friendship with her, I came to know other migrant women as well as everything she has gone through and how she lives. This became evident when I decided to interview her formally for my project. She would say things like "you already know, why are you asking me" Although I collected extensive information from her, when writing out her life history I had to use shortened versions to illustrate specific issues. Her home town is Livingstone, an agricultural town in Zambia with a tourist attraction (the Victoria Falls). (this town got its name from the British martyr David Livingstone, whose tomb is still present there) Cindy has had different experiences from the migrant women from West Africa.

4.2.2 Marriage and the role it has played in the lives of the women.

Marriage is a very important institution in African culture, and is not just a union of two individuals but a union of two families, the bride's and the bridegroom's. Before the introduction of Western forms of marriage, which involve the signing of a marriage certificate, the African people had their own way of celebrating marriages. However, they have been caught up between the two forms but still in most cases go back to their roots, except where individuals decide to deviate from their cultural norm. Contemporary African people have thus found themselves celebrating both forms. This is because in the global world, in which we are living, a union is really recognised as such with the proof of a marriage certificate. On the other hand, Africans do not consider fellow Africans married if they fail to have the traditional African marriage ritual. Carrying out both forms involves spending a lot of money and in situations where some educated people cannot afford the two forms, they simply elope and obtain only the marriage certificate. On the other hand, the uneducated end up with only the traditional wedding.

One of my informants, Maria, went through the traditional African marriage in Zambia. From her childhood days, she was one of those who considered every aspect of their culture very important. This was first demonstrated at the age of fifteen when she saw her first menstruation. She went through initiation into womanhood. Another aspect of her culture, which was also important, was for her to keep her virginity until she is married. Her account tells us how respected and proud the parents of a virgin given into marriage are. Maria married according to the culture of the Lozi people of Zambia. Coming from a patrilineal

society, she was supposed to be married according to the culture of the Lunda people of her father, but when her father died, her mother was asked to go back to where she came from. So her maternal relatives brought up Maria. Her mother did not remarry after the death of her husband. Her father's brothers took all the cows they had after his death and were supposed to be taking care of their late brother's wife and children but didn't. Instead, they chased Maria's mother away and took all the farms and cattle.

When John came to propose to Maria, she had no choice but to direct him to her maternal relatives because they were the ones who brought her up. She then told her mother that there was someone who wanted "her hand in marriage". According to the Lozi culture, the man who wanted to get married was not supposed to come to see her parents, but his relatives came instead. So her husband's relatives came and placed 500 kwacha in a plate and gave it to her parents as the tradition stipulates. This money is not the bride price, but is given to ensure that no other man comes to marry her. Thereafter, the brideprice of 750 kwacha was paid. In November 1975, John and Maria had a civil wedding and signed their marriage certificate at Chiangola in the Copper Belt and after this had a wedding in the Catholic Church.

According to the culture of the people, a kitchen party was organised before the wedding and Maria invited her friends who brought her presents. The party was also organised so that the elderly women should initiate her into marriage. As the party went on, the elderly women taught her how to behave with a man on the bed. Her case was a bit different because she was marrying someone from another culture and had to be taught the culture so

that she could fit in. These were the same women who took her to her husband's house after the wedding. She was given just one dress to wear after taking off her wedding garment. This was according to the tradition of the people. All her other dresses were given to her sisters, for her husband had to start buying her clothes. The wedding gifts were kept at her parents' house and were only collected later. These clothes could not be given to her in-laws because it is feared that they will use them supernaturally to make her barren.

The time came for the test of her virginity. Among these people, a virgin is highly respected. Normally after the wedding ceremony, some elderly women in the village are sent to accompany the bride to her husband's house (at night). The husband is supposed to have made love to her that first night to make sure that she was a virgin. In the morning, if she were found to be a virgin, then the man would put some money in a bowl and place it at the entrance of his house. On the other hand, if she were found not to be a virgin, he would put an axe outside so that the girl's parents should collect her (in this case, the bride-price is not returned). Maria was such a shy woman and was afraid of men since when she was growing up, her mother had told her that she mustn't allow men to touch her else she would fall pregnant. On her wedding night she sobbed with tears because it was so painful. Early in the morning, before the women who came and left her at her husband's house arrived, her husband put some money in a bowl and placed it at the entrance of his house. When the women came and found it, they were very happy.

Usually among these people, if a woman has a child without being married, it is very difficult for any man to marry her. They call such a woman a "spare wheel". They even go as far as discouraging boys from marrying girls who have children.

Maria's social and cultural upbringing has shaped her sexual behaviour, even away from home. Being far away from home, she has still been able to comport herself and live in South Africa without any extra-marital affair. She explained that she has been able to do this because of the way she grew up. "If I was able to stay without sexual intercourse as a teenager why should I not be able to do the same now" Maria remarked. She said that her husband, John, is the only man she had ever had sex with since she was born.

In every African cultural setting, there are rules and regulations governing the institution of marriage and deviating from them may mean that the deviant may not be able to continue living in that cultural setting. Silvia's story is an example to show how difficult it is for such people, especially women, to continue living with the stigma of "a run-away spouse" in her culture. In any society, there are always deviants. Out of foolishness or anxiety, some women decide to deviate from the norms of the society in which they were brought up. At an early age of fourteen, Silvia Akua dated her first boyfriend and by the time she turned twenty, married one of them, the last one she met at the university. In this regard, when a boy finds a girl whom he thinks he can get married to, he cannot just go to the girl's family. His father or the head of the household is the one who is expected to go and see the girl's parents. Then the girl's parents will ask them to go and check on their response after about two or three weeks. In the mean time, the girl's parents will go and enquire about the boy's

family; whether he comes from a good or bad family, whether he is a true born or a slave etc. These people who are called the slaves came to Ghana during the slave trade period and even though they have inter-married for generations now they are still considered as 'outsiders'. Parents will not want their family name to be stained by marriage with families of slave descent. The inhabitants of Jesikan may not tell someone openly that they are slaves, but when something goes wrong with an individual, especially a certain type of attitude that is not expected among the people, then they will want to know which family such a person is from. Once it is discovered that the person is of slave descent, they will simply say that they didn't expect it from elsewhere. In Jesikan, if you come from this group people will not mix with you easily, but with Christianity, people have started changing their attitudes.

After the inquiry, if the boy's family has a "clean slate", then they will be asked to fill a big pot with palm wine and then the whole village will be called for the wedding. A small amount of money is paid as the bride price (about R50). This money is tied in a white handkerchief and given to the girl's mother. At times a small amount is also given to the girl's father. According to their culture, it is believed that the girl is not being sold. What normally happens is that the day that the money in the handkerchief is given back to the girl's husband, that same day the marriage will be over. In any case, divorce is not very common amongst these people. The couple cannot just decide when to end the marriage. One would expect a high rate of divorce looking at what is given as bride price, but this is not the case. Before a marriage can be terminated, the two families have to sit down and decide.

Due to foolishness, Silvia fell pregnant and she and Kwesi Francis realised that there was no time to waste before people started seeing the protruding stomach, so they decided to get married. They went and did the initial stage, which is called "knock door", and Silvia's parents gave them one month to wait so that they could inquire about his family. During this period, people started suspecting that Silvia was pregnant so she left Jesikan and went and joined Francis at Kumasi. The secret had been leaked, so they decided upon a civil marriage, without the concern of her parents. After the first child, the parents had no choice but to accept their marriage. It is common to find many girls behaving in like manner in Jesikan. Once they are pregnant, they just run away because the society does not condone such behaviour.

However, Silvia's married life was full of frustration. Her mother-in-law used to live with her when she married and this woman never saw anything wrong with her son. Every problem that came up in the house, her mother-in-law would blame it on her. Silvia moved out of the house before coming to South Africa. She doesn't like talking about her marriage but says it was like living in hell. Her inability to continue living in Ghana as a woman who was separated from her husband pushed her to migrate to South Africa. She said that it is very difficult for a divorced woman to remarry in Ghana and coupled with the fact that she had a bad experience in marriage, she doesn't want to think of marrying. She is here in South Africa to make a living for herself and her children.

Cindy Mundi who comes from Livingstone in Zambia also married in 1999. Her wedding is a typical example of how far Africans have been caught between two worlds. As part of their culture, Daniel (her mother's brother) was fully responsible for determining what was to be taken as her bride price. This did not happen, for out of respect for Cindy's father, he went to him and together they took the decision. African culture seems to be similar for in her case also, her husband (Vincent) was not supposed to go to her parents to talk about the wedding. In place of Vincent's father, David, his father's brother who brought Vincent up when his father died, paid the brideprice of 400,000 kwacha and six cows.

When the wedding was to take place, all the visitors who came stayed at Margaret's (her elder sister's) house in Lusaka. On the eve of the wedding, a group of women came to Margaret's house where Cindy was and gave her lessons on marriage and how a married woman is supposed to behave. Her bridesmaids were taken to the matron of honour's house, where they spent the night. In the morning (the day of the wedding), Cindy went to the matron's house to join them. From there, they went to the Assembly of God church in Lusaka where one of her elder brothers is the pastor. From the church, she and her maids went to the matron of honour's house to change their dresses for the reception party, and Vincent and his bestman and boys went to David's house to change also. The reception went on till about 10pm and when it finally ended, Cindy and Vincent went for their honeymoon.

Vincent's boss (from the World Vision in Lusaka) was the one who organised where they were to spend their honeymoon. He paid the bills and did everything that was needed for

them to have a nice time. They spent four days in the hotel before going to their house. All the gifts that were given to them were collected after the wedding.

How far African women have gone in embracing the Western form of marriage can be seen in the procedures that Cindy went through to get her wedding cake to Zambia. Her wedding cake is important to her as something she can never forget. Her elder sister, Doreen, remarked "I know my sister, whenever she wants something she always gets it no matter what it takes". To show how important this was to Cindy, it was baked here in South Africa and transported to Zambia (a photograph of the cake can be seen in the appendix).

The cake was fitted into six boxes. Two large boxes had unsliced cake and four others with approximately 250 slices of cake, so that everyone who attended her wedding had at least a piece to eat. Interestingly, she did not copy this idea of transporting a cake from anywhere and she said that "I was the first and no one will ever do what I did ". The cake was transported by road by bus from Durban to Johannesburg and from there to Lusaka.

In preparation of the cake, she paid R1600 for the baking and bought a container from Game stores at Empangeni for R250. The cake was nicely packed into the container because it had beads (both of silver and of gold) which needed maximum care else they could easily fall off. She prepared most of the things, which she needed, for the wedding, which was to take place in Zambia, here in South Africa. Her reason was that there was no one back in Zambia who was going to help financially (apart from her husband). Back in Zambia, every one in her family expects money from her and she did not anticipate any help coming from them.

Any money sent to them to help prepare for the wedding was going to be misused. She said that they just came to the party to eat. From little gossips during the wedding, one could hear "the Rand has come to Zambia, let's eat". Cindy decided to spend a lot of money on her wedding to show that she is working in South Africa. By transporting her wedding cake from South Africa, she wanted in a way to prove to her peers back in Zambia that she is now of a different class, financially.

Benedicta from Osing village can never forget the day she got married. It was with mixed feelings that she impatiently waited for the procedure for paying the bride price to be over. She begged her parents, sobbed, all in vain to persuade them not to sell her "my life is not for sale" she said. Were her parents being so unreasonable? Were they extortioners? Were they behaving out of context?

Culture varies from one society to another. As it is commonly said "one man's meat is another man's poison". Among the people from Osing, marriage is "till death do us part". Divorce is taboo and it is difficult for a divorced woman to remarry, but a man can marry as many women as he wills. However, paying bride price for a woman is a lifetime investment. Interestingly, it is not paid only to the parents of the girl but to both her paternal and maternal relatives. Another interesting issue here is that, there is no stated amount for bride price. It is like taking a car to be auctioned. Both the owner and the buyer have no idea how much money will change hands during the transaction.

As in the other African cultures, marriage is seen as a union of two families and probably that is the reason why bride price is given to both paternal and maternal relatives so that everyone becomes a part of this union. When it was the time for the bride price to be paid, Bernedicta's husband, Tambe Ako was asked to go to his wife's maternal relatives before finishing the procedure with her paternal relatives.

Tambe had to give the following for the "knock-door", a bag of salt, an axe and five yards of African printed fabrics. Thereafter, he bought palm wine, a few bottles of whisky and chickens and one pig. This was the easiest part because then he was asked to give twenty thousand francs to each of Bernedicta's mother's immediate relatives. When it came to paying the bride price on her father's side, then things turned ugly. The amount to be paid was to be determined by how many pieces of leaves were to come from the banana branch. According to the culture of the Bayang people of the southwest province of Cameroon, a branch is cut from a banana tree, and from this branch, the various leaves are priced. What happened in Bernedicta's case, which of course was not something new, was that when the branch of banana was brought, a mat was placed on the floor and all her paternal relatives and her husband's relatives stood around it. The head of their household who was her father's most senior brother started the procedure. He cut a piece of leaf and asked her husband to put twenty thousand CFA Francs on the mat. This continued until the amount came up to three hundred thousand. Bernedicta tried to stop them from extorting money from her husband until they had to change, accepting one thousand francs CFA for a leaf in place of twenty thousand CFA francs.

After the bride price was paid, a wedding party was organised where all the village people were called to come and eat. Goats, chickens, pigs as well as wine brewed both locally from maize and imported wine from France was served. When they got to their house, her husband told her that he had borrowed a lot of money and that they both had to work hard to pay it back.

For most of the migrant women, marriage has played an important role as a push factor to South Africa. Finding themselves in unsuccessful marriages, migration to South Africa was a way out. For Bernedicta, it was a way of escaping from a marriage relationship where she was being battered. This is seen in her behaviour towards her husband, who has been struggling to reconcile with her. She has on several occasions warned him not to phone her and at one stage, she changed her telephone number in a bid to avoid him. She said that she doesn't know how he got her telephone number in the first place.

4.2.3 The social obligations of the women

In the African context, one's family does not only mean one's father, mother, brothers and sisters. When Africans talk of their families they actually mean their cousins, uncles and aunts, grand as well as great grand parents. It was important for me to get a proper understanding of the family composition of these migrant women in order to understand why they are where they are today and also to understand forces around their families that have shaped both their career and their social life. It was also important for me to get a proper understanding of the women's social obligations back in their countries of origin

because, while in South Africa, these women send remittances home. In the African context, "one family member's riches belong to everyone". While in South Africa, migrant women are obliged to send money home to their parents and siblings. Failure to send remittances home is considered wicked or disgraceful.

Silvia owes a lot to Anna, one of her mother's sisters. She is the one who brought Silvia up. When Silvia's mother was to give birth to her, it happened that she was on her way to her farms when she fell into labour. The nearest place to go to was Anna's house since the hospital was far away. When the baby (Silvia) was delivered and was a girl, Anna told Silvia's mother that she would be the one to bring Silvia up since she was born in her house and since she had no girl child. Silvia considers Anna as her mother because as a little girl, Anna taught her about womanhood and how to sustain herself without the assistance of a man. Anna is a trader in African printed dresses. She buys the fabrics from Accra and sells them in Jesikan. She has a big clothing shop in Jesikan. She is married to Moses and has four boys. Growing up with Anna, Silvia learned about trading and while in South Africa, she trades with the same fabrics. Since Silvia was the only girl child in Anna's house, whenever she had to go to Accra to buy her stock, she would leave Silvia in her shop in Jesikan. The entrepreneurial skill she is utilising today was learnt from Anna. While in South Africa, whenever a Ghanaian is going to Ghana, Silvia sends money to Anna to buy her stock for her. Recently, Anna was robbed by thieves and was unable to buy more stock for her business. Silvia came to her rescue and gave sent her R4,000 to replenish her business.

When Silvia separated from her husband, she took all her three children to live in her mother's house in Jesikan. It is Silvia's obligation to see that her children go to school, eat and stay in good health. In Ghana, the welfare services are not as established as they are in South Africa. Her husband claims that, since Silvia took the children away from him, she has to take absolute care of them. Silvia however used to send money to her mother in Ghana to take care of the children. She recently decided to buy a car, which is used as a taxi back in Ghana. From the money collected daily from the taxi, the welfare of the children is assured.

Benedicta, coming from a polygamous family with ten siblings and her own children back in her home country, has enormous responsibility. She not only has to send money to take care of her children but her brothers and sisters as well. She acknowledges the fact that it is difficult to send money to Cameroon from South Africa, especially with the closure of the Western Union Money Transfer System. She has opened an Ethernet café in Mamfe (Cameroon), where her mother, children and siblings live. She bought five refurbished computers and sent them to one of her brothers, Divine, who runs the business. The money from this business assists in the daily needs of her family back at home.

4.2.4 The educational history of the women

The education African women migrants in South Africa received before migrating to South Africa has played a primordial role in their stay in this country. A migrant is given a permit to stay in South Africa if he/she has special or scarce skills. Also, to be able to survive in an

environment different from that of your country of origin depends to a large extent on how skilful one is. It is for these reasons that I decided to look at the educational history of the women.

Cindy M. attended the Old Langa primary school in Lusaka. Going to school made her happy because during her primary school years, her father used to take her to school with his car and collect her after school every day. Something happened to her one day, which she said was very embarrassing. Classes were over and her father was not there to collect her. So her friends who normally used to walk home from school asked her to join them. They had certain things that they used to do on their way home which Cindy had no idea of. On their way home, they told Cindy that they were going to harvest oranges (apparently they were going to steal). In the process, the owners of the oranges came running after them. Those friends all ran away and she was the only one who was caught. She was asked to reveal the names of her friends and they were all reported at their school. Her father was then called to explain why his child was caught stealing. It was shocking news for him and when they got home, she was well beaten by her mother. She spent seven years in that primary school.

When she completed primary school, she went to Ndola Convent, a girls' boarding school in the Copper Belt region. She went to this school not to become a nun but because it was a good school and also because her elder sister Doreen was teaching there. Doreen actually taught her. Doreen used to treat her like a mother would treat her own child (Doreen is ten years older than Cindy). Doreen said that one couldn't believe how fast Cindy has grown because she used to be like her child. She however went and worked for some time before

she decided to go back to school in 1990. She then attended a hotel and catering training institute from 1990 to 1992 and finished with a diploma in hotel catering and management.

Maria M. started school at the age of five because her both parents were teachers. She said that in those days in Zambia, a child could only start school when the child's right hand could go across the head and touch the left ear. She had the privilege to start school an early age because her parents were in the profession.

She attended Ndola primary school in the Copper Belt region of Zambia from Grade One to Grade Seven. From there she went to Holy Cross girls secondary school in the western province and spent five years. She completed secondary school at the age of seventeen. She spent three years in the Ndola school of nursing and came out as a qualified nurse and then went and did field work for two years and six months. After this period, she back to the nursing school and spent one more year to qualify as a mid wife.

While in South Africa, Maria took the opportunity to climb the economic ladder, which was not possible in Zambia and enrolled for a first degree in nursing. She will be completing her degree in the year 2003. This degree will enable her to be placed at a higher rank at her work place.

She was a happy girl in school from Grade One to Grade Five. When she got to Grade Six and Seven, the pupils were forced to do sport and when they refused, they were beaten. Since Maria did not like sports, she was always in trouble and this made her unhappy. She

said that the curriculum at junior primary school was difficult for her probably because she did not know why she was in school (she said that she was a naughty girl when she was young). By the time she went to the nursing school, she actually knew what she wanted so school days were exciting ones. Most of the friends she made while she was at the nursing school are still her friends today.

Silvia A. spent six years in the Roman Catholic primary school in Jesikan. After completing primary school, she attended Sunyani secondary school still in Jesikan. She spent three years in the junior secondary section and three years in the senior secondary section. She had to spend one year doing national service at the Sunyani secondary school in the junior section, as a prerequisite for entry into the university. She then went to the University of Accra where she spent three years and obtained a first degree in population geography.

Bernedicta T. attended Catholic primary school Osing in the Manyu division in the southwest province of Cameroon where her father was a teacher. She spent seven years in the school and at the end wrote the "Common Entrance examination" into secondary school and passed in grade "A". She then went for an interview and was admitted into the government high school Mamfe, still in Manyu division which was a school attended only by those who passed in grade "A". After spending five years in the secondary school, she wrote the "GCE" ordinary level and passed in six subjects. She was again admitted in the same school, but in the higher section. She spent two years but unfortunately for her, she wrote the "GCE" advanced level and failed three times and abandoned it out of frustration. It is for this reason that she decided to try her luck in business.

She however remembers those days when she was still in primary school. Before going to school, they had to eat leftover food from the previous day for breakfast. She said that even if it was hard porridge made from cassava, they had to eat it. This was because their father did not have sufficient money to give to them to buy food in school and if they failed to eat before leaving the house, they were going to be hungry at school.

Chapter Five

5.1 The women's views with respect to their families

Most of the migrant women who were interviewed for this project still feel strongly that their decision to migrate to South Africa was a good one. Certainly, this seems to be true when we look at their personal economic conditions in South Africa compared to those of their home countries before emigration. They feel that they are better off in South Africa. With respect to their families back in their countries of origin, there is little reason why migrant women should not allow these economic benefits to “trickle-down” to their families. Looking at the fact that their lives have improved as a result of their decision to migrate to South Africa, the inevitable questions are:

- What are their commitments to their families back at home?
- What are their future plans with respect to immigration?

The migrant women have no direct answers to these questions because it is an inter-play of complex forces, which cannot really be separated from each other. Most of the women have substantial responsibilities in their countries of origin. They always have to send remittances home for the welfare of their parents, offspring, siblings and at times spouses. Some own a house in their country of origin; others own a car (which is used to generate income to take care of parents and children). Those whose country of origin is in Southern Africa, make one or two trips home every year. Others from East or West Africa may travel home once a year or once in two years and in certain situations, they have never had the opportunity to travel home.

For other migrant women, the decision regarding future immigration is more complicated. Due to the nature of Vincent's job, he could not visit Cindy. He only came to South Africa when he had to attend workshops. However, she visits once a year during her annual leave.

Being married to someone who is living far away in Zambia meant that Cindy had to always spend money phoning. In April 2001, Vincent's contract with World Vision (a non-governmental organisation) ended. Cindy had to keep on working with the hope that the contract will be renewed. The issue here is that, with Cindy's husband not being willing to live in South Africa and his inability to get a job back in Zambia puts Cindy at a position where she cannot take any decision concerning immigration. If she decides to leave South Africa and go to join her husband in Zambia, it would mean putting her career at stake. This is because the possibility of her finding a job (a good one) is very slim since most people in Zambia are currently unemployed because of the effect of the Structural Adjustment policy.

However, most of the women still believe that they will continue to live in South Africa for many more years. In my research, I didn't come across one migrant woman who is really prepared to go back home. Even those who are still working and studying, there isn't any possibility that they might want to go back home in the near future. Most of them indicated that unless they are forced by the immigration officers into the plane, they will not return. What I also observed was the phenomenon of second migration. Many

nurses who migrated to work in some South African hospitals are now migrating to England.

5.2 Ways in which the South African immigration policy has shaped the lives of the women

The criterion for admission into South Africa is based on economic considerations. The immigration policy of South Africa stipulates that citizens of other African countries can only be given employment if they fall under the category of scarce skills and trained skills. This is because, as the minister of home affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi (1996) noted, every position occupied by a non-South African is a job less for a South African. As a result of this, those skills, which were classified as scarce in the early 1990s, for example nursing are no longer scarce.

The implication here is that nurses from other African countries who have been working in South Africa since the late 1990s can no longer be given work permits on the basis that nursing does not fall under the scarce category: "As if to take a goat that has been sold to be slaughtered", these women face deportation at any time because they are working without work permits. The implementation of such a policy that does not take social as well as humanitarian aspects into consideration brings devastating consequences to the lives of African migrant women who thought at one point that they had "found their promised land".

Maria M. and a cross-section of three other nurses from Zambia fall under this category. These are women who are trained and qualified. This is proven by the fact that before they

were given jobs at the various hospitals, they wrote and passed the examination of the South African Nursing Council. They are members of this prestigious body of professionals. They are women who had jobs at hand in their countries of origin before applying for the jobs they presently occupy in South Africa.

These women feel that their South African counterparts have betrayed them. One of my informants, Caroline, said that she is particularly bitter because she and her family used to live next to a house in Zambia, which was used by the ANC-in-exile. Whenever this house was under attack, they too would suffer and at times they had to run away from home. She explained that they didn't bother about it because they thought that the moment apartheid was crushed, South Africa was going to be their second home. She however concluded that they were wrong. They suffered alongside South Africans but now they are being chased away.

What strikes me most is the fact that all these women did not enter South Africa illegally as is presumed by most South Africans. They all have been issued permanent residence permits but have been refused South African identity documents and without these they cannot apply for jobs. As a result of this, these women live frustrated and confused lives. They cannot send money back to Zambia through bank transfers, they have no medical aid because they do not have an identity card number. So when they fall ill, they have to pay cash for their treatment. This is very sad because consultation in the medical field especially with specialists is very expensive.

When asked about their hopes for the future, these women are so uncertain because they said that the decision about their future lies with the Department of Home Affairs. This is because most of them have applied for the South African identity card since 1999 and are still waiting for the response from Home Affairs. In any case, they believe that if they get a South African identity document, their lives will change for the better because they will be able to lead stable lives.

The migrant women who came to pursue studies for a career find themselves facing a major obstacle, but which has a positive face. The immigration policy clearly stipulates that before a job is given to a migrant, it has to be proven that there is no South African who is qualified and willing to take the job. This makes it difficult for migrant women to find employment, especially with the tertiary institutions. The advantage this has for the migrant women is that they have decided to pursue their studies to the top of the academic ladder, where there are very few South Africans. This explains the reason why when migrant women find employment in the tertiary institutions, it is obvious that it is one with a good pay-package. This is as a result of the fact that they are highly qualified.

During the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, many South Africans were scattered all over Africa. There were many in the secondary or high schools as well as in the universities. During those years as my informant Margaret (a migrant woman from Nigeria) said, money used to be collected and given to the South African students as part of the struggle against apartheid. The Olympic games were boycotted in support of the struggle. The present picture of the entire African continent shows South Africa as a giant compared to the other

African countries which are plagued by genocide, civil wars, corrupt and undemocratic governments, and economic crisis, among many other mishaps

Under these circumstances, the government of South Africa has formulated a policy of immigration, which does not take the humanitarian aspect into consideration. It is bent on getting the best out of the other African citizens at their own cost. Africans from the other African countries feel that South Africa has to compensate for the support they gave them during the years of the anti-apartheid struggle. The question which has to be answered is "who should benefit from the African migration to South Africa? Is it the African immigrants or the South African society? Stefano (2000) argues that a sustainable immigration policy should be able to reflect the interest of both parties: immigrants and the resident citizens.

Conclusion

African women's participation in the migratory flows of South Africa is currently the focus of scholarly research. This study set out to investigate the lives and work experiences of African women who migrated independently to the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. Initially, a questionnaire was used and was later abandoned because it proved inadequate. Consequently, the research acknowledges the usefulness of the qualitative approaches to the study of people's lives and all the data, which was gathered as shown by the findings, came about as a result of the use of qualitative methods. The literature reviewed gave me guidelines although most of the findings show contradictions and loopholes.

By drawing upon a theory of gender insensitivity, which portrays the fact that independent skilled, business and career women have been sidelined in the migration studies, this study contributes to the literature in four ways. Firstly, in describing the processes and dynamics of the lives of independent African migrant women, the study provides insights regarding the processes through which African migrant women adjust to life in South Africa. Secondly, this study argues that the immigration policy of South Africa has a substantial impact on African migrant women's contribution to capacity building. In addition to this fact, discrimination has been enforced in employment, which has left a negative impact on the lives of the women. Thirdly, the study provides a framework whereby African women's

creativity is exposed. Fourthly, this study gives us another sense of direction in terms of the “pull” and the “push” factors relating to African migration to South Africa. Breakdown of unsuccessful marriage relationships was seen as an important “push” factor to women’s migration decisions. On the other hand, South Africa has been portrayed as the only African country that can give migrant women the opportunity to rise to the highest echelons.

The research data indicated that African women migrants in South Africa have been successful in enhancing their career, social as well as economic positions in their families. These women are not employed for employment’s sake but they like their jobs and have a mastery over them, which has given them an occupational identity. They have been able to obtain and also sustain employment in both the formal and the informal sector in South Africa, which is one of their greatest achievements. The work experiences of these women are rewarding and do represent a sufficient opportunity for recognition by the South African government.

Although it was not the major focus of this study, it has generated data, which reveals a great deal of the impact of the immigration policy of South Africa on the lives of the women. The study therefore can contribute to the development of a framework focusing on the issue of African immigrant integration into the South African society.

Appendix A

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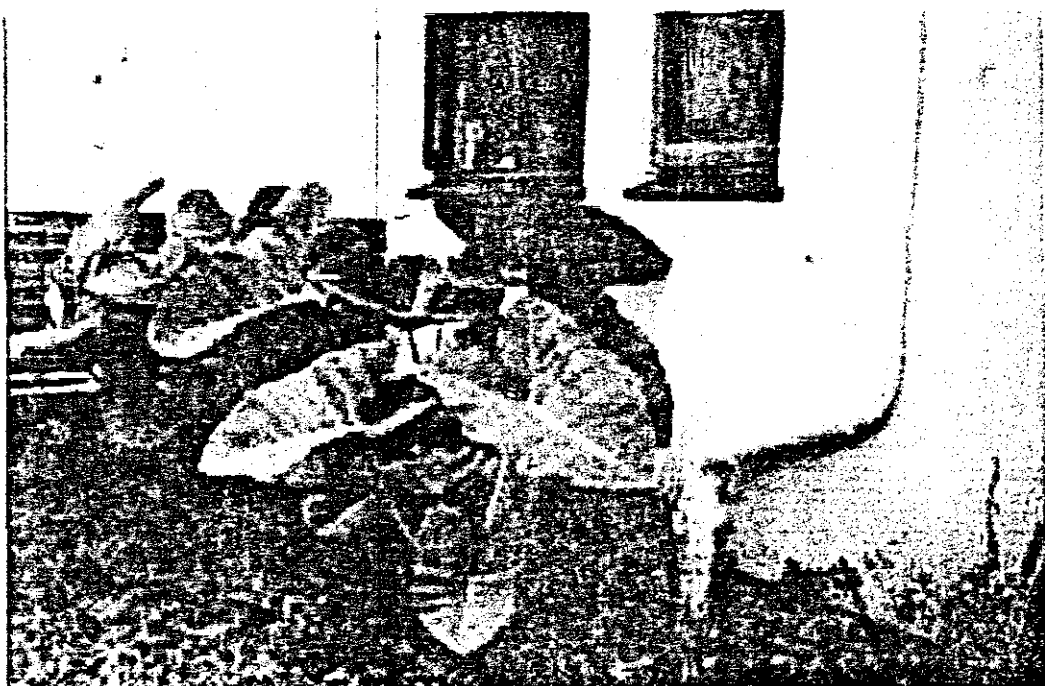
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Appendix B

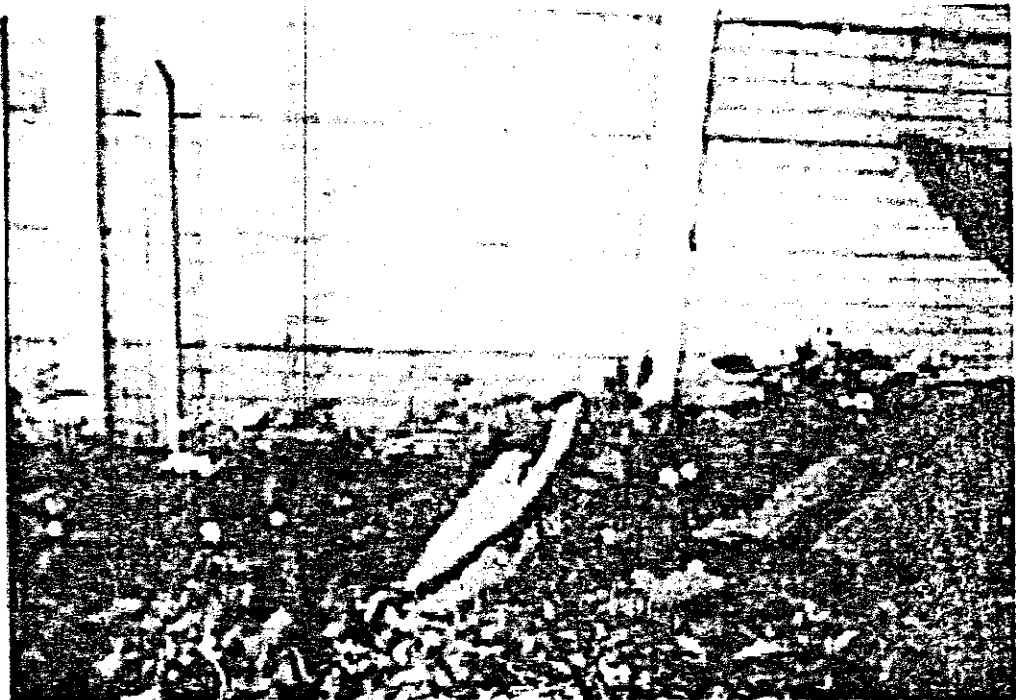
PHOTOGRAPHS



Cocoyam plants



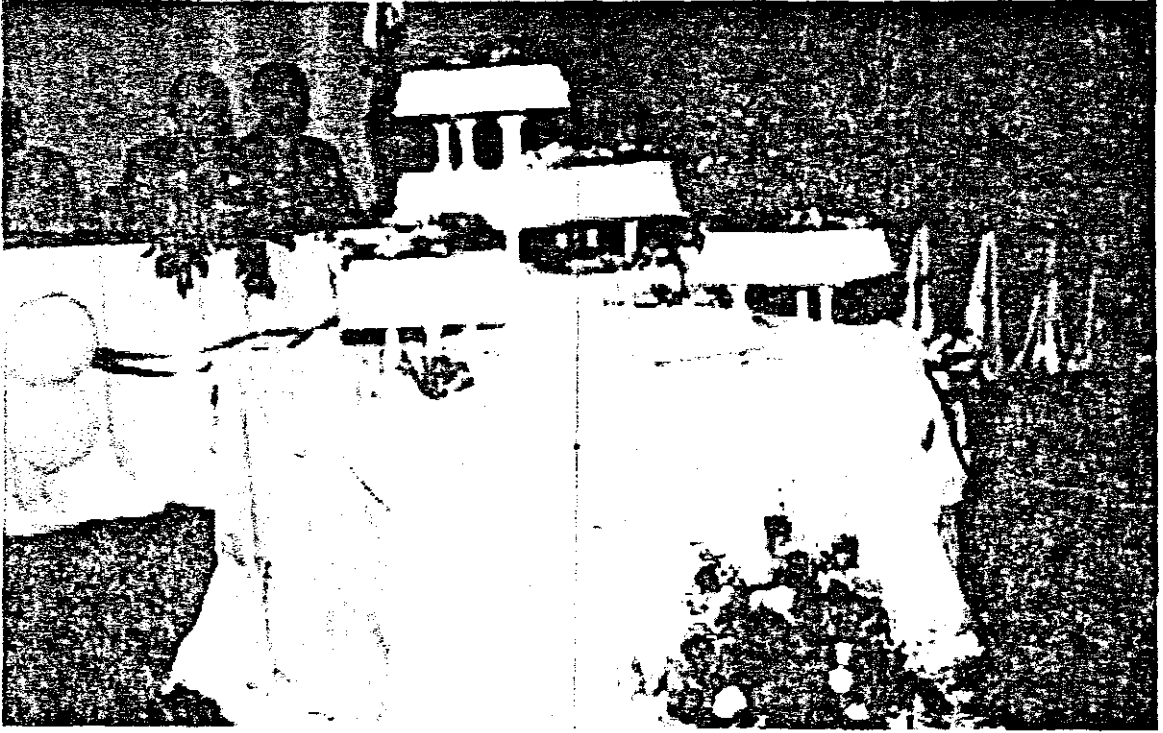
Different species of cocoyam plants



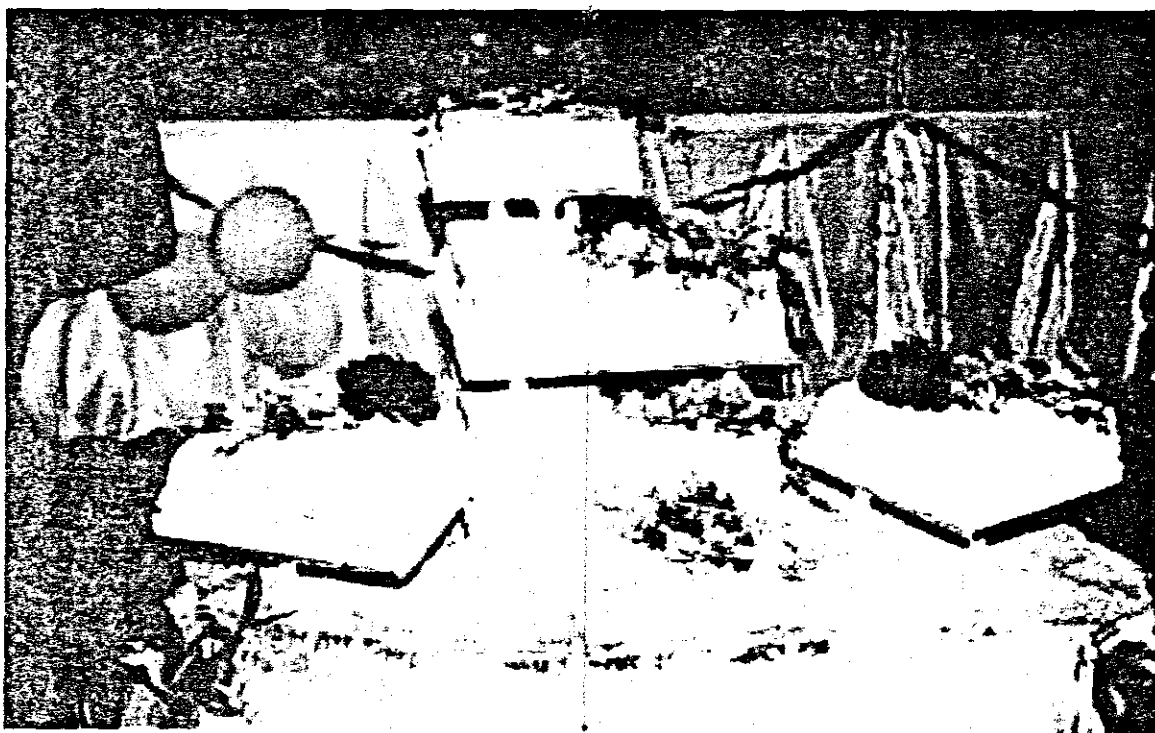
Bitter leave vegetables



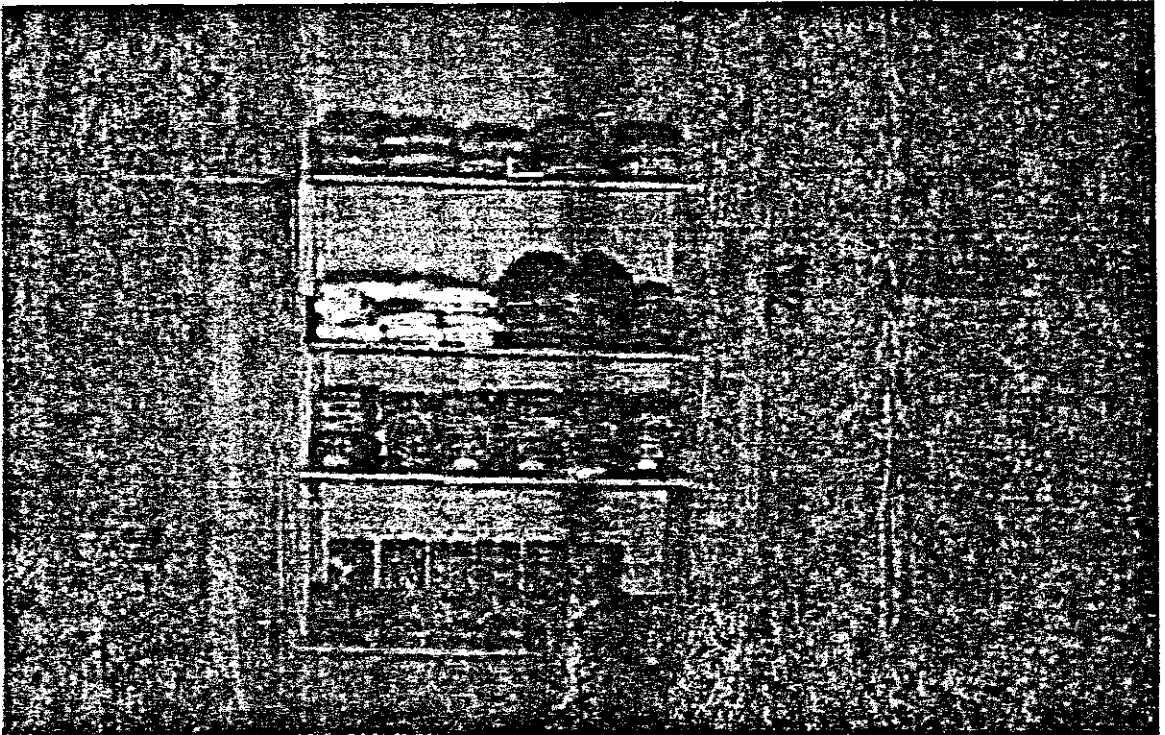
Okongobong vegetable



Cindy's wedding in Zambia



Wedding cake



El-Shadai African Food Shop



Migrant woman purchasing palm oil from El-Shadai

Appendix C

AIDE MEMOIRE

SECTION 1: occupation/job history

1. Is this job your first employment since you came to S.A (If no, go to n2, if yes go to n3).
2. What was the nature of your first job?
3. Did you have a job arranged for you before you came? (If yes, go to n6)
4. If no job was arranged for you before you came, for how long did you stay unemployed?
5. How were you able to cope financially, since you had no job?
6. How do you feel about your present job? and about how much do you earn per month?
7. Are you satisfied with your present pay package?
8. What else do you do apart from your main job?
9. What are your future plans concerning your job?
10. Do you think that what you earn now in S.A puts you in a better position than when you were in your country?
11. Could you please name some of the things you have been able to accomplish, which would have been impossible, if you were at home?
12. How do your folks at home see you? or what do they think of you? Or better still, do they envy you?

SECTION 2: work/stress factors

13. Do you think you are being treated by your bosses the same like your S.A colleagues?

14. Could you please name some of those aspects of discrimination that you encounter...?
15. Are there any aspects of motivation at your job side?
16. Are you being paid for any extra work done?
17. How do you feel about this?
18. How do your S.A colleagues feel about your presence at your job side?
19. Which language do you use at your job side, with colleagues, public?
20. Do you encounter some problems?
21. So how do you cope with the language problem?
22. Generally which are some of the measures you have taken to settle yourself in at your job side.

SECTION 3: Relationship with home

23. Did other members of your family move in with you? (If no go to 26)
24. If yes, what is your relationship with them?
25. Did they come after-wards or at the same time?
26. How often do your family members back at home visit you?
27. How often do you visit them?
28. If you are unable to visit them, could you give reasons why?
29. How then do you communicate or keep in touch with them since you can't visit?
30. How do you feel about your inability to unite with your family?
31. What are you planning to do to be able to solve this problem?

Section II: Business/ stress factors

32. How do you sell your goods?
33. Do you encounter some problems?
34. How do you feel about this?
35. So what measures have you taken to be able to solve this problems?
36. Which language do you use with your customers?
37. How have you been able to cope with the problem of language since you come from a French speaking country?
38. Generally, have you ever been discriminated against because you are a foreigner?
39. How do your customers see you?