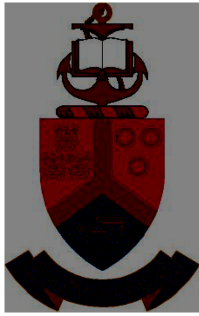

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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# Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa


By

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology, Faculty of Humanities, in fulfilment of the award of a Doctoral degree in Development Studies.**

## PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis titled 'Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

This thesis has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree at any university.

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To whom it may concern

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I hereby certify that I, Sonja Bräsler, tended to the professional language-editing, proofreading and presentation of “Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa” by Lydia T. Chibwe to the best of my professional knowledge and ability, without compromising the integrity of her research, nor the style in which it was presented. This also serves to also indemnify me from any issues relating to plagiarism as I did not have access to the literature.

Yours faithfully

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## ABSTRACT

The issue of migration has remained one of the most pressing contemporary issues facing nation-states. To this extent it has become a topic of global, humanitarian, foreign and domestic affairs with some calling for open borders and pitying those who call for securitization of borders (closed border regime). With its focus on the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest part of Zimbabwe into South Africa, this study joins an expanding corpus of literature that examines how and why Zimbabweans flock to South Africa. Departing from the conventional regional migration literature, this research relies on a unique case study. Furthermore, the study approaches this enduring migration through the sociological and human mobility lens by articulating the driving force and the accommodative factors underpinning the migration of Zimbabwe's Southwesterners into South Africa. The study draws from a qualitative research approach consisting of life-world interviews, key informant interviews, observations, and informal interactions with migrants, border officials, historians, academics and ordinary citizens from both South Africa and Zimbabwe to gain a deeper understanding why Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest part migrate and settle with ease in South African communities. This is followed by a case study analysis and the analysis of grey literature (material).

The study utilises a dyadic approach in considering the push and pull factors and the human social networks. The study findings establish that, although it is a truism that push and pull factors incentivise Zimbabweans (including those from the southwestern parts) to migrate to South Africa, this is not the salient factor. Human social networks play a key role in facilitating not only migration decision-making and journeys, but also the subsequent assimilation and integration into South African society. The study offers both a fine-grain and a granular perspective to understanding the migration patterns of people from the southwest part of Zimbabwe into South Africa through a deeper sociological lens. In doing so the study attends to the empirical and theoretical lacunae that exist in the extant studies, proving that it is somewhat easier for Zimbabweans from the southwest areas to migrate to South Africa owing to the long-standing historical, linguistic, cultural, and familial ties with ethnic groups in South Africa. Whilst contributing to the academic and policy discourse on migration, the study makes a greater plea for a deeper understanding of the human mobility-migration nexus through a wide range of factors including: structure-agency, political economy, securitisation, and bounded relations carved through shared history, culture, identity and human-social networks.

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# DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to migrants from southwest Zimbabwe.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---|---|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| BSAC | British South Africa Company |
| CBRTA | Cross-Border Road Transport Agency |
| CID | Criminal Investigation Department |
| CIO | Central Intelligence Organisation |
| COVID-19 | CoronaVirus Disease of 2019 |
| DOA | Department of Agriculture |
| DOH | Department of Health |
| DOI | Department of Immigration (Home Affairs) |
| DTI | Department of Trade and Industry |
| EDID | Department for International Development |
| EMA | Environmental Management Agency |
| ESAP | Economic Structural Adjustment Programme |
| EU | European Union |
| FTLRP | Fast Track Land Reform |
| HRW | Human Rights Watch |
| NIA | National Intelligence Agency |
| NRC | Native Recruiting Corporation |
| NUM | National Union of Mineworkers |
| OAU | Organisation for African Unity |
| POSA | Public Order and Security Act |
| RNLB | Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau |
| SADC | Southern African Development Community |
| SAHA | South African History Archive |
| SANDF | South African National Defence Force |
| SAPS | South African Police Service |
| SARS | South African Revenue Services |
| UNDESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |
| VID | Vehicle Inspection Department |
| WNLA | Witwatersrand Native Labour Association |
| ZANU-PF | Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front |
| ZAPU | Zimbabwe African People's Union |

| | |
|---|---|
| ZDP | Zimbabwe Dispensation Project |
| ZEP | Zimbabwean Exemption Permit |
| ZIMRA | Zimbabwe Revenue Authority |
| ZIPRA | Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army |
| ZRP | Zimbabwe Republic Police |
| ZSP | Zimbabwean Special Dispensation Permits |

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter presents an overview of the entire study focusing on the migration of people from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe into various communities in neighbouring South Africa. In doing so, the study investigates how, and why these people migrate. The study continues beyond these questions to interrogate the varied challenges and opportunities that arise as these migrants seek to integrate and assimilate within these communities. The study specifically looks at the role of porous borders, human and social networks and the push and pull factors with regards to how these intersect to facilitate regional migration flows which have become a contested and polarising domestic and foreign policy issue in South Africa. In endeavouring to provide a richer analysis of the topic, the study draws on various perspectives from migration policy to sociology, culture, linguistics, history, securitization of borders, border control and management, and political economy. The chapter proceeds as follows: In the opening sections, I present the historical background of the study before proceeding to map the migration trends and dynamics. This, in a way, sets the tone for the study. I then present the study objectives and a brief methodological and theoretical outline. I conclude with a synopsis of the structure of the thesis.

## 1.2 Background to the Study

As of today, migration has remained one of the topical issues of interest to development, migration scholars, human rights lawyers, refugee organisations, politicians, policy experts, security experts, governments, development agencies, multilateral institutions, Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Migration is a phenomenon with a long history reaching back to the inception of borders (Du Plessis, 2011; Engelbert and Matthew, 2002; Gashaw, 2017; Herbst, 1989; Kapil, 1966; Mc Ewen, 1971). However, with the arrival of borders, varied strands of academic and public policy literature have emerged articulating the movement of people and goods across borders (Bolt, 2015; Landau, 2010; Makina, 2012; Muzondidya, 2010; Polzer, 2008; Rutherford and Addison, 2007; Zinyama, 2002). The globalisation process, coupled with the development of information and

communication technologies (ICTs), have led some policy experts, governments and politicians to develop increasing interest in border governance and securitisation (Bigo, 2000; Johnston, Jones, Paasi, Anssi, Amoore, Mountz, Salter and Rumford, 2011; Letlape, 2021). Others, however, have been cognisant of the reality of migration to the extent that calls have emerged for open border regimes with much emphasis being placed on human security and the rights of migrants and refugees (OHCHR, 2016). In light of the above, it is important to underline that much contemporary attention seem to be focused on international migration and, in the process, eclipsing nuanced analysis of regional migration. The latter is more pronounced in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) where people do migrate within the continent, but more between neighbouring countries (Adepoju, 1988; Alessandra and Andrea, 2021; Crush, 1984; Estifanos and Zack, 2019; Kelly,Moletsane, and Coetzee, 2017; Letlape, 2021; Marie-Laurence and De Haas, 2016; Moyo 2021; Williams 2019). In some cases, this regional migration is facilitated by pre-existing familial and kinship ties that existed prior to colonial rule (Mlambo, 2010; Moyo, 2016; Mujere, 2019). In some cases, these ties have continued to grow from strength to strength owing to intermarriages and through the sharing of similar – if not the same – heritage, language, culture, and other social ties. This is the reality between some Zimbabwean and South African communities. For the sake of brevity and in examining the study on migration, it is relevant to first interrogate how borders came into being without necessarily being drawn into a lengthy historical discussion of the subject.

The Pretoria Convention, signed between the United Kingdom and the Transvaal on 3 August 1881, established what became known as the Beitbridge border (Moyo, 2022; Musoni, 2020; Ndlovu, 2012; Rukema and Pophiwa, 2020). This convention stipulated that the border would be delineated by the Limpopo River, which had previously functioned as a natural boundary between Transvaal and Matabeleland, spanning all the way to the confluence of the Luvhuvhu River (Moyo, 2022; Musoni, 2020; Ndlovu 2012). According to Musoni (2012), following the defeat of the Ndebele forces in 1894, the British administration issued the Matabele Order-in-Council which officially recognised Zimbabwe’s current borders.

It is of great significance to point out that, following the independence of both Zimbabwe (1980) and South Africa (1994) both governments have either denied or failed to give attention to the presence of border citizens at Beitbridge. Moyo (2016) noted the existence of Venda and other people (particularly the Kalanga, Sotho, Xhosa, and Ndebele) who share historical, socio-

cultural, and linguistic relationships within South African societies (Chirwa and Kader, 2018; Letlape, 2021; Mlambo, 2010). According to Derman (2013) many Africans expected apartheid-era practices towards Africans to be changed with the end of apartheid and the formation of a new administration. Johnston, et al., (2011) hold that in real essence borders are associated with 'people', 'country', and 'culture' in geopolitical terms. Thus, the border is not just the borderland, but also the 'complex, continually ongoing, hegemonic nation-building process' (Paasi, 2012:2305.).

This thesis asserts that the border has disrupted Venda's pre-colonial relationships as alluded by Moyo (2016). It takes the discussion further by looking at other tribes such as the Ndebeles, Kalangas, Xhosas and Sothos whose relations were disrupted as a result of the arbitrary borders. Thus Brambilla (2015:19) notes the need to 'give attention to the fluidity of nation-state borders and the complexity of the experiences of those who live in them and/or across them'. According to Moyo (2016), both the South African and Zimbabwean governments were ignorant of the reality that these people lived in unity prior to colonisation. He further posits that Venda people lived as a single society separated by a simple river and united by the same Venda language and culture. Thus, Johnson et al. (2012:63) note that border contexts have become more complicated and need to be examined within the context of categories such as location; agency and power; social practises such as politics, governance, and economics; as well as cultural processes such as ethnicity and national socialisation.

Extending Moyo's (2016) argument, the Venda-speaking people, as well as the Sothos, Xhosas, Kalangas and Ndebeles who also share some historical socio-cultural and linguistic relationships with some local South African groups, have challenged this bordering and separation by continuing with their interactions. They refuse to acknowledge what they see as a colonial border as their lives straddle across it in ways that no law or security forces can stop or contain (Brambilla, 2015; Lamb, 2014). As Michaud observes:

> Borders, by definition of their political nature, artificially split up the historical, social, and cultural fabric of trans-border topics, reducing the validity of country-based conclusions to what applies to a splinter group, with the larger entity frequently disappearing outside the nation's borders (2010:209).

Other studies, although not necessarily focused on the southwest part of Zimbabwe, do establish the strong ethnic, social, and cultural ties between South African and Zimbabwean communities. In a study by Mujere titled, *Land, Migration and Belonging: A History of the Basotho in Southern Rhodesia*, he acknowledges the presence of Basothos in the Gutu district of Zimbabwe and how they preserve their culture (Mujere, 2019). Mujere further elucidates on the variegated tactics and strategies that the Basotho community in Zimbabwe's Gutu district have employed to build a sense of belonging since their arrival in the 1890s. Mujere brings to the foreground narratives of belonging and autochthony of a predominantly Christianised people who relocated from South Africa with missionaries to reside in a Zimbabwean communal area. From this history, it is inescapable to note that the Basothos in Zimbabwe share relations with the Basothos in South Africa. It is such ties that bind the people in both Zimbabwe and South Africa thereby necessitating migration and settlement of a migrant population from the former in South Africa. This is not an isolated phenomenon as will be demonstrated with the empirical discussion of other groups selected for the study, mainly those from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, Mlambo (2010) has alerted us to cross-border movements from southwestern Zimbabwe as a rite of passage, as well as a deep history of interaction and networks between societies on different sides of the boundary, who share linguistic and cultural ties. However, he did not go into detail on the exact activities that led to the establishment of the relationships, thus this research intends to fill that gap. Moyo (2016) looked at the historical, socio-cultural, and linguistic relationships of the Vendas. However, his work did not take into account the relationship of other migrants from southwest Zimbabwe which includes the Ndebeles, Sothos, Kalangas and Xhosas which this research has examined. Mujere's research is significant to this research because he attests to the enduring ties and relations of the Basothos in Zimbabwe and South Africa. This study contends that it is these pre-existing relations that assist people to migrate and settle in South Africa.

### 1.3 Problem Statement

The movement of (un)documented migrants has been a challenge for countries since time immemorial. This undocumented cross-border movement has not only raised policy issues, but it has also ignited social justice issues around aspects of inclusion and exclusion in social services (Hungwe, 2013). By and large, receiving communities bear the pressure of migrants

who enter the country through (il)legal ports of entry. There has also been an ongoing debate about whether ‘outsiders’ (foreign migrants) bring problems which include criminality (drug and human trafficking, robbery, and the selling of contraband) and other illegal activities into the country (Letlape, 2021; Mawadza and Crush, 2010). A further allegation is that foreigners strip the locals of their jobs (Hungwe, 2013) – a claim which seems to be challenged within and outside the academic circles. However, it does seem that such claims have struck a chord with the local communities. It is therefore unsurprising that such sentiments, mainly stoked by anti-migrant movements and by political elites, have engendered xenophobia against undocumented Africans mainly from Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Crush, 2022).

Despite this situation, the volume of undocumented Zimbabweans going into South Africa continues to spike on a daily basis due to the collapsed economy in Zimbabwe (Hawkins, 2008; Mnangagwa, 2009). Even against such a background, it should be noted that human and social networks both from Zimbabwe and South Africa continue to aid the mobility of would-be migrants. Within the context of South Africa, the migrants’ settling-in and assimilation processes are assisted by the pre-existing networks and ties with fellow members who share socio-linguistic, cultural, and historical ties with people from the southwest part of Zimbabwe. For some this even includes assistance in navigating the illegal ports of entry at the Beitbridge Border Post. Considering the above, one is left with numerous questions regarding the assistance of human social networks in navigating porous borders, as well as in the provision of the necessary information, moral support and advice to would-be migrants who wish to work, settle and be assimilated within South African communities.

### 1.4 Motivation and justification of the study

Although scholars have been engaged in the debates around (inter)national migration in different continents and contexts for decades, this has not changed the ever-evolving trend and dynamics of migration (Kainth, 2009; Bhorat, Meyer and Mlatsheni, 2002; OECD, 2003; Ogujiuba, Anjofui and Stiegler, 2019; Shimeles, 2010). This is aptly demonstrated in the Zimbabwe-South Africa migratory trends which enjoy a long history spanning over several decades. It is significant to note is that there were early migratory trends that were fuelled by the Mfecane wars which led to certain ethnic groups moving from areas like KwaZulu-Natal and settling in various provinces in Matebeleland (Cobbing, 1974; Mlambo, 2010; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). This changed in the decades that followed as those who migrated during the

Mfecane wars found their way back to South Africa. In the later years, owing first to the discovery of gold mines in South Africa in the 19th century, but then exacerbated by the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Ranga, 2004), stretching to the Zimbabwean crisis stemming from the 2000-era onwards, most Zimbabweans migrated to various South African provinces (Chipika, Chibanda and Kadenge, 2000; Thebe 2016). The scale of intensity of such migratory flows has stoked interest among academics and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), International organisations (INGOs) and multilateral institutions. The same migratory flows have not ceased but have rather continued to evolve. The fact that the migration has continued emphasises the need for ongoing research on why Zimbabweans continue to find their way into South Africa.

In seeking to provide a richer explanation of the migration trends, drivers and dynamics, much of the existing scholarly work has paid attention to the push and pull factors (Alonso, 2011; Butler, 2015; Kainth, 2009; Meyer and Mlatsheni, 2002; Ogujiuba, Anjofui, and Stiegler, 2019; Thet, 2014). A strand of this literature places salience on economic factors as drivers of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa (Crush, Chikanda, and Tawodzera, 2015; Makina, 2012; Rutherford and Addison, 2007; Zinyama, 2002). Research on broader aspects of migration, and especially the complexity of the South Africa-Zimbabwe border, has remained absent from the existing scholarly accounts. Yet, these broader aspects are essential in understanding the migration of (un)documented migrants into South Africa. This begs the question: why this omission? Even within the small – yet significant – pockets of extant research on borders (see for example Thebe and Maombera, 2019) that problematise South Africa's immigration policy and border negotiation, a lot still needs to be explored regarding the politics and governmentality of borders. Viewed critically, the existing scholarly accounts tend to fall short of providing a systematic analysis of the complexity of the border separating Zimbabwe and South Africa (Moyo, 2022), and how this impact on effective immigration management of Zimbabweans.

Scholars (Brambilla, 2015; Lamb, 2014; Laine, 2016; Moyo, 2016, 2022; Paasi, 2012) have pointed out that borders are 'spaces of complex interactions' and by no means a static line, but rather spaces that are fluid and relational. In the case of Zimbabwe, there has been a lot of research on the various activities that take place at the Beitbridge border, for instance, the cross-border migration that happens mostly in Musina due to cross-border traders who are buying and selling there (Moyo, 2022; Moyo and Nshimbi, 2017). However, this body of literature did

not really interrogate the role of complex relationships and interactions in the complexity of cross-border movements. A study attending to these omissions is thus pertinent and relevant.

Literature focusing on migration as either a fleeting moment or a permanent feature also exists. Both earlier and recent literature have portrayed migrants as either circular (Makina, 2012; Mudziziwa, 2000; Zinyama, 2002), or semi-permanent and permanent (Crush et al., 2015). These scholarly accounts perceive migrants as economically motivated and South Africa as offering either a short-term or long-term economic refuge. For example, Rutherford and Addison (2007) present a picture of vulnerability, where desperate migrants risk their lives crossing a crocodile-infested river to earn a living in South Africa while living and working under conditions of uncertainty. They interpret migrants' strategies as economical and survivalist, doing everything in their power to return home with their loot. Other studies have hinted at the importance of social capital, particularly with those contacts in South Africa (Bloch 2008; Mudzizviwa, 2000; Sibanda, 2010; Siziba, 2014), but have provided little nuanced analysis of the broader implications of these social aspects on policy regarding Zimbabwean immigration.

Whilst the prevailing economistic explanations are significant in shedding some light on the subject of migration of Zimbabweans in general and those from the southwest in particular, they seem to have failed in systematically integrating the sociological aspects. It is this gap that warrants a deeper sociological explanation which the current study seeks to provide. In filling this lacuna, this research sheds some light on the interactions and relationships that exist between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African groups, contact which I argue motivates, facilitates, and encourages settlement in South Africa.

**1.5 Brief theoretical reflections**

The study utilises a dyadic theoretical approach consisting of a push and pull model as described by Ravenstein (1885) and other recent scholars (Khalid and Urbański, 2021; Urbański, 2022; Van Hear, Bakewell and Long, 2018). The study favours the use of this analytical lens mainly because it facilitates an analysis of why (un)documented migrants from the southwest parts of Zimbabwe first make the decision to migrate to South Africa in search of better socio-economic services, including employment. The push and pull model also include the historic, socio-economic, cultural, and linguistic factors that incentivise migrants

to leave their various places of origin in southwestern Zimbabwe for South African cities and towns. However, approaching the study only from this perspective would be too simplistic and reductionist. Hence, I anchor the push and pull model with another theoretical lens, namely the human social network (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013; De Haas, 2010; Spoonley, Peace, Butcher and O'Neill, 2005; Spicer, 2008).

The human social network facilitates an easy explanation of the decision making, mobility and support (financial and moral) for migrants who share a common heritage and specific linguistic-cultural-historical and social ties with communities in the host country. By employing this analytical lens, I argue that such ties and bonds aid the process of migration of (un)documented Zimbabweans coming from the southwestern parts of the country as they find it easy to assimilate and integrate within South African communities.

**1.6 Why migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe?**

The selection of migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe as a case study for this research is based on two main reasons. First, some of the migrants have long-standing relationships with certain South African communities as expressed through the sharing of socio-cultural and historical relations prior to the inception of borders (Mlambo, 2010; Moyo, 2016; Mujere, 2013; Musoni, 2020). Secondly, migrants from southwest Zimbabwe are among the pioneers of migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa as many of them were political refugees (Muzondidya, 2008) as well as workers on farms and mines (Crush, Williams, and Peberdy, 2005). This is partly due to the proximity from southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa but also due to these migrants feeling socially excluded from Zimbabwean society (Musemwa, 2006; Siziba, 2014 and Thebe, 2013). According to Malunga (2002), the places from which clandestine labour migrants came were situated in the southern parts of Zimbabwe and this pattern of migration of residents from southern Zimbabwe to Musina (also known as Messina) in South Africa's Limpopo province continues to this day.

The majority of Zimbabwean immigrants working on farms at the border crossing are from these southern Zimbabwean regions (Malunga 2002; Rukema and Pophiwa, 2020). This allowed early migrants to form and maintain human networks which, to this day, have also continued to facilitate the migration of their kith and kin (late migrants) from Zimbabwe to South Africa. The fact that they share some socio-cultural and linguistic aspects with some

South African communities (Maphosa, 2010) furthermore makes it easy for them to blend and settle in South African communities.

Although the focus is on those from southwest Zimbabwe, this by no means suggests that this is the only group of people who migrate to South Africa. Zimbabweans from different geographic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds have flocked to South Africa over the past decades. However, it is the unique nature of the relations between the south westerners and the South African ethnic groups that makes a case study of southwest Zimbabwe worthwhile and interesting. Unlike some groups like the Manyika, Ndau, Zezuru, Karanga, Korekore and Buja, the Kalanga, Venda, Xhosa, Sotho, and Ndebele share strong ties and bonds with South African communities. While these migrants from the southwest part comprise of the Zimbabwean contingent in South Africa, they differ from the rest of the migrants in that they share historical, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects with some South African communities, which makes it easier for them to be assimilated into South African society. It also makes this cohort a fascinating subject of research inquiry.

Thebe (2013) categorised their migration to South Africa as a form of citizens disengagement from the state. He also alerted us to the fact that some migrants from these communities never even attempted to seek work in Zimbabwe but preferred moving to South Africa, where they could easily settle. While a section of scholarship has recognised these relations (Moyo, 2016; Mlambo, 2010; Mujere, 2019) the south westerners are not fully incorporated in any systematic research on Zimbabwean migration into South Africa. To this end, the current research brings into conversation how people from southwestern Zimbabwe – mainly Ndebele, Xhosa, Sotho, Kalanga, and Venda-speaking migrants – can fit into, and become, a generic 'Zulu/Xhosa/Sotho/Venda-speaking people'.

In Figure 1.1, coloured areas (pink, red and blue) indicate the parts of southwestern Zimbabwe where migrants come from.

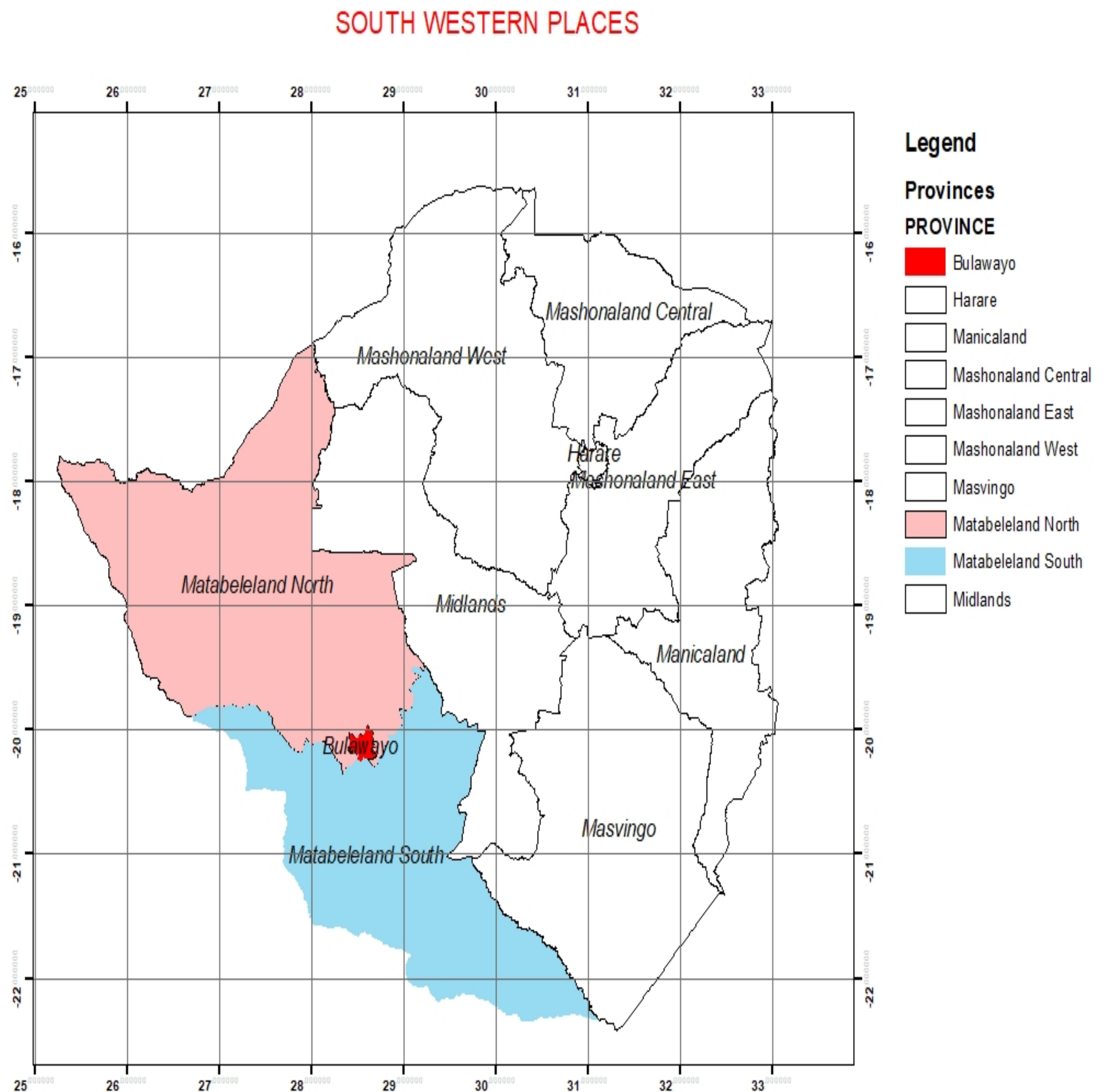


**Figure 1.1: A map showing southwestern Zimbabwe**

### 1.6.1 Southwestern Zimbabwean places and location

Southwest Zimbabwe comprises of three provinces located in Matebeleland, namely Bulawayo, Matabeleland North, and Matabeleland South (Government of Zimbabwe). This region spans the west and southwest parts of Zimbabwe, between the Limpopo and Zambezi rivers and it is detached from Mashonaland by the Munyati River in central Zimbabwe. The

ethnic groups who reside in southwest Zimbabwe are Sotho, Ndebele, Tswana, Xhosa, Venda, Tonga, Nambya Bakalanga, Khoisan and Shangaan (UN Zimbabwe, 2021). This research will be focusing on the five main groups which are the Kalanga, Venda, Xhosa, Sotho, and Ndebele. The population of southwest Zimbabwe makes up 20% of Zimbabwe's total population (ZIMSTAT, 2022:7).

### 1.7 Scope of the study

This study primarily takes the shared historical, socio-cultural, and linguistic aspects between people from southwest Zimbabwe and South African groups as the point of departure and central object of analysis. It does so to comprehend ways that the migrants appropriate in order to settle in South Africa, and some instances to negotiate the border, especially in the instances of the Venda.

The central argument of this thesis is that migrants (Xhosas, Ndebeles, Kalangas, Vendas and Sothos) from southwest Zimbabwe share historical, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects with some South African local groups which has created a complex web of social relationships and interactions which has enabled easy migration and integration within the South African communities. This is because South Africa has only recognised the economic aspects around Zimbabwean migrants, while ignoring the social factors which have facilitated and aided the interactions between the different players involved. These long-standing relationships have led to the well-established interactions at the border by various groups, including cross-border transporters (e.g. bus drivers, *malayisha* [1] and *izimbizi*[2]), border officials, local South Africans,

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[1] Defined as cross-border agents who move people and goods between South Africa and Zimbabwe(see also Moyo, 2022).

[2] Men who live along the border and help undocumented migrants cross the Limpopo River for a fee. They work independently, but in some cases, they are hired by the *malayisha* (see Hungwe, 2013).

and the migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. The thesis also pays attention to the fact that the border is by no means static (Brambilla, 2015; Johnston et al., 2011). This is proven by the fact that, in as much as the state manages the official border, there are other undesignated entrances which are managed by different actors who assist migrants to come into South Africa. In the same way, once migrants are in South Africa, they are assisted by their networks to settle through various means.

I am of the view that, even though the border presented a physical barrier between communities, it has failed to erode the socio-cultural, linguistic and historical ties between them, which have continued to mediate the interaction between related groups (see also Laine, 2016; Moyo, 2016). Paasi (2012:2305) states:

> Territories are not fixed, but rather are a result of overlapping and interconnected sets of social, political, and economic relations stretching across space, whereas the existence of identifiable territories shapes and, in some cases, limits the ways in which those relations can develop.

Thus the study utilises the border as a unit of analysis prior to investigating how the migrants assimilate and integrate once they cross the border into the neighbouring South Africa.

**1.8 Study Objectives**

The study is guided by the overarching objective of establishing the role of human social networks in facilitating the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa.

The study is further informed by the following secondary objectives:

1) To understand the South African migration policies insofar as they relate to (un)documented migrants who share a socio-cultural and linguistic background with their own members.
2) To establish the historical incidents of migration to South Africa and how they are playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa.
3) To examine the role of socio-linguistic and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities in facilitating the migration and subsequent integration of the former with(in) the latter.
4) To interrogate the nexus between porous borders and migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest into South Africa.

Guided by the objectives above, the study seeks to address a set of research questions as presented below. The significant, overarching question is framed as follows:
*How, and in what ways, do human social networks facilitate the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa?*

Pertinent to this research question, the study has sub-questions:
1) What are the policy and practical migration challenges faced by South Africa in effecting border control measures in the wake of an influx of (un)documented Zimbabwean migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds with South African communities?
2) How are historical incidents of migration to South Africa playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa?
3) To what extent and in what ways (if any) can socio-linguistic, historic, and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities facilitate the migration and subsequent integration of Zimbabwean migrants with(in) South Africa?
4) How, and with what effect, do porous borders facilitate migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest into South Africa?

### 1.9 Research contributions and boundaries

#### 1.9.1 Academic Contributions

The study is unique and relevant insofar as it integrates the perspectives of both the push and pull model (structural) and human social networks (functionalist) in understanding the Zimbabwe-to-South Africa migration, looking specifically at people from the southwest parts of Zimbabwe. Here, a gap exists in the literature in the sense that mainstream scholarly perspectives tend to focus mostly, if not solely, on the push and pull factors (Alonso, 2011; Bhorat, Meyer and Mlatsheni, 2002; Butler, 2015; Kainth, 2009; Bhorat, Meyer and Mlatsheni, 2002; Ogujiuba, Anjofui and Stiegler, 2019; Thet, 2014) at the expense of the sociological aspects that influence human and labour mobility. In this study, I maintain that an argument embedded in a political lens, though useful, is fraught with several limitations. It also misses the critical aspects which drive contemporary migration, namely the ties and bonds between people who share the same history, culture, heritage, language, and ancestry. In this regard, the study provides a deeper theorisation of the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest into South Africa through a political, economic, and sociological grounding, thereby providing a balanced approach as well as a plausible theoretical explanation of the phenomenon. At an empirical level, the study provides rich and thick descriptions of the subject under inquiry through the use of life histories.

The study is also relevant considering the existing scholarly void on the subject. Though an explosive corpus of literature has emerged articulating the varied facets of migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa, they have either not focused on the southwest, or they have solely adopted a push and pull model, thereby precluding a middle level and balanced approach. Other existing studies have also tended to focus on a macro level analysis of migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa to the extent that explanations centring around human social networks in aiding mobility remains at the margins of contemporary scholarship. At present, it is less well understood how, and in what ways human social networks influence this migration trend. It would seem appropriate to focus on the nexus between porous borders and human social networks in aiding the migration of the (un)documented Zimbabwean migrants.

Thinking of the role of human social networks permits us to add nuance to the research on Zimbabwean migration to South Africa, particularly in the context of people from the

southwestern parts of Zimbabwe who share common ties with several South African communities. These bonds are expressed through linguistic, cultural, and historic ties.

The current study is relevant as it provides a deeper theorisation of the migration dynamics, trends, flows, challenges and opportunities going beyond the gross generalisations and simplifications which tend to adopt an economistic lens dwelling on the 'Zimbabwean crises' (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012; Crush and Tevera, 2010; Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2017; Takaindisa, 2021). This study makes a plea for a holistic and critical appreciation of the sociological, cultural, linguistic, historical, geographical, and political economy lens in explaining the migration of specific communities into South Africa. An analysis which seems to be entirely lacking – if not missing – in the mainstream articulations of the subject of Zimbabwean cross-border migration into South Africa.

### 1.9.2 Practical and policy contributions

The study does not only have a scholarly relevance, but it is also of practical significance to policy formulation. The study offers several insights that can help inform not only migration policy, but also domestic, economic, and foreign policies for both Zimbabwe and South Africa. I also maintain with modesty that insights gleaned from the study can be utilised in informing migration policies in other African countries considering the growing wave of regional and international migration within the continent. Furthermore, the study offers insight into border management, governance, and securitization, thus aiding and informing contemporary policy debates on the need or relevance of open border systems within African countries. More importantly, the study also offers policy insights on aspects related to human security which, within the field of government policies, is becoming a major issue in developing policy regarding migration planning.

It is also hoped the study will help to inform policy (re)thinking and articulations around the socio-cultural and linguistic co-operation of nations, particularly neighbouring countries. It is hoped that this will open a window for cultural diplomacy and cultural tourism specifically between Zimbabwean and South African communities. The study is also timely, considering the challenges of securing borders and the thorny issue facing South Africa as it seeks to regulate the inflow of migrants from neighbouring countries, including Eswatini, Lesotho, and Mozambique and other migrants from as far as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Bangladesh among others.

### 1.9.3 Delimitation of the study

The focus of the study can be reduced to a journey itinerary. I focus on the Zimbabwean case study, specifically zooming in on the southwestern parts, but only in passing. Narrowing down to focus on these areas help us understand the migration decision making and influence by peers and relatives hereafter understood as human social networks. This also helps us to get a good contextual grasp of the situation within the sending areas (multiple case studies) prior to mapping the lived realities, opportunities and challenges that are present within the context of the receiving (host) country. For the latter, I specifically focus on areas that include Sunnyside in Pretoria, which is home to various migrant populations including those from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe. The research also focuses on tracing the mobility of Zimbabwean migrants via the Beitbridge border post. In this regard, the (il)legal points of entry at the border become areas of focus and interest, particularly how the porous borders help migrants to cross into the neighbouring South Africa. In this regard, the research can be viewed through the lens of a journey starting from the Southwest case studies – Beitbridge Border – Limpopo and areas further afield in Pretoria, Johannesburg, and KwaZulu-Natal. However, for the purposes of case study analysis in the host country, I settle on Sunnyside (Pretoria) for reasons elaborated at length in the methodology chapter (see Chapter 2) of this thesis.

## 1.10 Operationalisation of concepts

Pretorius and Mampuru (2007) noted that defining words maybe problematic as they are socially formed in a way that they are given different meanings by different people in different circumstances. Nonetheless, for this study the key concepts in the setting of the research are explained below:

### 1.10.1 Language

Language, in this research, is seen as one of the ways in which migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe can connect with some South African ethnicities. Scholars (Blommaert, 2005; Blommaert and Rampton, 2011; and Mesthrie, 2000) note that language gives entry into the speakers' identities and their social class, for example, gender, age, and ethnicity among other things. It is further noted that, in order to comprehend language in action, we have to understand 'who' speaks 'what' language to 'whom' and 'when'. Fishman (1965) argues that the patterning of language use may be influenced by group affiliation, circumstances of communication, as well as the issues being discussed (Siziba, 2013).

Individuals learn their language as they are brought into their ancestors' way of life which is a marker of culture. Language can be divided into several categories: vernacular, administrative, and print. The vernacular language is articulated at home and learnt from ancestors. Administrative language is articulated across a region for organisational purposes; it is elected to regulate business and political administration across a larger area; and is the first real instance of nationalisation (Anderson, 2006). This research points out that language is one of the significant tools that have come to the front in how migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe navigate and negotiate the politics of identity in South Africa.

### 1.10.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity is considered a characteristic that is used by migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe to identify with some South African groups over customs and laws. According to Smith (1991), ethnicity is a feature amongst individuals that is considered before looking at customs and laws, specifically the significance of family. To form an ethnic identity, individuals may recognise themselves as alike to one another and unlike others (Smith, 1986; Smith, 1991). This thesis notes that migrants under investigation identify their way of life as similar to those of South Africans which makes it easier for them to assimilate in the societies. This is probably due to ancestral relations they have with some South African groups, as explained by history.

### 1.10.3 Sociocultural

'Sociocultural' is a word associated with social and cultural aspects, meaning mutual ethnicities, behaviours, patterns, as well as beliefs amongst a community (Hofstede, 1980). Hofstede (1980) argues that culture consists of several individuals who were brought up with similar socialisation. Hence, culture can be defined as the collective mind programming that differentiates societies.

The transference of knowledge has been an instrument that societies, organisations, and groups have been using to preserve the mental programming of generation after generation (Hofstede, 1980). From this perspective, the culture concept establishes that communities share patterns of mental programming that are different from other communities. This research notes that there are certain similarities in the cultures of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and other South African tribes which are passed from generation to generation.

### 1.10.4 Borders

According to Dokoupil and Havlicek (2002:28), borders are defined as 'a dividing line between state formations/estates. It represents the lines that legally separate and limit the country's sovereignty'. These borders have inconveniently separated families, clan groups and ethnic communities in different countries (Anderson, 2006). Therefore, societies with akin characters regard themselves as the same people. Letlape (2021) argues that borders define the sovereignty of a state by defining its area and where its authority and administration begins and ends. Furthermore, borders define a country's national identity which in turn defines its citizens' language and way of living – their national culture and privileges (Letlape, 2021). This research concurs that the Beitbridge border was created as a result of colonialism and was drawn between the South African Republic and the British Protected zones (Griffiths, 1986; Kapil, 1966; Herbst, 1989). The research also argues that African borders are artificial in the sense that they were imposed by colonialism without African consent and did not take into account the familial relationships and ethnic group relations on the ground (Asiwaju, 1990; Bauder, 2017). Hence South Africa's borders and many other borders in the region are complex to manage for people who were separated by inconvenient borders. Nevertheless, the relationship which exists among these people complicates the management of the borders.

### 1.10.5 Porous borders

Porous borders have no presence of border security agencies and are permeable and leaky. Porousness also alludes to the penetrability and fluidity induced by the absence of any form of rules and the presence of illegal dealings outside officialdom in numerous circumstances that are corrupt and harmful (Eselebor, 2019).

### 1.10.6 Migrants

A migrant is 'any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or not; (3) what the causes of the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is' (IOM, 2018 as cited in Castelli, 2018:2). This research uses this definition to refer to all kinds of migrants. The research will also refer to migrants as documented or undocumented as per requirements of key institutions (European Parliament, 2009; European Commission, 2010; United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009) as cited on the UNHCR webpage.

### 1.11 Structure of the thesis

The thesis contains eight chapters with two principal sections. The first section contains three chapters (1, 2 and 3) that present the study's contextual, conceptual/theoretical, and methodological framework. The second section consists of four chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) which are presented as a blend of literature and empirics. The empirical findings of this research aim to answer the following research questions:

(1) How are historical incidents of migration to South Africa playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa?
(2) To what extent and in what ways (if any) can socio-linguistic, historical, and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities facilitate the migration and subsequent integration of Zimbabwean migrants with(in) South Africa?
(3) How, and with what effect, do porous borders facilitate the migration of Zimbabwean migrants from southwest Zimbabwe into South Africa?

The chapters undertake an analysis of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe as a case study and confront the findings with appropriate literature. In so doing, the chapters start underlining the study's general contribution to this body of knowledge which is summarised in the eighth and concluding chapter. The thesis indeed connects previous and newly identified strands of empirical and theoretical information in the field of migration While evidence from this study of people with shared socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics in South Africa provides strong support for my propositions, more research evidence from other contexts, and preferably other similar cases, is needed for their consolidation. That said, the study argues that the research may be fairly applicable to other people from other counties such as Lesotho, Mozambique, Botswana, and Swaziland who also share borders with South Africa. The following is a brief overview of the chapters and their contributions to the thesis arguments.

In Chapter 1, 'Introduction' is the introductory chapter. It discusses the background and justification of the research, goals and objectives, research questions, and basic concepts and how they were applied in the thesis. The chapter establishes the context for the remainder of the thesis by highlighting how interactions between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and various actors complicate the management of the border.

Chapter 2, 'Theorising borders, migration, human and social networks' is a review of the broader theoretical literature from a global ,regional and local perspective It provides a comprehensive discussion on debates around borders, border governance and management, migration trends, policies, dynamics, and the role of hum social networks in facilitating migration. The chapter also discusses the push and pull model as a way to situate the research findings and explain them better in the discussion chapters.

Chapter 3 consists of the research methodology. This chapter outlines the methodology used which is a qualitative case study of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. It then moves to discuss the research techniques that were used to gather data, which are key informant interviews and semi- structured interviews conducted with the migrants in Sunnyside Pretoria. Lastly, the fieldwork experiences and ethical considerations that were encountered in the research, are described.

Chapter 4 explores 'South Africa's position on migration'. This background chapter starts by looking at the border as understanding the border is key to understanding immigration management. The South African/Zimbabwean border not only divides an ethnic population into two different nationalities, but it also serves as a barrier to movement. Despite the border acting as a barrier, it has been subjected to negotiations, and its role has been breached regularly. The second section provides a discussion on South Africa's migration history and the response by the South African government to migration in general and on Zimbabweans specifically as the subject under discussion. It notes the changing policy focus from exclusion to limited accommodation through special dispensation policies which were not renewed after December 2021.

Chapter 5, 'Historical incidents of cross-border migration in the contemporary migration into South Africa',discusses the historical incidents that took place in the history of the Zimbabwe plateau as significant in portraying how early migrants were able to settle in South Africa, in some cases even permanently. This facilitated the establishment of human networks which made it easy for people from southwestern parts of Zimbabwe to migrate into South Africa, especially post-2000 when the Zimbabwean economy spiralled downwards. The resultant influx of Zimbabwean migrants into South Africa complicated the management of the Beitbridge border.

Chapter 6 is titled 'Human social networks and the migration and integration of Zimbabwe's south westerners in South African communities.' This chapter identifies the relationship and ties that exist between people from southwestern Zimbabwe and some South African communities. The four main groups that will be discussed are the Ndebeles from Zimbabwe who have strong ties with the Zulus, Vendas, Xhosas, Kalangas and Basothos from both South Africa and Zimbabwe. The chapter identifies the similarities that exist between the cultures with shared languages, which in most cases makes it easier for them to settle and in some cases to find homage and acceptance in South Africa. This chapter analyses the role played by language and socio-cultural factors as tools that are used by Zimbabweans to be accepted in South African societies. As such, this chapter adds a new and critical element to the understanding of migration from Zimbabwe into South Africa.

In Chapter 7, 'Migrants and the negotiation of cross-border control at the Beitbridge border post' it is argued that the amendment of the 2014 Immigration Act by South Africa imposed stringent measures on immigrants, especially those who share socio-cultural and linguistic relations in South Africa and Zimbabwe. More importantly, that this has led migrants – especially those who migrated to South Africa after the amendments were put in place – to devise strategies to negotiate the border so that they can maintain the relationships that they have on the other side of the border which in turn further complicates the management of the Beitbridge border.

Chapter 8 provides the overall summary and conclusion of the study. It brings together different theoretical strands, as well as the empirical arguments and objectives of the study. It discusses policy implications and highlights areas for further study. In this chapter I argue that the research applies to other countries that also share borders with South Africa.

Following the introductory chapter, I now present the theoretical frame guiding the study.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THEORISING BORDERS, MIGRATION, HUMAN AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framing underpinning the study on the migration of (un)documented migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe into various communities in South Africa. The chapter also maps the literature debates around the subject of inquiry. In so doing it engages with the various strands of literature on borders, border governance and management, migration trends, policies, dynamics, and the role of social/human networks in facilitating cross-border migration. The chapter also utilises the push and pull model to examine the challenges in the sending country which migrants face and which forces them to migrate, as well as the opportunities presented to migrants in the receiving country which makes it easy for them to integrate and assimilate into the host community. Such theoretical discussions offer a basis to explain the empirical findings. The literature review stems from the local, regional and global perspectives. In discussing this literature, I map the inadequacy, flaws, limitations, and strengths that abound in the extant policy and academic scholarship on migration. The chapter's focus is two-fold. In the first section, I discuss the literature on borders, migration, human and social networks before proceeding to discuss in depth the conceptual framework underpinning the study.

## 2.2 Setting the scene: Evolution of migration research

Over the past ten years, scholars have become interested in the study of migration, international politics of migration, intra-regional migration, migration-security nexus, porous borders, border control, transnational security threat, global security, national security, refugees, undocumented migrants, cross-border mobility, and border restrictions (Beauchemin, Flahaux, and Schoumaker, 2020; Chimimba, 2020; Estevens, 2018; Parker, 2015, Seda, 2015; Tevera, 2020; Thebe and Maombere, 2019). As a result, there has been renewed interest in research on global themes such as migration, border security, protection of refugees and asylum seekers, xenophobia, international law, stateless peoples and human (in)security. This has produced rich and reactive literature on migration and porous borders which helps us to understand the phenomenon under study.

To date, migration research has grown in leaps and bounds. This is evident from the early scholarly work on the subject where scholars approached the issue of migration from different theoretical canons. While others will put this in a bad light as engendering breadth rather than depth, one could argue this has enabled a wider understanding of the migratory trends and flows, as well as actual root causes and effects of migration on contemporary society. The early works of Lee (1966) on the theory of migration constituted some of the ground-breaking research that has managed to inform our understanding of the subject of migration.

Relatedly, other significant strands of literature also shaped migration scholarship at both policy and academic levels. These, for instance, include – but are not limited to – Zelinsky's (1971) mobility transition theory, Mabogunje's (1970) migration systems theory and the migration transitions as enunciated by Skeldon (1990). Within this body of literature also emerged the work of Harris and Todaro (1970) who propounded the neo-classical migration theory, a theoretical canon that seems to have elicited intense discussions and criticisms within the field of migration studies. Similarly, Massey's (1990) cumulative causation theory also ignited intense scholarly debates regarding the issue of migration. Such literature, though adopting diverse thematic and theoretical strands, are unified in how they sought to understand the causes, effects, and processes of migration.

In line with the reasoning of Mabogunje (1970), the flow of information, the counter-flow of goods, services and sharing of experiences about the destination creates an imagined world characterised by a good and new life. Undoubtedly, such a portrayal then attracts would-be migrants. These feedback mechanisms about the place of destination which are transmitted to the place of origin are seductive to potential migrants (De Haas, 2008). Though Mabogunye (ibid) focuses his analysis on the dynamics of rural-urban migration in Africa, the migration systems theory has also been lauded for its value in explaining international migratory trends (Fawcett, 1989; Kritz Lim, and Zlotnik, 1992). However, passing an evaluative judgment on the utility of migration theories within regional migratory trends, as in the case of the Zimbabwe-South Africa migration dynamics, is an exercise that still requires an in-depth and granular analysis. This is because some disparate theoretical lenses and interpretations should be factored in analysing migration flows. Not doing so will be akin to perpetuating a singular narrative that is far from being objective and illuminating.

Others, namely Harris and Todaro (1970) utilise the neo-classical theory which holds that individuals maximise utility by transitioning to places where they feel they will be much more productive. As De Haas and Fokkema (2011:766) observe:

> Such theories tend to interpret migration as an investment in human capital, predicting that migrants move to places where they can expect the highest economic returns on their human resources; according to these theories, migration is expected to occur when there is a good chance migrants will recoup their human capital investment once migration and adaptation costs and risks are taken into account.

In another study, De Haas (2014:7) makes an objective analysis by suggesting that 'it would certainly be unrealistic to expect that a one-size-fits-all theory explaining migration for all places and times will ever arise'.

Debates on the global literature on migration echo several related themes drawing on the structural, human, social, and functionalist perspectives on migration. Topical among these is the push and pull model. It is significant to note that, whilst a burgeoning corpus of literature has utilised the push and pull model to explain and understand migration, this theoretical lens has not been embraced uncritically within the migration studies scholarship (De Haas, 2021). For instance, some streams of literature have criticised such a model for being 'simplistic', a claim which needs to be taken with caution. Others even go to the extent of claiming that the model is only good at cataloguing 'a list of factors, all of which can contribute to migration, but which lack a framework to bring them together in an explanatory system' (Skeldon,1990:125–126). In offering this kind of criticism, scholars like De Haas (2021) opine that migration should be conceived as part and parcel of societal change and development that is tied to human society. As De Haas (2021:6) further argues, 'knowing what motivates individual people to move does not help us to explain the processes, patterns and drivers of migration at the structural level'.

Though the literature on migration has made significant strides in understanding the phenomenon, others, however, still find shortcomings in such scholarly works. Some have even poked holes in the existing theories and models of migration for being stuck in the past. As Massey et al. (1993:432) lament, the prevailing conceptualisation on migration 'remains mired in nineteenth-century concepts, models, and assumptions.' In this regard, the scholars make a

plea for the need to update and extend the frontiers of research and the knowledge on migration. Notwithstanding such scathing criticisms, it is beyond dispute that some models and theories, specifically the push and pull model, still carry heavy analytical weight in informing our understanding of why and how people migrate both within and beyond borders. This is a point to which I will return later in the discussion.

**2.3 Global migration scholarship**

Today there is an increasing body of policy and academic scholarship on a global level focusing on various aspects of migration (Chebel d'Appollonia, 2019; Moyo and Zanker, 2022; Richards, 2019; Sirbu et al., 2021). This scholarship has grown in leaps and bounds owing to the ever-growing phenomenon and the trends in migration. Among one of the topical research areas is the issue of international migration which has since engendered polarising views and animosity between in-groups and out-groups with politicians using the issue as a foreign and domestic policy issue that can be used for electioneering. This has been evident in several European countries and elsewhere for instance in North America. In these countries, policy contestations have also emerged (Chebel d'Appollonia, 2019) on how to manage the ever-rising trend of undocumented migration. This has been evident in policy discussions in countries such as Italy, Greece, Germany, the United Kingdom and France (Cebolla-Boado and Finotelli, 2015; Papadopoulou, 2004). Some countries have even called for 'burden sharing' of undocumented migrants who find their way to the shores of Europe via the Mediterranean Sea (Bauböck, 2018; Biondi, 2016; Thielemann, 2003, 2018).

An observable trend is that empirical works on migration address the subject of global migration utilising varied methodological approaches (Crush, et al., 2015; Franklinos, 2021; Sirbu, Andrienko, Andrienko, Boldrini, Conti, Giannotti, and Sharma 2021; Stielike, 2022). A percipient example is an extensive study by Sirbu et al. (2021) who utilised big data to examine the decision-making and trajectories that influence one's choice of place to stay. Such a study, though inexhaustive, is significant in informing our understanding of the migration trends, dynamics, decision making and choice dwelling on rich and empirically backed data. While such and other corpora of global studies exist, we can see that in the context of regional migration (for instance the Zimbabwe-South Africa migration issue) there is no official and

credible data (statistics) regarding the number of people who cross and now reside in South Africa. Such paucity of credible data is, however, understandable.

This is considering most Zimbabwean migrants including – but not limited – to those from southwestern parts enter South Africa through illegal ports of entry (Mabvurira, Zengeni, and Chigevenga, 2022; Malatji, 2020; Muzondo, 2021). It is thus difficult to account and document for such a cohort that does not enter through the legal routes. However, this issue is not peculiar to the Zimbabwe-South African border alone (Dodson, 2001; Mamokhere and Chauke, 2020). Various countries do face challenges in documenting undocumented migrants owing to the porosity of borders (Dorjee, Buckmaster, and Downey, 2021; Handmaker and Nalule, 2021; Letlape, 2021). To this extent, data on the number of migrants entering into neighbouring countries remain at best inconclusive and at worst a matter of estimation.

Tied to the above, scholars argue that the thriving of international organised crime, as evident in human smuggling, has compounded the challenges of coming up with credible, official data on undocumented migration trends (Heckmann, 2004). This is mainly because human smugglers bypass the official ports of entry, leaving official government agencies to speculate on the number of undocumented migrants entering or leaving the country without any solid statistics. Such challenges limit research on the number of migrants that enter a country and curtail our understanding of the settling-in challenges, dynamics, and opportunities.

Scholars have long established that fieldwork research on migration is not an easy feat (Jauhiainen and Tedeschi, 2021; Oluwatoyin, 2020). This concerns the ethical and practical/feasibility challenges associated with such a research endeavour. This was established in a study by Oluwatoyin (2020) who focused on undocumented immigrant women of African origin in the United States of America. Scholars agree that methodological challenges in accessing these and other undocumented migrant communities do arise, requiring the researcher to establish trust, create rapport and confidence among the participants (see De La Rosa, Babino, Rosario, Martinez and Aijaz, 2012; Jauhiainen and Tedeschi, 2021; Shedlin, Decena, Mangadu, and Martinez, 2011). This is quite understandable among undocumented migrants who harbour fears of being exposed and being sent back to their countries (deportation).

These fears also loom large among migrants owing to the absence of community collaborations, stigmatization, and suspicions within communities (Moyo and Zanker, 2022). It is essential to note, however, that such fears exist even though there are groups of migrants, specifically refugees and those fleeing danger, who have their rights protected under the international human rights regime. For instance, under the principle of non-refoulement, no state party under refugee law should send back those seeking refuge, fleeing danger and persecution where there are reasonable prospects that this will endanger their lives (Coleman, 2003; Langy and Nagy, 2021). All these fears and mistrust also weigh in on researchers seeking to recruit participants. A good example is the study on Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador which established that a huge chunk of Latino migration into the United States of America was fuelled by push factors including fleeing gang violence, persecution, deep-seated poverty and crime (Ambrosius, 2021; Obinna, 2019).

Admittedly, many of the existing scholarly accounts pay much attention to the economic and social drivers of migration, focusing on the search for better livelihood opportunities, and quality of life and health among others (Akanle, Fayehun, Adejare, and Orobome, 2019; Boghean, 2016; Kanayo, Anjofui, and Stiegler, 2019). In their contribution to migration research, Kanayo et al. (2019) conducted empirical research focusing on the push and pull factors of Congolese and Cameroonian migrants to South Africa. Their study offered interesting empirical findings which are relevant to this study as they established three main determining factors that fuel international migration. They noted, 'first on the list are economic factors, followed by political factors, and then the influence of migrant networks' (Kanayo et al., 2019:220). Just like the rest of the existing scholarship on migration, this literature suffers several deficiencies. For instance, this study (Kanayo et al., 2019) did not dwell on analysing the porosity of the Congolese, Cameroonian and South African borders which facilitate the ease of movement of people (migrants). These aspects of migration flow and trends are evident in all continents. As articulated in policy-centred literature this is also evident in regions that have not received much attention namely, the labour migration of people from the Pacific Island region into New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America (Guan, Raymer, and Pietsch, 2022).

At the crossroads of the debate on undocumented migration are issues that deal with social justice and human rights. This relates particularly to the realisation of the rights of

undocumented migrants viewed through the lens of structural racism (Krieger, 2014). Nowhere has this been more evident than in the struggle to access health facilities in the USA (Olukotun and Mkandawire-Valhmu, 2020). It could be that this may not be expressed through institutional design, but it might also be that the undocumented migrants are scared to access public and state institutions for the fear of exposure of their illegality. This has a striking resonance in the context of undocumented Zimbabwean migrants (Vanyoro, 2019) who also harbour the same feelings in South Africa, especially in light of the growing wave of xenophobic discrimination (Hungwe and Gelderblom, 2014; Mutambara and Naidu, 2021). The salient issue of this literature is that of the social exclusion of migrants. Apart from a small amount of migration literature, we still know relatively little about how these migrants integrate and assimilate within South African communities.

### 2.3.1 Return migration: Peering into the literature

Within the past decades, a distinguished line of research has emerged investigating the subject of return migration (Arowolo, 2000; De Haas and Fokkema, 2011; Hagan and Wassink, 2020; Ruyssen and Rayp, 2014). This perhaps speaks to migrants' failure to integrate and acquire socio-economic opportunities within areas of destination in what scholars choose to term 'failed migration experience' (Makina, 2012:365). Consistent with this global literature, the emerging nuances also relate to the Zimbabwean migrants who go to South Africa (Makina, 2012, 2013). From this perspective, one can only conclude that there are numerous nuances within the migration discourse regionally, nationally, and globally. It is from this perspective that the current study situates the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest part of Zimbabwe within these ever-evolving dynamics, trends, structures, and contexts.

### 2.3.2 Political economy, labour migration and migration policies

Previous scholarship in the 19$^{th}$ century on labour migration has documented how the early labour force was recruited into South African mines from Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe (Van Onselen, 1973, 1980). However, some strands of literature also note that the migration was not only limited to men from Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. Workers from Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe (Zambia) and those from Mozambique who had toiled in the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean mines also took a great trek to South Africa (Hungwe, 2013:23–24). These include some of the former Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe employees who had been recruited by the Rhodesian Native Labour Bureau (RNLB). The question, however, is whether this early migration aligns with, or can be explained by recent theoretical framings

derived from the new economics of labour migration (NELM) as articulated by various studies (Mannan and Fredericks, 2015; Poole, 2022; Stark, 1978, 1991; Taylor, 1999; Taylor et al., 2003). Again, significant gaps exist in the extant studies that focus on early labour migration in South Africa in the sense that very little academic analysis has been done to investigate whether these early labour migrants paved the way for the later migration of fellow kinsmen.

In line with this strand of literature, one can then conclude that labour migration by Zimbabweans to South Africa has had a long history. This is also true of the cultural, socio-linguistic ties of the South Africans and Zimbabweans. For instance, scholars hold that, although Zimbabwe was the centre of migrants fleeing Mfecane wars during the 1800s, the pattern was to be reversed in decades to follow. It is further observed that the wars that occurred in the Nguniland saw the establishment of the Gaza and Ndebele kingdoms in Mozambique and southwestern Zimbabwe respectively (Hungwe, 2013:22).

As the literature on migration correctly states, the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe were to become the epicentre of sending communities. This was evident in the migrants who left these places of origin for destination communities (areas) in South Africa. These can fit the categorisation by migration scholars – the label of 'pioneer(ing) migrants' (Bakewell, De Haas, and Kubal, 2012; De Haas, 2010; Karaçay, 2015; Wessendorf, 2019). As scholars have long observed this, in a way it engenders chain migration (Kenny, 1962; Price, 1963). For MacDonald and MacDonald (1964:82) this entails 'that movement in which prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment'. Other scholars further argue that the labour entry and accommodation is facilitated 'through primary social relationships with previous migrants' (De Haas, 2008:5). In nuancing and contextualising the Zimbabwe-South Africa early migratory flows and trends, the question remains whether those who fled the Mfecane wars returned to South Africa or whether they settled in Matebeleland regions. Or did they contribute to the chain migration (Kenny, 1962)? Or did they just return to their sending countries with others where they would have been settled in destination areas, detached from their families with no trace? It is hoped that such an analysis would then help us situate socio-linguistic and cultural ties by examining how these ties came into being. This is a subject that has not received sustained academic research. It would suffice to state that these familial, socio-economic,

linguistic, and cultural bonds were to become crucial links that aided later migratory flows into South Africa.

The scholarly migration literature is also attentive to the Zimbabwean political economy perspectives before and during the 2008-era in seeking to understand how this has shaped cross-border migration to such a large extent (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Kuhlengisa, 2014; Makina, 2013; Nkau, 2005). A distinguished line of research traces how the female folk were thrown at the deep end during the era of the Bretton Woods institutions – the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank's coercive policy measures – and the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAPs) (Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2017; Hadebe, 2022; Muzvidziwa, 2001, 2015; Nkau, 2005). Owing to job losses and the retrenchment of male workers, women stepped up and started engaging in informal trading through cross-border trade to South Africa. This feminisation of migration was no doubt underpinned by economic factors, not socio-linguistic and cultural factors.

Zimbabweanist literature and research on migration has focused on a different temporal and spatial lens. Some of these research strands speak to the earlier periods (1924–1990) of migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. The bulk of this scholarship comes from authors who include Crush et al. (2015), Crush and Tevera (2010), Mlambo (2010), Pasura (2008), Peberdy (1999), Simon (1988), and Tevera and Crush (2003). The current study thus builds on this rich corpus of literature to illuminate the migration flows and dynamics of Zimbabweans over time. It is significant to note that within these streams of literature some scholars locate the Zimbabwe-South Africa migration flows and trends through longitudinal studies. Relatedly, others look at migration through specific time frames namely at the genesis of what came to be referred as the Zimbabwean crisis (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012; Hammar, McGregor, and Landau, 2010; Hammar and Raftopoulos, 2003; Kanyenze, Chitambara, and Martens, 2011; Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004; Mlambo and Raftopoulos, 2010; Muzondidya, 2010). A key limitation of these studies is that they rarely pay attention to the role that human social networks play in facilitating the movement of humans outside Zimbabwe in search of better livelihood options, particularly in neighbouring South Africa.

Several existing studies have also dwelled on analysing how migration-immigration policies aid migratory flows (Krieger, 2006; Schachter, 2009). This has been evident in the policy

contestations at government, political party, and inter-party level within multi-lateral agencies, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). For instance, scholars note how Lesotho and South Africa signed bilateral deals that facilitated the cross-border movement of migrants from Lesotho into South Africa (Crush and Mc Donald, 2001). Many of these studies are limited insofar as they are focused on the economic dimensions, domestic and foreign policy, international human rights, refugee and migrant rights and international humanitarian law perspectives, yet giving minimal attention to the sociological aspects including how socio-linguistic and cultural perspectives intersect in aiding regional and cross border migratory flows.

### 2.4 Borderlands, porous borders, and border management

In the past decades, an emerging research strand on borderlands and borders has increasingly focused on the porosity of borders, and the use of biometrics in offshore monitoring among other issues (see Johnson et al., 2011). This corpus of studies produced what has come to be termed critical border studies. Such studies have further engaged with issues of complex temporality illuminating debates on temporality, space, and permanence (Little, 2015). Such a research strand relates to the study of how people view borders over time and how they negotiate such physical spaces. Other scholars see temporality 'as it manifests itself in human existence' (Hoy, 2009:xiii). It is further argued that temporality is 'dependent on the mind' (Hoy, 2009: xv). It is through such articulations that we can trace how people can view borderlands within changing times.

Within the literature, perhaps no case study has received sustained academic and migration policy attention like the border between the United States of America (USA) and Mexico (Pries, 2019). The border has elicited sustained scrutiny not only because of its porosity but also because of the volume of human and vehicular traffic moving people across the border. As extensive as Pries (ibid.) and other studies (Hanson, 2006; Hill and Wong, 2005) on Mexico-USA cross-border migration are, significant gaps still exist. For instance, the issue of socio-cultural and linguistic ties seems to be overshadowed by the larger debates around border permeability, proximity, and push factors. Yet, there are nuanced debates that also exist in the migration literature pointing to the relevance and significance of familial ties and pre-existing networks in driving undocumented migration. Considering the evidence, it should also be noted

that the issues driving undocumented migration intersect. For instance, the rise of undocumented migrants cannot only be linked to human social networks, but also to porous borders, poor border management and failing border control measures centring on weak governance.

It therefore comes as no surprise that research on porous borders has become an important subject of discussion in the contemporary academic and policy debates on migration. As such it has gained prominence on the global agenda stimulating varied debates in the cognate fields of security studies, migration, and international relations. A critical review of existing literature highlights that countries from the Global North and other middle-income economies like South Africa, are grappling with formulating migration policies that can restrict the migration of documented and undocumented migrants (Beauchemin et al., 2020; Helbling and Kalkum, 2018; Moyo and Zanker, 2022) as a result of the porous borders. Such literature offers varied perspectives on the complexity of migration policies, porous borders and border control, and management (Côté-Boucher, et al., 2014; Seda, 2015).

Recently, attention has also been focused on the debate on 'if and how' closed or open borders aid undocumented migration (Vezzoli, 2021). Some strands of literature advance the notion that in closed border regimes people are bound to find other alternative illegal routes (Vezolli, 2021). Whilst this is a truism, the debate on the open border regime has also received increasing resistance and has come under intense attack, at least from the policy level. Scholars also ascribe the increasing undocumented migration to restrictive border controls as attested in the USA-Mexico border (Pries, 2019) where migrants tend to go underground (resorting to illegal ways). To this end, opinions remain split on whether states should prioritise open or closed border regimes, considering the ubiquity of transnational and supranational organised crimes that are on the rise. These crimes often involve the movement of goods (extractive resources) and people (human smuggling), drugs and narcotics. This is also attributed, if not contingent, on porous borders which make it easier for the mobility of undocumented migrants and the movement of other illicit goods.

Within the expanding corpus of border governance, some scholars have started to integrate the spatiality of bordering, arguing for the need to bring the time-space lens to the foreground in understanding the border phenomenon (Little, 2015). Such a perspective is critical and

illuminating as it foregrounds significant issues often neglected in conventional scholarship. In the same vein, critics lament the heavy emphasis on spatial and territorial perspectives on the importance of borders among critical border theorists and the marginal attention that they give to the temporal dimensions of borders (Little, ibid). As Little (2015) further opines, this tends to engender a territorialist understanding of borders. Such a perspective, however, has not been accepted uncritically within the academic discourses. Critics argue that its main limitation – if not flaw – is that it undercuts and dilutes a temporal understanding of borders which is still crucial in widening our critical view on borders and bordering in totality (Little, 2015). Scholars also acknowledge that variegated bordering practices (for example in the USA) are contingent on not only the political dynamics but also on the physical location of the border (Little, 2015). This claim resonates with the situation obtained within the Canadian and Mexican borders (Konrad and Nicol, 2011; Kyle and Scarcelli, 2009).

#### 2.4.1 Scholarship on border securitization

Another research issue that has excited scholars about borders is the issue of securitization. The field has gained prominence within the contemporary global literature on porous borders, migration and border management to the extent that it has become a veritable research area (see for example, Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; Côté-Boucher, Infantino, and Salter, 2014; Estevens, 2018; Seda, 2015). This interest has presumably been sparked by the developments that continue to grip the world. Scholars highlight that securitization became topical after the 9/11 attack in the USA (Brunet-Jailly, 2007; Marino and Dawes, 2016; Newman, 2007). One scholar stressed that, as counterterrorism measures '…governments have introduced restrictive border controls and admission policies to control the flow of people across state borders' (Jaskulowski, 2019: 711). But whether this securitization has resulted in more secure borders, especially when analysing the African context, is an area where evidence is still sparse. This notwithstanding, some countries even beyond Africa have adopted modern technology to monitor and patrol borders, including the use of drone technology. However, the question remains whether this has helped in halting the tide of undocumented migrants. This concern raises other perspectives on why undocumented migrants still cross borders.

Although security measures have been viewed as a counterterrorism response to 9/11 (Jaskulowski, 2019), contemporary literature shows that increased human mobility and porous borders (Moyo, 2023) have resulted in the securitization of migration (Jaskulowski, 2019; Solano and Massey, 2022). The question that remains among citizens in general is whether the

securitization of borders is aimed at having more secure and water-tight borders that guarantee human security, or whether it is in fear of terrorism. The literature on borders also enunciates that porous borders pose a major security threat (Ackleson, 2005; Addo, 2006; Brunet-Jailly, 2007; Letlape, 2021) as they facilitate the movement of undocumented migrants, weapons, terrorists, and other trans-border crimes. A percipient example is the US-Mexico border where undocumented migrants have been using legal and illegal routes to cross into the USA (Ackleson, 2005). On the other hand, several migration scholars argue that porous borders protect the rights of forced migrants, undocumented economic migrants, and refugees (Ferreira, 2019; Mawadza, 2008; Seda, 2015). Yet, others maintain that porous borders result in uncontrolled migration, security threats in addition to putting strain on the host countries and communities (Addo, 2006; Letlape, 2021). Proponents of human security (Seda, 2015:2) enunciate that, 'to protect the human security needs of these border communities, new complementary spaces are needed to ensure that practices of border control do not threaten the human security of border communities in the name of national security'.

In his comprehensive study on border governance, Seda (2015:212) writes:

> … in response to high flows of migration through Ressano Garcia, South African border authorities have tightened their control of the border by erecting electrified fences, deploying more patrol units and using the defence force to fight irregular forms of migration, trafficking and smuggling.

By this assertion, scholars underscore the utility of securitization of borders within this 21st century era. Whilst this concept of securitization seems to have gained sway in both theory and practice, in some contexts it is apparent that border security infrastructure is still failing to deal with the influx of undocumented migrants effectively. This development in turn has made scholars search for alternative explanations as to whether border security infrastructure alone is effective in containing the flow of undocumented migrants. A critical review of the literature on the 'migration-security nexus' informs this study, especially with regards to why the South African government has been changing immigration policies to restrict the movement of (un) documented migrants.

In his study on border security in South Africa, Moyo (2023:8) established that the threats posed by porous borders associated with human smuggling and trafficking, coupled with the

rise of undocumented migrants, forced the securitization of South African borders. Literature has also examined this state-centric border securitization response owing to the flow of contraband, including the smuggling of cigarettes, from countries like Mozambique and Zimbabwe into South Africa. To this end, the literature is alert to the fact that the securitization of borders has not been inspired by human monitoring only, but also by the need to stem transnational organized crime, including cross-border smuggling.

In a qualitative study on border governance in Mozambique, Seda (2015) argued that the securitization of borders had an impact on people living along the borders (those who share borders). Through his study, he took a swipe at the securitization of Mozambique's borders with neighbouring countries as this affected local communities who would ordinarily move freely from one country to the other in search of social services, informal trading and employment opportunities. Although his study mainly focused on cross-border movement and securitization, it fell short by failing to engage with the nexus between porous borders and migration. Besides such a flaw, his rich empirical findings offer important insights into any regional research study focusing on migration, cross-border movement, securitization, and border management.

### 2.4.2 Regional and continental perspectives on borders

The border literature is also cognisant of the reality that in much of Africa and Asia, in the context of areas where borders are highly porous, 'physical boundaries between nation-states mean little in practice' (Little, 2015:6). However, in understanding the porosity of borders several issues must be taken into consideration (Goodhand, 2012). The literature on porous borders suggests these issues arise due to border management; governance, including corruption and aiding state and non-state officials; as well as the socio-linguistic ties that divide and bind the neighbouring states. It is the later line of enquiry which is particularly relevant in the context of the current study. Relatedly, scholars observe that 'border effects may be draconian and punitive when it comes to unskilled labour migration or security concerns but relatively open around the movement of goods' (Little, 2015:13).

Scholarly accounts on borders have also established the interlinkage or the interconnectedness of migratory flows between neighbouring countries (Milivinti, 2019). This has brought the issue of porous borders into contestation. For instance, it is not surprising that in Zimbabwe – as is the trend across much of Africa and elsewhere – people who reside in adjacent/bordering

areas mingle, intermarry as well as share socio-cultural and linguistic ties with those from South Africa and Mozambique. This point, as articulated by Seda (2015), is illustrated by the example of the interactions between Zimbabweans who live in border areas in the eastern part of the country with Mozambicans. Although this is a critical element in understanding the nuances of migration dynamics, scholars have steered clear from discussing the notion of porous borders in context of citizens from adjacent borders who are united as 'family' through the sharing of socio-economic, cultural and linguistic aspects and services.

It is to this end that some scholars have even dwelled on analysing the shared economic benefits that come with shared borders, facilitated through the movement of goods and services. Thebe (2011) demonstrated how the *Omalayisha* system has been of great importance to people from southwest Zimbabwe in sending remittances back home, as well as facilitating the movement of people and goods between Zimbabwe and South Africa. In some way, the border has also been viewed as a barricade and a negotiated space insofar as Zimbabwean women migrants negotiate the border with the assistance of *omalayisha* (Thebe and Maombere, 2019).

What is critical to note is that much of the existing scholarship on porous borders highlights the complexity of this phenomenon. In a study titled, *The multiplicity of challenges faced by South African borders: A case of Limpopo Province*, Mamokhere and Chauke (2019) established that there are underlying factors that lead to porous borders in South Africa. These include – but are not limited to – corruption at points of entry and weak border management systems (Mamokhere and Chauke, 2019). Such complexity has also been pervasive and prevalent across all continents. This observation is in sync with that of migration scholars across the globe ranging from Latin America (McIlwaine, 2011), Africa (Ikome, 2012) and Asia (Ullah and Kumpoh, 2018) who have also written extensively on the migration conundrum, porous borders and their complexity. Owing to the unprecedented international migration crisis, academic and policy debates on porous borders, border control and border management have increased in the recent past. The literature highlights that the geopolitical shift, COVID-19, and economic crises, especially in the global south, have led to the influx of migrants to neighbouring countries or abroad in search of greener pastures (Jackson and Hoque, 2022; Mushomi, Palattiyil, Bukuluki, Sidhva, Myburgh, Nair, and Nyasulu, 2022).

Despite scholars' contemporary interest in the study of porous borders, we know little about the driving factors of migration of people from southwest Zimbabwe, apart from the economic factors (Crush and Tawodzera, 2017; Moyo, 2010; Muzondidya, 2010). Methodologically, there are limited empirical studies that focus on narratives (life histories) of (un)documented migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. This study is thus an addition to this body of knowledge, with new nuances on porous borders and the migration of Southwesters into South Africa. This current interrogation seeks to plug this lacuna by critically analysing the impact, effect and contribution of porous borders and South Africa's immigration policies, as well as the role of human networks, which are chiselled along socio-cultural and linguistic lines, in facilitating migration and subsequent assimilation of migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe.

**2.5 Unpicking the scholarship on human and social networks**

For a long time, scholars have established the nexus between familial and kinship in fuelling migration and integration in host societies (Boyd, 1989; Fawcett, 1989). Whilst this has long been acknowledged in migration studies, scholars lament over the paucity of analysis on how the sending and receiving communities relate to and sustain migration (Gurak and Cases, 1992). To this day there is no denying the role of networks in shaping migration decision-making and in influencing the actual migration. For this reason, scholars speak of the social capital of migration (Haug, 2008). While this is a truism, there is a lack of sustained scholarly literature focusing on this theme within the context of Zimbabweans migrating to South Africa. To this end, the current inquiry focused on the migrants from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe seeks to fill this void by obtaining theoretical and empirical studies on how social networks aid migration and integration in host communities.

The study of human social networks has long captured the interest of academics in various continents. In an important study, though focusing on a country level, Barnejee (1983) underlined how social networks facilitated the migration and settling of people from rural areas to New Delhi in India. I argue that such a micro-level analysis helps us to understand the role of networks at a supranational level. Admittedly, studies focusing on social networks in facilitating migration are not only limited to micro-level analyses, but also stretch to the macro and meso levels (Blumenstock Chi, and Tan, 2019; Moretti, 1999; Thieme, 2006).

The role of social networks in facilitating migration has long been acknowledged within the migration literature (Gurak, 1987), but recently this aspect has been seized and expanded. However, the early literature is enlightening as it helps us to get a longitudinal perspective on the subject. In a study by Caces (1986) it was established that among the Filipino migrating to the US, particularly in Hawaii, fellow kinsmen helped newer migrants in acquiring employment. In another study, Gurak (ibid) found evidence suggesting that Dominican and Colombian migrants in New York City received arrival assistance from their familial networks. Relatedly, MacDonald and MacDonald (1964) examined how social networks aided the migration of Italian migrants to the USA (1880–1914) through offering assistance, and by disseminating vital information on migration.

Existing research recognises that migration decision-making, settling and integration in the host nation is also necessitated by the pre-existing familial and social networks, especially in the case of the Latino community (Obinna, 2021). The existence of such evidence underscores the claim that human networks aid and abate undocumented migration. In underscoring the nexus between pre-existing familial, linguistic, cultural, and religious networks, scholars observe in an article titled *Migration from Muslim-Majority Countries: A Tale of Two Patterns* that such existing backgrounds facilitate migration decision-making (Gu and Fong, 2022). Furthermore, such links also help with the integration of the migrant populations through the assistance of those who would have settled earlier or those who are permanent citizens of such countries. In this regard, religion and cultural beliefs are seen as unifying bonds that tie people and propel migration, especially in Muslim-to-Muslim majority countries. However, as the research established, this process also differs and becomes more challenging in Muslim minority countries (Gu and Fong, 2022).

Relatedly, a study by Mlambo (2010) examines how inconveniently borders divide families. In his study, Mlambo explored how ethnic groups moved from South Africa to Zimbabwe in pre-colonial times as a result of the Mfecane wars and ended up being divided by the border. He then highlights the relationships that still exist between these ethnic groups which were divided. However, one shortfall of his inquiry is that he did not take the discussion further to interrogate the impact of these social relations on contemporary migration flows, dynamics, and trends. Yet, it is a truism that shared history, language(s) and culture(s) still tie Zimbabweans and South Africans together. Through a close reading of the literature, one gets

a sense of the welcoming reception of some Zimbabweans, specifically those from the southwestern parts within South African societies. However, the issue of reception needs to be analysed critically as it is an issue that must not be generalised.

Judging by the voluminous corpus of extant literature, one can never undervalue the role of social networks as 'bridgeheads' (Böcker, 1994; Collyer, 2005) in aiding the integration and settling of fellow family members and friends. Though this seems to be an undisputed finding in the literature (De Haas, 2008), a lacuna still exists insofar as the fine-grained relations and dynamics of social networks have not elicited sustained academic scrutiny – at least in the context of sub-Saharan African migration research (Hungwe, 2013). The reason for this is presumably because much of the extant migration literature tends to give salience to economistic articulations on why people migrate, especially in the case of Zimbabwe where people have been reeling under a collapsed economy pronounced through the 'Zimbabwean crisis' (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012; Raftopoulos, 2006). In studies conducted elsewhere, scholars have established the dynamics of 'pioneer migrants' (Bakewell, et al., 2012) – migrants who do not avail the sought 'migration assistance' (Bashi, 2007; Böcker 1994; Boyd 1989). To this end some migrants even act as buffers or gatekeepers. Various researchers have found that these networks are not receptive and that they are unwelcoming to would-be/fellow migrants (Böcker, 1994; Bauer, Gang, and Epstein, 2002; Collyer 2005; De Haas 2010; Epstein 2008).

A study focusing on the social exclusion of Zimbabwean migrants in the South African labour market and society found, interestingly, that though social networks help to facilitate migration from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg, they also inhibit and repel new migrants (Hungwe, 2013). A detailed analysis of the reasons behind such behaviour is, however, beyond the literature discussion of the current enquiry. Suffice it to state that there are numerous reasons for this, including labour market dynamics, petty jealousy, and competition, among others.

The scholarly literature has also expanded on the aspect of social networks to illuminate its nexus, or lack thereof, with more information (De Haas, 2008). To this end, scholars like Epstein (2008) outline the *herd* and *network effects*. From this perspective, it is maintained that absent information on destinations leave migrants with the only option to follow where other migrants normally migrate (ibid.). Taking from such a strand of thinking, Epstein (2008) seems

to discount the prominence and salience of the neo-classical push and pull utility maximisation model in understanding migratory flows, trends, dynamics, and process. As scholars observe:

> Herd behaviour is an endogenous effect because the migrant behaviour of group members directly affects the migration decision of other individuals. In particular, this will also encourage community members outside their direct circle to migrate before network effects come into play. It is important to emphasise that at this stage, the role of social capital is mainly confined to family support used in enabling chain migration of direct kin and does not significantly extend to wider network effects yet. (De Haas, 2008:34)

Taking from the above, the migration literature generally agree that human social networks play a role in facilitating migration, integration, and assimilation in the host (receiving) communities. After engaging at length with the literature discussion, the following section explains the theoretical framing undergirding the study. I adopt a dyadic model to examine the empirical findings by utilising both the push and pull model and human social networks to theorise the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest parts into South Africa.

## 2.6 Theorising migration

In the discussion that follows, I present the conceptual framing underpinning the enquiry on the migration of migrants from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe into South Africa.

### 2.6.1 The Push and Pull model of migration

The study is guided by the push and pull model of migration (Lee, 1966; Ravenstein, 1885) and a crop of recent scholars (Khalid and Urbański, 2021; Urbański, 2022; Van Hear et al., 2018) who have picked and extended this research frontier to explain how and why both documented and undocumented migrants leave a place of origin for another area of destination. This analytical lens is fitting as it facilitates an analysis of why (un)documented migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe migrate to South Africa. The model is sufficiently general to cater to various socio-economic, environmental, political, and even cultural and linguistic factors that push, attract, and incentivise migrants to leave their place of origin to move to another place of destination (see Lee, 1966). Within the migration scholarship, some scholars have even developed what has come to be known as the laws of migration (Ravenstein, 1885). My analysis also concurs with such scholars who opine that the chief reason for migration at

domestic and international level is economic. However, other scholars seem to share a different perspective. One such scholar is De Haas who puts a caveat that:

> Although the truism holds that economic and other opportunity differentials generally play a major role in migration, this alone cannot explain the actual, patterned and geographically clustered morphology of migration, typically linking particular places and regions (De Haas, 2010:1589).

It is these kinds of observations that calls for one to consider other supporting conceptual analytic frames to understand the migration flows, trends, and processes.

However, consistent with much of the existing literature I maintain that, in the context of Zimbabwe, before considering the role of social networks, people do consider push and pull factors when taking the bold decision to migrate. Taking from this perspective people are incentivised to migrate in search of better socio-economic opportunities (Nagurney and Daniele, 2021) including jobs, better education, health, livelihoods, lifestyle, and way of life. Strictly speaking, people migrate owing to the political and economic situation in the sending country. For instance, in Zimbabwe, the political economy plays a role in pushing migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe to migrate to South Africa (Crush and Tevera, 2010). Even people from the whole of Zimbabwe migrate to South Africa owing to the collapsed economy and, especially during the height of the economic crisis, mostly undocumented migrants crossed the border to South Africa. However, what is unique about migrants from the southern part is that their transition into South African communities is made easier because of pre-existing familial ties and bonds.

I thus deploy the push and pull model to first understand why migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe decide to migrate to South Africa before engaging with the analysis of how social/human networks (Hungwe, 2013) facilitate their mobility, subsequent integration and assimilation within South African communities.

I hold that there is greater analytical value in utilising the push and pull model in examining migration decision-making, motives, and factors that incentivise Zimbabweans from leaving (*the place of origin*) the southwest part of Zimbabwe to migrate to (*the place of destination*) South Africa. This theory also holds in other contexts as established in a study on the

Mozambicans' migratory flows into South Africa (Muanamoha, Maharaj, and Preston-Whyte, 2010).

### 2.6.2 Human Social Networks

The study is also anchored in the human social networks theory to examine how migrants from the southwest part of Zimbabwe navigate the various precarious journeys to South Africa. For Marsden, social networks entail a 'structure of relationships linking social actors' (Marsden 2000:2727). Liu,Sidhu, Beacom, and Valente (2017) explains that the social network theory focuses on the importance of social relationships in transferring information, channelling personal or media influence, and promoting attitudinal or behavioural change. Scholars tend to speak of 'social capital' when referring to human social networks (Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, and Taylor, 1993, Massey and España, 1987: Palloni Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, and Spittel, 2001). In the words of Putnam (1995:665), social capital entails 'social connections, the attendant norms and trust'. For others, social capital entails:

> The actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition - in other words, membership in a group - that provides each of its members with a backing of the collectively owned capital [...] a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu as cited in Daly and Silver, 2008:543).

This social capital is undoubtedly derived from human social networks. In this regard, it is significant to underline that the utility of human social networks in aiding migration has long been considered in the literature spanning many decades (Boyd, 1989; Fawcett, 1989; Massey and España, 1987). I deploy this theory to first analyse the initial decision-making to migrate to the neighbouring country. By utilising the social network theory (Spoonley et al., 2005; Spicer 2008), I hold that family members and relatives who now reside in South Africa act as sources of information to would-be interested migrants. It is from this lens that they provide a source of information on how one can navigate the migration process from the place of origin (sending country/place), in this case the southwest parts of Zimbabwe, the Beitbridge border post and even within South African cities/communities. This, however, is not to undervalue the migratory agency exercised by would-be migrants who make calculated decisions involving cost-benefit analysis on whether to leave or stay (De Haas, 2021). In support of this claim, Anderson and Ruhs (2010:178) argue that the notion of migrant agency is not reducible to 'choice', as is evident in the dominant portrayals within policy discourses. To them, the agency

of migrants entails 'understanding decision making, the room for manoeuvre, opportunity structures and migration trajectories' (Anderson and Ruhs, 2010:178). Returning to the issue of social networks, it is critical to note that, although the theory has gained prominence within the migration scholarship, it has not escaped criticism and scrutiny for its perceived shortfalls in failing to foreground agency. Mainwaring, for instance, claims that:

> … migration network theories have indicated how networks of friends, relatives, or co-nationals enjoy social capital that facilitates continued migration between two places, independent of the initial drivers of migration. Network theories often present migration systems as fully formed without investigating the agency required to initiate, transform, or weaken such systems (2016:291).

In underscoring the importance of social networks in migration trends, flows and processes (Massey and Espinosa, 1997), one researcher asserts:

> Strong ties relating to bonding capital are certainly useful in helping the migrant move from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg. These ties provide the needed shelter, food and comfort, especially in the first months soon after arrival. They also help with entry into the first job (Hungwe, 2013:206).

At the second rung of the study's conceptualisation, I deploy this analytical lens to examine how these networks help fellow migrants to whom they are connected through bloodline, socio-linguistic and cultural ties, to settle, integrate, and find employment. There is no doubt that the issue of social capital has continued to intrigue migration scholars. It is worth noting that social capital is not only important in labour market entry, but that it also helps the new migrants with knowledge, information, resources (Cheung and Phillimore, 2013) and guidance on how to access social services such as health institutions and ways of assimilating within the South African communities (Hungwe, 2013). Scholars posit that networks indeed act as 'bridgeheads' (Böcker, 1994). I posit that the theory provides heavy analytical value in understanding how human-social networks aid the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa, especially undocumented migrants. Such explanations on the role of these 'foundation networks' (Humphris, Phillimore, and Khan, 2014; Wessendorf, 2017) have a theoretical and empirical basis as they provide a rich tapestry to understand migration decision-making and assimilation within the receiving community.

As some scholars observe, 'migration literature on early settlement generally assumes that migrants will gravitate towards co-ethnics with whom they share a language, similar cultural values and religious beliefs' (Wessendorf, 2017:2). It is from this perspective that I utilise the human social network theory to understand the driving factor behind the migration and integration of migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe within South African communities.

Furthermore, this theoretical lens helps to inform and unpack the empirical data as I examine whether social networks facilitate the integration and assimilation of Zimbabweans coming from the southwest part who share familial ties with some South African socio-linguistic and cultural groups. To put it in the words of De Haas (2010:1589) 'shared culture, language and geographical proximity often play a crucial role in the initiation of migration processes.' This claim resonates with the current inquiry as I seek to situate the migration of migrants from the southwest part of Zimbabwe through the lens of their socio-linguistic and cultural relations with South African communities. Because of the application of the human social network theory, I utilise such a lens in examining the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa while making a more nuanced analysis of the socio-economic, linguistic, and cultural perspectives. This is an area that has not elicited sustained academic scrutiny as evident in the lacunae in the literature. I thus posit that contemporary studies on migration can benefit from integrating the human social network analysis in terms of understanding the mobility, migration decision-making and other challenges that migrants face in assimilating and integrating into destination areas where they share specific linguistic-cultural and social ties with the receiving community.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter set out to present the theoretical framework underpinning the study on the migration of migrants from the southwest parts of Zimbabwe into South Africa. In doing so, it engaged at length with an expansive corpora of literature speaking on various themes ranging from migration decision-making, incentives for migration and challenges, to the role of human and social networks, the challenges in navigating borders, as well as examining the push and pull factors and how the migrants settle and assimilate in receiving (host) communities. The chapter explored two theoretical lenses, namely the push and pull model and the human social network, that will be utilised to frame the study. These two theoretical strands will be used to

analyse the empirical findings of the study in the chapters to follow. In the next chapter, I present the methodology guiding the study.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines and discusses the methodological approaches utilized to gather empirical data for the entire study. It outlines and maps the methods employed (research design), it justifies the methodological choices that were adopted and evaluates their limitations. The chapter also outlines the philosophical approach utilized in collecting the data. These methodological approaches inform the subsequent empirical chapters. Furthermore, the ethical issues that guided the research study are presented, as well as explanations regarding data analysis. The study is anchored in a qualitative research methodology that involved various data collection methods including key informant interviews, unstructured interviews, discourse analysis, review of grey material (literature), observations, and case study analysis. This chapter forms the basis for the empirical analysis of the discussion that will be following in the subsequent chapters. Next, I present the philosophical paradigm guiding the inquiry before outlining the research design.

## 3.2 Philosophical research paradigm

Any social science research is rooted in a research paradigm. For this study, I settled on the interpretive (hermeneutics) phenomenology paradigm in seeking to understand the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest part of Zimbabwe into South Africa.

### 3.2.1 Interpretive (hermeneutics) phenomenology

The study is anchored in the interpretive phenomenological paradigm derived from Heidegger (see Neubauer,Witkop, and Varpio, 2019). In seeking to understand the migration (mobility) and subsequent settling of the migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe, it is relevant for us to understand how they perceive, interpret, and observe social reality. In doing so, through interpretive phenomenology, I examine how participants make sense of their personal, cultural, linguistic, individual, and collective social relations in their country and in the host nation. However, in seeking to fulfil such an endeavour it is useful to outline in brief the meaning and history of phenomenology.

The philosophical concept of phenomenology has received serious analytical attention in various fields of study ranging from the humanities, to social and nursing science, and philosophy, among others. The origin and the use of the term is traced and accredited to Edmund Husserl, who is renowned in the scholarly field as the father of phenomenology (Moran, 2000). Phenomenology relates to the study of lived realities and life worlds (Dowling, 2007; Neubauer, et. al., 2019).

In the context of this study, I deployed such a philosophical paradigm to get an in-depth understanding of the lived realities and the life worlds of the Zimbabwean migrants in a contextualised setting of Sunnyside in Pretoria. To this end, I attended to questions regarding how and what their experiences had been (Teherani et al., 2015) in migrating and settling in a foreign country where they enjoy familial ties which stretch way back in time. In doing so, the study avoided treating the migrant community as a homogenous entity, but rather as a heterogeneous entity that at some point experienced varied and at times similar challenges, situations, vulnerabilities, and opportunities. The study is therefore alive to the differential identity markers (intersectionality) across culture, language, age, geographic, age, customs, education, and gender, among others.

In terms of phenomenology, scholars agree that there are various types and schools of thought (Neubauer et al., 2019; Tuohy,et al., 2013). These range from descriptive phenomenology, hermeneutic/interpretive phenomenology, and transcendental phenomenology to life-world phenomenology (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). A critical discussion of each is beyond the scope and focus of this study. Suffice it to state that I engage with interpretive phenomenology insofar as it relates to this particular study focusing on the migration of Zimbabwe's Southwesterners who settle in South African communities (mostly urban areas). At the core of interpretive phenomenology is the analysis of the respondents' lived experiences and their observations (Dowling, 2004). Through this process it interprets and describes situations, experiences, and phenomena. The fact that it describes phenomena might cause one to confuse interpretive phenomenology with descriptive phenomenology. However, the interpretive (hermeneutics) paradigm goes beyond description to explain and interpret phenomena (Neubauer et al., 2019; Padilla-Díaz, 2015).

Scholars are, however, mindful of some of the challenges of deploying an interpretive phenomenology paradigm in guiding an inquiry. As scholars like Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick, and Lavoie-Tremblay, (2020:1) lament, the difficult part is how to make phenomenology 'accessible and doable by researchers who are not themselves professional philosophers and who do not possess an extensive and in-depth background in the relevant phenomenological literature' (Van Manen, 2014:18). It is argued that this may affect issues of epistemology, ontology and objectivity and the choices one makes in deciding and designing appropriate methodological tools to guide the research inquiry. For example, scholars hold that in much of interpretive phenomenological research, one has to adopt purposive sampling (Padilla-Díaz, 2015:102).

Though not dismissing the interpretive hermeneutic researcher's objective stance, scholars argue that this paradigm is laden with subjectivities. They posit that 'the researcher's past experiences and knowledge are valuable guides to the inquiry. It is the researcher's education and knowledge base that led him/her to consider a phenomenon or experience worthy of investigation' (Neubauer, 2019:95). This relates to the situation where the researcher foregrounds his/her pre-conceptions and background on the phenomena (Neubauer et al., 2019). I am a young African woman who has observed and interpreted the migration of fellow country (wo)men into South Africa. Although I do not hail from the southwest part of Zimbabwe, I have interacted with migrating Zimbabweans both at the border – Beitbridge – and in the receiving community – specifically in Sunnyside in Pretoria and in Mussina. It is from this perspective that I have observed, interacted, and interpreted how the migrating population adapts and integrates into the host community. My situatedness or positionality helps in enhancing my interpretations and perspectives. The central focus of the hermeneutic phenomenology is to interpret one's experiences and circumstances through a lifeworld lens.

In the context of this study, I deploy this philosophical paradigm to examine how individual migrants from the southwest part of Zimbabwe make sense of, and interpret their experiences, and what the coping and adaptive mechanisms, challenges, opportunities and vulnerabilities are that they have to overcome when settling in South African communities. Taken together, I do deploy the hermeneutics approach to interpret and understand their narratives and life worlds. This interpretation should be understood through the lens of a hermeneutic circle involving an iteration of going back and forth involving interviews selected through purposive

and snowball sampling. Furthermore, the interpretation is also based on a close analysis of the phenomena through participant observations as is consistent with the hermeneutics research paradigm. The ensuing sections explore the varied research techniques that I used to collect data for this study.

### 3.3 Life worlds/Life histories

I utilised the life histories approach to gather in-depth data on the life trajectories/history of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. More specifically, I focused on examining their life challenges and opportunities, as well as their lived realities. Such perspectives helped in understanding how and why migrants from the southwest part of Zimbabwe make the bold decision to trek into South Africa, often using illegal routes. As scholars enunciate, life history is a qualitative research technique that is used to understand people's history, life, and real-world experiences (Wicks and Whiteford, 2006). In the words of Frank (1995:252):

> Life history is a narrative approach in which empirical methods are used to reconstruct and interpret the lives of ordinary persons. Life histories, as a genre, can include case histories, life-charts, life stories, and hermeneutic case reconstruction.

This approach enabled me to gather extensive amounts of data about the biographies and personal lives of migrants. Such a research method was particularly helpful in tracing and exploring the movement of migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe, motivating factors, and the socio-cultural and linguistic ties that made it easier for them to settle in Sunnyside in Pretoria. I also valued the life history approach for facilitating a deeper understanding and providing a vantage position from which the researcher can learn more about a person's experiences, identity, beliefs, and values. As such, life history (through narratives) was an ideal research technique that I employed to understand the historical ties, identity, and linguistic backgrounds of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe.

### 3.4 The Research design

A research design is a plan or a blueprint of how a specific research project will be carried out. (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). In the words of Kothari, research design refers to 'the conceptual structure within which research is conducted; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement and analysis of data' (Kothari, 2004:31). Scholars conceive of methodology as

'the theoretical, political, and philosophical backgrounds to social research and their implications for research practice and for the use of particular research methods' (Robson, 2011:528). This research is a qualitative case study research, which uses triangulation. Scholars define triangulation as the 'use of two or more independent sources of data or data collection methods to corroborate research findings within a study' (Saunders et al., 2009:154). I used a mixed-method approach to acquire a  comprehensive understanding of the complex issues of porous borders, migration, and assimilation of migrants to South Africa.

### 3.4.1 Triangulation

In conducting the study, I relied on triangulation to validate the merit of the initial findings and to ensure that it would qualify for rigorous analysis. In order to verify data, the following sources were used:

1. **Policy analysis:** the researcher examined yearly reports, policy documents, and legislative frameworks, as well as digital and print newspapers. This also entailed reviewing policy documents from government departments, namely the Ministry of Home Affairs and Foreign Affairs, Police and Social Policy. The review also entailed looking at policy documents from think tanks and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in order to consider whether any other foreign/regional relations aspects had triggered consternation than the issue of migration (influx) of Zimbabweans into South Africa in the past decade.
2. **Key informant interviews:** To complement data collected through a critical reading of policy documents, I also relied on key informant interviews. These were conducted with academics from different universities, border officials, community leaders, historians, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) personnel.
3. **Semi-structured interviews:** I conducted semi-structured interviews with migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe.
4. **Literature:** I consulted literature including academic publications, case studies and journals and grey literature linked to the research topic.

The triangulation approach was suitable for this qualitative case study research as it enabled the examination of a phenomenon within its setting by employing different data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2010). I made use of this approach as it enabled me to investigate the subject not from a singular lens but from multiple lenses facilitated by the use of varied data sources.

Yin (2003, 2006) notes that a qualitative case study design aims to ensure that the topical issues receive sustained and thorough examination. In the words of Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg (2005:694), 'qualitative interviews have traditionally been framed as explorations or discoveries of the perceptions of an individual subject to better understand his or her world'. The case study approach provided an opportunity for investigation of the both documented and undocumented migration phenomena as it unfolded. The merit of utilising qualitative research methods in an empirical inquiry 'is that they allow the researcher the flexibility to probe initial participant responses – that is, to ask why or how' (Mack et al., 2005:4). Also, a qualitative design helps by examining the environment and context in which particular behaviours are shown (De Vos, 2005). Considering all the above, I utilised a qualitative approach in order to get nuanced world views, insight regarding the life experiences of migrants, their opinions and beliefs, as well as those of other main stakeholders concerning the complex issue of migration, porous borders and South Africa's immigration policies.

### 3.5 Case study analysis

The study is informed by a case study analysis. Case studies are appropriate for researching specific incidents at a particular time and place with regards to the 'why, how, and where' questions. In this purpose, I engage in a case study analysis of migrants residing in Pretoria and parts of Mussina and Sunnyside. In examining the driving factors behind the mobility of migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa and how they settle and adapt, it became necessary to focus on their life experiences. In this regard, the study is a multi-case study analysis. Scholars define a case study as, 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be evident' (Yin, 2014:16).

My study focused on Pretoria as it is a cosmopolitan city. By this I mean that it incorporates people of different ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds. This caveat does help in framing the aspects of migration and whether some social and ethnic groups in Zimbabwe migrate and easily adapt in Sunnyside (Pretoria) with the aid of pre-existing sociocultural and linguistic networks. The case study in Southwest Zimbabwe (sending community) makes an ideal context for researching migration into South African communities. The various areas in Southwest Zimbabwe have enjoyed a long history of migration of people with distinct socio-

cultural and linguistic ties with some South African ethnic groups. I also focused on the Beitbridge border post and the surrounding areas to get a grasp of the flow of migrants into South Africa.

The adoption of a multi-case study enabled rich and thick descriptions of the lived realities of migrants. Case study analysis provides in-depth information and a thorough understanding of a phenomenon under investigation. It was for this reason that I favoured the use of varied contexts to examine how and why migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe settled in some selected South African cities and not others. Furthermore, the case study analysis permitted for the analysis of variations, dynamics and unique familial and friendship ties that necessitated ease of assimilation and settlement of migrant populations within the host country (South Africa).

More like a continuum, it needs to be understood that my approach to the case study analysis involved first examining the places of origin of migrants (Southwest Zimbabwean cities/rural areas) and secondly the case study of the Beitbridge Border post. The analysis of the border post permitted one to examine the porosity of the border and how this facilitates the movement of migrants into South Africa. The third layer in my case study analysis entailed examining the case of migrants whilst in South Africa. This analysis allowed for the nuanced perspectives of how the migrants integrate into the host communities in Pretoria.

According to Yin (2003), a case study highlights a phenomenon and the real-life setting in which it took place. This case study research began in February 2020 and was concluded in February 2022

In terms of the target population, the study targeted forty-six participants who provided rich and thick descriptions of the challenges and opportunities that arise in the migration process and journeys from the southwest part of Zimbabwe into South Africa.

### 3.5.1 First research site: Beitbridge border post

The Beitbridge border is located in Beitbridge, a border town in southwest Zimbabwe. The border post and bridge stretch over the Limpopo River and form the physical border separating Zimbabwe and South Africa (Mawadza, 2012). The city is dominated by the Ndebele and Venda people as articulated by the 2002 population enumeration. The town's population is estimated to be 43, 000 according to the 2012 population survey (Urban Councils Association

of Zimbabwe, 2022). However, there is a smaller proportion of people from other districts as it is a busy border post with entrepreneurs from other provinces in Zimbabwe. Figure 3.1 shows the Beitbridge border post sign.

**Figure 3.1: The Beitbridge border post between South Africa and Zimbabwe**
Source: homeaffairsSA/Twitter page

### 3.5.2 Second research Site: Sunnyside, Pretoria

Sunnyside is amongst the earliest towns in Pretoria, South Africa. The well-established neighbourhood is located east of Nelson Mandela Drive, close to Pretoria Central. The town comprises mainly high-density housing complexes, ranging from fairly upmarket to ramshackle. Robert Sebukwe Street (formerly known as Esselen Street) is a very busy and popular street in the suburb, surrounded by a band of nightclubs, canteens, and commercial enterprises. The peaceful eastern side of the town consists of residential apartments and student housing. The suburb is mostly occupied by foreigners which include Zimbabwean, Nigerian, and Congolese migrants. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 depict pictures of the major mall and the location of Sunnyside.

**Figure 3.2: Sunny Park, a mall in Sunnyside**
Source: Sunnyside Pretoria/Facebook page

Sunnyside is situated on the eastern peripheries of Pretoria's business centre. It is a good place for recreation as well as for business travel as one can enjoy the suburban space, yet it is also easy to access Pretoria town and the embassies.

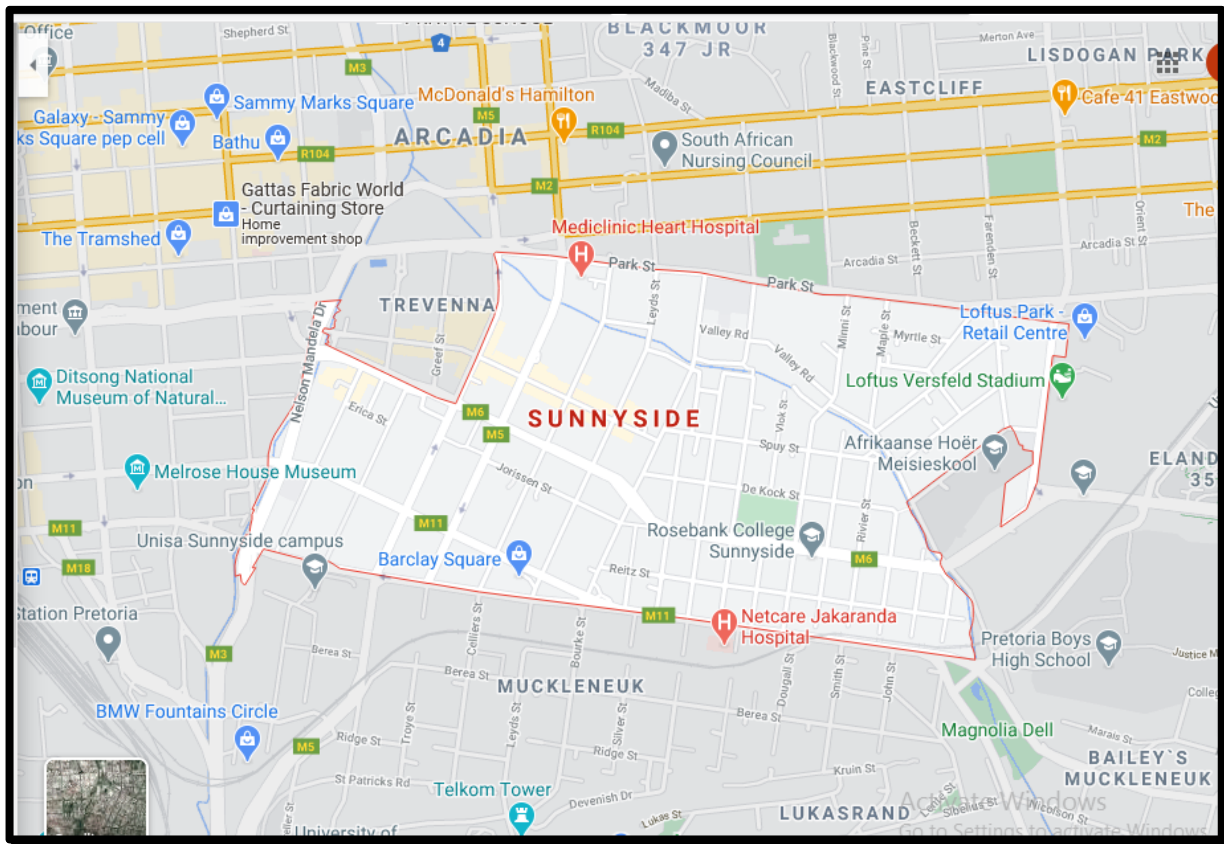


**Figure 3.3: A map showing the location of Sunnyside**
Source: Google Maps

### 3.5.3 Conducting research at the case study sites

The case study sites were selected to represent communities that would best provide me as researcher with the necessary environment from where I could gain answers to the questions that are pertinent to the study. First, Sunnyside suburb in Pretoria, although convenient because of its proximity to the University of Pretoria and the researcher, is also home to a population of foreigners and Ndebele-speaking migrants, some of whom had been in the country for a long time and are well represented. The Beitbridge border area is the entry and exit area between South Africa and Zimbabwe and is also home to the indigenous Venda ethnic group. It also houses border officials, who were key people of interest for the study. The Beitbridge border was selected because it enabled access to both migrants and border officials. This helped me to gain access to those secret characteristics that could only be discovered through extensive contact. The research revolved around the centre of these people's lives and intended to look at the uniqueness and complexity of managing a border where human and social relationships constitute a large part of the interaction processes and to come to understand its activity under important circumstances (Stake, 1995). The purpose was to document people's experiences to

get a sense of the migration decision-making process, their choice of areas to settle and the subsequent challenges and opportunities that tend to arise.

However, owing to lack of financial resources and the COVID-19 situation I could not access the case studies situated in the southwest parts of Zimbabwe. I had wanted to get an objective and contextualized perspective on why migrants often came from these areas. This would have entailed a multiple case study analysis of various areas situated in Bulawayo, Matabeleland North, and Matabeleland South. Such a perspective would have enriched my analysis considering that I would have been able to integrate perspectives from both the sending and receiving countries. But this is not to suggest that I did not focus on these case studies. I did implicitly focus on these case studies to understand the driving factors and forces behind the decisions to migrate from various areas situated in southwest Zimbabwe.

### 3.5.4 Negotiating entry

As this study involved migrants, border officials, community leaders, historians, and academics who were approached in their personal capacity and the interviews took place outside their official work hours, no official permission was required. I used a reference system to store details of participants until I researched the desired number of participants. Gaining access to the migrants only required asking for their willingness to share their experiences. To build trust and create rapport, I utilised the official letter from the university that proved that I was a student researcher. Migrants who were willing to participate would in some instances invite me to their homes for discussions and they would refer me to their relatives and friends. In the initial stage of each of the interviews, respondents did agree to sign a consent form (see appendices) authorizing the interview.

## 3.6 Sampling method

There are various factors that influence methodological approaches in any social science research. In this study, I made use of the snowball and purposive sampling techniques. As scholars posit, a purposive sample is rooted in the researcher's verdict, as the sample comprises foundations that represent most of the features of the population (De Vos, 2002). Snowball sampling is when 'the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and uses these to establish contacts with others' (Lewis-Beck et al., 2018:100). In this study it was relevant to use such a sampling method to access the research

population. The migrants were identified through referrals from a friend and also from my neighbour who hails from the southwest part of Zimbabwe. In accessing the rest of the research population, I also benefitted from referrals to friends, relatives, work mates and colleagues of these migrants. Employing such a sampling method made it easier for me to make sense and derive meaning of the lived experiences and narratives of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe who now reside in various South African communities, including Sunnyside.

As earlier outlined, my sampling approach was two-pronged. To this end, I also adopted the purposive sampling method. Such an approach helped in the sense that I targeted key informants who possessed expert and in-depth knowledge of the subject under investigation. According to scholars, purposive sampling refers to 'selecting units (e.g. individuals, groups of individuals, institutions) based on specific purposes associated with answering a research study's questions' (Teddlie and Yu, 2007:77). The value of this approach is that I was able to purposively select key informants based on their experience and knowledge of the issues of migration and assimilation of migrants in South Africa. These included border officials, community leaders, historians, and academics. Border officials provided useful insights due to being privy to migration trends, dynamics, challenges, policies and on the complex issue of porous borders.

### 3.6.1 Key informant interviews

I conducted in-depth key informant interviews with various stakeholders who are knowledgeable about migration, cross-border movement of migrants, porous borders, assimilation of migrants and immigration policies. To get in-depth knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation, I conducted fourteen key informant interviews. I utilized purposive sampling to find the respondents.

Key informants are individuals with direct experience, knowledge, or expertise on the subject of inquiry. The key informant interview method is suitable for gathering descriptive as well as qualitative information which provides valuable insights to the subject under investigation. Tremblay (1957) notes that key informants permit a researcher to formulate a definition of proportions included in the study, to learn about society's boundaries, to recognise challenges as well as to enhance awareness of the challenges. This method enables the gathering of useful information from well-informed members of society. These individuals similarly signify main discourses on how the research should be carried out.The key informants helped me to gather

more information on the broader issues of the complexity of the border and other aspects that are pertinent to the study (Creswell, 2008). According to Ahuja, key informants have a 'high response rate, a high possibility for in-depth probing and an increased respondent's confidence building through rapport' (Ahuja, 2007:237). In buttressing the essence of such a selection criteria, O'Leary stresses that 'working with key informants means you believe the answers to your research questions lie with select individuals who have specialised knowledge and know what's going on' (O'Leary, 2014:191). In this regard, I conducted key informant interviews with historians who have vast experience and knowledge of historical migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa reaching back to pre-colonial times. The in-depth interviews ranged from one to two hours per session. I repeated sessions with some key informants such as Pathisa Nyathi, a renowned Zimbabwean historian, as well as Ngqabutho Mabhena, a well-known activist who hails from southwest Zimbabwe and interacts with both Zimbabweans and South Africans on a daily basis through his line of work.

I also conducted key informant interviews with the following stakeholders: four academics from different universities including the University of Witwatersrand and the University of Pretoria, four border officials from the Beitbridge border post, two community leaders, two historians and two officials from an NGO that deals with migrants. Open-ended interview questions were used to gain an understanding of these social dynamics and their implications. These participants were approached in their personal capacity, and the interviews took place outside their official work. I asked the key informants questions revolving around the relationships between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African local groups, the cross-border movements, issues of assimilation, integration, and the challenges of such complex relationships. By targeting such a diverse response group, I managed to gather in-depth information and varied perspectives on historical migration, contemporary migration and the complex issue of assimilation and integration of migrants into host communities. The selected key informants were chosen due to their substantial expertise or research experience, some who have also written extensively on the subject of inquiry.

### 3.6.2 Semi-structured interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with thirty-two Zimbabwean migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe. These were recruited in Sunnyside, Pretoria, and at the border. These were specific individuals who originated from particular areas in the Matabeleland region. The sample included both early and late migrants in order to assess whether they faced similar

circumstances in South Africa. The migrants who had been in South Africa since the apartheid era either had South African citizenship or held permits and were willing to participate as they had nothing to fear for being exposed. I identified two migrants (Naledi and Lerato) from the flat where I stay in Sunnyside and I then used a referral system until I identified enough migrants in the age range of 25 to 65 years.

Appointments were set up to ensure that there was ample time to for discussions. Semi-structured interviews were utilised to solicit information about the life history of migrants, as well as their perspectives on South Africa's immigration policies. Furthermore, the method enabled me to ask follow-up questions and to probe further on the participants' views and opinions with regard to the complex issue of porous borders, pre-existing social relationships, and their assimilation into the host communities. According to Rubin and Rubin (2005:88) semi-structured interviews 'allow depth to be achieved by providing the opportunity on the part of the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses.' I used semi-structured interviews to ensure flexibility and to give interviewees the opportunity to narrate their life histories. This technique was also chosen as it allowed participants to clarify their responses or to request further clarity to some of the questions that they might have been asked. The interviews were conducted in English, Shona, and Ndebele. I was assisted by translators in some contexts where I used open-ended interviews to gain an understanding of participants' background, their circumstances in South Africa, how they got along with locals, and more importantly how they identified with particular ethnicities (in South Africa), and how significant these identities were in their assimilation in South Africa.

### 3.7 Data collection methods

The ensuing sections discuss the data collection methods that I utilised to gather data for this study. I relied on various data collection methods to yield a balanced and objective inquiry regarding the topics under investigation.

#### 3.7.1 Face-to-face interviews

Face-to-face interviews remain one of the most important and effective data-gathering techniques in social science research. According to De Vos (2002), face-to-face interviews are private encounters where a mutual understanding can be constructed. To get reliable

information, the researcher needs the participants' utmost cooperation. In this research, this method was utilised to solicit information about the subject under discussion. This technique was also chosen as it allowed participants to clarify their responses or to request further clarity to questions that they were be asked.

### 3.7.2 Telephonic and Zoom interviews

Telephones provide researchers with access to different resources and encounters without spending much time and money. It allows interviews with people who may not be reachable due to their locations. For instance, I managed to conduct telephonic interviews with community leaders from Mussina during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a research technique was useful since it was impossible to conduct face-to-face interviews due to COVID-19 restrictions. For some of the follow-up meetings, I also used either telephone or Zoom meetings. My interviews with Pathisa Nyathi were done through Zoom. An additional advantage of this was that I could easily record the meetings and play them again later. By utilizing such a technique, I managed to interview some key informants who were in different geographical locations. Various scholars have commented on the importance of telephones due to the increasing worldwide basis of research (Gibson and Cohen, 2003; Townsend, DeMarie and Hendrickson, 1998).

### 3.7.3 Participant observation

Participant observation is an extensively used qualitative research technique that usually supplements another research technique (Silverman, 1993). Participant observation occurs when the researcher absorbs themselves in the societies they will be observing. This technique can deliver good qualitative data, as well as non-verbal data. One of the strengths of this method is its ability to observe concealed behaviours – behaviours that people are less likely to expose. However, these are also possible effects of reacting unnaturally when individuals know that they are being watched.

I used covert observation on many occasions when I travelled to the border via different cross-border transporters, including buses (twice) and trucks (once) to observe how they assist the migrants to cross into South Africa, which were often through illegal ways. This also allowed me to observe how cross-border transporters can interact with border officials. I interacted with Zimbabwean migrants from all walks of life. Some of them were coming from or going back to Zimbabwe. Those to whom I disclosed my research, often then referred me to other migrants

from southwest Zimbabwe. I got first-hand views and perspectives on their challenges and opportunities.

### 3.7.4 Review of relevant literature and documentation

I critically reviewed secondary sources to complement the empirical data gathered through interviews with migrants and key informants. As a standard practice, reviewing grey literature is crucial to get a general understanding of the phenomenon to be studied. In light of this, I reviewed a wide range of existing scholarly literature (both historical and present) to get an in-depth analysis of the migration trends, changes in South Africa's immigration policies, and the existing socio-cultural and linguistic ties. The literature that was reviewed and analysed included newspapers, articles, and secondary data (journal articles and books written on Zimbabwean migration, focusing mainly on history, socio-cultural ties, integration, and human networks). Reviewing extant literature helped me to identify gaps and the need for further research on the complex issues of migration, porous borders, and assimilation of migrants in South Africa's host communities. A critical review of the extant literature revealed that there is voluminous scholarship on the migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa due to economic and political reasons. However, what is noticeable in the existing body of knowledge is a gap in scholarly studies focusing solely on the social factors of Zimbabwean migration.

I used secondary literature to establish a foundation for situating my research. I also extracted material that was specific to the migration of people from southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa. I critically reviewed and analysed (existing and grey) literature focusing on four subject areas: the history of migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa; the socio-cultural and linguistic relationships between migrants from Zimbabwe and certain South African groups; Zimbabwean migration trends to South Africa; and South African migration policies in general and specifically towards Zimbabweans. To gather such complex data, I reviewed reports, policy documents, commissioned reports, past and current media articles and policy briefs from research institutions, government agencies, international organisations and think tanks.

### 3.7.8 Data collection apparatus for the interviews

I recorded the interviews using a phone recorder as it permitted me to focus on inquiring about the subject while at same time observing the non-verbal cues. To clarify that participants were not forced to partake in the research, their consent was sought before recording them. However,

all the respondents in this research permitted me, the researcher, to record them. According to Saunders and Thornhill (2003), a recorder allows for word-to-word recording, thus enabling more precise data analysis.

**3.7.8.1 Discourse Analysis**

The study also relied on discourse analysis to understand narratives of migrants as well as discern varied perceptions of key informants on the complex issue of migration and porous borders. Discourse analysis is generally defined as the type of qualitative study that emphasizes the exchange of ideas through language. Discourse analysis looks at how language is used in different circumstances, such as texts in policy documents, (media) newspapers and conversations (Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge, 2009; Van Dijk, 2015). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258):

> discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power. Discursive practices may have major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instance) social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through how they represent things and position people.

The study relies on discourse analysis of both spoken and written texts mainly focusing on the narratives of Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa. To this end, the analysis focuses on examining the driving factors that push these migrants to enter South African cities. The study also relies on a critical discourse analysis of the interpretations by the host community in how they relate and socialise with migrants who reside in their respective communities. To this end, for instance, I examine the politics of socialisation, integration, and perceptions of migration, especially in light of a rising animosity towards 'outsiders'. This is undoubtedly an issue of concern regarding migration and how it is stoking heightened concerns within and outside South African communities, fuelling social polarization and animosity. For instance, the way that other South African politicians like Guyton Mackenzie view Zimbabwe's undocumented migration and the rise of the Dudula Movement is instructive (Majola, 2022). At the same time, the hype around the need to protect migrants fleeing from conflicts, war, civil strife, and

economic hardships has also found favour with the populist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by Julius Malema under the banner of Pan-Africanist solidarity.

Consequently, these political parties and public discourses have created animated discussions and polarity among South African societies on the issue of migration. It is thus relevant in this study to utilise the discourse analysis perspectives to examine why Zimbabwean migrants choose to relocate to South Africa, what challenges they face in the host communities, and what attracts and entices them to settle in specific communities. Is it an issue of having pre-existing friendship and familial networks (kith and kin)?

### 3.8 Data verification

It must be known that all researchers encounter challenges as well as biases which can lead to misrepresentation although the research results may seem correct. The procedure of identifying and handling those biases and mistakes reliably and with exactness is what is called data verification. I verified the collected data using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach as well as making use of triangulation. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) approach was employed as it guarantees transparency to ward off errors and biases in the outcomes of qualitative analysis. Lincoln and Guba 1985 (cited in De Vos, 2001), identified four constructs that are core to this approach: transferability, credibility, confirmability, and dependability.

#### 3.8.1 Transferability

There is no denying that the concept of transferability is important in a research study. As scholars aver, transferability is the responsibility of showing the pertinence of a set of results to an additional setting (De Vos, 2001). In this regard, the qualitative researcher is not mainly concerned with creating generalisations since all observations are determined by the setting in which they happen. One could be correct to state that the findings, analysis and conclusions of this study are a true depiction of the context of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and that they therefore may be generalised to other contexts where people who share socio-cultural and linguistic aspects had been separated by borders. However, others could dispute this claim considering that, based on the sample size, it might be difficult to generalize and pass definitive judgment on such a convoluted and complex process as migration.

### 3.8.2 Credibility

Credibility indicates that the research took place in a manner that would guarantee that the phenomenon was described accurately. Credibility is realised by the subsequent measures: constant engagement, continuous monitoring, triangulation, adequate reference, reporting to peers as well as checking on the members. For the study to guarantee reliability relative to these measures, I had lengthy detailed interviews for an hour or more, as well as follow-up interviews for some participants in an attempt to guarantee that all significant evidence was collected. I was convinced that this would guarantee the gaining of rich, aligned and contrasting data from multiple viewpoints.

### 3.8.3 Confirmability

Saunders and Thornhill (2003) and De Vos (2005) note that confirmability concentrates on whether the outcomes of research can be validated by another. I was under the guidance of my supervisor in verifying the authenticity of the data collected. The transcripts were also shared with the supervisor.

### 3.8.4 Dependability

Dependability refers to the reliability of the research and efforts involved in explaining it (Lincoln and Guba, 1984, cited in De Vos, 2001). In this regard, qualitative researchers have to be able to confirm to their audiences that, if the research had to be repeated in an identical setting, it would give the same outcomes. Thus, in this study, the methods employed to demonstrate credibility were also employed to determine dependability. This included rigorous examination of the various methods and procedures, as well as the information employed in this research. Poortman and Schildkamp define reliability as the 'consistency of the results over time, independent of researcher and instruments' (Poortman and Schildkamp, 2012:1733).

## 3.9 Field work challenges and solutions

Undertaking a research study always presents some challenges (De Vos, 2001). These challenges might negatively affect the study's outcomes and they could be beyond the researcher's control. Although the early stages of the research proceeded seamlessly and went through the Faculty Ethics Committee with only a few concerns, the following challenges were experienced during the fieldwork:

1) I made use of a phone recorder in capturing the views of the respondents. However, issues arose regarding the use of recording technology. This created a sense of uneasiness with some respondents who were perhaps reluctant to share sensitive information. This, however, occurred even though I had made explicit guarantees that the shared information would be treated with confidentiality. Again, I also took the respondents into confidence by seeking permission to record their responses using voice recorders.
2) There were certain limitations in terms of conducting face-to-face interviews due to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions that were put in place as non-pharmaceutical measures to reduce the spread of the virus.

On 23 March 2020, a month after I had started the research, President Ramaphosa announced that the country would go into what was known as 'Lockdown level 5' at midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020. Under this level, everything was put at a standstill (both economic and social activities) and no movement was allowed except for essential workers (those in the medical and health field, those in production and sales of the goods related to food, cleaning and hygiene products, medical products, fuel and basic goods such as airtime and electricity, etc.). All the essential workers had 'permits' which were generated by their employers which allowed them to be on the roads. This period also witnessed the closure of borders. Lockdown level 5 was further extended to the end of April 2020, after which somewhat relaxed conditions (level 4) were brought forward. Movement was still limited with stringent curfews except for essential workers. By June 2020, Lockdown level 3 was announced which ushered in more relaxed conditions that allowed people (including non-essential workers) to move around with better curfew hours.

This meant that I could do the research with migrants in Sunnyside and around Pretoria, adding to the ones that I had conducted before the restrictions were put in place, some of which continued via non-contact methods. On August 2, 2020, Lockdown level 2 was announced and finally, in September 2020, South Africa moved to level 1. This allowed movement of people within and outside South Africa until December 2020 when the country was put back to level 3 for two months due to high rates of infection. On level 3 movement was allowed, however, people were forced to observe and adhere to the COVID-19 measures that had been put in place. Thus, my research continued. I even managed to go to the border more than once. More lockdown episodes followed in South Africa, but I only focused on those that affected this

research. Due to the limited time in my fieldwork, I had to rely on some non-contact ways of collecting data, for example the use of telephonic interviews to replace face-to-face interviews. Another hurdle was the closure of the border at the time I that had earmarked for interviews. I then had to rely on other data sources and strategies including email conversations, Facebook, and WhatsApp chats, and Zoom interviews. These limitations, however, did not in any way affect the depth and rigour of the study, especially as I had to rely on data triangulation from varied sources.

3) Due to the effects of COVID-19, some participants tended not to reveal much about their lives to a stranger for fear of inviting trouble and also because some participants were affected or infected by the virus. My initial fieldwork showed that migrants tended not to share information about their encounters in South Africa. However, after they accepted me as one of their own, they keenly revealed their information. This strengthened my belief that a trust-based connection between participants and researchers is important in any qualitative research study.

Conducting interviews face to face, entailed entering into respondents' spaces. Being immersed in the world meant that they had to open their homes, thus, invading their privacy and sharing private as well as sensitive parts of their lives. This was a bit of a challenge, especially considering that human beings are naturally protective and guarded to people with whom they are unfamiliar. The situation was not helped by the fact that the subject of migration is highly sensitive. Alert to these challenges and specifics I approached the research population with caution and sensitivity, paying due diligence to their vulnerabilities and sensitivities. In creating rapport and gaining their confidence I thus assured them of my commitment to ethical considerations as expected of me as a student researcher at a South African university.

### 3.10 Positionality

In social science research, positionality is a very important aspect. However, it is important to highlight that my positionality does not in any way affect the objectivity and credibility of the gathered data. First, I am a Zimbabwean researcher based in South Africa. But I do acknowledge that my lived reality as a Zimbabwean living in South Africa has enlightened me to better understand the challenges faced by both documented and undocumented migrants residing in Zimbabwe. I have for several years devoted my time to researching human and

women’s rights as a researcher at the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. Such professional work has deepened my knowledge of several issues affecting Zimbabwean migrants crossing the border and those living in South Africa. To this end, my positionality has enabled me to understand how the Zimbabwean migrants trek into South Africa. Furthermore, it has also enabled me to better understand their lived realities, for example the challenges they face and the opportunities that arise in assimilating and integrating into the receiving (host) society. My knowledge of the socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and political issues from the sending country (Zimbabwe) has also enlightened me on why some Zimbabweans particularly those in the southwestern part of Zimbabwe migrate to South Africa. Such positionality has enabled me to better understand the challenges and opportunities that come with this transition and settling. However, it must be stated upfront that my positionality as a doctoral and professional researcher at a South African university and as a young Zimbabwean woman did not in any way affect the way I perceive the research population. Suffice it to state that this advantageous position facilitated a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.

### 3.11 Ethical considerations

In conducting this study, I observed all the procedures and standards that are consistent with social science research. Research ethics principles are of paramount importance because they set out the guidelines of the study. There is academic consensus that the researcher should abide by ethical considerations to protect the participants of the study. In the words of Sieber, ethical conduct refers to ‘the application of a system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to promote the good, to be respectful, and to be fair’ (Sieber, 1993:14). In conceptualising ethics, O’Leary mentions that it is a ‘professional “code of practice” designed to protect the researched from an unethical process … Key ethical considerations include informed consent, causing no harm and a right to privacy’ (O’Leary, 2014:349). I observed all the ethical procedures and guidelines to protect the research participants. To abide by these ethical procedures, I applied and acquired an ethical clearance letter from the University of Pretoria’s Research Ethics Committee. Further to that, I also acquired a formal letter from my Ph.D. promoter confirming that I am a student in the Department of Development Studies conducting an empirical study on migration, porous borders, and South Africa's immigration policy. The clearance and formal letter were very helpful in building rapport with the research

participants, as these letters affirmed that the research findings were solely for academic purposes.

Another important aspect of social science research is the safety of participants. As part of ethical considerations, I prioritized the safety of the participants. Consistent with observing and upholding the 'Duty of Care' I made sure that the research will guarantee the safety of respondents by not disclosing their (il)legal status in South Africa. To gain trust and rapport, I also first outlined the research objectives and purpose of the study. In so doing I underscored the scholarly nature of the study to the respondents. To this end, I made assurances that the study was solely for academic purposes and that it could therefore not put the participants in any danger, for instance victimization, or by exposing their status as undocumented migrants to the police/home affairs department. Scholars like De Laine (2000) enunciate that ethical knowledge includes guaranteeing the safety of participants and that sense these guarantees were important. I informed the interviewees that the gathered data will be treated as confidential.

In line with ethical considerations, I adhered to the following core ethical principles during the study:

### 3.11.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is one of the core principles that needs to be adhered to before conducting any social science research.  This study involves peoples' lives and also probes into their private lives; therefore, I began the research with the participants by seeking their informed consent to take part in the study (Ulin, Robinson and Tolley, 2005). I informed the study participants that they were free to participate or to withdraw from the interview at any time if they wished to do so. I also informed the potential study respondents that participating in the study was voluntary. Seeking informed consent was necessary for the migrants to feel free to participate, to express themselves and to share their life histories. Two potential participants decided not to participate in the interview. They felt that the study (findings) would expose them as undocumented migrants.

### 3.11.2 Non-judgement

I also employed empathetic listening in the research to prevent being judgemental as I listened to migrants' narratives (Clandinin and Murphy, 2007). This helped in getting an accurate

picture and description of the challenges and opportunities faced by undocumented Zimbabwean migrants who migrate to South Africa.

### 3.11.3 Non-violation of privacy

Anonymity is a very important ethical principle to protect the identity of the interviewees. Privacy is a basic human right that is vital for the protection of human dignity (Kang and Hwang, 2023). In conforming to the ethical principles, the privacy of participants was prioritised by assigning pseudonyms to conceal their identity (Babbie, 1998). Anonymity enabled the research participants to share sensitive information concerning the complex issues of porous borders, migration, and South Africa's immigration policies. The interviews were also conducted in a private space, as desired by the participants, and the information was stored in secure forms.

## 3.12 Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic pursuit of meaning (Hatch, 2002). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) note that it is a means to refine qualitative data in order to report what has been learned to other people. Hatch (ibid) further notes that analysis means shaping as well as cross-examining data in a manner that allows academics to recognise themes, identify systems, learn relationships, or formulate theories. It frequently includes evaluation, synthesis, categorisation, pattern finding, hypothesising, comparison, and interpretation. In performing this research, I made data analysis a recurring and continuous process, not a disconnected and distinct stage of my study (Bryman and Burgess, 1994).

Through a consecutive style of analysis, where necessary, I was able to redevelop my research guide concerning perceptions developing from the participants. Throughout the drafting phase of this thesis I sustained the process of data analysis with a clear position of converting the fieldwork experience into text. Bryman and Burgess (1994) and Okely (1983) observe that data analysis is informed by the sort of data we are using as well as the intentions of any study. In this study, I was interested in qualitative data on the experiences of migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe in the way that they shared some socio-cultural and linguistic aspects with some South African communities. These practices could only be gathered through a thorough and flexible examination of migrants' experiences in South Africa. Considering the sought and acquired data, I made use of thematic content analysis.

I attempted to write the thesis utilising the words which were the actual expressions, classifications and metaphors used by the research participants of the research participants (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

### 3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter the research techniques which were utilised in carrying out the research were discussed, including the data collection methods and sampling techniques that were adopted. The area of focus (geographic area) was mapped and how the research process unfolded was explained. In this chapter the methodological challenges that were encountered were outlined and this in a way underscored how the researcher managed to navigate and troubleshoot these issues. The chapter further articulated the reasoning and decision behind the selection of some methodological choices underscoring the weaknesses and flaws of each approach. In the next chapter, I will look at South Africa's position on migration.

# CHAPTER 4

# SOUTH AFRICA'S POSITION ON MIGRATION

## 4.1 Introduction

South Africa has always maintained that Zimbabwean migrants in the country are economic migrants and should not be considered otherwise. While this position is largely true and portrays the realities of contemporary Zimbabwe-South Africa migration, it fails to consider the complexity of Zimbabweans migration into South Africa, which tends to create challenges on immigration management. By maintaining that Zimbabweans are economic migrants, the government fails to acknowledge the social and political aspects of Zimbabwean migration. Such a position also runs the risk of over-simplification and is reductionist as it ends up lumping Zimbabwean migrants in a single category. While such a position dominates official thinking and probably informs the government's responses to Zimbabwean migration, it has been criticised by numerous scholars (Crush, 2011; Polzer, 2008; Thebe, 2017).

This chapter discusses migration-related policies and policy shifts in response to an influx of African and Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa. In doing so, it focuses on migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. The chapter traces the various immigration policies that were adopted by the South African government during the apartheid and post-apartheid era and how the policy shift continues to shape and influence migratory flows. In this regard, this chapter specifically discusses how the migration policies affect contemporary migration of (un)documented migrants. The policy shifts stem from the fact that South African host communities bear the pressure from (un)documented migrants. It is alleged that some Zimbabwean migrants and other migrants from different African countries engage in illegal activities and compete for jobs with South African nationals (New African, 18 May 2017). Such allegations have triggered a wave of xenophobic violence directed at Zimbabweans and other African migrants over the past decade. To critically engage with such a complex phenomenon the chapter begins by revisiting the issue of the border. Understanding the border is key to understanding immigration management, border security and border control. The South African/Zimbabwean border not only divides an ethnic population into two different nationalities but also provides a barrier to movement. Despite the border acting as a barrier,

these constraints have been subjected to relentless negotiations, and have regularly been breached. The second section provides a discussion of South Africa's immigration policy since the apartheid era. It can be argued that South Africa's immigration laws have been exclusionary and discriminatory during apartheid and that the post-apartheid regime maintained the statutes and policies just like they were during the apartheid era. Given such a backdrop, this chapter critically discusses varied perspectives on South Africa's migration policies and how this has been affecting cross-border migration of documented and undocumented migrants from southwest Zimbabwe.

Tati (2008) argues that South Africa is becoming a popular destination for immigrants from virtually all parts of the African continent. Concurrent with this population shift, South Africa is seeing a significant outflow of trained labour such as doctors and nurses to industrialized countries like New Zealand, Australia, UK, Canada, and the UK (Crush, 2011). In 2000 South Africa welcomed 439 nurses and 1,557 doctors from other SADC nations (Crush and Williams, 2010:30). Thus, South Africa's policies and laws only cater for skilled migrants as will be discussed in the sections to follow. The chapter also discusses the responses by the South African government to the Zimbabwean migration, noting the changing policy focus from exclusion to limited accommodation through special dispensation policies.

### 4.2 The South African-Zimbabwean border

As a way of background, this section examines the South Africa/Zimbabwe border. The border is important in our attempt to understand cross-border movements from Zimbabwe into South Africa and South Africa's immigration management. Borders define citizens and non-citizens and are the perimeters through which a nation-state gains legitimacy (Anderson, 2006; Dokoupil and Havlicek, 2002). Klotz (2016:182) argues:

> Responses to migration are intricately linked to the demarcation of national boundaries through formal institutions, from constitutional law to everyday legal paperwork, not just the social imaginary. To distinguish citizens from foreigners, narratives of the nation, therefore, rely on both physical and discursive elements of the state. Thus, border control policies can be simultaneously ineffective at stopping people yet effective at bolstering the state's legitimacy.

The border also becomes important in a study where the main focus not only revolves around porous borders, but also around social networks, facilitation, physical aspects, and informal movements. The border represents both the physical and the social aspects, which are critical elements in understanding Zimbabwean migration and the challenges to managing the border imposed by these elements.

The political border between Zimbabwe and South Africa is regarded as among the most porous on the African continent (Daimon, 2009; Letlape, 2021; Pophiwa, 2007). As such, South Africa has been facing insurmountable challenges in securing its borders. The Beitbridge border post, which includes the Alfred Beit bridge that spans the Limpopo River, is its official entrance point (Diamon, 2009). This border station is approximately 10 kilometers from Musina, South Africa, and slightly more than a kilometer from Beit Bridge, Zimbabwe's border town (ibid). The Limpopo River, which is infested with crocodiles and hippos, naturally forms a physical barrier between the two countries (Diamon, 2019; Rukema and Pophiwa, 2020). This natural boundary is reinforced with an electric fence and is daily guarded by state security personnel on both sides of the border. To this extent Derman (2013) notes that 'the barbed wire and razor-wire fences, the military track in their middle and military control posts continued after the end of apartheid'.

Despite the border being monitored by both countries' state security, border jumping and smuggling of illegal imports characterise life along the border (South Africa Police Service, 2018). This unlawful trade takes place along the border's illegal entry points as well as through the official border post (Thebe, 2011; ZIMPAPERS digitals, 28 November 2021). To evade customs and immigration authorities, cross-border traders, dealers, touts, and vendors engage in illegal activities on both sides of the border (Chimimba, 2021). Due to its porosity, the Zimbabwean and South African border is vulnerable to illegal cross-border movement, transnational security threats, illicit trade and smuggling of illegal imports. Smugglers and the smuggled thrive within the border, sometimes becoming conduits or victims of human trafficking (Diamon, 2020; IOM, 2020).

The Beitbridge border post is one of the busiest inland border posts in Southern Africa, handling the majority of products in transit to central and northern Africa (Thupeyo Muleya, *The Herald*, 12 March 2015). This is because it facilitates trade within the Southern African

Development Community (SADC) and other parts of Africa (Save the Children, 2009). It is estimated that around 170,000 people, 2100 buses, 25,000 private cars, and 15,000 trucks pass through the town each month (Thupeyo Muleya, *The Herald*, 12 March 2015). This led to the construction of a new larger border post in 1994, followed by four successive border extensions over the years, as well as the development of government offices, residences and flats to house public officials (Chirisa, 2020; Thupeyo Muleya, *The Herald*, 12 March 2015). This border post is a critical point of exit on the North-South Corridor with many trucks, buses and cars travelling to and from South African ports as well as to countries in the north such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Malawi (Cross Boarder Road Transport Agency Report, 2016; TradeMark Southern Africa, 2011). The study established that the land route to the north into Tanzania and even into Sudan, has been chosen in preference to the maritime route (TradeMark Southern Africa, 2011). The border post encounters acute traffic congestion during peak hours (Diamon, 2009; TradeMark Southern Africa, 2011). Figure 4.1 shows the location of the Beitbridge border post.

**Figure 4.1: A map showing the location of the Beitbridge border**
Source: Google Maps

#### 4.2.1 The border bureaucrats and cross-border movements

This subsection examines the work of border bureaucrats and how they regulate cross-border movements. To understand the work of border bureaucrats, it is imperative to understand how South Africa ranks its borders. This subsection also analyses the features of the South African/Zimbabwean border, to highlight the physical aspects and how they are part of the

porous border system. South Africa ranks its boundaries using the 'A to C' system. Borders ranking as 'A' are manned by all tee basic state departments engaged in regulating all the activities at the border (Khumalo, 2014). Borders that are ranked as B have the presence of only two of the three and borders that are ranked as C have the presence of only one. A border official noted that the three key actors that control A-ranked border posts are:

- Department of Home Affairs: Immigration Department
- South African Police Services (SAPS): Border Police
- South African Revenue Services (SARS): Customs and Excise Department

The border official further noted that all three of these are obligated to be present at the land borders.

The Customs and Excise Department facilitates commerce and provides speedy movement of goods. The migration department controls the administration of arrival and exit of people at the designated ports of entry (Khumalo, 2014). It controls the border by inspecting the travel documents of people arriving or departing South Africa. The Border Police are accountable for safeguarding and patrolling South Africa's borders. Their responsibilities include inspection of traveling documents to avoid illegal movement, consignment documents and bills of entry, arresting undocumented migrants, and cargo check-ups. Additionally, the border police are responsible for preserving public order, averting criminality at the borders, and executing safety measures at the border. The other major stakeholders with regulatory duties – apart from the three departments of the government who are physically present at the borders – include:

1. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries: They examine, supervise as well as legalise plant importation and exportation, the plant produces as well as other regulated items, for instance, animals that are alive, as well as livestock produce coming to South Africa.
2. The National Intelligence Agency (NIA): They are responsible for lowering levels of crime in South Africa, mostly the intense criminal stages, by creating actions against national and international criminal organisations.
3. Port Health division of the Department of Health (DOH): They are responsible for controlling and reviewing all food products, toiletries, germicides, and pharmaceuticals arriving in South Africa.
4. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF): They are in charge of tackling boundary line protection and regulation.

5. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI): This department is chiefly responsible for facilitating and advancing commerce prospects amongst South Africa and other nations.
6. The Cross-Border Road Transport Agency (CBRTA) (Khumalo, 2014).

In an interview with a South African border official, he noted that the above-mentioned state agencies form part of the civil service said that they perform specific roles and functions at the border post. He revealed that:

> *These functions are performed by officials, who have prescribed duties and roles, which they perform as a service to the nation. However, among the main criticisms of civil servants in South Africa is the problem of corruption* (Interview with a South African border official, Beitbridge border, 2021).

Not surprisingly, given the high level of human activities at the border, corruption allegations have been levelled against officials operating at the South Africa/Zimbabwe border (Muchena, 2021; Sadike, 2022; Thupeyo Muleya, *Chronicles*, 16 March 2022). This creates loopholes in the border management system and compromises the country's immigration management. In buttressing this claim some key informants reiterated that a surge in the crime rate in South Africa has ignited debates on the 'migration-security nexus' and anti-immigration narratives.

What further complicates the process is that border management is the dual responsibility of the two countries sharing the border. This means that a similar kind of state department controlling the border can also be identified on the Zimbabwean side. These officers may have different titles from their South African counterparts but are engaged in similar border activities. They include various state agencies, namely: the Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA), the Department of Veterinary Services, the Zimbabwe Republic Police (ZRP), the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Environmental Management Agency (EMA), the Department of Agriculture (DOA), the Vehicle Inspection Department (VID), the Department of Immigration and (Home Affairs) Department of Health (DOH). For this research, an examination of their respective roles and obligations is not relevant and would not serve any purpose.

While the two nations' agencies work separately and under different legislation, the officials are part of the border social system and have not been able to avoid social evils like corruption,

which is prevalent in the Zimbabwean/South African border system (Muchena, 2021; Steinberg, 2005). Despite the socio-economic issues, this border station is critical for both countries. On a daily basis, an estimated 14,000 passengers and 3000 commercial trucks pass through Beitbridge Border Post (Khumalo, 2014; Teravaninthorn and Raballand, 2009). Many respondents of this study stated that border officials from South Africa and Zimbabwe are all vulnerable to corruption.

While this is the border through which most Zimbabwean migrants enter South Africa, most movements are northbound. The majority of this corridor's northbound freight flows originate in South African ports and industrial centres (Khumalo, 2014). On average, northbound traffic faces much longer border transit times than southbound traffic (movements entering South Africa from Zimbabwe through the Beitbridge border) (Khumalo, 2014). The movement of people, both formal migrants entering South Africa with legal travel documents and informal migrants entering through undesignated entry points, is one of the most noticeable aspects of southbound traffic.

Entering South Africa through undesignated entry points is part of a broader trend in contemporary migration into South Africa where people use either their social networks or undesignated entry points to enter South Africa (Khumalo, 2014; Thebe and Maombere, 2018). These are mostly uncounted entrants and no official figures are available (Bolt 2015; Landau 2010; Muzondidya, 2010; Polzer, 2008). Yet, these people tend to stay and work in the country illegally and return home through the same system. Increased informal movements reflect the failure of the border management system in preventing unauthorised entry into South Africa (Letlape, 2021). The natural border has so far failed to prevent illegal cross-border movements, while the electrified fence (despite all the controversy it has generated) has been equally ineffective. Figure 4.2 shows a picture of the border on the South African side and Figure 4.3 shows the Limpopo River side.

**Figure 4.2: A picture of the border on the South African side**
Source: Field (2020)

**Figure 4.3: The Limpopo River**
Source: Aljazeera (2008)

The Limpopo River, which flows north from the intersection of the Marico and Crocodile rivers, forms the physical border between South Africa and Zimbabwe (SARDC, 2002). It flows eastward into Mozambique, where it traverses a huge floodplain before entering the Indian Ocean (Diamon, 2009). The name 'Limpopo' is said to have been adopted from Rivombo which refers to a group of Tsonga settlers, led by Hosi Rivombo, who had settled in

the surrounding mountains and called the place after their commander (Mikiyasu, 2003). After the Zambezi River, it is Africa's second largest river that flows into the Indian Ocean.

The river serves as a physical barrier between communities in Zimbabwe and South Africa. Because of the river's perennial nature and crocodile infestation, it is one of the most dangerous rivers to cross. As such, many people lose their lives after being attacked by crocodiles or when attempting to cross the flooded Limpopo river. It was noted during interviews that such tragedies are more prevalent during the summer season. Recent studies have not only highlighted the importance of specific points along the river serving as illegal entry points, but have also demonstrated how people smugglers, known as *izimpisi* in local cross-border circles, use the river to smuggle migrants into South Africa (Thebe, 2011). Recent research (Chimimba, 2021; Thebe, 2011, 2015; Thebe and Maombera, 2019) demonstrates how *omalayisha* use *izimpisi* to facilitate the illegal movement of clients across the river and into South Africa.

### 4.2.2 The electrified fence

**Figure 4.4: The images depict the appearance of the previous border fence**
Source: Siyabonga Mkhwanazi, *IOL News*, 03 February 2021

In addition to the natural barrier that creates difficulties in cross-border movements, particularly during the rainy season, South Africa has installed an electrified fence. The original fence was built in 1985 by the South African Defence Force to keep African National Congress guerrillas out of Mozambique and Zimbabwe (Cravinho, 1995). However, over the years, migrants have managed to cross the physical barrier, the Limpopo River. This prompted the need to extend the fence to stretch along the riverbanks of Limpopo to deter undocumented migrants from entering South Africa. Éclair, a fencing contractor from Johannesburg, installed

the fence, which has a continuous current of 800 milliamps (Cravinho, 1995). The fence stretches from Swaziland's border south of the Kruger National Park game reserve in South Africa, to the north, traversing rough mountain terrain (*Chicago Tribune*, 26 November 1990). It was made up of five massive circles of razor wire twisted together to form a dragon-like structure of about 10 feet high and 15 feet wide (*Chicago Tribune*, 26 November 1990). The research findings established that securitization of the border has helped to reduce cross-border movements. However, it is pertinent to emphasize that securitization does not completely secure borders or halt the movement of undocumented migrants. Empirical findings established that migrants clandestinely cross the border into South Africa using other illegal ways as will be discussed in detail in ensuing chapters.

The purpose of lethal fencing installed during the 1980s was to prevent ANC freedom fighters from installing weapons in South Africa (Cravinho, 1990). However, its use on civilians, the majority of whom were fleeing for their lives, was tragic: lives were lost, and those who survived suffered severe burns and even lost limbs as a result. The fence killed more people in three years than the Berlin Wall did in its entire history (80 deaths over 28 years) (*Chicago Tribune*, 26 November 1990). The fence was dubbed the 'Snake of Fire' by the locals (Tania Monteiro, *Newscientist,* 27 January 1990). According to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), between August 1986 and August 1989, 89 human beings were electrocuted at the fence (Tania Monteiro, *Newscientist,* 27 January 1990). Others, however, believe the number of fatalities to be higher, with around 200 people dying each year (Tania Monteiro, *Newscientist,* 27 January 1990).

Although this monstrous pile of razor wire made crossing over to South Africa a very difficult process, migrants from Mozambique fleeing from the RENAMO war risked their lives to escape to a safe haven (Cravinho, 1995). The majority of its victims were women and children fleeing the civil war in Mozambique, which prompted South African church leaders to call for the fence to be permanently decommissioned (Arthur, 1998). An article mentioned that 'South Africa threaded 10 strands of tiny wire through circles of razor wire that were electrified with up to 3,500 volts to increase the risk of clandestine crossings' (*Chicago Tribune*, 26 November 1990).

It should be noted that the Zimbabwe section of electric fencing was less lethal. This is evident in the record showing fewer deaths. However, this may have been due to fewer numbers of

migrants that tried to enter into South Africa during the 1980s and 1990s, and the fact that clandestine migrants could easily have avoided the electrified border by using alternative routes. More importantly, the majority of migrants at the time were mostly circular and mostly used formal channels (Zinyama, 2002). The majority of migrants entering South Africa entered legally and decided to stay after their visitor permits expired (Thebe, 2011; Zinyama, 2002). It is worth noting that the electric fence did not only act as a deterrent for Zimbabwean migrants to cross into South Africa, but it also separated families and made it difficult for social interaction between relatives. One of the Venda leaders explained:

> *The border divides Venda people into two geographical areas – the South African and Zimbabwean Venda. Yet, these people are related; some have close families across the river border. These related households share rituals and have to interact regularly during these rituals including funerals and illness. It becomes difficult for people to go through the border post, every time they have to visit each other. The border post is far, and it is costly. People would then cross the river, visit relatives, and return to their homes. But the electric fence made these difficult* (Interview with Mr. Mudau, Venda, 2020).

It should hardly surprise us then that the fence was destroyed. According to South African government sources, the fence was destroyed by migrants sneaking into South Africa (Otoole and Botes, 2011). However, according to interviews with local leaders in South Africa, the presence of the fence was unwelcomed as it divided relatives.

The subject of the border fence dividing the Venda people was re-ignited towards the end of the second decade of the 2000s, and funds were made available for the reconstruction of a fence, which was also justified as a means to address smuggling and human trafficking issues (*Aljazeera News*, 20 March 2020). Key informants including border officials mentioned that smuggling syndicates that operate on the South Africa/Zimbabwe border use undesignated entry points along the border to carry out their activities. The interviewees bemoaned the fact that undocumented migrants from Zimbabwe, including those from the southwest, destroy the fence and enter into South Africa. Some key informants were particularly worried about how some undocumented migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe contribute to South Africa's crime levels. Figure 4.5 shows the fence that was constructed by the South African government in April 2020.

**Figure 4.5: The new fence that was completed in April 2020**
Source: News 24

The South African Department of Public Works and Infrastructure finished constructing a 40-kilometer stretch of fencing between South Africa and Zimbabwe in April 2020 (Takaindisa, 2021). Nonetheless, despite the erection of the fence, illegal cross-border activities between South Africa and Zimbabwe continued (Rudzani Tshivhase*, SABC News,* 09 May 2020). Typically, smuggled items would include cigarettes and other contraband (Thupelo Muleya, *The Sunday News*, 11 July 2021). However, after both countries had imposed lockdown measures following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumption goods were mostly transported through illegal entry/exit points (Bosch 2020, Moyo, 2022; Pophiwa, et al., 2023). Before the imposition of lockdown measures, Zimbabweans could cross the Beitbridge border post formally to purchase food items in Musina and Johannesburg, while migrants would send remittances through *omalayisha* and the cross-border buses. However, restrictions on cross-border movements created challenges for the cross-border movement of goods as only essential cargo was allowed across (Rudzani Tshivhase, *SABC New*s, 09 May 2020).

The severe restrictions on cross-border movement and transportation of goods provided opportunities for corruption at the border post, smuggling, and the trade of illicit products. To necessitate and facilitate smuggling of illegal goods the fence was destroyed. The fence also failed to prevent undocumented migration, as Zimbabwean migrants returning home following

the lockdown measures used undesignated exit points, while those returning to South Africa were assisted through the fence by human smugglers (*izimpisi*), some of whom lived on the South African side of the border (Rudzani Tshivhase, *SABC News*, 9 May 2020). This reflects not only the complexity of the border but also the difficulty of managing the border in general and immigration management in particular. These activities occurred despite a heavy security presence from both countries, as South Africa and Zimbabwe strived to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

#### 4.2.3 The Musina Forest

The Musina forest stretches southwards from the border fence. This is the forest that undocumented migrants have to negotiate for their passage to South Africa's major cities, which are often the destination of many migrants. Near the border, the forest is heavily patrolled by South African security forces and these patrols provide an additional hurdle after the river and the electric fence. However, unlike the Kruger National Park which lies between Mozambique and South Africa, this forest is not home to dangerous wildlife. This claim was buttressed by one migrant who revealed that:

> *There are no dangerous wild animals, except the usual snakes and other animals we are accustomed to. However, navigating the forest is made difficult by the heat and humidity, and the terrain is very tough. Sometimes the distances travelled are long.* (Interview with Thulani, Pretoria, 2020).

Unfortunately, the forest is infested by a much more dangerous beast: the criminal gangs called *amagumaguma*, who often rob migrants and rape women (Hungwe, 2013). These armed criminals often waylay unsuspecting migrants and rob them of their possessions. The thick forest provides a favourable operation terrain, away from the clutches of the law. The forest is also familiar territory for these criminal gangs as they hail from the local communities. However, migrants often find ways of negotiating the challenges of the forest (Thebe and Maombere, 2019). They mostly engage the services of human smugglers (*izimpisi*) who have developed the skills to avoid military patrols. They have also established relationships with the army and often negotiate for the safe passage of migrants if they are intercepted by patrols (Thebe, 2013). Concerning criminals, the *izimpisi* are often armed and they use the assistance of migrants as backup against *amagumaguma*. It emerged during interviews:

> *It is often safe when one is with izimpisi. Amagumaguma is afraid of them and rarely attacks migrants. If by any chance, there are encounters with amagumaguma, izimpisi*

*would inform the migrants to fight back to fend off such attacks* (Interview with Lufuno, Beitbridge border, 2020).

It is clear that informal migration continues to take place, despite the obstacles and risks associated with illegal border crossing. The research findings established that undocumented migrants make use of different strategies and illegal means to overcome both physical and human obstacles. The management of borders continues to be based on the prevention principle. Thus, the next section will critically look at South Africa's immigration policies during the apartheid era as well as the post-apartheid era.

### 4.3 South African immigration policy

The Republic of South Africa has extremely porous borders, and it is generally acknowledged that the number of both documented and undocumented immigrants entering the country from the world and from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region has escalated since 1990 (Crush, 1997; Crush and Mc Donald, 2000). However, since the apartheid era, the South African immigration policy has only addressed African migrants as economic migrants. Siddique (2004) noted that, although several significant adjustments to immigration into the Republic were made at the end of the apartheid era, South African laws still only cater for economic migrants. As a result, it established a legal and institutional framework to ensure that all migrants remained migrants and never settled in South Africa (Crush, 2008). Thus, the next section discusses in detail the apartheid migration policies and the post-apartheid migration policies.

#### 4.3.1 South Africa's apartheid migration policies

Apartheid is an Afrikaans word that means 'apartness', and it was implemented in South Africa by the National Party (NP) government in 1948 (Evans, 1997). The ideology appeared to advocate for egalitarian growth and cultural expression, but the method by which it was implemented made this impossible. (Dhanagare, 1967). Laws enacted during apartheid forced various racial groups into separate development (Phillips, 2017). The draconian laws were against intermarriages and social unity amongst different groups. In other words, apartheid was a social classification that severely disadvantaged the majority of the population, merely due the fact that their skin colour was different to that the rulers (Evans, 1997). The core reasons for the enactment of apartheid laws were associated with racial dominance and fear (Sweeney,

2020). White people were in the minority and thus afraid of losing their jobs, culture, and language. This is not a validation for apartheid, but it clarifies how the white minority enacted draconian laws with an intention to create the apartheid state. For instance, the Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 and the Group Locations Act of 1950 mandated that various racial groups reside in certain areas which were known as Bantustans (Evans, 1997).

#### 4.3.1.1 Impact of creating Bantustans on labour stabilisation in the country

According to Chanock, the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936, as well as Hertzog's 'Stallardist' doctrine (which favoured segregation and indirect rule above assimilation and African urbanism), formed the foundation of the National Party regime's racialized system of super-exploitation (Chanock, 2001). The Native Trust and Land Act of 1936 was a cornerstone of the policy to resolve the so-called 'native' question, and the establishment of the Department of Native Affairs (NAD) during this time period also contributed to the development of this project of indirect rule and colonial trusteeship (Evans, 1997, 2019). The Native Urban Areas Act (1923) reinforced imperial policy notions of population 'stabilisation' drafted by the NAD. It underlined the importance of the state in protecting the welfare and residency rights of urban Africans (Drummond,1991, Evans, 2019).

The government significantly increased political repression in the 1950s in response to the growth of a large-scale anti-colonial movement (Evans, 2019; Posel, 1997, 2012; Phillips, 2017). In the words of Evans (2019:372), 'it also began a long-term social engineering project to relocate black South Africans, especially women, the elderly, the unemployed, and those deemed politically "undesirable" to rural dumping grounds in the so-called "homelands"'. It is worth noting that other countries, most notably the United States, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia had established similar 'native reserves' for the indigenous peoples they had conquered (Khapoya, 1980; Khunou 2009).

The underlying conceptual premise of the Bantustan policy was that Africans are naturally inferior to Europeans and should thus be physically isolated from whites and treated appropriately (Drummond 1991, Khapoya, 1980). However, the South African governing minority and its apologists in South Africa and the Western world have argued that this division was necessary to ensure unity and the preservation of the traditions of all racial groups in the country (Khunou, 2007). Separate development was the practical part of the Bantustan policy (Keulder, 1998; Khunou, 2007). According to Verwoerd, in Nelson Mandela's book titled, *No*

*Easy Walk to Freedom,* building distinct black homelands would bring economic opportunities as well as political participation for them in the reserves (Mandela, 1989). As a result, the government persuaded traditional chiefs to adopt self-governance or separate homelands (Southall, 1978).

Thus, it was recognised that these divisions resulted in significant levels of racial inequality and poverty in South Africa among whites and locals (Drummond, 1991; Khapoya, 1980). The Bantustan economies lagged behind and were almost dependent on the economy of white South Africa (Drummond, 1991). Due to the poor agricultural terrain of the homelands, farming was not viable (Lipton, 1972). Moreover, Blacks possessed only 13% of South Africa's land (Sparks, 2019:13). These farmlands were in (semi) arid areas characterised by soil erosion and overgrazing. As a result, millions of black Africans were forced to leave their Bantustans every day to work either in mines, for white farmers, or in other urban businesses (Evans, 2019). The Stallard Commission had recommended that Africans be treated as temporary urban employees who 'minister to the white man's desires' (Barber, 1999; Evans, 1997). According to Evans (2019), the Bantustans functioned as labour reservoirs, keeping the unemployed and releasing them when their services were required in White South Africa (Crush and James, 1995). Thus Lipton (1972:02) noted that 'blacks who continued to work in white South Africa did so as "migrants or temporary sojourners" who returned to their homelands regularly, leaving their families'. This section sought to demonstrate how apartheid policies were biased towards blacks and only considered them as 'economic migrants' who were supposed to work when their services were needed and then return to their reserves. Following apartheid, the South African government used this approach in their migration policies against other Africans, as will be explained in the following sections.

#### 4.3.1.2 Recruitment of other African labourers to ease labour demands

The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley (late-1860s) and the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand basin near Johannesburg (1886) led to a high demand for labour (Crush, 1984; Moyo, 2021). Thus, the Chamber of Mines was established to expand the pool of potential labourers and to reduce employment expenses as the indigenous labour available in South Africa was insufficient to fulfil the rising demand in the mining sector. To meet the demand, African labourers from nearby countries like Botswana, Eswatini, Malawi, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe were recruited (Adepoju, 1988). In South Africa, mine workers were mostly (more

than 75%) of foreign origin by 1900 (Wilson, 1972). Racial and religious factors were employed by successive white governments to determine who would be granted entry into the nation and under what conditions (Reed, 2013). South Africa's labour demand resulted in changes in legislation, for example the Bantu Laws Amendment Act no. 76 of 1961 which was enacted during the mid-1960s. The act permitted labour migration from some nations while prohibiting population transfers from others. The act established labour bureaus such as TEBA and its predecessors, WNLA (Witwatersrand Native Labour Organisation) which was also popularly known as *Wenela*, and the NRC (Native Recruiting Corporation) (Mlambo, 2010; TEBA, 2002). Zimbabwean labourers never had a noticeable presence in South Africa except for a brief period in the late-1970s (Moyo, 2017). Rhodesia/Zimbabwe only officially permitted South Africa to recruit labour in 1974 (Crush et al., 1991; Zinyama, 1990).

According to Crush et al. (1991:109), the bilateral contract between South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe allowed for the recruitment of up to 20,000 employees per year(Moyo, 2017:83). As a result, Rhodesian contract labour migration to South Africa peaked in 1977, reaching 37,900 workers (Moyo, 2017:83). This was preceded by a significant increase from around 7000 workers that were recorded in 1975 (Wilson, 1976:455) to 29,000 in 1976 (Crush et al., 1991:101). Working in South Africa was restricted to specific industries, including mining and agriculture. Therefore, the act made other forms of migration into South Africa more difficult and confined, as the handling of travel documents (passports) was delegated to authorities in the country of citizenship (Tati, 2008). However, just like the black South Africans were required to return to their homelands after service delivery, the foreigners were required to return to their home country once their contracts had expired and before starting a new one (Adepoju, 1988; Ricca, 1989). The wives and families of male immigrants were barred from entering South Africa under the rules of the Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1963 (Hepple, 1971). Employees were brought into the country for short periods and, besides working tirelessly, they were also poorly paid (Adepoju, 1988).

However, the workforce migration system's impact on the South African mining industry should not be underestimated. Due to the availability of inexpensive labour and therefore low cost, the mines were able to expand and maximize profits.

### 4.3.2 Post-apartheid immigration policies

#### 4.3.2.1 Events in selected countries and implications for migrating to South Africa

There are various migration-related policies that were crafted and adopted by the South African government in the post-apartheid era to govern the migration flows. The study established that the policy shift was mainly unfavourable to undocumented immigrants. The influx of undocumented migrants and the anti-immigration sentiments in South Africa provided a basis for formulating policies that govern international migration. As discussed in chapter two, migration is largely driven by push and pull factors. Before delving much into the post-apartheid policies, it is imperative to critically discuss the push factors from selected African countries and the implications thereof for South Africa. In this regard, it has been established that international migration is driven by a multidimensional and complicated collection of causes spanning from macro and micro-level institutions to poverty-related variables (Alessandra and Andrea, 2021; Marie-Laurence and De Haas, 2016). This is also true in the context of South Africa. Some of the pull factors attracting migrants are related to South Africa's historical and contemporary position in the SADC region and on the continent (Tati, 2008). Historically, the country is well known for employing foreigners from its neighbouring countries (Lesotho, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Botswana) (Crush, 2017; Letlape, 2021). In recent years, Africa's persistent climate of violent conflicts and chronic poverty has emerged as a push factor, causing migrants to leave their countries and seek safety in countries with better living conditions, such as South Africa (see also Tati, 2008).

One classic example is Lesotho which was subjected to authoritarian and military rule for 23 years and where they struggled to bring about long-term peace. The country has conducted many democratic elections with varied degrees of success and marred with irregularities (Kelly, Moletsane, and Coetzee, 2017; Letlape, 2021; Williams, 2019). In economic terms, Lesotho's economic trajectory is determined by the South African economic forecast and the global macro-economic outlook (Letlape, 2021). Historically, most of Lesotho's male migrants were hired to work in South African gold mines. Due to restrictive migration laws, a preference for South African labour, and dropping gold prices, the pattern shifted in the 1990s, and fewer foreigners obtained mining jobs in South Africa. Many women from Lesotho worked as domestic workers in South Africa (CIA, 2020; Griffin, 2010). Lesotho's slow economy was worsened by poorly performing business development services, as well as inadequate policies and regulatory framework (Letlape, 2021; UN, 2017).

In Mozambique, there are Islamic insurgents who carry out brutal strikes in the country's north (Spangenberg, 2017). The current administration is battling Islamic insurgency threats in Cabo-Delgado, where massive natural gas deposits have been discovered (Letlape, 2021). The armed group, Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamo, is related to Islamic radicals as well as organised crime syndicates (Allison, Mothobi and Rademan, 2019; Letlape, 2021). The lack of political stability between the two parties, FRELIMO and RENAMO, led to violence and armed clashes in 2013, and remains weak (Letlape, 2021). Similarly, in Somalia, while there were many reasons for the conflicts and the subsequent civil war that erupted from 1991 to 1992, the World Bank paper (2005:9–16) titled *Conflict in Somalia: Drivers and Dynamics* found that tribal clans had been one of the most significant drivers of migration. According to the World Bank (2005), the majority of military battles in Somalia had been fought in the name of clans since 1991, frequently as a result of political leaders exploiting clannism for their political gain.

Eswatini's political system is founded on undemocratic monarchical governance that is ostensibly justified by tradition (Mbuyisa and Mndebele, 2021; Ndlela and Mano, 2020). Several criticisms have been levelled at the political system. Since Mobutu's fall as president in 1997, the DRC has been characterised by tremendous violence (Inaka and Trapido, 2015). The destruction caused by the Congo conflicts of 1996–1997 and 1998–2002, as well as the erratic peace that followed, resulted in an estimated excess mortality of 3.9 million people – more than anywhere else since World War II (Coghlan et al , 2015). The unending conflicts in the DRC and Somalia has resulted in an influx of migrants to South Africa, fleeing for safety. This influx of international migrants and the concurrent surge in cross-border movement ignited debates on 'migration-security nexus' all over the world. In response to this rising phenomenon, the South African government shifted several policies and positions to govern international migration.

Malawi has been a prominent labour-sending country on the continent (First, 1982). Despite the accumulation of wealth and products in many rural families, Malawi has remained one of Africa's most poverty-stricken countries to date (Johnson, 2017; McCracken, 2012). According to Johnson (2017:10), '72% of the population lives on less than $1.25 a day'. Indeed, throughout the history of labour migration, the appeal of South Africa must be understood in light of Malawi's lack of economic opportunities. The Ethiopian migration to South Africa has

been mainly for to political and economic reasons. Chain migration has also influenced decision-making, as can be seen from the large social network of migrants from Southern Ethiopia in South Africa (Estifanos and Zack, 2019; Research and Evidence Facility, July 2020; Wehmhoerner, 2015).

The history of Zimbabweans migrating to South Africa will be discussed at length in the next chapter. However, migration from Zimbabwe has been witnessed a lot more in the last two decades due to push factors such as economic meltdown and political crisis. Economically, Zimbabwe experienced hardship as a result of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) (Ranga, 2004; Thebe,2016). Between 1991 and 1996, ESAP, a World Bank/IMF-motivated package was implemented in the hope of stimulating economic growth and creating employment (Thebe, 2016). However, ESAP caused layoffs in all sectors, raising inflation and unemployment and aggravating poverty (Chipika, Chibanda and Kadenge, 2000). This was exacerbated by President Robert Mugabe's unplanned compensation for war veterans in 1997 (Mamdani, 2008; Shoko, 2013). The 2000s observed a further increase in Zimbabwean migration to South Africa (Bimha, 2017). According to Thebe (2016), people migrated from all over Zimbabwe as a result of the crises during this period. The majority of the migrants were Shona speakers who could not speak or converse with local South African dialects, who had never been to South Africa and also did not have any social ties (Morreira, 2015; SPT, 2004). In 2008 many people migrated to South Africa due to the economic crisis, astronomical inflation, and a drop in the value of the Zimbabwean dollar (Morreira, 2015).

The Mugabe government's chaotic land reform programme implemented in 1999 was a watershed moment for the Zimbabwean economy. It mostly destroyed agriculture export for commercial purposes (Crush, Chikanda and Tawodzera, 2012). In their analysis of the Fast-Track Land Reform, Chaumba, Scoones and Wolmer (2003) noted that it resulted in economic collapse, political instability, socio-economic inequalities, corruption, crime, and depictions of a failed African state. The empirical study and review of extant literature on push and pull factors of migration established that many Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa after the new millennium – the push factors being political and economic factors as discussed above (Bimha, 2017). However, the study established that economic factors are the major driving force of cross-border migration from Zimbabwe and other African countries to South Africa.

#### 4.3.2.2 South Africa’s response to migration: 1994–2020

The previous section highlighted the challenges that were being experienced in selected countries in Africa, including Zimbabwe, which subsequently led to massive migration of both documented and undocumented migrants to South Africa. Thus, since the end of apartheid and the birth of the country’s freedom in 1994, there has been a sizable flow of migration into South Africa (Crush, 2001, 2008). While several apartheid laws were repealed by the black South African government, the country’s immigration policy has been criticized for being similar to the apartheid laws (Crush, 2001). According to Musoni (2020), apartheid rules and infrastructure were frequently strengthened between 1994 and 2010 (see also Derman, 2013). The South African government adopted a number of security measures to secure its borders. The border security infrastructure included the deployment of many guards and highly computerised systems. Further to that, border security officials raised entry fees and added more legal immigration documents as a requirement in order to get rid of illegal cross-border movement. Low-skilled immigrants from other parts of the region – many of whom are undocumented – as well as skilled African professionals, refugees, and asylum seekers now make up the majority of immigrants to South Africa. The evolving nature of these flows has not been taken into account by policies (Crush and McDonald, 2001). However, the law that govern immigration in South Africa is ineffectual in its post-apartheid migration management.

**The 1998 Refugees Act**

The Refugee Act of 1998 was enacted as a legal instrument to transpose South Africa’s international commitments under the 1951 UN and 1969 AU refugee treaties into domestic reality. The act establishes the procedure for applying for asylum in South Africa.

Aside from the obligations imposed by the UN and AU refugee conventions, the Refugee Act, drafted in 1998 and enacted into law in 2000, dictates that the South African government should receive, accommodate, and protect persons who have been forced to flee their countries of origin due to well-founded fear of persecution, violence, or conflict (The Refugees Act 130 of 1998). South Africa demonstrates its commitment to being bound by its laws in providing asylum seekers and refugees with protection within its borders, not only as a humanitarian gesture but also as a legal requirement, by enacting domestic law to supplement its international obligations (Sawa, 2016). Sawa (2016) further argues that the legislation enables South Africa to establish the principles and criteria for the reception of asylum seekers, as well as to regulate

the application procedure and the circumstances for obtaining refugee status. This act also specifies the rights and obligations that refugees and asylum seekers have under the law.

Once granted legal status, the Refugees Act highlights that refugees can access full legal protection and enjoy all the rights and benefits enshrined in the Bill of Rights without discrimination (Dera, 2022). The right to seek employment, access health care, and education are emphasised, which are the same rights provided to South Africans as long as they adhere to the rules of the state (Sawa, 2016). Estifanos, Zack and Vanyoro (2019) noted that the South African asylum system is in disarray. Applicants can wait for years, in some situations more than ten years, to receive asylum seeker permits and these need to be renewed at varying intervals. During the lengthy application process, the Refugees Act allows asylum seekers to work, study and move freely in South Africa (Crush, 2011). Nonetheless, to address concerns that the asylum system was being abused by migrants who had no legitimate fear of persecution, it was amended in 2008, 2011, and 2017 (Moyo, 2021).

However, even though migrants are protected by law, many refugees and asylum seekers are unable to get asylum. Despite these pledges for protection, the regular xenophobic outbursts that have affected huge numbers of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees over the years demonstrate the government's indifference to providing adequate protection as required by law (Sawa, 2016). The government's indifference has frequently been reflected by the fact that, rather than adopting stern measures to address the situation, they have attempted to downplay its significance by stating that xenophobic attacks are simply acts of criminality. Although the distinction is not readily apparent in practice, forced migrants (asylum seekers and refugees) are not considered to be labour migrants (Crush, 2011). Between 2000 and 2008, there were 710 Zimbabwean refugees in South Africa (Taylor, 2017). In 2009, there were 220,028 new applications for refugee status in South Africa (Crush, 2011:17), of which 45,538 applications were rejected and only 4531 were accepted (Crush, 2011:18). Of these, 75% were from the DRC, Ethiopia, and Somalia (Crush, 2011:18; EU Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography, 2018). According to Taylor (2017), only 200 Zimbabweans of the 149 000 were granted refugee status in 2009 as part of the refugee determination procedure.

Refugee status had been given to 53,000 applicants during the post-apartheid era up to January 2011 (Migration Data Portal, 2021). However, because of the backlog in the refugee assessment procedure, decisions had often been made based on an applicant's country of origin

rather than their specific circumstances (Crush, 2011). As a result, applicants for asylum from nations like Somalia and the DRC got preference and were awarded refugee status faster than applicants from other African nations, such as Zimbabwe. Writing in 2011, Crush highlighted that the number of people seeking refugee status had increased. According to the Migration Data Portal (2021) South Africa's refugee population had grown progressively from 6800 in 1997 to 66,000 in 2013. It then climbed significantly to 112,000 and 121,600 in 2014 and 2015, respectively. However, the Scalabrini Centre Statistics (2020) noted that, since 2015, the number of refugees had declined to 91,000 in 2016 and has stayed consistent at around 89,000 per year from 2017 to 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic slowed it down even more, which made the situation worse. In 2019, 96% of all asylum requests were denied (Trac Immigration, 2019). New restrictions that prevent refugees and asylum seekers from participating in politics in their home countries were put in place at the beginning of 2020, presumably in response to the sizable number of foreign political exiles who had landed in South Africa (Taati, 2018). As a result, the asylum application procedure has become more time-consuming and challenging, while these asylum seekers are left with the ongoing risk of xenophobic assault, harassment, and crime (Moyo and Zanker, 2022).

South Africa has a tiny population of forced migrants, who make up 9% of all recognised migrants. As of 2020, South Africa was home to 255,200 people who had been forcibly displaced, of whom 76,800 had legal status as refugees and 173,500 were requesting asylum (Moyo, 2021; Callixte Kavuro, *Mail and Guardian*, 22 August 2022). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2021) 'top countries from which refugees and asylum seekers came in 2020 were Ethiopia (25%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (23%) Somalia (11%), Bangladesh (10%), and Zimbabwe (6%)' (see also UNHCR Data finder 2020).

**The Immigration Act 13 of 2002**

The post-apartheid government revised the Aliens Control Act of 1991 in 1995, making it more stringent. Through these revisions the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) was awarded greater rights and abilities to regulate immigration (Crush, 2011). The Immigration Act no. 13 of 2002, which was adopted in 2004, replaced the Aliens Control Act of 1995. It was revised in 2007 and again in 2014 to take the evolving migration conundrum in South Africa into

account. According to Sawa (2016), the act is a principal legal instrument that governs and establishes the terms of admission, residence, and departure for a broader variety of immigrants, including different types of temporary visits, economic migrants, investors, and permanent residents. The act establishes the requirements and procedures for obtaining visas and permits for skilled migrants, as well as the arrest and expulsion of unauthorized workers (Immigration Act 13 of 2002). It also adopted certain aspects of the apartheid era which allowed entry to certain kinds of immigrants while barring others (with skills serving as the primary criterion for immigration selection) (Moyo, 2021).

Despite the South African government's suggestions to modify its migration policy, the modifications which were made to the Immigration Act in 2014 strengthened migration hurdles for all categories of migrants (Crush, 2011; Sawa, 2016). Although the Migration Act intends to cater for migrant needs, it has become limiting and ambitious, with the emphasis nearly entirely on luring highly skilled workers. It should be argued that such a policy is discriminatory and that it violates international human rights law, which guarantees the freedom of movement for all without discrimination, as well as South Africa's constitutional legislation guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination (Sawa, 2016). The migration act does not offer the same rights and privileges as the Refugees Act, which means that the government is not accountable in the same way to migrants in terms of specific human rights.

According to Crush and James (1995), the ANC administration became more interested in immigration issues after 2001. Due to the renewed interest in migration, the ANC administration took a new direction in policy to hire qualified immigrants in response to observations of a large brain drain and the pleadings of the corporate sector (McDonald and Crush, 2001). However, the majority of labour migrants, including skilled migrants, are considered temporary residents or 'sojourners' under the Immigration Act (Crush, 2011:08). Notably, low-skilled migrants from other SADC countries appear to be disregarded by the Immigration Act although they have a slight chance of becoming documented migrants. Due to such unfavourable laws, there have been significant issues with regards to unauthorised immigration. As a result, some would-be economic migrants have turned to the nation's asylum system as a route of admission.

**The 2006 Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition**

The government of South Africa launched the Joint Initiative for Priority Skills Acquisition in 2006 to further emphasize its goal to exclusively accept skilled immigrants (JIPSA, 2008; Moyo, 2021). This high-level task team, which operated under the vice presidency for three years, was created to alleviate South Africa's skills shortage by enhancing training and expertise in important fields including:

1. High-level, international engineering and planning for the transportation, communications, water, and energy sectors
2. City, regional, and urban planning, and engineering; artisanal and technical aspects of infrastructure development, housing, and energy
3. Management and planning in education and health
4. Mathematics, science, and language in public schools (Crush, 2011:11).

**The 2008 Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition**

Additionally, JIPSA advises pursuing new skills recruitment abroad where necessary. Immigration has proven to be a partial answer in only two of these, namely engineering and craft skills (Crush, 2011). These two professions were promoted by the Department of Foreign Affairs in South Africa's embassies abroad and were listed on the Department of Home Affairs 'scarce skills list' (Crush, 2011:11).

**The 2017 White paper on International Migration**

A White Paper on International Migration for South Africa's future immigration law was published in 2017 and called for even stricter immigration regulations (White Paper on International Immigration, 2017). Research participants expressed the opinion that post-colonial legislation is tougher than it was before independence, which implies that the South African government is unwelcoming to African migrants (Moyo, 2021). This sparked xenophobic protests and the deadly Operation *Dudula*, which resulted in loss of lives of numerous African migrants. In the white paper, irregular immigration was discussed in detail. It was stated that irregular migration 'leads to unacceptable levels of corruption, human rights violation, and national security dangers' (White Paper on International Immigration, 2017: v). Additionally, the policy criticises the refugee regime, claiming that South Africa faces security threats as a result of overly broad laws and rights for humanitarian protection. The notion that migrants are abusing the asylum system by migrating to search for work, as well as anti-immigration sentiments, are other prominent narratives that have persisted in public debate. It

was clear from the state report of 2017 that low-skilled or unskilled migrants and undocumented immigrants from the SADC region pose a threat to South Africa's economic stability and national sovereignty.

**The 2020 Border Management Act 2**

To restrict and monitor migratory movements, recent legislation such as the Border Management Authority Act 2 of 2020 has improved border security by consolidating and centralising border control operations (Border Management Act, 2020). A new state-owned organisation, the Border Management Authority (BMA) was established in South Africa in 2022 to oversee all border security-related matters, including the authorised movement of people and products (Border Management Act, 2020). The BMA is an example of South Africa's all-inclusive approach to border management. It created an Inter-Ministerial Committee with ministers of Environmental Affairs, Defence, Agriculture, Finance, Police, Health, Trade and Industry, State Security, and Transport serving as members under the chairmanship of the Minister of Home Affairs (Border Management Act, 2020). The BMA also established an advisory committee appointed by the Minister of Home Affairs. In addition to that, the BMA also established a Border Technical Committee composed of relevant state ministries and institutions. The Act stipulated that the BMA was supposed to operate as a division of the Department of Home Affairs until March 2023. Writing in 2022, Maposa mentioned that the agency is scheduled to begin operations as a standing Schedule 3A public organisation on the 1st of April 2023, and that it would report to the Minister of Home Affairs (Maposa, 2022). The Department of Home Affairs added that 200 BMA guards, who had been 'properly recruited and trained, with emphasis on fitness and physical testing', would be placed at the Beitbridge Port of Entry in Musina, Limpopo as of 14 July 2022 (Maposa, 2022).

The BMA's establishment fees were significantly criticised for being high (Maposa, 2022). Maunganidze and Mbiyozo (2020) argued that the BMA Act and South Africa's position on immigration would further entrench xenophobic attacks against migrants. Consequently, the Department of Home Affairs was transferred from the government's Governance and Administrative Cluster to the Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Cluster, joining other departments devoted to law enforcement, defence, and state security, among others, to promote securitisation (Maposa, 2022).

### 4.4 South African position on Zimbabwean migration

Before 2009, travellers from Zimbabwe were required to have a visa to enter South Africa, while other SADC citizens, including those from Zambia and Malawi, were not required to have visas from their home countries (Muzondidya, 2011). However, South African authorities simplified the visa criteria for Zimbabweans in 2009 to stop the fraudulent acquisition of South African IDs, to manage the spike in asylum petitions, and to lessen the reliance on unproductive deportations (Makina, 2011). Therefore, at a port of entry, Zimbabweans could obtain a three-month visitor's visa. They were able to search for jobs in South Africa using this permit (ibid) However, several migrants believed that this permit was not sustainable. The first complication was that a migrant had to leave South Africa and return to Zimbabwe for a minimum of one week as the three-month permit could not be extended whilst in South Africa. For an employed migrant, getting leave for renewal purposes was also involving and expensive (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010; Mattes et al., 1999). Furthermore, due to the nature of their professions, migrants from Zimbabwe were ineligible for the six-month permission. Many migrants tended to overstay, ending up in trouble with the law when departing to renew their three-month permits (Crush and Ramachandran, 2010). Due to such visa requirements, several migrants from Zimbabwe, including those from the southwest, resorted to using clandestine ways to enter into South Africa. Such illegal ways included the use of *izimpisi* and various cross border transporters at the ports of entry or at undesignated points (which will be discussed in depth in chapter 7).

#### 4.4.1 The Zimbabwe Dispensation Project

To ease pressure on the asylum system and to address the significant influx of unauthorised migrants from Zimbabwe, the South African government introduced the Zimbabwe Dispensation Project (ZDP) in late-2009 (Bimha, 2017). The main goal of this project was to offer these Zimbabweans legal status for short-term employment, education, and commercial operations (Derman, 2013). This was particularly aimed at migrants who were already working in South Africa. South Africa insisted that applicants must have legitimate Zimbabwean documentation to be eligible for the visa, which resulted in delays in issuing the permit. In 2010 the South African government introduced a four-year special dispensation permit program for migrants from Zimbabwe. According to Makina (2011), the following basic requirements had to be met:

1. Ownership of a valid Zimbabwean passport
2. Entry into South Africa before 31 May 31 2010
3. Proof of employment in South Africa

Additionally, migrants who were in possession of fraudulently obtained South African identity documents were requested/instructed to surrender these documents and to apply for special permits (Bimha, 2017). Crush (2011:19) reported that 275 762 applications had been submitted as of December 31, 2010. Deportation of Zimbabweans who failed to apply for the special permit was scheduled to take place on 1 January 2011. However, a moratorium postponed the deportation process until August 2011 to provide Zimbabweans with reasonable time to apply for the special permit. Even though the ZDP might have aimed to lighten the pressure for refugees in their determination to get a permit, a great deal of migrants took extra precaution as they awaited approval following their application. This is evident by the fact that only 49 255 Zimbabweans surrendered their right to refuge in the hope of securing legitimate work and business licenses (Crush (2011:19). Unsurprisingly, only about 4000 immigrants voluntarily surrendered their fraudulent documents (Crush (2011:19).

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) initially established an arbitrary deadline of 31 December 2010, after which deportations began. It was therefore argued that the dispensation had no effect as many people did not have sufficient time to make their applications (Pokroy, 2012) and the DHA in turn was not prepared to assist those who had submitted applications (Amit, 2011; Bimha, 2017). In light of this, the dispensation permission did not provide a solution to the issue of unregistered Zimbabweans in South Africa.

#### 4.4.2 The Zimbabwean Special Dispensation Permits

Following the second revision to the 2002 Immigration Act by the South African Parliament, the Immigration Regulations of 2014 was released which became effective on 26 May 2014 (Chiumia and Van Wyk, 2014). To replace the permits provided under the ZDP, the Minister of Home Affairs launched the new Zimbabwean Special Dispensation Permits (ZSP) on 12 August 2014 (Bimha, 2017; DHA, 2015:79). The ZSP was in effect for three years, until it was terminated on December 31st, 2017 (Bimha, 2017). Bimha (2017:63) further notes:

> Unlike the ZDP process which was facilitated through direct interaction with the DHA and DHA officials, the ZSP process was conducted using a new electronic permit

> application system. One of the DHA's strategic goals for the 2014 financial year was to complete the development of an electronic permit system which would be facilitated by Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global. Permit applications have to be submitted online via the VFS website.

According to the South African government (2015) the engagement of VFS in a way curbed corruption as the applicants were not engaging directly with DHA officials.

#### 4.4.3 Zimbabwean Exemption Permit

The Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) replaced the Zimbabwean Special Dispensation Permit (ZSP). ZEP was introduced in 2017 and expired on 31 December 2021. It has been estimated that, almost 180,000 Zimbabweans were in possession of a ZEP (Chirume, 2021). Like its predecessors, it legalised the status of migrants in the country for five years and allowed them to live and work on a temporal basis. However, the South African government declared on November 25, 2021, that no additional concessions would be permitted. As a result, ZEP holders will no longer be able to renew their permits under the provisions of this dispensation. After the ZEP expired, the South African government gave permit holders a 12-month grace period during which they were to apply for a visa under a different category that would allow them to continue living lawfully in the Republic. Further, on June 7, 2023 the government announced that ZEP holders would have one more chance to regularize their status by applying for a mainstream visa category before it expired on December 31, 2023.

In an interview, a border official said:

> *The Director General of the Department of Home Affairs gave an instruction on November 29, 2021, informing Zimbabwean citizens who are ZEP holders that no further extensions will be given. All ZEP holders were granted until December 31, 2022 to enable them enough time to legalize their status in South Africa as per instructions outlined in the Immigration Act 13 of 2002* (Interview with a border official, Beitbridge, 2021).

Therefore, ZEP holders now have to comply with the act and apply for a visa that is appropriate for their situation while making sure that all necessary conditions are met. The law stipulates that ZEP holders can continue to work, study, and use banks as long as they have a Visa Facilitation Services Global (VFS) receipt as proof of their application for an alternate visa by December 31, 2023.

For Zimbabweans working as labourers, construction workers, e-hailing drivers, gardeners, and domestic helpers, the situation is dire as they will not be eligible for other visas under the Immigration Act. This includes visas for permanent residency, study, specialisation, and general employment. During interviews it emerged that the five-year general work visa was difficult to acquire as companies were requested to demonstrate that they were unable to fill the post with a South African national or permanent resident. Seven participants who took part in this study noted that they were affected by this move. However, three of them indicated that they were already applying for visas to migrate to Europe, whilst two noted that they were applying for the South African critical skills visa as they were eligible for that. The other two stated that they would remain in South Africa and return to Zimbabwe if the situation worsened.

### 4.5 Conclusion

This chapter critically reviewed South Africa's immigration policies from the apartheid era to the present. The chapter reviewed the functions of the immigration authorities at the Beit Bridge border. The second section reviewed events that led to the influx of (un)documented migrants from selected countries to South Africa as well as South Africa's response to the migration through various policies.

The study established that migrants from different African countries came to South Africa fleeing from various push factors such as recurring conflicts, war, economic and political crises, and in search of employment opportunities to mention but a few. This highlighted the fact that South Africa had attracted migrants from all over Africa already pre-independence, due to the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and gold in Witwatersrand which led to the growth of its economy and which continued to attract migrants into the post-apartheid era.

However, just like during the apartheid era, South African migration policies have remained unaccommodating to migrants. This chapter discussed South Africa's immigration response to the unprecedented migration of (un)documented migrants from Zimbabwe. I argued that the South African government has always regarded Zimbabweans as economic immigrants without considering the other factors, as highlighted in this thesis. Border management becomes limiting when social factors are not considered in the drafting of policies that govern the

movement of undocumented migrants. The recent policy developments regarding Zimbabwean migrants imply that they are only considered as economic migrants who are expected to work and then return to their country of origin. This is despite the human social networks that exist between Zimbabweans migrants, including those from southwestern parts of Zimbabwe, with some South African communities and tribes. The next chapter will trace historical incidents in Zimbabwe that have facilitated cross-border migration from the apartheid era to the present in South Africa.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# HISTORICAL INCIDENTS OF CROSS-BORDER MIGRATION FROM ZIMBABWE TO SOUTH AFRICA

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the research by providing historical background on cross-border migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa from the precolonial times to the contemporary. To achieve this, the chapter specifically traces the historical antecedents of migration and the push and pull factors. This chapter looks at these historical incidents and attempts to understand their contributory effects to immigration management challenges faced in present-day South Africa. Further to that the chapter will also discuss the human and social networks and how it has been assisting the migration of (un)documented migrants over the years. In presenting this chapter, I am also mindful of the complex historical relationship and links between the Zulu, Swati, South African Ndebele, Basotho, Xhosa, Pedi, and Zimbabwean Ndebele cultures, which are described in the next chapter. These linkages are important as they are used today as the basis for easy assimilation by migrants, mainly from southwestern Zimbabwe into South African communities (Mlambo, 2010; Thebe, 2013).

To understand the full scope of contemporary migration by people from southwestern Zimbabwe to South Africa, it is necessary to take a journey back in history and understand the historical context of cross-border and labour migration. The journey involves the unfolding of the contribution of this history to the movement of people from Zimbabwe into South Africa. Exploring the historical trends and migration patterns of (un)documented migrants from Zimbabwe provides a basis to understanding the complex nature of border management, contemporary migration, and securitisation of South Africa's borders. Securitisation and border management was discussed in detail the previous chapter. This chapter specifically traces the history of migration and how it has been influencing cross-border migration from the past to the present.

The complexity of the South Africa/Zimbabwe border and the challenges for immigration management, which is the subject of this thesis, should be understood both from a historical and socio-cultural perspective. History is an important starting point, but not the only factor

affecting immigration management. Yet, the importance of history cannot be ignored. In most cases, historical events tend to influence the present. In this case, the history in question begins with the Mfecane wars, particularly the displacements that resulted in the movement of the Ndebele people under King Mzilikazi (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009) to what is now called Matabeleland (southwest Zimbabwe). It also extends to the colonial period, the era of extra-territorial recruitment of migrant labourers, and the migration of men from southwestern Zimbabwean territories to South Africa as a rite of passage.

The chapter is divided into three main categories of migration which are involuntary, voluntary, and clandestine. The first section focuses on the formal, organised, and structured labour system whereby migrants from Zimbabwe and other neighbouring countries migrated to South Africa in search for work opportunities. These migrants were officially employed in the mining fields and they signed employment contracts. The second and third sections focus on voluntary and clandestine migration, which constitutes informal migration that witnessed the movement of undocumented migrants in large numbers. This form of undocumented and uncontrolled migration allowed people to spread into South Africa. As such, the chapter will briefly discuss porous borders, human social networks, and the subsequent assimilation of (un)documented migrants from a historical perspective. The second section will also look at the social exclusion issues in Zimbabwe that led to the disengagement to which Thebe refers in his 2013 study. This galvanized them to emigrate and thus qualified them to be major push factors. In satisfying the main objectives of the chapter, relevant literature reviews and key informant accounts are incorporated.

The chapter argues that the historical incidents that took place in the pre- and post-colonial Zimbabwean plateau are significant in portraying how early migrants were able to settle in South Africa, some even permanently. As such the chapter also argues that the migration and assimilation of (un)documented migrants have been facilitated by pre-existing social networks and ties. Drawing from empirical findings the establishment of human networks made it easy for people from southwestern parts of Zimbabwe to migrate into South Africa, especially post-2000 when the Zimbabwean economy spiralled downwards. The resultant influx of Zimbabwean migrants into South Africa complicated the management of the Beitbridge border. This resulted in the securitization of the border and changes to South Africa's immigration policies as discussed in the previous chapter.

### 5.2 Involuntary and formal migration

Labour migration was the main form of emigration for Zimbabweans during the colonial period as they moved to South Africa to seek employment opportunities in the mining fields (Beremauro, 2013). Migration to South Africa has been typified by both formal and informal migration. Formalised migration has taken place through the brokerage of recruitment agencies, notably the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA), which facilitated the recruitment of migrants from Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) to work in South African mines (see Wilson, 1976). This can also be referred to as involuntary migration as these people had been forced to migrate to South Africa due to the availability of lucrative employment opportunities in mining fields.

#### 5.2.1 Formal contract labour migration into South Africa

There is a long history of labour migration and cross-border mobility from Zimbabwe to South Africa that dates back to the pre-colonial epoch (Rukema and Pophiwa, 2020). Contract labour migration into South Africa was evident in South African mines and farms. Contract migrant labourers were hired on a contract basis and their employment was restricted to specific mines and job grades. Contract migrant workers have typically been denied permanent rights to work or to remain in South Africa, regardless of the length of their employment under subsequent contracts or their established familial and social ties (Adepoju, 1988; Ricca, 1989). Mlambo (2010:63) adds that 'labour migrancy in Southern Africa dates back to the 1850s with the development of the sugar plantations of Natal… it intensified with the discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1870 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886'. The pull factor for migration into South Africa was mostly for economic reasons. An excerpt from *Financial Mail*, a South African business publication (shown in Figure 5.1) emphasizes the wage differences offered to miners by South African mines and Rhodesian/Zimbabwean mines as the pull factors for the then-Rhodesian emigrants into South Africa. In this regard, Everett Lee's push-pull model (Lee, 1966) integrates the utility maximisation concept of Harris and Todaro (1970) to explain this migration. This corresponds with the observations by Lebert (2003:03):

> At the time there was a definite wage hierarchy in the sub-region which corresponded largely to differing levels of capital development in Southern Africa. Within this hierarchy, South African wages for migrant labourers were the highest (followed by

Zimbabwe and then Malawi). As a result, labour migration in the sub-region had a southward tendency.

From the above, it is clear that the migrants were attracted to South Africa by higher wages. Nonetheless, concerning contract labour migration in mines, the migrants lost their prerogative to labour recruitment agencies such as the WNLA and the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) (Mlambo 2010; TEBA, 2002). Mlambo (2010) reveals that WNLA facilitated recruitment in Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique while the NRC was more active in Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. Through the intermediation of these recruitment agencies, contract labour migration was classified as formal and regular as these migrants were legal. There was a brokerage arrangement between the mining companies and the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean government whereby the migrants were required to remit a percentage of their payment back home (see Figure 5.1).

To buttress the issue of labour migration and agreements, Takaindisa (2021:02) states: ‘there was a standing bilateral labour agreement (BLA) between the Rhodesian government and WNLA through which WNLA could recruit labourers from Rhodesia up to a maximum of 20,000 per given year’. Unlicensed recruiters, on the other hand, used force to source labourers. This has been confirmed by Rukema and Pophiwa (2020:288) who mentioned that ‘the Southern Rhodesia’s Chief Native Commissioner received complaints about “blackbirders” who used violent methods of recruiting people in border districts for work in South Africa’. Therefore, although contract labour migration might have been formal, it was not necessarily always voluntary. Research findings established that labour migrants from Zimbabwe, including southwest Zimbabwe, entered into South Africa through the border. This is, however, different from the informal migration found since 2000 with undocumented migrants flocking into South Africa through corruption at the border, border jumping, the use of *malayishas* and using illegal ports of entry. As discussed in detail in chapter 4, this influx triggered many changes in border control and border management and prompted the South African government to change its immigration policies and the securitisation of the border.

(1) 211
(2) Rhodesia – Labour

**MIGRANT MINERS**

**Wenela looks good**

**With minimum daily rates** on SA mines of R$1,63 for underground and R$1,20 for surface workers (compared to the recently established minima on Rhodesian mines of 40c and 35c respectively) Wenela offers a relatively attractive proposition to Rhodesian Blacks.

Just over 8 300 Rhodesians are now working on SA mines. The year-end total is expected to reach 8 500-9 000, with the last batch of recruits for 1975 flying down on December 23.

This exceeds earlier estimates by more than 1 000 with the recruiting rate doubling over the past two months. The reasons, a spokesman at Wenela's Salisbury office told the *FM*, were that pre-rain ploughing is over, and news of wages and conditions has been brought back by the 600 plus Rhodesians who have opted for an early return from the mines.

Recruitment next year is expected to reach 12 000.

The Rhodesian Chamber of Mines has been "very co-operative", says Wenela. There is no shortage of African labour on Rhodesian mines and the Chamber puts the few work-seekers who approach them in touch with Wenela.

All of which means a healthy boost for Rhodesia's tight foreign exchange reserves. Workers have to remit 60% of basic salary after three months to the Post Office savings bank. Wenela estimates that remittances are running between R$65-R$70 a month.

Given that workers sign for a year, with the option of a further six months before returning to Rhodesia, the 20 000-odd workers who will have been recruited between January 2 1975 and the end of 1976 will eventually send back at least R$12m.

Financial Mail December 19 1975

**Figure 5.1: Contract labour migrants facilitated by WNLA**

Once a contract had been signed the labourer was under the protection of the WNLA which, besides arranging transport to the Witwatersrand, also organised their employment in a mine in South Africa (Prothero, 1974). The sending home of remittances and repatriation at the end of the contract period with the payment of deferred wages was also its responsibility (Prothero, 1974). In establishing WNLA's recruitment network, one academic expert said:

WNLA had to recruit offices in different places including Salisbury – now Harare – in Msasa, with dormitory and screening facilities for 600 men. There were two more in Fort Victoria – now Masvingo – and in Bulawayo. Recruiting of these miners was confined to Salisbury, Bulawayo, Masvingo and tribal areas to the north. These recruits were offered one-year contracts with the option of a six months extension (Interview with A. Mlambo, Pretoria, 2020).

South African recruitment agencies were certainly active in Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, as attested by the popular association of former labour migrants in Zimbabwe with WNLA. Mlambo (2010:68–67) concurs:

> Over time, labour migration to the mines became entrenched in parts of Zimbabwe, particularly Matabeleland…became almost a rite of passage for young men to go *kuWenela* (with WNLA to the South African mines) to raise cash to meet colonial tax requirements at home and to earn money for *lobola* (bridewealth)….

In interviews it emerged that:

> *Young men were recruited to participate in migrant labour through WENELA and went for some years before coming back with some modern assets, like bicycles, gramophones, and other modern gadgets. They also spoke a different dialect and could also speak some Afrikaans. Some would return after the first tour, and others never returned home. They may have died or disappeared into South African society. I remember one relative, who only returned home aged and with only a suitcase* (Interview with Sibusiso, Pretoria, 2021).

However, compared to other countries which supplied labour to South African mines, Zimbabwean contract labour migrants were fewer than those who originated from other SADC countries. This comparison is depicted in Table 5.1. As highlighted above, a major factor that contributed to these discrepancies was that, during that time, aside from South Africa, Zimbabwe was relatively more developed than other countries in the SADC region. The then-Rhodesian manufacturing and mining industries also drew migrant labour and discouraged the country from signing contract labour agreements with South Africa (Mlambo, 2010; Wilson, 1976). Zimbabwe/Rhodesia was a labour-sending as well as a labour-receiving country (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Moyo, 2017; Mlambo, 2010). Mlambo (2010) states that Rhodesia/Zimbabwe obtained labour from the Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) which

supplied 13,000 workers per year between 1903 and 1933 to various Rhodesian/Zimbabwean industries. In addition, Rhodesia/Zimbabwe had labour treaties with Malawi, Zambia, and Mozambique.

Despite being recruited to South African mines by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association (WNLA) – colloquially known as *Wenela* in Ndebele or *Wenera* in Shona (Mlambo, 2010) – Zimbabwean labourers never had a noticeable presence in South Africa except for a brief period in the late-1970s. Rhodesia/Zimbabwe only officially permitted South Africa to recruit labour in 1974, following the withdrawal of Mozambican and Malawian labour from the mines (Moyo,2017). This was following a misunderstanding between Malawi and South Africa as a result of the 1974 air crash in Botswana (this was a *Wenela*-registered plane with all-Malawians on board) and also due to Mozambique gaining independence (Crush et al., 1991; Zinyama, 1990).

According to Crush et al. (1991), the bilateral contract between South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe allowed for the recruitment of up to 20,000 employees per year. According to Moyo (2017:83), the number of Rhodesian/Zimbabwean contract workers migrating to South Africa peaked in 1977 with 37,900 employees arriving in South Africa (see also Mlambo, 2010). A huge growth from roughly 7000 workers in 1975 to 29,000 workers in 1976 was witnessed (Crush et al., 1991:101). However, the sudden increase in the number of recruited Zimbabweans was short-lived as the majority of them were repatriated at the end of their contracts, and by 1983 only 7700 Zimbabwean contract labourers remained in South Africa, having finished their contracts (Moyo, 2017:83). As such, the outflow of contract labour migrants from Zimbabwe depended on the business cycle fluctuations in the country. This is evident by the fact that, as shown in Table 5.1, contract labour migration recorded the highest outflow in 1940 and 1945 with 8112 and 8301 emigrant migrants, respectively. On the other hand, 1950 recorded 2073 emigrants, while in 1955 there were only 162 emigrant migrants. This peak in 1945 and the subsequent downward trajectory are explained by the economic fluctuations in the country. The impact of the alienation policies, particularly the Land Apportionment Act (1931), was felt during the peak period as, by 1945, the African reserves were overpopulated, overstocked, and were suffering from heavy soil erosion (Yap, 2001). Therefore, since the source of livelihood for most Africans was centralised on land, a larger proportion of Zimbabweans were compelled to migrate to South African mines.

The downward trajectory may also be explained by the higher demand for labour in Zimbabwean industries, mines and farms which triggered higher wages than the subsistence wage which had been offered prior to the high demand. As such, Arrighi (1970:223) argues:

> The exceptionally rapid growth of the demand for African labour in the late 1940s and early 1950s (the number of Africans in wage employment rising at an average compound rate of almost 7 percent per year in the period 1946–51) was certainly a major factor in pushing up real wages.

Resultantly, the opportunity cost of migrating to South Africa became higher in the 1950s than before.

**Table 5.1: Contract Labour Migration to South African Mines, 1920–1990**

| Year | Ango | Bots | Leso | Mala | Moza | Swazi. | Tanza. | Zamb | Zim | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1920 | 0 | 2,11 | 10,43 | 354 | 77,92 | 3,44 | 0 | 12 | 179 | 5,84 | 99,95 |
| 1925 | 0 | 2,54 | 14,25 | 136 | 73,21 | 3,99 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 14 | 94,23 |
| 1930 | 0 | 3,15 | 22,30 | 0 | 77,82 | 4,34 | 183 | 0 | 44 | 5 | 99,35 |
| 1935 | 0 | 7,50 | 34,78 | 49 | 62.57 | 6,86 | 109 | 570 | 27 | 9 | 112,4 |
| 1940 | 698 | 14,4 | 32,04 | 803 | 74,69 | 7,15 | 0 | 2,72 | 8,112 | 0 | 168,0 |
| 1945 | 8,71 | 10,1 | 36,41 | 4,97 | 78,38 | 5,68 | 1,46 | 27 | 8,301 | 4,73 | 158,9 |
| 1950 | 9,76 | 12,3 | 34,46 | 7,83 | 86,24 | 6,61 | 3,49 | 310 | 2,073 | 4,82 | 172,8 |
| 1955 | 880 | 14,1 | 36,33 | 12,4 | 99,44 | 668 | 8,79 | 3,84 | 162 | 2,29 | 192,9 |
| 1960 | 12,3 | 21,4 | 48,84 | 21,9 | 101,7 | 662 | 14,0 | 5,29 | 747 | 844 | 233,8 |
| 1965 | 11,1 | 23,6 | 54,81 | 38,5 | 89,19 | 5,58 | 404 | 5,89 | 653 | 2,68 | 232,6 |
| 1970 | 4,12 | 20,4 | 63,98 | 78,4 | 93,20 | 6,26 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 972 | 265,1 |
| 1975 | 3,43 | 20,2 | 78,11 | 27,9 | 97,21 | 8,39 | 0 | 0 | 2,485 | 12 | 220,2 |
| 1980 | 5 | 17,7 | 96,30 | 13,5 | 39,53 | 8,09 | 0 | 0 | 5,774 | 1,40 | 182,4 |
| 1985 | 1 | 18,6 | 97,63 | 16,8 | 50,12 | 12,3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 196,0 |
| 1990 | 0 | 15,7 | 108,7 | 72 | 50,10 | 178 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 192,0 |

Source: Crush, Jeeves and Yudelman (1991)

Nevertheless, in the 1970s there was an increase in the number of Zimbabweans working in South African mines as South African employers changed their focus from traditional labour suppliers to Zimbabwean labour (Mlambo, 2010). This followed the loss of Malawian labour-force after the Malawian government stopped its participation in the migrant labour system. At the same time, there was also a loss of labour from Mozambique, following the country's independence from Portuguese colonialism in 1975, which contributed to the increased recruitment of labour from Zimbabwe. As Mlambo (2010) indicates, Zimbabweans working in the South African mines in the 1970s, increased to over 20,000 in total, and the contract labour emigration for Zimbabwe peaked in 1977 when 3900 migrant labourers were recorded to originate from the country.

While the post-colonial government finally ended the migrant labour system to South African mines in 1981, a sizeable number of Zimbabweans remained working in South Africa in the 1980s. Statistics place the number of Zimbabwean migrants at 11,332 in 1982, 7742 in 1983, 7492 in 1984, 7428 in 1985, and 7304 in 1986 (Leistner and Esterhuysen, 1988). What this implies, is that the government's position may have been to stop Zimbabweans from working in South Africa, but it did not succeed. As literature has shown, the majority of migrants working in the mines were from migrant-sending communities in the south and eastern parts of Zimbabwe, where migrant work had become a rite of passage for young men (Mlambo, 2010).

We can make some broad deductions and inferences about the implications of this phase of migration for later migration. The majority of households in the southern communities of Zimbabwe have a family member who has migrated to South Africa and had worked in the mines. Others, as Mlambo (2010) has shown, remained working in South Africa well into the late 1980s, and these could not be ruled out as contacts for future migrants.

Between 1930 and 1950, Rhodesians/Zimbabweans from rural villages near the South African-Rhodesian border flocked to Musina in an effort to seek better employment opportunities. Their motivation was driven by the desire to save enough money to buy livestock in their home country. The majority of them had no former experience as underground mine workers and were instead employed as rock sorters, messengers, pump station workers or other surface workers in the smelter division (Bolt, 2015).

### 5.3 Informal/Voluntary migration

To complete the picture of early labour migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa and to understand its complexity and implications for later migration, we need also to look outside the formally organised labour migration. A critical review of the extant literature on labour migration shows that informal migration took place alongside the formalised labour system to the mines (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Mlambo, 2010). These were movements that were in many cases undocumented and migrants were not confined to the mines but ended up working in different sectors of the South African economy. For example, some became involved in agriculture, construction, domestic and hospitality sectors. This movement was uncontrolled, which enabled migrants to spread around different parts of South Africa. These parallel movements were encouraged by the benefits associated with working in *Wenela*, or for being spared from certain social and political incidents in the country (Mlambo, 2010). Whatever the root of these movements, migrants were often accommodated in the South African economy, and while some returned, others decided to stay in South Africa, while maintaining contact with their home in Zimbabwe. The implications are obvious, and their role as contacts should not be underestimated.

#### 5.3.1 Movement in the farms in Limpopo

Even before Kimberley's diamond discovery in 1840, labourers from Mozambique, Malawi, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe began migrating to South Africa to work in sugarcane fields (Crush, 2000; Matsenjwa, 2022). According to Crush et al. (2015), this migration persisted through the Kimberley diamond mines in 1867 and the Witwatersrand gold discoveries in the 1880s. For decades, Zimbabwean farm labourers migrated, both permanently and seasonally, into the borderlands of Limpopo and other regions (Rutherford, 2008). According to scholars (Kudejira, 2008; Rutherford, 2008) there has been an influx of Zimbabwean farm labourers being employed in Limpopo's agricultural areas.

Zimbabweans made up 10,111 of the 13,519 workers at 94 of the 210 farms in the special employment zones, according to a report conducted by the South African Department of Labour in 2000 (Rutherford, 2010:247). The government permitted Limpopo farmers to hire Zimbabwean agricultural labourers in the 1990s as part of the designated 'special employment zone' (Rutherford, 2008). According to Rutherford (2008), after the year 2000, both the

structure and number of farm labourers in Zimbabwe changed. Before the 1990s, the majority of the labourers had been Beitbridge-area Venda people. After 2000, this changed as a result of the migration of farm labourers from other regions of Zimbabwe, with a concomitant increase in linguistic, ethnic, and social variety (Bolt, 2016). Research findings established that the migration of Zimbabweans to farms in Limpopo and other areas in South Africa created social networks that are still assisting migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe to be assimilated in various communities.

### 5.3.2 Migration as a rite of passage

Informal migration for labour in South Africa has a long pedigree in southern communities of Zimbabwe. A prominent scholar of migration, Mlambo (2010), noted that migration in certain areas of Zimbabwe became a rite of passage for young men. Young people saw going to South Africa as an initiation, and every young man from places like Plumtree, Tsholotsho, Nkezi, Gwanda and other nearby societies, would travel to South Africa, spending months on the journey as part of a graduation process to manhood. This was based on the dangers they overcame along the way as there was no transport from Zimbabwe to South Africa. In an interview, a prominent Ndebele historian, Mr Pathisa Nyathi argued that migration was mainly influenced by the benefits of the *Wenela* experience. Sharing his views on migration as a rite of passage the historian further argued:

> *The Wenela experience and anticipated economic rewards became so important that young men risked their lives to get to the mines, walking for weeks through lion-infested country, spending nights tied to branches in trees to escape the ravages of wild animals, and crossing the crocodile-infested Limpopo River. Even as recently as the 1960s, among the Ndau of eastern Zimbabwe, those who had spent time in South Africa were known as Magaisa, and were held in high regard as men of substance, especially when they returned after many years away with money and valuable goods. Similarly, for young Ndebele men in southwestern Zimbabwe, going to work in Egoli (Johannesburg) has become a virtual rite of passage* (Interview with Mr Pathisa Nyathi, Zimbabwe, 2020).

As such, migration to South Africa was about status. Those who had been to South Africa received some respect and were seen as heroes in their community. Moreover, they had material assets, and they dressed and behaved differently from their fellow community members. They were a different class in the community, which made migration a major

attraction among men. Several respondents of this study mentioned that they managed to navigate their journey to South Africa through illegal ports of entries as well as pre-existing social networks.

Sisulu et al. (2007:554) note: ‘The labour needs of the South African mining industry ensured that, in the first half of the twentieth century, it was virtually a rite of passage for young men from colonial Rhodesia to have a stint working in South African mines…’. With specific reference to Matabeleland South, Zack et al. (2019:16) acknowledge, ‘that region effectively constitutes a borderland, proximate to both South Africa and Botswana, and there is general acceptance of cross border migration as a livelihood strategy and a rite of passage to adulthood amongst the youth.’

According to the socio-cultural rites in Nguni culture, ‘… significant stigma is attached both to failed initiates and uninitiated people. Boys have to be successfully initiated to marry, inherit property or participate in cultural activities such as offering sacrifices and community discussions’ (Froneman and Kapp, 2017:01). Likewise, if the young men failed to migrate to South Africa, they were despised as men and their social status was eroded. Factors that have been influencing cross-border migration have been explored in several studies. Writing in 2010, Maphosa observes that in the rural areas of southwestern Zimbabwe,

> …migrating to South Africa is seen as a ‘rite of passage’, a signal of a man’s maturity. Among the youth, particularly male youths, those who have not been to South Africa are often despised because they are perceived as *ibhare* (or unsophisticated) (Maphosa, 2010:349).

This reveals that these modern Nguni societies have also developed a classification system based on the risk-taking associated with migrating to South Africa. This signifies that the challenges associated with emigration to South Africa are known, but that a man has to prove their manhood by facing them headlong as he migrates to South Africa. Those who know of the process and those who undertook the risk still remember the experience and speak with great pride as revealed in the excerpt below:

> *Long ago they travelled on foot, my father travelled from the Kevhe area finding shelter in baobab tree holes and they would go via Botswana on the western side of Limpopo River and cross to South Africa at Port Peter’s Rand. If you successfully travelled from*

*Tsholotsho to South Africa you would have passed the test, befitting the title of being called a man. When you return you are respected and when you speak people listen to you* (Interview with Pathisa Nyathi, Zimbabwe, 2020).

As wages paid in the South African mines were much higher than those paid by Southern Rhodesian/Zimbabwean mine owners, young people were pushed to seek employment and make their fortunes in South Africa. During that time, one was not regarded as a man until one had spent some time working in South Africa. A real man was supposed to work hard and accumulate money to support the family back home. This was true of the Ndau of eastern Zimbabwe, who also have very strong historical links to the Nguni of South Africa.

The rite of passage was also associated with what many would call 'touching roots' and being initiated into a familiar culture. Sharing his views on the rite of passage, an academic expert, Mr Mlambo, said:

*Many of the Ndau people, especially those with South African names like Mlambo, Hlatshwayo, Dube, Sithole, Dlamini etc. originally came from South Africa under the leadership of Manukuse or Soshangana, fleeing from Shaka, Zulu in eastern South Africa. Some of them, especially the very old ones, still spoke isiZulu when I grew up. Ndabaningi Sithoile actually taught isiZulu at Dadaya Mission in Zvishavane in his younger days. Here, too, going to work in the mines became a rite of passage for the young men. When I was young, it was not unusual to see those who were returning from South Africa load their very huge trunks full of goodies accumulated in South Africa on buses bound for Chipinge and they commanded a lot of respect locally as the returning 'Magaisa'. Only after they returned from a stint in the mines in South Africa did many of them start their own families* (Interview with A. Mlambo, Pretoria, 2020).

Such findings resonate with existing literature on migration where scholars such as Piguet (2018) view migration as a rite. On this point he argues that 'the propensity to take risks and the locus of control (the extent to which an individual believes himself or herself to be in control of events that affect his or her life) are often seen as central psychological dimensions in this regard…' (Piguet, 2018:19).

In cultures like the Zulu culture and the Kalanga culture, where such migration was prominent, migrating to South Africa was associated with working and raising money for *lobola*, and not for enjoyment. They would spend time working tirelessly to raise money for bride price and establishing new families. Of interest to this study is that not all of these migrants returned to their places of origin, although they maintained contact and close relationships. This is the reason behind several Zimbabweans, who were born and bred in South Africa in the 1960s, as descendants of migrants who had decided not to return to Zimbabwe, but instead, married and settled in South Africa. The fact that they are still in contact with their relatives and friends in Zimbabwe, facilitates cross-border mobility to South Africa. Many respondents of this study mentioned that it was easy for them to assimilate into South African communities as they had relatives and friends who provided them with shelter, food, and money when they moved from Zimbabwe. Research findings established that the (un)documented migrants were aware of some cultural norms, dress sense and language aspects which assisted them to assimilate, integrate and adapt in host communities in South Africa.

### 5.3.3 African participation in the money economy

Colonial rule brought with it a monetary economy, which gradually substituted the barter-trade system which was common in Africa before colonialism. The disillusionment that precious minerals were scarce in the Zimbabwean plateau north of the Limpopo inspired many settlers to engage in farming (Madimu, 2017). However, the necessary labour force was limited since the native Africans survived on subsistence farming and sourced their discretionary needs through barter-trading. Therefore, the settlers adopted various policies to coerce the Africans to be active in the money economy through working for an income. Gann (1965) posits that the settlers used forced wage-labour before 1896 which was one of the grievances that triggered the first Anglo-Ndebele war (Ranger, 1970). After losing the war, some people from southwestern Zimbabwe migrated to South Africa despite the two-year reprieve in oppression which came into being as a result of the negotiations to end the war between the settlers and the Ndebele (Yap, 2001).

Subtle ways to force the Africans to abandon their sustainable livelihoods were taxation and alienating them from their land as this was the major means of production. According to Arrighi (1970:208),

> Taxation seemed at first to provide the solution as it would reduce the 'discretionary' nature of African participation in the money economy. A hut tax of 10s. for every adult

> male and 10s. extra for each wife exceeding one was imposed as early as 1894, and ten years later it was replaced by a poll tax of £1 on each male over 16 and 10s. upon each wife exceeding one. When the hut tax was first introduced, payment in kind was accepted but it was soon discouraged in order to induce Africans to earn their tax by wage labour.

Besides taxation, land appropriation by the whites deprived the Africans of their agrarian livelihoods as they were displaced into infertile and tsetse-fly-infested reserves in many cases. To enforce this strategy, in 1909 the British South Africa Company (BSAC), the responsible authority at the time, imposed a rent system in unalienated lands (land which belonged to the BSAC but not yet apportioned to particular white settlers) and this forced the Africans to resettle into the demarcated native reserves (Ndumeya, 2019; Nyandoro, 2019; Roder, 1964). Accordingly, the white settlers were mandated to introduce various fees within their land holds and these included grazing fees and dipping fees. As such, Arrighi (1970:211) comments that 'the introduction of the compulsory payments… was the main factor making necessary African participation in the money economy'. As such, most Africans from southern Africa were left with no option but to migrate to South Africa in search of employment opportunities in farms and mines. As a result of such developments, some migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe and other parts of Zimbabwe migrated to South Africa during that time.

**5.3.4 Enactment of the Native Labour Act of 1942**

While informal movements of labour, particularly from certain communities in Zimbabwe, became a culture and was embedded in the social system as found in the Kalanga and Ndau societies, in other societies cross-border movements were not as prominent (Mlambo, 2010). These societies were either far from South Africa or they were comfortable with rural-based livelihoods. Some of these societies might have sent migrant labour to South Africa through the migrant labour system, but it never entailed a large exodus of men. Some interviewees felt that some people decided to work in Zimbabwe. This was noted by one interviewee who said:

There was a choice. Men would work in Bulawayo for a certain period, then return home once they have achieved their targets. Men did not stay at a single job for a long time. They always had the solace of the rural home if they are without jobs. They would return to the reserves to plough and be with their families (Interview with Sibusiso, Pretoria, 2020).

More importantly, the Native Affairs Department (NAD) in Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe was encouraging Africans to produce more to contribute to the economy and, as a result, Africans were not totally dependent on wage labour.

According to Johnson (1992:11):

> Their incomplete separation from their means of production meant that there was some scope for exercising choices as to whether one did or did not engage in wage labour, and if one did, at what time of the year, and for how long.

The Southern Rhodesian/Zimbabwean employers also experienced severe labour shortages, which provided Africans with options. The element of choice emerges in David Johnson's analysis of settler farmers and coerced labour. J. R. Douglas wrote in a letter published in the *Rhodesia Herald* in March 1941, '"Jim Fish" can find work tomorrow if discharged today – or else spend a pleasant week with a 'brother' in someone else's compound.'

However, this changed with the enactment of the Native Labour Act of 1942, which emerged 'as the prize of the farmers' campaign for coerced labour' (Johnson, 1992:128). Zimbabwe's expanding agricultural sector and mining industry demanded an abundance of low wage labour which, locally, could not be provided at the time. This was the case notwithstanding colonial efforts to coerce the African people to sell their labour power by introducing taxes. The African people were also hesitant to work in the mining and agricultural industries, partly because they were still able to produce more than enough agricultural output to meet their growing colonial enforced tax obligations. The colonial authorities then used forced labour, also known as *chibharo*, to meet demands. *Chibharo* made it easier for colonial settlers to obtain low cost labour without the capitation fees tobacco farmers had to pay to recruitment agents to meet their employment needs. The Rhodesia Native Labour Bureau (RNLB) was a government agency that recruited foreign labour and supplied an average of 13,000 workers to employers every year between 1903 and 1933 (see Johnston, 1992; Thebe, 2016).

The compulsory Native labour Act forced Africans to be recruited into gangs that worked for different sectors of the economy. Historically, these farmers relied significantly on inexpensive labour from the Native Reserves and northern colonies, particularly Nyasaland (Johnson,

1992). Africans, on the other hand, had the opportunity to sell their labour in other sectors of the Southern Rhodesian/Zimbabwean economy and the Union of South Africa, or at the very least, to choose when and how long they would work for pay (Johnson, 1992). The majority of Africans preferred to work in South Africa. Mr Peter was of the view:

> *There were better opportunities in South Africa. There were better working conditions. My father was doing domestic work. They established new names there and got married to South African women. The South African wives captured them, some went back to Zimbabwe and some never returned back* (Interview with Mr Peter, Beitbridge, 2020).

African labour had to be integrated into Southern Rhodesia/Zimbabwe's newly formed capitalist mode of production, which had been established through conquest (Johnson, 1992). Overpopulation in native reserves, on the other hand, was caused by discriminatory laws such as the Land Apportionment Act (1931), which prohibited Africans from owning land outside of designated zones (Floyd, 1962; Nyandoro, 2019). According to the Matebeleland Chief Native Commissioners report in 1928, Matabeleland experienced increasing overpopulation and overstocking, resulting in frequent famines and food shortages.

Johnson (1992) argues that the discriminatory policies adopted during the colonial era served two purposes: the subjugation of native Africans through increased competition; and enhancing white supremacy through the appropriation of the means of production. In this regard, Yap (2001:36–37) points out that, 'As the land pressure grew acute and affected the majority of the Ndebele population, many migrated to South Africa for employment in the mines or found work in Bulawayo.' One migrant who was originally from Bulawayo noted that:

> *The people from Matabeleland started to flee to go to South Africa even before colonisation to search for greener pastures but due to the difficult working conditions during the colonial period, the numbers increased. The economic depression led my father to migrate to South Africa because of the deteriorating working conditions in the country* (Interview with Solomon, Pretoria, 2020).

This implies that the early migrants were the harbingers of the present migration patterns between southwestern Zimbabwe and South Africa. These are the necessary links that facilitate contemporary migration patterns between the two nations. In some cases, the early migrations from southwestern Zimbabwe indirectly resulted in some South Africans having family ties

with people from Zimbabwe. This is exemplified by the following revelation from another migrant:

> *My mother's uncle came to South Africa in the 1940s and married a South African woman Makhumalo. He never went back to Zimbabwe. He had five children, three remained in South Africa and two kids went back to Zimbabwe. Automatically they became South Africans* (Interview with Thulani, Pretoria 2020).

Africans reacted hastily to the opportunity to leave their 'traditional' economies and increase their real wages by working in the modern sector (Johnston, 1992). The settler farming community, whose numbers had been boosted by new immigrants hoping to profit from the tobacco price boom, found itself in fierce labour competition with the concurrently growing industrial sector and the Union of South Africa, where African workers had migrated undocumented to get the best possible price for their labour (Johnston, 1992). This points to the fact that people from southwestern Zimbabwe were amongst the people who migrated to South Africa first (Mlambo, 2010). The fact that they shared historical and sociocultural ties enabled them to have human networks and, in some instances, they settled in South Africa before independence. The empirical findings and extant literature on pull and push factors of migration reviewed that the established human networks facilitated the relocation of their kith and kin to South Africa after independence. The fact that (un)documented migrants from Southwest Zimbabwe shared linguistic characteristics with some South African tribes made it easier for them to relocate and assimilate in the host communities.

To avoid conscription, they fled to the Union of South Africa, depriving the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean colony of potential labour. According to Thebe (2016), after the rand was discovered, South Africa used a variety of tactics to target Zimbabweans, including solicitation and limited assimilation. When Africans were warned to report for conscription, this practice was especially visible in Matabeleland, where Native Commissioners observed an increase in southward labour migration (Johnson, 1992; Mlambo, 2010). In Matobo it was estimated that, for every worker hired, five would flee to the Union for a period of two to three years (Johnston, 1992:124). Thus each appeal 'had the effect of driving the outflow of labour to the South'.

One of the migrants, Thulani, noted in an interview that he is a descendant of a migrant to South Africa. The migrant mentioned that his grandfather had told him that they worked under difficult conditions under the *chibharo* system due to shortage of labour at that time across the country. Apart from working under difficult conditions, they were also paid less. Due to such difficult circumstances he migrated to South Africa despite not knowing how things would turn out for him. Forced labour was one of the most reviled and despised policies of colonial rule (Johnston, 1992). Many migrants emigrated to South Africa of their own volition and worked in apartheid factories, farms, and white homes (Mlambo, 2010). Some stayed for as long as five years while others had to spend the rest of their lives in South Africa. The research found that the *chibharo* system of labour (Johnston, 1992) forced people from all parts of the country, for instance a town in Mashonaland which was then called Hartley and which is now Chegutu, to migrate to South Africa. That is why some Shona people managed to acquire South African citizenship.

Many of these migrants who migrated earlier to South Africa managed to settle and thus they differ from migrants who relocated in the late-1990s. A prominent historian, Pathisa Nyathi noted:

> *Migrants who came to South Africa during the '60s to early '90s are different from the latecomers who came in the late-1990s because the focus was on the fight against the apartheid regime and there was a call for black unity because Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia so everyone was considered as the brother in arms, even many people from other countries. However, to work in South Africa after 1994, there is now the economic question where the ANC has been in power for two decades and the economy is not performing well with massive unemployment. There is contestation of resources and failure of the government/politicians to deliver. Foreigners are blamed for all the problems that are being faced. This has led to resistance and some movements that are anti-migration organising themselves which was not the case in the 1960s* (Zoom Interview with Pathisa Nyathi, Zimbabwe, Pretoria, 2020).

During qualitative interviews respondents revealed that the majority of migrants who arrived in South Africa prior to 1994/1995 did so after the country launched a documentation effort in response to Zimbabwean immigration. As a result, they established human networks. Piguet (2018) elaborates on the human networks' perspective of migration, stating that contact with

friends who have already migrated, or members of one's immediate or extended family are valuable resources that facilitate and encourage migration. The early migrators' facilitation of family ties, friendships, and other types of connection laid the groundwork for luring migrants to South Africa in this regard.

### 5.3.5 The Matabeleland conflict of the 1980s

Conflict that happened in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces in the 1980s is another push factor of cross-border migration to South Africa. Respondents of this study reiterated that ethnic-based conflict and underdevelopment in Matabeleland forced people from Southwest Zimbabwe to migrate to South Africa. The migrants also noted that structural violence and systematic neglect, and deprivation of needs forced people from Matabeleland to migrate to South Africa for the purposes of safety and seeking employment.

**Figure 5.2: The Fifth Brigade operations in Matabeleland**
Source: Zimbabwean National Archives/PA

The ethnic-based conflict was referred to as Gukurahundi which translates as 'the rain that washes away the chaff before the spring rains' (CCJP and LRF, 1997:45). The massacre was a state-sanctioned violent campaign against perceived enemies of the new government (Moyo, 2017:89). Scholars argue that 'the Gukurahundi violence was predicated on ethnicity and party-politics' (Dzimiri et al., 2014:230). As such the ZANU-PF government was concerned with creating a one-party state by destroying its rival: ZAPU. Further to that, the ZANU-PF-led

government wanted to maintain its hegemony and wipe away the Ndebele speaking people in Southwest Zimbabwe (Musemwa, 2006). In January 1983, the Zimbabwean army's Fifth Brigade was deployed into Matabeleland and the Midlands, reporting only to the Prime Minister (Alexander, 1998; Moyo, 2017). The Fifth Brigade was formed as a result of an agreement signed in October 1980 between Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and North Korean President Kim Il Sung to train a special unit of the Zimbabwean army. Its mandate was to 'deal with dissidents and any other problems that may arise in the country' (Moyo, 2017:89). During the Gukurahundi massacre thousands of civilians from Midlands and Matabeleland lost their lives whilst others were tortured (CCJP and LRF, 1997; Eppel, 2004; Jocelyn, 2021). The horrendous conflict created divisions, anger, and hatred among the Ndebele and Shona speaking people.

Following the deaths of over 20,000 civilians in Matabeleland, the Fifth Brigade left a trail of trauma (Muzondidya and Ndlovu Gatsheni, 2007). The massacre undermined peace and human security in the Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. As a result, many ethnic Ndebele and other minorities had to flee and seek refuge in South Africa. According to Moyo (2017), the migration included both former Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) combatants and civilians who had been targeted by the state. Scholarship on the conflict points to the fact that *Gukurahundi* intensified the victims' awareness of being non-Shona and their sense of not being part of Zimbabwe (Alexander et al., 2000; Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007; 2008). According to Takaindisa (2021), 'this sparked a wave of emigration from Zimbabwe of Ndebele people fleeing ethnic violence.' The study participants reiterated that the Gukurahundi pogrom led to the massive migration of people from Southwest Zimbabwe to different parts of South Africa. The migrants and key informants noted that existence of family ties, friendships and other social networks established links that are still useful in contemporary migration.

Such views find an echo and are corroborated in the extant literature on migration. To buttress this, Makina (2012) discovered that many migrants from Zimbabwe identified the Gukurahundi massacre as the reason they moved to South Africa in his study on Zimbabweans in the inner city of Johannesburg. Scholarship on this cross-border migration is still scanty, although its components influence contemporary migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa. According to Sisulu et al., (2007) the bulk of the refugees assimilated into South African culture as a result of their prior linguistic and cultural ties to South Africans, particularly *isiZulu*-speaking South

Africans (Sisulu et al., 2007). Such views also emerged in interviews with key individuals. A prominent Ndebele historian said:

> *Following Gukurahundi many people from southwestern Zimbabwe fled to South Africa as they were finding homage, solace, and acceptance there amongst relatives who were already in South Africa. The Gukurahundi implanted an attitude in many people from Matabeleland; they felt that they were not accepted in Zimbabwe on tribal grounds/basis. There was a refugee camp at Tukwe and it remained there until 1992. These attitudes remain in people from Matetebeleland – an unwanted people – they continue to stay there* (Interview with Pathisa Nyathi, Zimbabwe, 2020).

Zack et al., (2019:16) posit that 'many of the refugees were able to integrate into South African society due to the historical language and cultural affinities – in particular with *isiZulu*-speaking South Africans'. This reveals that the migrants during the *Gukurahundi* period were forced migrants, hence the use of the term 'refugees'. It is noteworthy also that the destination for most of the migrants was South Africa. By and large, as the massacres ostensibly targeted 'dissidents' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008), this infers that among the people who migrated into South Africa, were former war combatants of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA).

The fact that these former war combatants had connections with the African National Congress (ANC) party of South Africa, is noteworthy. Yap (2001:50) reveals that 'in 1967 the South African ANC approached ZAPU with a proposal for joint operations' and that ZAPU agreed to the proposal. Therefore, this relationship between ZAPU and the ANC cushioned the forced migration of the Ndebele into South Africa and made it easier for the latter to be assimilated as they had connections at ethnic, political, and military levels. This was highlighted by this excerpt following an interview that the South African History Archive (SAHA) carried out with Abraham Nkiwane (a former senior ZAPU member) in 2010:

> The relationship between ZAPU and ANC is believed to have started with the relationship between Nkomo and Oliver Tambo which dated back to Nkomo's days in South Africa in the 1940s. The relationship between ZIPRA and Umkonto we Sizwe (military wing of ANC) originally was to escort the latter to travel across Zimbabwe from Zambia into South Africa. The Umkonto we Sizwe (MK) cadres attacked the Rhodesian army only in defence,

that is, when there was a confrontation. When Zimbabwe got independence the ANC Cadres still needed assistance, for example they needed to be helped to cross Zimbabwe with their weapons and enter South Africa. In 1986, there was agreement on the clandestine movement of arms to South Africa through Zimbabwe, though life for ANC members in Zimbabwe continued to be difficult and highly dangerous.
Abraham Nkiwane, provided safe-house accommodation to people working for ANC intelligence, who were visited by their boss, Jacob Zuma, while Akim Ndlovu (commander of ZIPRA) provided accommodation to MK people, working under Joe Modise (Commander in Chief of MK), as did Sam Fakazi Moyo. He mentioned the use by MK of houses in the Bulawayo suburbs of Trenance, Emajwini and Rangemore. Three people, including Kevin Woods and Philip Conjwayo, were found guilty of planting a bomb in a house in Trenance in 1988. They remained in prison in Zimbabwe until 2006.

**Figure 5.3: The relationship between ZAPU and the ANC: The Abraham Nkiwane case**
Source: South African History Archive, 2010

The interview excerpt establishes that mobility between South Africans and people from Matabeleland South influenced political and military ties which dated back to the migration of Joshua Nkomo into South Africa. Such a complex relationship was handy in the mass migration of the people in southwestern Zimbabwe during the *Gukurahundi* period as the people were assimilated into the South African community for the host community empathizing and identifying with them.

The researchers noted that most people who were affected by *Gukurahundi* were the ZIPRA guerrillas who were inviting many of them to cross the border into South Africa. Some of them joined what was called ‘super-ZAPU’, a South African destabilising group. Some used their relationship with Umkhonto weSizwe (MK) comrades to cross over and find refuge in South Africa (Macmillan,2017; Temu and Tembe, 2020). Since the country had no refugee camps, this infers that these people mingled with ordinary South African citizens making it difficult to identify them as they would have spoken Ndebele which is similar to Zulu, one of the main languages in South Africa. This made it easy for these migrants to assimilate into South African communities as I will discuss in depth in chapter six.

While none of the former ZIPRA cadres that were affected by the conflict in Matabeleland participated in this study, some migrants knew some of those who had established themselves in South Africa. Some of the migrants who participated in this study had close relationships with these individuals and had even migrated to South Africa through the assistance of these individuals, who were Zimbabwean by origin and South African by residence. Khulisani Moyo, 35 years old, and from Plumtree is an example of a migrant who joined his uncle, who had migrated to South Africa following the *Gukurahundi* operations in Matabeleland. His uncle, who holds South African citizenship, has a house in Yeoville in Johannesburg and is married to a woman from KwaZulu-Natal.

### 5.3.6 Post-independence disillusionment in southwestern Zimbabwe

Another aspect of Ndebele migration to South Africa, one that Thebe (2013) refers to, is the phenomenon of citizen disengagement from the state. There are perceptions of neglect of the region by the government, which many saw as favouring Shona-dominated regions. Thebe (2013) related to this as a quest for belonging. Others have alluded to feelings of disenfranchisement and of not feeling part of Zimbabwe. In an article, entitled 'Discipline and disengagement: Cross-border migration and the quest for identity among the Ndebele of southwestern Zimbabwe', Thebe (2013) referred to the unresolved Matabeleland development question. This issue has also surfaced in many platforms and has been the bedrock of the rise of radical movements and organisations in the regions, including calls for the Mthwakazi Republic.

After the Unity Accord of December 1987 which was signed between ZANU PF and ZAPU to end the *Gukurahundi* atrocities, Thebe (2011:653) notes that 'a crisis of expectation developed among the rural and urban populace'. Musemwa (2006), in his article on the problem of water in the Matabeleland city of Bulawayo, also highlighted neglect and deliberate under-development of the city.

> Although Zimbabwe's independence from Britain in 1980 technically abolished the racially and economically discriminatory access to water for the poor people of Bulawayo and Makokoba Township, in particular, it did not result in greater water security. Due to both the post-independence status in Zimbabwe and the city of Bulawayo's natural biological circumstances, water crises continued there frequently. The MDC won every urban parliamentary seat and nearly every municipal ward in the 2001 elections, which resulted in the appointment of an opposition-party mayor to lead

> the Municipality. From 1980 to 1992, the Municipality engaged in constant disputes with the Bulawayo City Council over control of the water supply. Over time, as these conflicts intensified, they caused severe artificial water shortages (Musemwa, 2006:23).

There were three water catastrophes. The first one happened between 1982 and 1984 and was followed by the 1986/87 catastrophe after the central government accused the dissidents – a group that was linked with ZAPU – of wanting to overthrow ZANU-PF after it had won the 1980 elections(Musemwa, 2006). Thus, water shortages were used as a political weapon by the central government to punish the region. The central government ensured that the City Council's appeals for supplementary sources of water were not granted. The government failed to allocate resources or approve funding for water development projects in Matebeleland and no dams were built between 1982 and 1987. The third water crisis occurred between 1991 and 1992 after the state had instructed the Bulawayo Council to report all matters concerning water issues, to disempower the council on all water issues under their authority (Musemwa, 2006).

People's dissatisfaction with the slow pace of growth manifested itself in feelings of past and present abandonment, as well as ethnic discrimination, according to migrants interviewed for this study. Nonetheless, the derailment of national development was attributed to the failure of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme in early-1990s, which caused some ripple effects which were felt into the late-1990s (Bird and Shepherd, 2003; Kanyenze, 2009). On the other hand, Mtetwa et al. (2013:32) argues:

> Socio-economic marginalisation, stigma, and discrimination go hand in glove with socio-economic marginalisation of the population… This marginalisation can be due to political beliefs, ethnicity and religion. Coming three years after a protracted struggle for liberation, the civil strife in the early 1980s was cited as one of the major stumbling blocks to the development of Matabeleland South...

Due to this disillusionment, Eppel (2013) points out that lack of development is a characteristic of southwestern Zimbabwe and that the area is a stronghold for opposition politics.

### 5.4 Circular/clandestine migration and its implications

For many years, ethnic Ndebele, Khalanga, and other ethnic minorities from the southwest of Zimbabwe have been migrating clandestinely to South Africa and Botswana, though the literature on this movement is scarce (Moyo, 2021). Migrating to South Africa provided a way out of poverty as the region contains some of the country's most arid and drought-prone lands (Hungwe, 2013). It was also a way of entering manhood (Mlambo, 2010). According to Maphosa (2010) and Moyo (2017), migration from Matebeleland to South Africa and Botswana has persisted due to close kinship ties with the Ndebele, Zulu and Swazi in South Africa as well as the Khalanga and Tswana in Botswana.

A migrant has contributed to this:

> *The Ndebele people are the ones who migrated to South Africa first and as the crisis in Zimbabwe worsened more people from the other parts of Zimbabwe started migrating too. Apart from the fact that there is a historical, socio-linguistic and cultural relationship, people from Matabeleland came to South Africa because of the proximity, they were closer. When looking at migration, one of the things you need to consider is the costs and benefit implications. This allowed them to go back and forth easily and quickly* (Interview with Dr Gugulethu Ncube, Pretoria, 2020).

This study argues that migrants from southwest Zimbabwe were able to establish relationships with local ethnic groups as a result of the early migration.

At various times in the history of Zimbabwean migration trends differed, which makes it difficult to form any generalisations. However, a key observation is that formal cross-border movements from Zimbabwe dominated before the 2000s, and that Zimbabweans crossing into South Africa mostly did so legally. In the 1980s and 1990s, migration was mostly circular and 'purpose specific'. Literature has covered this early migration, highlighting the migration intentions and time often spent in South Africa (Muzvidziwa, 1998, 2000; Zinyama, 2002). Early migration involved both women and men, although women dominated the migrant population (Muzvidziwa, 2000; Zinyama, 2002). When they migrated to South Africa to sell wares and purchase goods, these migrants also established social networks in South Africa. The networks that developed, and the implications of these networks on the migration flood experienced in the 2000s in particular, as well as managing immigration from Zimbabwe, have

received little or no consideration. Even the possibility that early migration and the networks formed within South African society could have negatively affected the state's ability to manage migration from Zimbabwe was never factored into policy, although these migrants later returned to Zimbabwe.

### 5.4.1 Cross-border trading by entrepreneurial individuals

The study shows that cross-border trade consisted mainly of entrepreneurial individuals, who exploited the peaceful environment to explore trading opportunities in both Zimbabwe and neighbouring countries. Among these were members of the *Bapostori*, one of the largest religious sects in Zimbabwe that also has a large following in Botswana. This religious sect is generally entrepreneurial and dominates informal sector activities, including buying and selling. They mainly travel to Botswana:

> *Because of the proximity to Botswana, early migrants sourced their wares from that country, many engaging in one-day return trips, mainly to Francistown, where they would buy electrical gadgets and other goods that were not available in Zimbabwe. For a new nation, emerging from isolation, foreign goods provided an attraction* (Interview with Janet Munakamwe, Pretoria, 2020).

These Bapostori, mainly because of their networks in Botswana, also started smuggling goods between Botswana and Zimbabwe. The study learned of the popular coffin scandal, where a group of Bapostori, masquerading as mourners repatriating a body from Botswana, were caught with electrical goods smuggled in the coffin which was supposed to be transporting the corpse to Zimbabwe.

While members of the sect dominated the cross-border trade business, they were often joined by other people who used cross-border trading as a strategy to support their families. One of these women is Mama Thatho, a 59-year-old married woman and mother of three: two daughters aged 35 and 15 and a son aged 30. Her eldest daughter is married and works in Canada. Her only dependent child is her 15-year-old daughter in grade nine. In 1992, she was doing cross-border trading in Namibia and Botswana. She would travel to Gaborone in Botswana and then hitchhike from there to Windhoek and Walvis Bay in Namibia where she would sell her wares.

With the availability of transport, the South African route opened up and Zimbabweans, even from as far as Harare, started travelling to buy wares in South Africa. Some would use the train service. This was highlighted in an interview by Mama Thato, who indicated that her cross-border trips to South Africa were mostly done by train. This allowed her to carry large quantities of goods on any single trip. These trips were different from the Botswana trips as the journey took more days, with travellers forced to either spend nights in public spaces, or other forms of lodging. Mama Thatho, for example, stopped cross-border trading to Botswana and Namibia and started cross-border trading to South Africa between 1994 and 1998. She did her trading in Cape Town and Pretoria. Mama Thato, sitting in her well-furnished house, making embroidered table clothes to sell locally (see Figure 5.4), narrated these experiences with great cheer, peppering her accounts with English and Ndebele.

**Figure 5.4: Mama Thato embroidering a tablecloth**
Source: Researcher's fieldwork, 2020

Migrants who were interviewed for this research mentioned that they had tended to come to South Africa for a certain period to sell their goods and going back home again before they decided to settle in South Africa permanently due to the difficult economic and social conditions in Zimbabwe. Some had relatives (mostly early migrants) who could host them during these trading visits, while others established new contacts which became key contact points, like their business. They would sell their goods for a week to several months depending on their visa. Afterwards they would go back with cash or they would buy goods, especially electrical and mechanical gadgets like radios, TV's, cell phones, solar panels, computer disks;

but also clothing *(mazambia*), jerseys, footwear, textiles; medicine; and even motor vehicle parts to sell back at home in Zimbabwe (see also Musemwa, 2001).

One area of interest is the gendered nature of cross-border trading, with women dominating in terms of the numbers that were captured. The number of cross-border women traders started to increase in the early-1980s according to the literature (Cheater and Gaidzanwa,1996; Muzvidziwa, 1998, 2010). According to the SAMP National Household Survey from 1997, only 32% of men travelled to South Africa for shopping or to buy and sell items, compared to 65% of women. At the time, the majority of cross-border travels to South Africa were circular and relatively sporadic, albeit they did have a distinctly gendered flavour. Women cross-border traders spent substantially less time in South Africa than men. As illustrated in Fig. 5.5, 87% of women stayed for less than a month, compared to 57% of men. Thus, the gendered makeup of the official economy contributed to women's dominance in the informal economy since it was thought that most males would not be able to deal with the kinds of challenges that cross-border trading entailed.

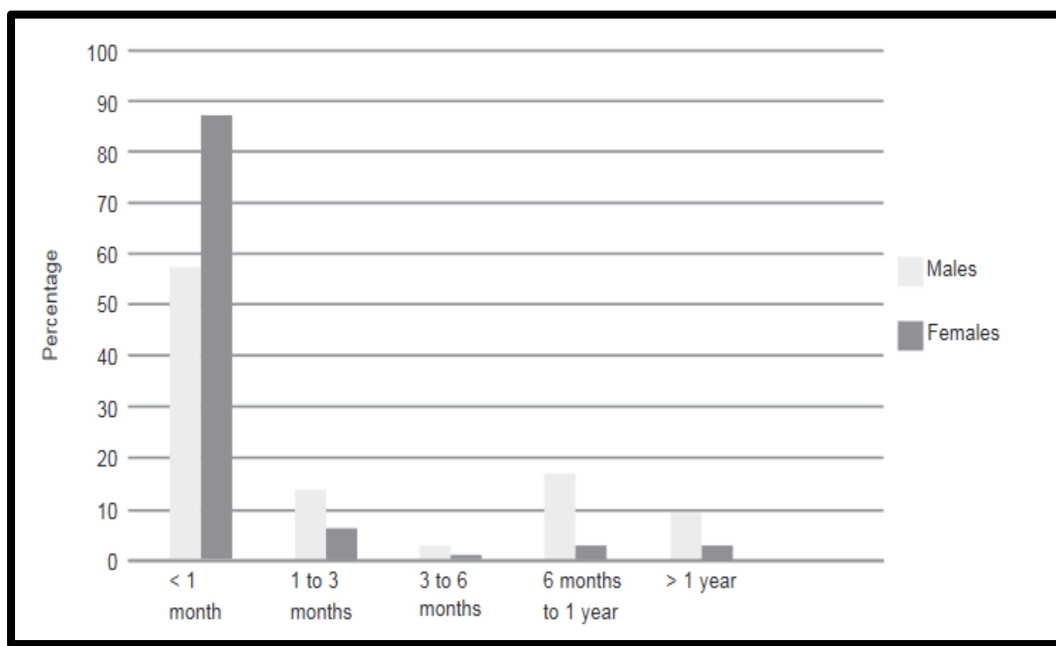


**Figure 5.5: A diagrammatical representation of the length of stay in South Africa**
Source: Muzvidziwa, 2001

As observed in Muzvidziwa (2001:85) it was common among these migrant traders for the women to sell what in Zimbabwe is called '*madoiri*', a set of homemade covers for lounge and dining room furniture. Some were trading in homemade bedding materials.

Men, who joined the cross-border trade were known to trade in different products from those that were traded by women. They often brought crafts like souvenirs and curios from Zimbabwe to sell to residents and businesses in South Africa. Stone sculptures and woodcarvings were among the craft items available. These products were very popular among tourists, and traders often targeted tourist attractions. They also would display their wares on the road to attract passing motorists. The migrants often landed up overstaying and even migrating clandestinely. These people established networks that became useful, especially when the Zimbabwean situation deteriorated. The Zimbabweans who settled back in Zimbabwe also managed to start their informal businesses. Some of the migrants noted how they had managed to survive and even establish themselves in South Africa.

### 5.4.2 Establishment of relations through selling in South Africa

For most of these migrants developing relationships was made easy because of their understanding of the local languages. Language proficiency was important in cross-border trade operations as it enabled migrant traders to blend in well with their customers. As a key to any good relationship, communication essential in building customer relationships. Migrants noted that, rather than just telling customers about their business, they had conversations with them. They would share about their lives and, as highlighted, this was made easy by local language proficiency. Hence, in some cases, they would find that they were related in some way or that they had shared socio-cultural ties between them. This made it easy for them to find homage and acceptance in these societies.

Gugulethu highlighted that *isiNdebele* helped her to interact with the locals as it made communication very easy. In some instances, South Africans would buy her stuff because 'she was their own'. She also noted that, in her lodging place at one point, she shared a name with the landlord's child which made them develop more close relations up to today. Gugu noted:

> *The landlord would refer to me as her child because we shared a name with her daughter, although I was a bit younger than her. On top of that, we spoke the same language that is Zulu, although it was a bit different because mine was isiNdebele* (Interview with Gugu, Pretoria, 2020).

The way that migrants conducted their business, mainly by offering credit and collecting the money when they visit again, meant that relationships developed with the local South Africans. For instance, Mama Thato noted:

> *When I came to sell my goods, at times, I would leave my regular customers with credit. However, I usually did this when I would have gotten back money that allowed me to purchase more stock because it was pointless to return all the way to Zimbabwe with goods that I could as well leave and collect my money later* (Interview with Mama Thato, Pretoria, 2020).

It is also possible that some women ended up establishing families in South Africa, given the frequency of visits and duration of the trading journeys. Gugu, for example, is now married to her South African husband who is in his late-40s and they have three children.

Participants in this research noted that their relationship with their customers was based on trust to the extent that they in some cases shared meals with them and would be hosted by them in their houses. They took them in as family because they had managed to establish some form of relationship. In other cases, migrants paid a fixed daily or weekly boarding rate, generally in kind. The relationship that existed allowed them to bring their clients' beloved food items from Zimbabwe which were not readily available in the food markets of their hosts (see also Muzvidziwa, 1998). Nthambiso highlighted that this is how some South African households came to appreciate the Zimbabwean Mazoe crush.

The other factor which contributed to the establishment of the networks was the fact that these entrepreneurs would impress customers by exceeding their expectations in terms of service delivery which would keep them coming back for more. To this end Nthambiso noted:

> *Customers expected great products from me. Hence, I would continue to raise the bar on what I would offer* (Interview with Nthambiso, Pretoria, 2020).

This led to the formation of connections and also of long-time customers. After a certain number of years, customers would be rewarded with a discount on their next purchase.

All the migrants who were involved in this clandestine migration in the research noted that establishing contacts and relationships with South Africans was effective in several ways, for

example, in cutting costs during their stay in South Africa as traders. It also helped when the Zimbabwean socio-economic and political situation deteriorated. According to the study, human networks showed migrants the potential of relocating to other places. Furthermore, contact with South Africans and early migrants allowed them to see that they would be better off somewhere other than their current residence (Hugo, 1993). For example, Mdudusi managed to make friends when he used to come and sell goods in South Africa. He stopped operations in 2006 when he decided to open a college in collaboration with his South African friend in the Pretoria CBD. He noted that these networks helped him to save and reduce living expenses upon arrival in South Africa as his friend offered him a room in which to stay before he managed to secure his own place.

### 5.5 Cross-border migration post-2000 from Zimbabwe to South Africa

Cross-border migration into neighbouring countries became more prevalent since 2000 in Zimbabwe (Accord, 2021; Crush, 2005; IOM, 2010; Tati, 2008). This is largely due to a combination of factors which includes but is not limited to economic crisis and political turmoil. In the early-2000s, political violence forced people to migrate clandestinely to South Africa. Due to the economic hardships in the country (particularly in 2008), many people from Zimbabwe, including Southwest Zimbabwe, migrated to South Africa in search of better living and working opportunities. The push factors were job losses, high unemployment rate, political turmoil, and a hyperinflationary environment. However, the massive influx of Zimbabwean migrants to South Africa triggered xenophobic violence in 2008 and 2015 (Crush, et al., 2017). Gracious, one of the informants in this study, emphasised that migrating to South Africa was a necessity as there was no way to earn sufficient income in Zimbabwe. She bemoaned the fact that the post-colonial government has been neglecting the Ndebele speaking people. In her view, Matabeleland has always been lagging behind in terms of development. She reiterated that, even if things (both political and economic) were to be fixed in Zimbabwe, Matabeleland would never be taken seriously because it had never been.

Her sentiments were also shared by other informants of this study. One key informant revealed that she was sceptical of the country's long-term economic stability. She further noted:

> *Even if the political and economic circumstances were to change overnight, southwest Zimbabwe has been neglected and unconsidered for a long time and I cannot trust my*

*life and that of my children to an uncertain economic and political future* (Interview with Dr Gugulethu Ncube, Pretoria, 2020).

Thebe (2011:653) argues that it was this sense of abandonment, which developed in the context of perennial crop failures, a semi-proletarian culture, economic uncertainty, and a long history of labour export and migration networks in South Africa, that set the stage for Ndebele people to migrate to South Africa, where they felt homage and acceptance. Participants of this study concurred that political unrest and economic meltdown pushed migrants to migrate to South Africa since 2000 to the present. Further to that, participants also noted that contemporary migration is being influenced by these historical incidents. Such views were shared by one key informant who said:

Following the formation of the MDC in 2000, many people from southwest Zimbabwe moved to the diaspora, such as Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, South Africa, and several other countries. Many people migrated to South Africa, however, taking advantage of the long history and shared relationships that allowed them to be absorbed in South African communities due to common history, language, and cultures. All of this benefited the people of southern Zimbabwe (Interview with Pathisa Nyati Zimbabwe, 2020).

Mehluli, one of the migrants, arrived in Pretoria in 2001. At the age of 62, he was one of the oldest interviewees He was a victim of political violence. His son was an MDC activist who fled Zimbabwe in search of work. A group of ZANU-PF men came to Mehluli's house to intimidate him about a week after his son had left. They returned to his house and knocked on the door, but he did not open it. They threatened to burn him if he did not open for them. He went out to face them, and he noticed some familiar faces in the crowd.

The ZANU-PF men warned him that if he did not bring his son, he would be severely punished. He had no idea where his son was. That is when he decided to move to South Africa to be with his brothers who had already settled there. The migrant narrated that he had to leave his house at midnight and that he walked for a very long distance. Jones (2010) also mentions how the Zimbabwean economy was operating under a *Kukiya-kiya* logic during this period, with Zimbabweans resorting to unruly and extraordinary strategies to make a living in an abnormal situation. Other issues arose as a result of the deterioration of state services, such as healthcare.

Female migration from Zimbabwe further increased from 39% in 1997 to 44% in 2005, according to Crush et al. (2015:367). There was a relative fall in younger and older migrants, with a higher proportion of the latter. In 2005, 50% of all migrants visited South Africa for six months or longer, an increase from the 16% that was recorded in 1997 (ibid:371).

### 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter traced the historical incidents of cross-border migration in contemporary migration into South Africa. The chapter generally focused on historical incidents which fostered the three main types of migration in Zimbabwe: formal, informal, and clandestine migration. The chapter argues that the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part of the country was a political and economic phenomenon whereby the migrants were compelled to sojourn into South Africa due to their survival instinct, to satisfy both their subsistence and discretionary needs which had not been met by either the colonial regime or the post-independence government. As such, during the colonial era, the Zimbabweans were pushed to migrate to South Africa to work in mining fields. The major motivating factors were better working conditions and wages. Inversely, the Rhodesian/Zimbabwean mines offered lower wages, as well as unconducive and oppressive working conditions. Therefore, Zimbabweans migrated to South Africa despite the dangers which accompanied the journey. Nevertheless, migrating to South Africa became regarded as a rite of passage by the people whereby it was like an initiation into manhood through proof of prowess, a relic custom from Nguni practices (Mlambo, 2010).

Zimbabweans enrolled in the South African mines either formally, through the recruitment agencies such as WNLA, or informally, through their own agency. In the case of the southwestern part of Zimbabwe, land appropriation by the white settlers deprived the native people of their livelihoods which were centralised on agrarian practices. The generally infertile lands of the native reserves, and the resultant overpopulation and overstocking, pushed the people, particularly young men, to migrate to South Africa. Besides the Witwatersrand mines, the Mussina Copper Mines was another destination for mine workers from Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. This mine mostly catered for the people who lived along the border and it is of significance to the study that people crossed the border through this informal migration to work in the mine.

In the 1980s, the human network systems which were laid down by the early emigrants to South Africa became very significant for the refugees from Matabeleland South. The post-independence government deployed a crack-down unit of the army, known as the Fifth Brigade, ostensibly to quell some dissident activities in this part of the country (Alexander, 1998; Moyo, 2017). However, this resulted in thousands of people being displaced and killed, among other atrocities that were meted upon the people (Alexander, 1998). Thousands of young people, including ZIPRA ex-combatants, fled the country into South Africa. The connections with the South Africans, oiled through ethnic ties and other social relationships, cushioned the migration of the people into South Africa. Of great significance to the study is the layered human networks which also resulted from all forms of migration that were discussed in this chapter and which also helped the migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa from the early-2000s to the present. These contemporary migrants were mostly pushed away by political instability and economic turmoil in the country. Therefore, owing to the interaction between Zimbabwean emigrants in South Africa and the anticipating emigrants, border management between the two countries became a challenge. The linkage is a pull factor that compels the anticipating emigrant to migrate despite any border impediment. The following chapter discusses the human social networks that facilitate migration from Southwest Zimbabwe to Sunnyside in Pretoria.

# CHAPTER SIX

# HUMAN SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION OF ZIMBABWE’S SOUTH WESTERNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the role of human social networks in influencing migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest part into South Africa. It interrogates the role and influence of enduring socio-cultural and linguistic ties in facilitating the migration process, the dynamics, and the flow of Zimbabweans from the southwestern parts as they go to work and reside in South African communities. The chapter further examines how these ties intersect to fuel migration and subsequent assimilation and integration into South African communities, specifically in Sunnyside in Pretoria. The chapter draws on empirical data derived from qualitative research explained previously in the methodology chapter. It proceeds as follows: In the first sections I present the historical ties that exists between the ethnic and linguistic groups in both South Africa and Zimbabwe before engaging with empirical explanations of how these groups have formed enduring and binding ties that facilitate migration. In doing so, I interrogate how and in what ways the human social networks carved along socio-cultural and linguistic background continue to influence not only the migration but also the settling, assimilation and integration of Southwestern Zimbabweans within South African communities.

## 6.2 Genealogy of the ties

The narrative of South Africa’s porous borders is often deployed to describe the physical conditions of the border and the ease at which people and goods enter the country clandestinely by exploiting what has either been termed smart entry methods or dirty entry methods. Others have used examples of people smuggling syndicates to explain the porous borders. Thebe and Maombere (2019) have used an alternative, but equally effective explanation, namely ‘negotiating the border’. While the border may be porous in a physical sense, the narrative of a porous border in configurative terms speaks to the complexity of the border. This complexity has been explained in some literature in terms of the socio-linguistic ties between ethnic groups in South Africa and its neighbouring countries.

The complexity could also be found in neighbouring countries like Botswana and Zimbabwe, not to mention Lesotho and Swaziland, which are annexures of South Africa. This has often been blamed on colonial borders, which indiscriminately located the same tribal groups in different countries. The South African and Zimbabwe situation was further complicated by the migration of the Ndebele under King Mzilikazi Khumalo from Zululand, his capture and assimilation of the Swati, Sotho, Pedi, Ndebele and Tswana ethnic groups within the South African territory, and the resettlement of the Thembu in Zimbabwe in the post-war period (Lindgren, 2002). Because of these processes, the socio-cultural and linguistic linkages between South African groups and some Zimbabwean enmities run deeper into the Zimbabwean hinterland. This adds to the situation of Venda which, although it was divided by colonial borders, the Venda people in South Africa and Zimbabwe managed to maintain their strong links (Rutherford and Addison, 2007).

Having examined historical incidents of migration to South Africa, particularly from Southwestern Zimbabwe, this chapter provides an analysis of the socio-cultural and linguistic relationships between some Zimbabwean and South African groups, and the complexity that these socio-cultural and linguistic ties pose for managing migration from Zimbabwe. As will be shown, these socio-cultural and linguistic ties make it easy for migrants from the southwest of the country to integrate and assimilate into South African society. Except for Mlambo (2010), Rutherford and Addison (2007), and Thebe (2013), research and policy on Zimbabwean migration have ignored the complexity of this dimension. Instead, the debate has focused on the economic motive, casually grouping all Zimbabwean migrants together as economic migrants, and claiming that some have fraudulently acquired citizenship through corrupt immigration officials. This ignores the process of facilitation and assistance by South African citizens as identified by Thebe (2013), which was popular among the Zulu.

This chapter broadens our understanding of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa by focusing on the socio-cultural and linguistic elements, which allow these migrants to easily identify with and assimilate into South African society. It also departs from the economic migrant argument and identifies these linkages and relationships as a motivation for migration. This is captured in Thebe (2013)'s explanation of citizen disengagement and the search for belonging. The thrust of this chapter is to integrate these factors as both the pull and push

factors of Ndebele emigration by highlighting the socio-cultural linkages between the Ndebele and South African ethnic groups, particularly the South African Venda, Sotho, Ndebele and Zulu ethnic groups. The survivalist mindset which migrants have demonstrated in this research will also be explored and broken down into evasive, strategic, resilient, and extra-legal characteristics. This is portrayed by examining the Zimbabwean migration from a socio-cultural perspective and moving away from the usual economic migrant narrative.

I posit that the underlying factors, which led Southwest Zimbabwe to be the major emigrant-sending region in Zimbabwe, could only be explained through sociocultural intertwinements. It is noteworthy that the early migrants from this region seeded familial ties, which contribute to the pull factors for emigrants from this region. In this regard, kinship relationships play a significant role in the migration of Zimbabweans from certain regions in Zimbabwe. Ethnic ties, as heralded by shared languages between some South African groups and the people from the southwestern regions of Zimbabwe, are instrumental in creating a conducive habitus for the emigrants to integrate, and be assimilated, into South African societies.

The above linkages between some Zimbabwean ethnic groups and their South African counterparts contribute to diminishing the concept of emigration management through the establishment of borders since this may be perceived as deprivation measures on their part to the right of travel without such restrictions (see Rutherford and Addison, 2007). This creates border management problems as the emigrants would always devise ways to overcome these restrictions to travel into South Africa. This is particularly more common amongst migrants who migrated to South Africa post-2010, due to the imposition of stricter laws that govern the border. The Beitbridge border has therefore become more complex to manage as migrants have resorted to using illegal ways to negotiate the border, as will be discussed in chapter 7.

### 6.2.1 The Zulu and Ndebele cultural linkages

To establish the link between migrants from certain regions in Zimbabwe and some South African ethnic groups who share ethnonyms, socio-cultural and linguistic relationships (Mlambo, 2010; Moyo, 2016), it is relevant to look at the history that led to the movement of population from South Africa into Zimbabwe before the establishment of colonial borders. This history creates challenges of identity and association. It also revolves around why certain sections of the Zimbabwean population identify with South Africa. As such, they view their

presence in South Africa as historically tied. Some relate to South Africa as their home, while others lay claims to South Africa through heredity.

#### 6.2.1.1 The history of the Ndebele

Apart from wars of occupation, other important developments in history around conflicts over land, territory, grazing pastures, clanship, chieftaincy, cattle, wives, and various other natural resource wealth saw the mass migration of communities. Such trends also help to explain the mobility of ethnic groups across African societies. This was evident in the mobility of groups of people owing to the Mfecane/Difaqane wars which ushered in political and demographic upheavals in the eastern region of South Africa in the early-1800s (Hamilton, 1995). This had a huge impact on the demographic makeup of the region between the Limpopo and the Zambezi, as well as in areas beyond that (Mlambo, 2010). In many ways, the consequences of this unfortunate episode in history have relevance to the present. According to Mlambo (2010), some people blame the Mfecane/Difaqane and the ensuing depopulation of vast tracts of land in the interior of South Africa on the Zulus and their leader, Shaka, with their ambitious nation-building activities (Hamilton, 1995). Others have criticised this perspective as self-serving historical fiction and justification to support white colonisation of the interior for having been ‘empty’ when they got there, due to the Mfecane/Difaqane (Mlambo, 2010). They blame trade, environmental deterioration, drought, and the expansion of white colonisation for the population spread.

The Mfecane/Difaqane caused northward population shifts in Zimbabwe, with far-reaching political and demographic implications (Mlambo:2010:02). The Ndebele are descendants of Mzilikazi, who left the Zulu Kingdom in the 1800s (Peiress, 1981). While they settled in the short term in several areas in South Africa, including what is presently known as Tshwane, they eventually settled permanently in the northwestern parts of the Zimbabwean Plateau in the 1830s, where they established the Mthwakazi Kingdom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Cobbing (1974) claims that the Ndebele, who now live in Matabeleland North and South, Bulawayo, and parts of the Midlands, crossed the Drakensberg into the country north of the Vaal River in about 1822 and continued northwards into modern Matabeleland (western Zimbabwe) between 1837 and 1841, despite the encroachment of Boers from the south (ibid).

While the settlement led to the establishment of the Ndebele nation, incorporating several other ethnic groups, they maintained the Nguni culture and did not lose their identity as southerners (Mujere, 2019). The Ndebele kingdom was divided into three distinct groups, which have often been described as castes: the Mzansi as an upper class of those who originated from Zululand; the Enhla, comprising incorporated groups like the Swazis, Basotho, Bapedi and Batswana; and the Hole, comprising of ethnic groups found on the Zimbabwean plateau (Dube, 2015; Mazarire, 2003). In essence, what was identified as a caste system was an identifier of where groups originated. The 'pure' Ndebele identified themselves as those from the south, and those who were incorporated on the way were identifies as those found in the west (Enhla), and those who were incorporated into the kingdom in Zimbabwe as Hole, which means 'those that are led' (*ukuholwa*) (Lye, 1969; Mazarire, 2003).

The Ndebele was a proud nation, and the aristocratic class (the Mzansi) proudly referred to their origin and as being Nguni, while the Enhla are believed to have easily associated with Nguni groups, particularly the Swati and Shangani. The pride of being Ndebele and an aristocratic Mzansi has remained a major trait with the present generation, which still prides itself on its Nguni ancestry. According to one informant:

> *…this is further reinforced by the general Ndebele public – those who understand the history – who often praise people known to belong to certain Ndebele lineage, mainly because they present this rich heritage, or because their forefathers were heroes. People from the Khumalo clan are often referred to as 'Ndlangamandla', in reference to their King Mzilikazi, while those from the Thebe clan often swim from the 'Mkhithika' glory, and are proudly referred to as 'Bhoqo'* (Interview with Makhalima, Pretoria, 2022).

This has been revived in the recent past with the formation of radical movements, pushing for the revival of the Mthwakazi Kingdom and Ndebele culture (*The Zimbabwean*, 2013). They have not hidden their desire to revive cultural ties with the South African Zulus. Furthermore, cultural visits to Zululand were conducted by Ndebele elders during the building of the Bulawayo Cultural Village (Zimbabwe). In the recent past, this Nguni particularism and revival movement has taken matters a step further with the enthronement of a new Ndebele King who, even though inauguration was not recognized by the government, continues to act like a king and has taken on the responsibility of a Ndebele King. What makes this even more interesting

for our understanding of the Ndebele/South African relationship, is that the current king is of South African origin and resides in South Africa. He has also been welcomed by other Nguni traditional leaders. During the recent death of the Zulu king, he was among the traditional leaders from other nations, like the Swati, Bapedi and Xhosa, who paid their condolences on behalf of their people, and represented his people – the Ndebele nation – during the funeral.

This history further links the Ndebele with certain South African groups as Nkulumane, Mzilikazi's son, was moved back to South Africa in the 1840s, following his unsuccessful succession to the throne before Mzilikazi's death was confirmed. This incident, plus the unfortunate *Ntabayezinduna* massacre, have been related in oral stories and Ndebele songs. A Zimbabwean historian, with expertise in Ndebele history, said:

> *The Ntabayezinduna is where the chiefs, including Gundwane Ndiweni, were massacred for enthroning Nkulumane as King, while Mzilikazi was still alive. Nkulumane, himself, was sent back to Zululand by his father. Although his fate and that of his group are unknown, there are unconfirmed reports that he never went back to Zululand but ended up settling in the Rustenburg area of South Africa. Some people claim that there is a grave with his name in the area. But this I cannot confirm* (Interview with Dlomo in Pretoria, 2022).

This whole history complicates the Ndebele/South African relations and the Nkulumane link further extends the Ndebele connections with South African ethnic groups to the Tswana tribes in the Northwest Province. Yet, this history has been ignored in policy circles and has been conspicuously absent from debates.

#### 6.2.1.2 Shared history between Ndebele and South African ethnic groups

For clarification purposes, there is a need to briefly distinguish the Zimbabwean Ndebele from those mainly from South Africa. The South African Constitution recognises eleven official languages, including isiNdebele, and it was estimated in 2006 that roughly 600,000 South Africans speak Ndebele as their first language (SAHO, 2019; South Africa National Language Policy Framework, 2003). By way of categorisation, we can identify three main groups of Ndebele lineage groups in the Southern African region (SAHO, 2019):

1. The Ndebele of the Southern Transvaal (now Gauteng and Mpumalanga)

2. The Ndebele of the Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo Province) around the towns of Mokopane (Potgietersrus) and Polokwane (Pietersburg)
3. The Ndebele of Zimbabwe, known as the Matabele by the British

These different groupings were also noted in interviews, where a distinction was drawn between the different Ndebele groups:

> *The term 'Ndebele' is commonly used to refer to two genealogically distinct Ndebele groups, namely the so-called Zimbabwean Ndebele, who were Mzilikazi's followers and are found in Zimbabwe, as their name suggests. The so-called Transvaal Ndebele live within the borders of the Republic of South Africa and are divided into two main groups: The Southern and Northern Ndebele. These are primarily found in four South African provinces: Mpumalanga, Limpopo, North West, and Gauteng* (Interview with Skhosana, Pretoria, 2021).

Related to this, another respondent stated the following:

> *In South Africa there is a distinction between the Ndebele and Zulus, despite that they are all Ngunis, but there is the Ndebele tribe, the Xhosa, the Zulus, the Swati's, etc., which is different from Zimbabwe where they are classified as 'Ndebele'. (Lobengula, extended the tribe's power, absorbing Sotho, Shona, and other extraneous tribal elements)* (Interview with Dhlomo, Pretoria, 2020)

A renowned scholar from Matabeleland, who has written on Ndebele history, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) notes:

> Ndebele is a nation, which comprises all the people whose ancestors were incorporated into the Ndebele state in the nineteenth century. These include those of Nguni, Sotho, Shona, Kalanga, Tswana, Venda, Tonga and Rozvi extraction. IsiNdebele is the common language spoken by the Ndebele, although such other languages as Kalanga, Venda and Sotho were spoken too and are still spoken alongside isiNdebele.

The two South African Ndebele communities are not only physically distinct, but also have different languages and cultural practises (Van Vuuren, 2010). The Northern Province's Ndebele are mostly composed of the BagaLanga and BagaSeleka groups, who have been affected by their Sotho neighbours and have adopted much of their language and culture (Bhuda and Koitiswe, 2021). The Ndzundza Ndebele (Southern Ndebele) of Mpumalanga and

Gauteng are highly recognised for their house painting, beadwork, and decoration. This tribe speaks an isiNdebele dialect that is considered a 'purer' variety of the language and is closely related to isiZulu (Wasera, 2023).

The South African Ndebele are closely linked to the Zimbabwean Ndebele and other Ndebele people, like the Mabhena, Mkhwananzi, Masombuka, etc., who joined the Mzilikazi Ndebele group when they left for Zimbabwe and are now a central part of the Ndebele tribe.

Another informant who is knowledgeable on Ndebele history noted:

> *Zimbabwean Ndebele are different from South African ones because some originated from Zimbabwe whilst others assimilated when the Ndebele settled in Zimbabwe. Within the Ndebele, you have the Khumalo who originated from KZN, Mabhena who originated from outside Pretoria, but in Zimbabwe, they are all identified as Ndebele. The Khumalo, Nkwananzi and the Ndiweni cannot be disregarded as Amandebele, but they assumed that identity because historically they were called Matabele and became people from Matabeleland. However, you will always hear the word Amahlabezulu which refers to the state Mzilikazi build – others referred to it as Mthwakazi* (Interview with Mabhena, Pretoria, 2020).

There is therefore a close relationship between South African Ndebele and the Ndebele of Zimbabwe, who are the subject of this thesis. The making and selling of mats, dolls, beadwork and other crafts has provided some Ndebele women with an independent source of income (Wasera, 2023).

This thesis, however, is about the Zimbabwean Ndebele and not the South African Ndebele lineages. Having said that, it is difficult to discuss cultural and linguistic associations without referring to the latter group (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The Ndebele of Zimbabwe has been described at various times as a tribe, a clan, and an ethnic group. Nevertheless, some scholars, and those spearheading the restoration of the pre-independence Ndebele Kingdom, prefer to call it a nation instead of a tribe (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). Two kings ruled the Ndebele nation, which was called *uMthwakazi* until the destruction of the kingdom by the British South African Company that administered the new colony. Mzilikazi Khumalo, *kaMashobana*, who was the

founder of the nation and led a group of militant Nguni from Zululand, died in 1868 and Lobengula, his son and successor, ruled until his defeat by the British in 1893 (Ndlovu, 2013).

According to Cobbing (1974:607):

> The Ndebele state was highly centralised, with a royal capital surrounded by a small number of 'regimental' towns, each with a population of at least a thousand people, and frequently much more. They were 'colossal strongholds' with a sole military purpose. Each was 'commanded' by a chief (induna) who was 'appointed' by the king and was an 'official' rather than a representative of a significant local lineage.

The state was built along the lines of the Zulu state. The Ndebele adopted all the cultural aspects that were followed in Zululand, including the attire of loin skin (*amabhetshu*), men carrying long shields, assegaais and knobkerries (*amawisa*) (Omer-Cooper, 1966). They also spoke the same dialect and performed similar rituals, including *ukushwama* and the *intwasa* ceremony. They were appendages of the Zulu nation in every aspect.

The state grew as a result of the frequent formation of new regiments to absorb a new generation of youths, to which captives who were captured during annual raids on neighbouring Shona tribes were added (Cobbing, 1974). Villages were grouped into clusters, and the state's outlying political unit was not the 'regimental' town, but the partially decentralised chieftaincy or *isigaba* (literally meaning 'sub-division'), which included several villages. Within an *isigaba*, one family provided a succession of chiefs according to strict patrilineal laws that even the king could hardly break. This shows how the Ndebele kingdom expanded (Cobbing, 1974). It also shows that some Ndebele from southwestern Zimbabwe originated from KwaZulu Natal while others were assimilated in Zimbabwe through conquest. This history, therefore, makes it easy for people from southwestern Zimbabwe to find homage and acceptance in South Africa.

The two kings had established their capitals at different places, with Mzilikazi residing at uMhlahlandlela*,* and Lobengula in Bulawayo. Lobengula named his capital after King Tshaka's kraal in Zululand. Related to the naming of Tshaka's residence as Bulawayo, the renowned Ndebele historian, Mr Phathisa Nyathi (1994) said:

> *UTshaka wakha isigodlo sakhe wraith nguBulawayo, ekhumbula isikhathi lapho efuna ukubulawa ngamazulu.* (Tshaka built his capitol and named it Bulawayo, remembering the time the Zulus wanted to kill him).

In an article titled *Migration of the amaNdebele to Matabeleland*, published in the Bulawayo Chronicle in 1937, Foster Windram recorded several oral statements. He noted:

> After becoming King, Lobengula gathered all the survivors of those who were killed at Gibixhegu (the name of the place where Lobengula's people originated in Zululand), some who had escaped, and some descended from women who had left the kraal, and settled them in a kraal where Government House now stands. The place was called koBulawayo which means the people who were to have been killed, but they were not killed. It applies to Lobengula himself because he was to have been killed and Gwabalanda saved him. Lobengula first built a kraal at Inyugeni, the other side of Hope Fountain. It was then he changed the name of the people to koBulawayo. In 1881, after 11 years of occupation, Lobengula moved his capital to what is now the modern city of Bulawayo. He ordered the destruction of the old settlement by fire (Gumede, 2016). When he moved to the site of the present Government House, he took the name with him. By koBulawayo Lobengula was referring to the people of Gibixhegu, so those who survived were called koBulawayo, but the name included everyone, those who were killed as well as those that survived.

KwaBulawayo was King Shaka's first capital in Zululand. It was built on the banks of the Mhodi River, which was fed by the Mkhumane River in the Bahanango District. His kingdom expanded with the royal household huts and became one of Africa's largest conurbations in the 1830s, extending to 1400 huts into the Mhlathuze Valley. These huts were located approximately 27 kilometres from Eshowe, the oldest European settlement in KwaZulu-Natal (Dube; 2011). Today, it is a tourist destination in KwaZulu Natal, with a modern reception centre that has been sensitively designed to blend with the recreated huts and traditional cattle (Dube, 2011; Gumede, 2016; Zondo, 2023).

The Ndebele have a long and heroic history, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012). Due to this rich history, they can maintain their memories as well as their identity in a predominantly Shona-speaking nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2008). The Ndebele royal lineage began in Zululand, where they were chieftains under the Zulu kingdom. The Ndebele have attempted to preserve their history and identity by using names that are already in use in Zululand (see

Ndlovu, 2013). The royal historicity of the toponym Bulawayo is reflected in the naming of Lobengula's kraal after the Zulu capital. Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2 show examples of authentic structures that exist in both Zimbabwe and South Africa and that capture the original character of Bulawayo. Bulawayo is the second capital city in Zimbabwe dominated by the Ndebeles whilst *kwaBulawayo* is a tourist destination in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. It is of interest that Lobengula's capital, Bulawayo, has also been redeveloped and launched as a tourist cultural site called Old Bulawayo. Relevant to this thesis is the fact that Old Bulawayo was developed along the cultural villages in Zululand. As noted earlier before it was developed by a team that was sent to Zululand to consult and learn certain cultural aspects, which were incorporated into the design of Old Bulawayo.

Since their arrival in Zimbabwe with King Mzilikazi, the Ndebele have named many places in Zimbabwe after Zulu places. Entumbane, for example, is another place that is now found in both the Zulu and Ndebele areas. The Ndebele's South African history, as well as their subsequent experiences in Zimbabwe, have inspired them in naming places. Names for towns, rural areas, and ecological aspects such as geomorphology and drainage have been derived from history (Ndlovu, 2013).

Furthermore, the migrants who participated in this research have names and surnames similar to most South Africans, for example, Gugulethu, Sbusiso, Dhlomo, Vusumuzi, etc. History serves as a very powerful tool of enculturation, and in the case of the Ndebele, the Nguni heritage has remained deeply embedded in the lives of generations of Ndebele through the naming of places.

**Figure 6.1: The entrance to the kwaBulawayo Cultural Centre (KwaZulu-Natal)**
Source: KwaBulawayo Cultural Centre Facebook page

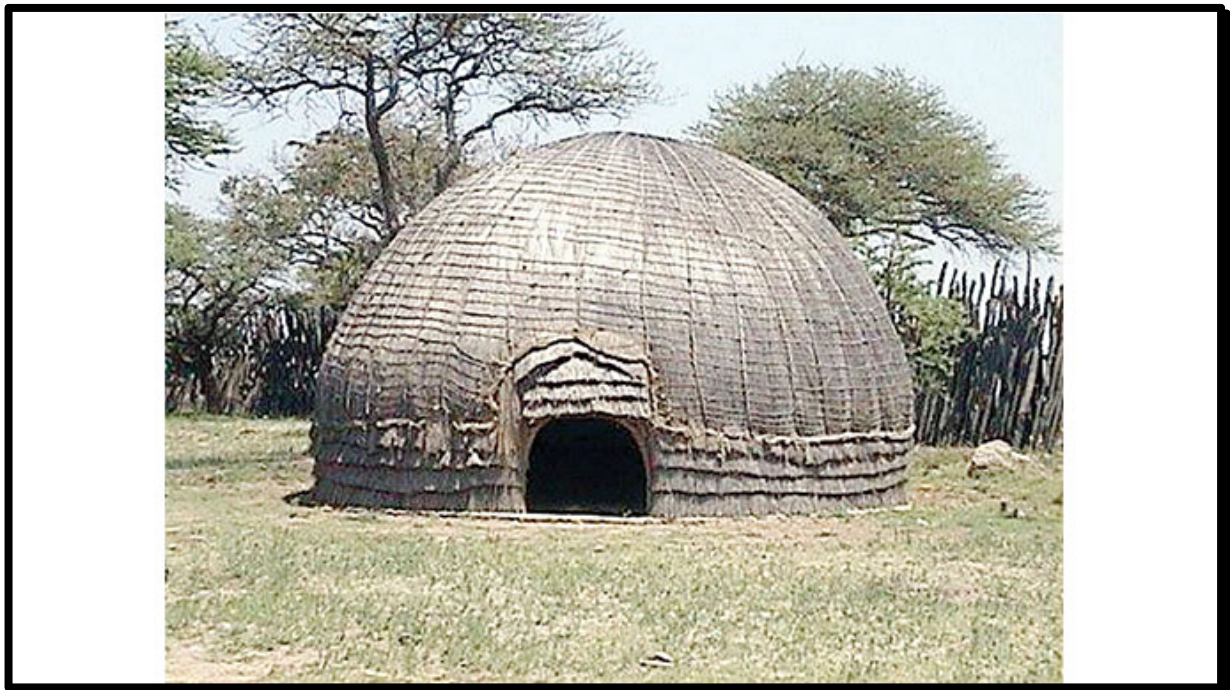

**Figure 6.2: A replica of the beehive huts that once stood at old Bulawayo (Zimbabwe)**
Source: *The Chronicle* newspaper, March 2020

The two pictures show similarities between the beehive huts and the pole fences in kwaBulawayo in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, despite the fact that Zimbabwean huts look old and unmaintained. This in a way signifies the cultural linkages between the states. Therefore, to a common Ndebele person, the place of origin is South Africa as evidenced by the shared names. By and large, the common names and cultures epitomize the lost identity of

the Ndebele people. Such identity crisis is further reverberated by the harsh socio-economic hardships that the Ndebele, just like any other Zimbabweans, have to endure to eke out a living. As such, the shared history acts as a magnet to attract the southwestern people of Zimbabwe to migrate to South Africa.

As highlighted above, Ndebele people from Zimbabwe (specifically the *amanala*) pay allegiance to their king who identifies as South African. The king is known as the Makosonke the Second (the great king of the Ndebele of both Zimbabwe and South Africa) and he is from the Mabhena clan. Nqabutho Mabhena, a prominent Zimbabwean activist in South Africa, noted:

> *Zimbabwean and South African Mabhena clans are one. This is because the Ndebele split around the 14$^{th}$ Century when King Musi passed on. So, the Mabhena under Manala established their own kingdom whilst the Mahlangu and Badonga established their own kingdom as well. As such, one faction of the Ndebele is called Amanala and the other is the Amagodonga. The king of the Amanala is called Makosonke the Second. Noteworthy is that the Nhlapo Commission report reveals that King Makosonke is the king of all the Ndebele and those who regard themselves as Amanala in Zimbabwe, the Mabhenas, observe an annual ritual presided over by the king* (Interview with Nqabutho Mabhena, Pretoria, 2020).

This kingship aspect of the Ndebele further erodes the efficacy of immigration control with regard to such people with ethnic ties. However, the fact that Zimbabwe and South Africa are sovereign republics, not kingdoms, dampens the Ndebele kingship issues. This is evidenced by the fact that, although there are such extant ties among the Amanala Ndebele in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, the ties are not significant enough to revolutionise the Ndebele in Zimbabwe to be stabilised with their South African counterparts. Nonetheless, those Ndebele people who do know such ties, are easily persuaded to view South Africa as their home, hence triggering the exodus.

### 6.2.3 The Kalanga of Bulilima and Mangwe

The Kalanga are found in the districts of Bulilima and Mangwe in Zimbabwe's southwestern region. According to Dube (2020:01), 'although the Kalanga has been around for a thousand years, it is important to note that Kalanga ethnic identity is a socially constructed phenomenon', as explained further below.

#### 6.2.3.1 History of the Kalanga

Around 1000 CE, the Kalanga occupied the southwestern parts of the Zimbabwean plateau and north-eastern Botswana (Dube, 2020). According to Hall and Stefoff (2006), the history of the Kalanga can be traced back to Mapungubwe's empire (1075 CE–1220 CE), a pre-colonial Southern African state that was situated at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers. Thus, Mapungubwe can be attributed as the early BaKalanga (Kalanga) people's home, and it encompasses parts of modern-day Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Botswana. According to Hrbek and El Fasi (1988), Mapungubwe descended from the Leopard's Kopje culture, the area or culture that marked the Middle Iron Age in Zimbabwe. This connection can be seen from ceramic artefacts that have been found in Mapungubwe and that are associated with the pottery traditions of the Leopard's Kopje culture and people who are thought to be the Kalangas' ancestors. Between 420 CE and 1050 CE, it was the first human settlement.

According to Dube (2020), the first Kalanga chief was Hamuyenanzwa of the Moyo or Howu clan, who reigned in 1441. Due to his actions (*kulanga*, which means to discipline or punish for no specific reason), he was later popularly identified as Nkalanga, and his subjects and the nation began calling him by that name. Prior to the 15th century, the Leopard's Kopje culture people spoke Kalanga as their primary language. Nonetheless, according to Chigwedere (1981), the name Kalanga was derived from the people's special connections with the sun (son of the sun). Langa, on the other hand, means the sun in Ndebele. So, it is unlikely that Kalanga means 'son of the sun' as the Kalanga had adopted this name before the Ndebele and Ngunis arrived in the country (Dube, 2020).

The lineage of Kalanga kings is traced back to Hamuyenzanzwa, who is said to be Munhumutapa's forefather (Dube, 2020). Malambadzibwa Moyo, known as Munounotapa because of his actions of kidnapping and raiding people's homes in order to force them to work for him, succeeded Hamuyenanzwa. Malambodzibwa is thought to have died around 1652 when his son Manuza became king and befriended the Portuguese known as *Matshivu* in Kalanga (Msindo, 2012). Around 1690, at the end of the 16th century, a civil war erupted, dividing the Kalanga people into various groups. The people broke into smaller groups after Munounotapa (Malambadzibwa Moyo) passed away and his son Mavula failed to bring them together. As stated by Dube (2020):

> Among these groups, those who departed for the northwest and northeast were known as the Korekore/Zezuru, those who departed for the east were referred to as the Manyika, those who departed for the further southeast were known as the Venda, and Madabhale Howu, later known as Chibundule, led his group to the southwestern regions, where they continued to be known as the Kalangaz. When Mambo (king) Nitshasike passed away in 1836, this group also included the current Karanga of Masvingo, who was ordered by Mwali to leave the Dula settlement in the Matopos for Masvingo before the entrance of the Ndebele in 1837. Later, he was given the names Chibundule and Sibuntule by Madabhale Howu's supporters. According to Mahumba's oral histories, Chibundule was the final Kalanga chief to leave the Khami ruins and settle in Netu, which is close to the Tondanagwana Mountains and Tokwana's Luswingo (Dube, 2020:04).

According to Dube (2020), those who were absorbed by the Kalangas and who accepted their way of life (and, consequently, customs and culture), would have had a greater sense of oneness than the nuclear family.

For instance, the Ncube clans, which are separated into three clans – Ncube-Lubimbi, Ncube-Hobodo, and Ncube-Malaba – are responsible for the Venda who migrated to the Kalanga state (Dube, 2015). The Kalanga integration caused the Ncube-Lubimbi clan, who are the guardians of the Mwali cult, to adopt Kalanga traditions. In Bulilimamangwe, the Malaba clan rules, and the head Malaba is descended from this clan. The Hobodo clan is also said to know a lot about charms and herbal medicines (ibid). The Hobodo clan got their moniker since they were the ones who carried the bags of herbs and medications. According to Rasmussen (1976), they are referred to as *Banosenga hobodo dzemiti* in Kalanga (those who carry bags full of medicine).

The Malobela, Bangwadi, and Tshilalu clans were among the Pedi of the Khupe totem that the Kalanga also absorbed. According to Wylie (1990), they came from southern Limpopo, travelled through Tswapong, and eventually settled in what is now Botswana. Three households make up this Khupe clan (Dube 2020). The Khupe Mangwadi, who made their home in Nopemano in Plumtree North, is the first. The Khupe-Tshilalu is the second group, followed by the Khupe-Malobela who live in the Bulili Mamangwe-north region around Makhulela. Since the three aforementioned clans were integrated into the Kalanga, they now

identify as being Kalangan. However, the Kalangas were merged under the Ndebele and made into one when they arrived in Zimbabwe as a result of the Mfecane Wars in 1840–1890. Some Kalanga reportedly had their clans and totems modified when the Ndebele later invaded the southwestern regions of the nation during the 19th century. As an illustration, the Howu (or Zhowu in Lilima) became Ndlovu, Wungwe became Nyoni, and Mbizi became Dube (Dube, 2015). According to Nyathi (2010), they did this to overcome their feelings of inferiority and, more specifically, to rise to the top within the church, particularly the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which is based in Tekwane. The church elevated people regarded as Ndebele to positions of authority and they spoke isiNdebele. Consequently, some Kalanga Ndebelenised their names to conform to the church hierarchy in order to be recognised.

#### 6.2.3.2 The Kalanga culture and traditions

Kalanga identity has been (re)constructed around the Mwali cult, whose shrines include, among others, 'Manyangwa, Neyile, Dula and Wililani' (Dube, 2020). According to Mutyambizi-Dewa (2012), Njelele is the holiest of the Mwali shrines. It is, however, not the only such shrine. Other shrines include Mahwemanyolo in Botswana, Domboshaba in South Africa, Mapungubwe in Zimbabwe, Domboshava in Mashonaland-East in Zimbabwe, Khami, Nzhelele among the Venda in South Africa, and others. The Mwali cult was introduced by the Kalanga of Venda origin. According to Dube (2006:07), Mwali is known in Kalanga as 'Dzviba le Vula', which translates as 'a pool of water'.

During droughts or times of thanksgiving, the Mwali is consulted through the *Amawosana* (Mwali messengers who were women) (Dube, 2006). Furthermore, Kalanga women play an important religious role by operating spirits at the lower level of Mwali, known as the *Mazenge* spirits (also known as *Izishumba*). The spirit beings could only inhabit Kalanga women, not men (Dube 2015). This is not surprising given that women established several shrines representing the Mwali cult in Bulilimamangwe, which helped to legitimise the Matopo's high god (ibid).

### 6.2.4. The Venda cultural practices

The Venda are said to have originated from south of the Limpopo River. According to Dube (2015:55) *the Venda descended from Mapungubwe ancestors, while others were of Sotho-Tswana origin*. The Venda people, who are divided by the border, participate in a variety of cultural activities to commemorate, and preserve their cultural heritage. The Mapungubwe

cultural heritage festival is one example. The festival aims to increase Mapungubwe exposure by fostering and nurturing the existing cultural, heritage, and music partnerships between South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Botswana. Mr. Peter mentioned:

> *The main objective of the event is to ensure that the Mapungubwe landscape and heritage are promoted through storytelling and indigenous music to receive optimal growth and sustainability* (Interview with Mr Peter, Beitbridge, 2020).

It is noteworthy that the Mapungubwe community was established as a state consisting of a cattle-rearing and farming community around the year 1100 on the Shashe-Limpopo River confluence (Mlambo, 2010). Interestingly, in 2017 the Mapungubwe cultural heritage festival took place at the confluence hill of the Shashe River, which connects South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe. Figure 6.3 captures the 2019 Mapungubwe celebrations. The significance of this event is the fact that this is an ethnic reminiscence whereby the Venda people in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana get together to acknowledge and revive their ethnic ties. Inversely, such activities are an outcry to the negative impacts of the national boundary systems which were imposed on indigenous people by colonists.

**Figure 6.3: The Mapungubwe celebrations in 2019 before the pandemic**
Source https://twitter.com/MorakaThandi/status/1206260857526784000/photo/1

There are other cultural activities that bring Venda people together on both sides of the border, especially those that live along the borders. Mr Mudau noted:

*The Murundu (circumcision) is done for boys on the mountains mostly in winter, to fast track healing of the wound. They learn to respect women, care for their families, and be responsible husbands and fathers. Young girls have certain days when they bathe at the river to check their virginity every year. They are also taught to be housewives and responsible women. There is also the vhusha 'initiation at puberty'– girls are taught humility as the essence of womanhood* (Interview with Mr Mudau, Musina, 2020).

In terms of toponyms, Mr Mudau added that both sides of the border have places named Makhado. To this Moyo (2016) noted that there is a town named Makhado on the South African side of the border, as well as a community by the same name on the Zimbabwean side. This place was divided when the border was imposed by colonialism. In sync with earlier findings by Moyo (ibid.), participants who took part in this research noted that some Zimbabwean Vendas, like the Ndebeles, recognise the traditional Venda king, Mphephu, who lives on the South African side of the border as their king. This demonstrates the similarities in cultural, linguistic, and other ties.

Of significance to this study is that, before South Africa amended the 2002 Immigration Act on 26 May 2014, Zimbabwean Vendas were allowed to come to South Africa, even without proper documentation. This was done to maintain the Venda culture on both sides of the border (Moyo, 2016). Quoting Chetsanga and Muchenje (2003) whilst commenting on Venda farm-workers in the northern Limpopo province, Rutherford (2010:251) points out that 'the historical and cultural ties between southern Zimbabwe and South Africa's "Far North" mean that the border is not so much an impediment to international migration [but] a "nuisance"'.

By and large, as a socio-economic measure, immigration officials in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, together with South African farmers in northern Limpopo 'promoted a "special employment zone" by establishing informal border posts at the gates of the South African border fences' (Rutherford, 2010:409). The Zimbabwean farmworkers, who were mostly of Venda origins, were only be allowed to travel through these gates if they had a B1-17 permit. However, these were local arrangements that were not recognised by the South African immigration policies and thus they were stifled by various immigration and labour laws (ibid.). For example, in December 1999 the Department of Home Affairs placed a moratorium on the employment of foreign labour in this area (ibid.). However, although the localised border posts

were deemed illegal, they served the purpose of engendering the socially displaced communities in southwestern Zimbabwe to reconnect with their relatives in northern Limpopo.

### 6.2.5 The Mbembesi Xhosa - Fengu

According to Pathisa Nyathi the term Fengu is derived from the term *ukufenguza* which means to ask for a place to stay. However, this is not accepted by the people concerned as they prefer to be addressed as Xhosa because their language and cultural practices are similar to the South African Xhosas in the Eastern Cape (Makambe, 1982:7). In Zimbabwe they compromise a small population which has been there for over 100 years (ibid). According to Nombembe (2013:01), ‘they settled in Mbembesi which is situated in the Matabeleland North Province, 42 kilometres northeast of Bulawayo’.

#### 6.2.5.1 The History of the Fengu

The Fengus originated from KwaZulu-Natal within the Hlubi ethnic group. Among them are the Dlaminis, Hadebe and Kuboni. Like the Ndebele, they moved to the Eastern Cape as a result of the Mfecane wars (Butler, 2015; Makambe, 1982). They found refuge among the Xhosa in the South, hence the name *Amafengu* (Bouch,1992; Moyer, 1973). As a result, they embraced the Xhosa language and cultural practices. The Mfengu fought on the British side in the wars of 1835, 1846, and 1851–53. They were given some land in the Transkei and Ciskei frontier regions at the expense of the Xhosa, and also to offer protection from subsequent Xhosa invasions of the province (Hurwitz, 2017).

In 1896, Cecil John Rhodes came to Zimbabwe with a group of Fengu fighters who had previously fought on the British side in the aforementioned wars. To neutralise the Ndebele people who were described as ‘war-like people’ (Mazarire, 2003:02) after their involvement in a battle in 1896, more Fengu people were allowed into Southern Rhodesia by Rhodes (Nyathi, 2005). Ranger (1999) notes that the missionaries were encouraged to settle in the hills to formulate groups of African Christians with the responsibility to develop and discipline the Ndebele. In 1898 the Brethren in Christ Church was allowed to set up at the Matopo mission station. The Cyrene mission was also established by the Anglicans. Cecil John Rhodes imported Fengus by train from the Cape via Mafikeng in 1898 (Nombembe, 2013). They were promised three reserves on which they could settle with the provision that each man works for three months every year. After three years of working each one of them would be given land (Nombembe, 2013).

The Rhodes scheme materialised with regards to Mbembesi where the Fengus were introduced although it did not materialise in the Matopo hills. The Ndebele were not happy with this but could not do anything about it in the end. As a result, the Xhosa immigrants managed to live apart from the Ndebele community and this helped them to preserve their language and culture until today. Today the Xhosa community is found in the Mbembesi area and in 2000 the Mbembesi Xhosa celebrated the centenary of their arrival in Zimbabwe.

**6.2.5.2 Other ways that led Fengus to Zimbabwe**

As alluded to earlier, some Fengus came to Zimbabwe, then Southern Rhodesia, under different church denominations for instance Lutherans, Anglicans, Salvationists, Wesleyans, Presbyterians, and Methodists. Five hundred Christian Mfengu families, workers, and farmers from Cape Town settled in Bulawayo between 1899 and 1900 (Ncube, 2013). Earlier on, in chapter 5, it was articulated that some black Africans went to work in South African mines with diamond mines in Kimberley and gold mines in Witwatersrand, which continued even after independence. Some of these migrants then married Xhosa women whom they came to live with in Zimbabwe.

Also, some South Africans, particularly the Fengus, received Western education much earlier than Zimbabweans as they were trained as teachers and nurses who migrated to work in Zimbabwe. According to Nyathi (2005:58) some 'came as drivers of ox wagons plying the route between Zimbabwe and South Africa'. A migrant noted:

After independence when resettlement took place, some Xhosas left their homeland to live in newly acquired land. They now live side by side with Ndebele people. This pattern of settlement is weakening the Xhosa culture that has been dominated by more dominant cultures of its neighbours (Interview with Grace, Pretoria, 2020).

The section explained the different ways that led the Fengu people to settle in Zimbabwe and establish themselves. However, this does not imply that they destroyed the relationships they had with their kin in South Africa. This is evidenced through cultural ceremonies they still perform today.

#### 6.2.6 The Sotho of Gwanda

Mujere (2019) noted that the Basotho community in Zimbabwe has a complex migration history. Most of them, just like the Fengu, came in the late-19th century accompanying missionaries who were carrying out evangelisation work among the southern Shona. Others however came with the pioneer column which colonised Zimbabwe (Mujere, 2019). A migrant in the research noted that the Basotho were preferred by the missionaries because they were the first people to be converted to Christianity in the SADC region. Mujere (2019) noted that unlike the *Karanga*, the Basotho persuaded colonial officials that they were 'progressive Africans'. This impression was bolstered by their participation in activities such as the founding of African Associations in the 1920s, but more importantly, by their rejection of radical and confrontational techniques used by other African organisations such as the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. The Basotho were given latitude to negotiate land-based belonging because, among other things, they were Christians, they owned freehold land, they demonstrated an entrepreneurial drive, and they avoided conflict with the state. Mujere argues that other Basotho however, just accompanied the Pioneer Column and served as porters and guides, etc. Their descendants are still found across Zimbabwe. Basotho evangelists and missionaries like Lucas Mokoele eventually established the vibrant Sotho communities currently found in Gutu, Zimuto and Bikita (Mujere, 2019).

##### 6.2.6.1 History of the Basotho

Nyathi (2005) argues that the Pedi and the Birwa Sotho groups were originally of Kalanga origin before they were 'Sothoised'. An example of the Pedi who are present-day Kalanga, is the Khupe clan. The Babirwa are Sotho people who moved to Zimbabwe from the Transvaal (a province of South Africa from 1910 to 1994, which was divided following the 1994 constitution) region of South Africa (Mzala, *Chronicles, The Sunday News*, 16 October 2022). The Babirwa people's language, Sebirwa, is a dialect of Northern Sotho. Pathisa Nyathi elaborated in an interview that in Zimbabwe, the Babirwa can be found in the communities of Mawaza, Tlhakadiyawa, Mafukung, Ntalale Kafusi, and nearby areas in Gwanda.

Mzala (2022) in an article titled the *Sotho people of Zimbabwe 2* further noted that:

> When Babirwa moved into the area which is today known as Gwanda (a corruption of the Ndebele word *Kwanda*, increase), it was inhabited by Jahunda (Kalanga dialect) speaking people and a group of Ndebele who moved southward from the northern side

of pre-colonial Matabeleland South. Other groups of Babirwa left their homes north of Polokwane with other Transvaal migrants again and joined their relatives who left Transvaal for Bokgalaka (Kalangaland), what Sotho called modern-day Zimbabwe territory back then (Mzala, *Chronicles, The Sunday News*, 16 October 2022).

However, Nyathi (2014) points out that not all Zimbabwean Basothos are Babirwa, e.g. those in the Beitbridge region of *Manama* and nearby areas are not. The forefathers of the Northern Sotho from the former Northern Transvaal were driven from their land by the boers. The Basothos originated from different parts of the then-Northern Transvaal, today known as Mokopane and Polokwane, and others were of Tsonga and Venda descent who learned Sotho through association and marriage. In the nineteenth century, some of those people's forefathers returned to South Africa and were reunited with family in the Northern Transvaal (Tom Mzala, *Chronicles, the Sunday News*, 16 October 2022). Thus, some Basotho in Zimbabwe maintain contact with relatives of their forefathers in both South Africa and Botswana. One of the Sotho migrants traced his family origins to South Africa:

> *My grandfather was actually a South African who migrated to Zimbabwe in the 1920-30s. We are one with South African Sothos. My paternal grandfather was born in South Africa in a place called Botlokwa. My father doesn't have paternal relatives in Zimbabwe – they are all in South Africa. So, we can be classified as Northern Sotho* (Interview with S. Nare, Pretoria, 2020).

It can therefore be argued that Sothos from Zimbabwe and South Africa are the same people and they acknowledge it amongst themselves. Accordingly, in spite of their nationality, which is dictated upon them, they cannot ignore their relations in both sides of the border.
Another migrant also noted that:

> *We have similarities, especially with northern Pedi people, the ones from Bochum, Taibosch and Musina. Our dialect of Sesotho is the same, therefore it is hard to detect who is Zimbabwean and who is not* (Interview with Abokoe, Pretoria, 2020).

Thus, there are many Pedi and Venda-speaking people in the Limpopo province who have Zimbabwean roots due to these migrations. As one of the migrants observed:

*I am Basotho from Zimbabwe and I have good relations with my relatives here in South Africa. Our Zimbabwean Sotho language is the same to the Sesotho that is spoken in many places in the whole of Limpopo* (Interview with S. Nare, Pretoria, 2020).

Another migrant elaborated further:

*Basotho was a part of the Ndebele state under King Mzilikazi and made use of totems as surnames, which is why some of them now have surnames like Mathuthu, Tshuma, Sibanda, Nkomo and so on. Some also adopted Sotho surnames such as Mokoena, Majoro, Nare* (Interview with Solomon Mabuza, Pretoria, 2020).

The research found that most of the traditional ways of conducting themselves are still the same while certain activities been dropped or changed over time. The next section will look at the cultural activities of the Basotho.

#### 6.2.6.2 Culture of the Basotho

In the Zimbabwean Sotho culture, *lobola* negotiations are done the same way it is done in South African communities. As one migrant noted, ‘we don't charge much but we build relationships’. However, 10 beasts should be paid. To this, a migrant argued:

*Our ‘true’ culture demands plus 10 beasts and should be females that have not calved before. Why 10? We have 10 fingers, and anything less than that means defilement or communicating displeasure. How and why? You might be saying the girl is incomplete. If less than 10 beasts are charged, they should be 5, fullness is key here* (Interview with S. Nare, Pretoria, 2020).

They further noted that in Zimbabwe most people frown upon cousins marrying and most Ndebele people say *yizinto zabesuthu lezo* (meaning ‘those are the things of the Sotho’). However, it is as normal in South Africa as it is in Gwanda for cousins to marry.

Mujere (2019) in his book titled, *Land, Migration and Belonging: A History of the Basotho in Southern Rhodesia* alerted to the fact that Basothos in the Gutu district of Zimbabwe also maintain their culture. He noted that particularism, which was intended to keep their ‘Basothoness’ and which was based on their freehold ownership of land, was frequently practised during social gatherings such as funerals and memorial ceremonies. They retreated

to their kinship networks and observed Sotho etiquette, such as singing hymns and communicating in Sesotho, which they would not do in their daily lives (Mujere, 2019). Throughout the study, Mujere (2019) shows how identity politics and the need for belonging were deployed strategically and depending on who the *Basotho* were interacting with, including their Karanga neighbours, the colonial authorities, and the missionaries. In reality, the Basotho themselves were hesitant to commit to a strictly geographical concept of belonging. Despite establishing roots in the Gutu District, they never lost touch with South Africa, their ancestral home.

The purpose of this section was to demonstrate that historically, some Zimbabwean ethnic groups have their roots in South Africa. More importantly, the section attempted to provide an informed understanding of why some Zimbabwean ethnic groups feel that they belong in South Africa. These groups have common ancestry with some South African groups, they share the same culture and they still interact.

### 6.3 Language as a tool to assimilate into South African communities

Thebe (2016:619) notes that 'migrants originating from communities that share certain common cultural aspects including language with some local groups managed to blend easily with locals in their efforts to legitimise their existence and right to employment'. The Ndebele who were interviewed noted that the Ndebele language borrowed from Swati, Xhosa, Tswana, but mainly from isiZulu. One migrant noted that:

> *75% of Ndebele is isiZulu and the remaining 25% can be shared amongst the other languages which are Swati, Xhosa and Tswana. This makes it a bit easier for me to understand the languages* (Interview with Zodwa, Pretoria, 2020).

However, most Ndebele migrants noted that they feel more connected to the Zulu language and way of life. This is because there are similarities in their ways of life, as well as a belief that they have had a relationship ever since Mzilikazi's migration from Zululand to the Zimbabwean plateau. Nevertheless, the Ndebele participants noted the difference between theirs and the Zulu language, was the way in which they used different words for the same meaning. For example, Ndebele say *angikwanisi* whilst Zulus say *angikwazi ukukwenza* to mean 'I can't'. Moreover, when they say reading the *Zulu* say *ukufunda* whilst the Ndebele say

*ukubala*. They also noted that where the Zulu put an ‘N’, the Ndebele put an ‘L’. For instance, where the Zulu say *nami futi,* the Ndebele say *lami futi.* These differences in the Zulu and Ndebele languages are minor and never a set-back for the Ndebele migrants from Matabeleland as they can blend with the locals. Some Xhosa, Venda and Basotho migrants noted that their languages were similar to locals which made it easy for them to fit into the South African communities. A migrant noted:

> *I never had issues since l speak fluent SeSotho and Setswana. Usually, people from Matabeleland fit easily in the SA community by virtue of speaking languages that are mutually intelligible* (Interview with Abokoe, Pretoria, 2020).

Language proficiency is a necessity for both documented and undocumented immigrants. For documented migrants, blending in with South Africans is necessary in circumventing xenophobic attacks. With regards to undocumented migrants, they need to master South African local languages to avoid deportation as well as xenophobic attacks. Two surveys carried out by France Maphosa confirm the significance of local language acquisition for undocumented immigrants, pointing out that failure to show knowledge of at least one language can result to arrest and deportation, since the South African police usually check cultural signifiers and a lack of language knowledge to identify foreigners (Maphosa, 2005; 2010).

Commenting on the immigration of Zimbabweans into South African mines, Mlambo (2010: 69) avers that ‘…the similarity of the Ndebele language of Zimbabwe with some South African languages, such as Zulu and South African Ndebele, also meant that migrants could easily blend in once they were on the mines or the farms’. On the other hand, Bolt (2016) observes that in the northern Limpopo farms, there are large numbers of Zimbabwean Venda and Shangaan immigrants owing to language affinity. This is further illustrated by Moyo and Cossa (2015) who observe that the La Rochelle and Rosettenville areas in Johannesburg have become Portuguese-speaking enclave communities as the areas were mostly inhabited by the Portuguese, thus attracting immigrants from Mozambique to make these areas their first destinations. By and large, Moyo (2017:183) concurs:

> In this case, the contestations may not be obvious, but the possession of South African language competencies places one in a better position to access specific resources within the Johannesburg context. Such language competencies also assist in the

negotiation of relationships and cultivation of social networks with South African citizens and the way that Zimbabwean migrants experience the city.

About 90% of respondents who participated in this research had similar names and surnames to the local people, for example, *Thulani, Naledi, Nthambiso,* and *Nonhlanhla* among many others. Such names make it easier for these migrants to connect with the local people. They noted that in most cases they are often confused with people from Mpumalanga, Limpopo, and the Eastern Cape. Language similarities as well as a common history of being Nguni makes it easier for people from southwest Zimbabwe to be assimilated into the South African communities. Language affinity is a significant pull factor for one to decide to migrate (Bolt, 2015; Moyo, 2017).

### 6.3.1 Language, social exclusion, and xenophobic attacks in South Africa

According to Siziba (2013:174): 'language in South Africa is described as a boundary-marking resource that profiles and excludes certain categories of people'. The Shona people are excluded from being people who are desired to be in South Africa due to language, which is different from migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe who can navigate the politics of belonging due to their shared languages. Notions of *amakwerekwere*[3] emerge out of this exclusion in South Africa (Matsinhe, 2011; Morris, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Siziba, 2013). Siziba (2013) further notes that language is used to evaluate the legitimacy of one's identity, and as such it is an identity-marking feature that differentiates Shona people as *amakwerekwere.*

Chikanda (2016) points out that language plays two crucial roles in establishing the matrix of insiders and outsiders, on which the other regimes of exclusion are built. Polzer (2008:20) notes

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[3] Refers to babblers or people who speak indecipherable languages (Siziba, 2014:174).

that 'the role of language in Zimbabwean migrants' negotiation of the politics of identity', when she writes of 'linguistic and cultural affinity of Ndebele speakers, allowing many Zimbabweans to 'pass' as South Africans in everyday interactions'. The significance of language as an instrument of socio-cultural assimilation is illustrated by Sifiso's case in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1: The case of Sifiso**

| Sifiso came to South Africa in 2000 to do her first degree up to her PhD at Wits University. She came with the assistance of her brother who was a lecturer at the University of South Africa. He was the one who assisted her with a place to live as well as knowledge around the place.<br><br>According to her, life was not difficult in terms of finding homage and acceptance in South Africa because of being able to speak Ndebele which relates to Zulu. She made South African friends and because of being able to speak the language and also her name and surname, the friends believed she was South African. She noted that she used language to negotiate politics of belonging as she was considered for a number of scholarships, especially at PhD level.<br><br>During her PhD studies which she conducted amongst the South African Ndebele in Mpumalanga who survive by doing beads work and paintings, she discovered that she spoke Zulu better than those Ndebele. This made her feel like she was part and parcel of the Zulu culture even more. This in a way made her believe that identities are not rigid, but they change depending on where you are. |
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Source: Researcher's survey (2020)

As highlighted above, language proficiency is necessary for both documented and undocumented immigrants. The common denominator for immigrants is that the acquisition of local language proficiency becomes a survival tactic for dissuading xenophobic attacks (Harris, 2001).

**6.3.2. Sense of belonging in South Africa**

Migrants noted with concern how victims of Gukurahundi were just forgotten as if nothing had ever happened and without any recognition. Migrants felt that, if they were seen as important and part of Zimbabweans, the perpetrators would have issued a public apology as well as reparations for the harm and loss of life. Thus, it is assumed that Ndebele people are not accepted and recognised as citizens of Zimbabwe (Ndlovu, 2010). Migrants also viewed Gukurahundi as an effort to terminate them, and lack of closure from the incident has left them in fear of a reoccurrence of the event. Therefore, they noted that ever since the atrocities, as well as other events in Matabeleland, they have felt as if they do not fully belong in Zimbabwe.

Migrants also noted with concern that Zimbabwe's post-colonial government has not yet addressed ethnicity as a problem in both politics and the economy, particularly in terms of tackling historical and contemporary circumstances that continue to make ethnicity an ongoing problem in people's lives (see also Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2007). The marginalisation of the Ndebele in Zimbabwe's nation-building project is another issue that was raised with great concern, as this makes it impossible to experience a sense of belonging in Zimbabwe.

Most migrants that were interviewed noted that they migrated to South Africa to join their families as they felt more accepted in South African communities, although some noted that it was due to the economic meltdown that Zimbabwe experienced after 2000. In all the situations, this was upon the discovery that there were better opportunities in South Africa than there were in Zimbabwe. Migrants who participated in this study noted that they had relatives, aunties and uncles who had migrated to South Africa from the Matabeleland regions. This migration occurred mostly in the late-1980s after the Gukurahundi era. This era saw the migration of Ndebele speaking people who then started working in the farms and mines before they were able to secure more-paying jobs. Research established that these migrants later sought permanent residency status as well as South African identity cards around 1994.

### 6.4 Human social networks and migration to South Africa

Migration decision making, as will be demonstrated through migrants' accounts, is influenced and shaped by 'pioneer migrants' – those who had migrated earlier (Bakewell et al., 2012; De Haas, 2010). In this case, such information helped fellow migrants to find their way in South

Africa. In some contexts, however, studies established that these pioneer migrants also sometimes acted as a buffer to block the entry of peers, although this had not been the case with the sampled respondents of this study. Such networks are not only unreceptive but also unwelcoming to would-be/fellow migrants (Böcker, 1994; Bauer et al., 2002; Collyer, 2005; Epstein, 2008; De Haas, 2010). Though this might be the case elsewhere, this is not the case in the context of Zimbabwe's southwestern migrants who boast of enduring connections, familial links and human social networks that aid in facilitating their migration and subsequent integration within the South African societies. In fact, the study findings established that these pioneer migrants even offer 'migration assistance' (Bashi, 2007; Böcker, 1994; Boyd, 1989). This finding is in sync with the conventional literature.

Strong ties relating to bonding capital are certainly useful in helping the migrant move from Zimbabwe to Johannesburg. These ties provide the needed shelter, food and comfort, especially in the first months soon after arrival. They also help with the entry into finding their first jobs (Hungwe, 2013:206). I also found evidence to the effect that migrants in Sunnyside received assistance with regards to shelter, food, and other social needs from their pre-existing networks.

This assistance also stretches to cover employment opportunities. It is for this very reason that 'prospective migrants learn of opportunities' (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964:82) from their social networks. In fact, others first secure employment before facilitating the migration of those relatives from sending countries. It is thus unsurprising that, to this end, these migrants 'are provided with transportation, and have initial accommodation and employment' (MacDonald and MacDonald, 1964:82). This was also found to be the case with the migrants from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe who find it easy to navigate their journey, stays and assimilation within South African societies._Caces (1986) found evidence to the effect that, among the Filipino migrants going to the US particularly in Hawaii, fellow kinsmen helped newer migrants in acquiring employment. In studies elsewhere, it was established that the Dominican and Colombian migrants in New York City received arrival assistance from their familial networks (Gurak, 1987). Such assistance thus helps in sustaining the migration chain.

**6.4.1 Assimilation of Southwestern migrants in South African communities**

With regards to the role of social networks in facilitating assimilation, one respondent said:

> *When I came to South Africa, I did not face any challenges. You know Ndebele and isiZulu is more or less related. The other issue is, in my first days I stayed with my*

*cousins. They were born and raised in South Africa. However, their dad grew up in Bulawayo. So, language wise, I did not face any challenge* (Interview with Josephine, Pretoria, 2020).

The above revelation does underscore how easy it became for migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to assimilate within the South African linguistic groups. Another respondent reasoned critically that:

> *… for one to blend within the South African linguistic groups, one does not need to speak Ndebele, Bantu languages are easy to learn. Even us Shonas we did learn Xhosa and isiZulu and Tswana so easily. Actually, Zimbabweans we are fast learners. Maybe this is because of our desperation to fit in the South African society to escape exclusion. We try by all means to fit in and become like them* (Interview with Tatenda, Pretoria, 2020).

Whilst the above respondent is to some extent correct, I argue, consistent with mainstream findings, that those with prior linguistic abilities are able to adjust, assimilate and integrate in host communities with ease. This is in contrast to first language learners. This is also considering that it takes a lot to learn a second language. In fact, some Zimbabwean migrants, especially those from Mashonaland and Manicaland provinces continue to face insurmountable challenges in second language acquisition, to the extent that they resort to the use of English language:

> *My sister, you know it can be very challenging to go to public institutions here especially if you do not speak the local language. Just imagine going to the local clinic in the high-density suburbs and you go there speaking English and you are a Zimbabwean. I do not know whether you have heard about medical xenophobia. But I generally think South Africans are not xenophobic. They have accepted us in their homes, workplaces, institutions, communities, schools, and universities. But I just think they are proud of their language just as is the case with Europeans. However, I always marvel and cherish the way how Ndebeles gel in the South African communities. One cannot even distinguish a Ndebele from Zulu. But for us non-Ndebeles it has been a challenge to fit in these communities. That's why you find some of us staying in the city in apartments, flats and in the low-density suburbs* (Interview with Susan, Pretoria, 2020).

Taking cue from the above, one can get a sense of how migrants view linguistic and cultural abilities as crucial in integration and assimilation within South African societies. It must be underscored in order to avoid any ambiguity that, although human social networks play a significant role in shaping and influencing migration of Southwesterners, that does not mean that there are no other important causes and drivers. The core reasons for this cohort's migration to South Africa has to do with the contextual and political economy issues. Consistent with earlier scholarly works, Zimbabweans are attracted by the pull factors that exist at the receiving (host) destination. In the same breath, they are also 'forced' to migrate by the push factors that exist in the sending country.

The pull factors that exist within South Africa include a good and quality lifestyle, improved standard of living, availability of functional economic and socio-economic systems, among others. As for the push factors, the economic decline pronounced through a comatose economy has generally served as a reason for Zimbabweans' decision to migrate to other countries within the region, like Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana and South Africa and far afield in the developed countries. Taken together, contextual realities in the sending and hosting countries all influence the migratory flow, patterns, and dynamics which see a lot of people trekking to South Africa in search of so-called greener pastures. In other cases, though, the greener pastures prove to be illusive. However, the point remains that human social networks play a facilitating, if not catalysing role in the migration of Zimbabwean south westerners into South Africa.

The above also relates to dynamics established in the wider literature. Scholars noticed a high trend of migrants from Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador of Latino who flocked into the United States of America and this migration is largely fuelled by push factors, including fleeing gang violence, persecution, deep-seated poverty, and crime (Ambrosius, 2021; Obinna, 2019). In their contribution to the migration research, Kanayo et al., (2019) conducted empirical research focusing on the push and pull factors of Congolese and Cameroonian migrants to South Africa. This serve to underscore that the push and pull factors do not only apply to Zimbabwean migrants but to other migrants too.

In terms of assimilating within the communities, the study found evidence to the effect that relatives and friends also assist. However, this is largely influenced by linguistic ties. It was established that in cases where xenophobic attacks emerged, the migrants found refugee within host communities. It is these host communities that offer protection to the migrants with whom they do share socio-linguistic and cultural lies. However, although most respondents concede that they find it easy to assimilate, some do argue otherwise. This is evident in the scholarly literature of Vanyoro (2019) who established that people experienced a level of unease and a sense of socio-exclusion in terms of accessing public services within the context of a growing wave of xenophobic discrimination (Hungwe and Gelderblom, 2014; Mutambara and Naidu, 2021). This may apply to reported acts of social discrimination in public institutions like hospitals and clinics.

The question, however, is whether such acts are only directed at Shona speaking people who have Shona names and do not speak the local languages. Or is this treatment also meted on Ndebele speaking people – those who hail from the southwestern parts. If it is the latter case, what then can we say about the role and effect of socio-linguistic traits in facilitating the assimilation and inclusion of migrants within the South African communities? This is why scholars speak of the social capital of migration (Haug, 2008). In the context of early research on Zimbabwean's migration to South Africa, scholars established that social capital also works in providing guidance on how new migrants can access social services namely health institutions and also on the varied ways one can assimilate and integrate within the South African communities (Hungwe, 2013).

### 6.4.2. Socio-linguistic and cultural ties as enablers of assimilation

In terms of assimilation, respondents noted that host communities with whom they shared linguistic and cultural ties also helped in providing information. Such information helps these migrants to assimilate within the host communities with ease. This finding is also consistent with the scholarly literature as established in the work of (De Haas, 2008). However, within the extant studies others observe what are termed as the *herd* and *network effects* (Epstein, 2008). From this perspective, it is maintained that the absence of information on destinations leaves migrants with only one option: to follow where other migrants normally migrate to (ibid). While, this was not established among the respondents, it appears this is prevalent among migrants from Mashonaland provinces who do not enjoy prior existing familial, historical, cultural, and linguistic ties with South African communities. It is these vulnerable

populations that face challenges in assimilating and integrating in host communities where there are no pre-existing socio-cultural and linguistic ties.

In underscoring the nexus between pre-existing familial, linguistic, cultural, and religious networks scholars observe that such existing backgrounds facilitate migration decision-making (Gu and Fong, 2022). These enduring links also help in the integration of the migrant populations with the help of those who would have settled earlier or those who are permanent citizens of such countries. In this regard, religion and cultural beliefs are seen as unifying bonds that not only bind people together, but also help the assimilation within the host country. This was aptly demonstrated in the integration and settling in of Muslims, especially in Muslim-to-Muslim majority countries. I also argue that, as shown by the findings, that these socio-linguistic and cultural ties help migrants from the southwest parts of Zimbabwe to integrate.It is from this perspective that social networks then act as 'bridgeheads' (Böcker, 1994; Collyer, 2005) in aiding the integration and settling of fellow family members and friends. As one respondent noted:

> *For me to settle and assimilate in the community was so easy. If it was not for the assistance, I got from my paternal relatives I do not know how I was going to navigate my stay and find my way around Johannesburg. I am grateful, I felt sheltered under their wings* (Interview with Josephine, 2020).

The above response underscores the role of human social networks in facilitating integration and assimilation within the host community. The above also underscores how ethnic and cultural bonds assist in the assimilation of migrant populations. As established in the scholarly accounts, 'migration literature on early settlement generally assumes that migrants will gravitate towards co-ethnics with whom they share a language, similar cultural values, and religious beliefs' (Wessendorf, 2017:2). This has also been a feature of the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest, specifically those of Ndebele origin who normally migrate to KwaZulu-Natal. It is from this end, that we see familiar and unsurprising migratory patterns clustered around socio-linguistic, cultural, and geographical lines.

### 6.5 Conclusion

This chapter engaged at length with the role of human social networks in facilitating the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest part to South Africa. In doing so, the study first situated the discussion within a historical perspective in examining how these ethnic groups are tied together. The discussion dwelled on illuminating how the history of the people in this region, particularly the Mfecane wars, produced shared ethnic origins between ethnic groups in South Africa, particularly the Zulu, Venda, Xhosa, Sotho, and Ndebele in Zimbabwe. The chapter also discussed how the shared historical, linguistic, cultural, and social ties helped the Zimbabweans to adapt, assimilate and integrate within various South African communities. To this end, the chapter argues that human social networks not only facilitate migration of Zimbabweans from the southwest into South Africa, but that they also aid in assimilation and integration within the South African communities. Such revelations do underscore the role of human social networks in facilitating cross-border (un)documented migration, a phenomenon which is not only limited to the Zimbabwean case study. In the next chapter I engage with how networks have been vital in assisting migrants to negotiate the border.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# MIGRANTS AND NEGOTIATION OF CROSS-BORDER CONTROL AT THE BEITBRIDGE BORDER POST

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses its analytic and empirical gaze on examining the negotiation of the challenges associated with cross-border control at the Beitbridge border post. The discussion centres on interrogating the dynamics and effects of having a porous border as exemplified in the case of Beitbridge. In so doing, the chapter shifts to look at how migrants negotiate and navigate the border using the (un)usual and (un)regulated entry points, both legally and illegally. The focus is also on the pivotal role played by various actors ranging from the bus drivers, truck drivers, border officials, police, and army, to *omalayisha* and the *izimpisi* as cross-border agents. The chapter brings into conversation how the South African Immigration laws reinforced stringent measures for immigrants, especially those who share socio-cultural and linguistic relations in South Africa and Zimbabwe. This has contributed significantly to the normalisation of undocumented border crossing by the Zimbabweans as a counter to the exclusionary tendencies of the border, especially for those who have a legitimate claim to free travel. The last section looks at how migrants negotiate(d) the border when more tough measures were enacted due to COVID-19. The study is, however, alert to the fact that the border is a social and physical space that can be manipulated by certain players.

## 7.2 Border management in practice

To date, the issue of border management and control has remained one of the most topical issues regulating migration. This topic is particularly concerning for nations considering the high volume of undocumented migrants seeking to cross borders. Again, as of today, it remains a truism that controlling migration processes between two nations is an obligation by responsible authorities. Such regulations help in safeguarding not only national and human security, but also state sovereignty. In this regard, controlling and managing borders involve security forces, the police, immigration departments, public health departments, and revenue-collection authorities. The presence of such governmental authorities is necessary for

regulating inflows and outflows at the border. These may include humans, goods, objects among other things. In other words, manning a border with various governmental authorities should buttress the legal contract in border crossing. However, the legal regulation of border crossing, particularly in relation to the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa, is a colonial relic that promoted the exploitation of the indigenous people within the Limpopo Valley. This border, like many others, went on to divide people through the erection of an artificial border fence, something that was alien to communities that used to co-exist.

Although the concept of borders was loosely observed in pre-colonial Africa, its heavy enforcement and regulation between Zimbabwe and South Africa, as imposed by the colonial governments, was alien. Audie Klotz (2016) observes:

> Thinking counterfactually, if just a few Rhodesian settlers had voted differently in 1923, all Zimbabweans would be South African citizens rather than foreigners, and the protectorates would most likely have been incorporated in the 1920s too. Such historical contingencies underscore that all nationalisms in the region rest upon the same colonial-era racist foundations – even if some contemporary nationalists are adamantly anti-racist or actively challenge xenophobia (Klotz, 2016:193).

By referring to this and other historical incidents in the region, she invariably positions the borders in the region as 'territorial boundaries that are an additional, unchallenged, legacy of imperialism' (ibid.). Unfortunately, this whimsical decision on the part of the colonial policy-makers can no longer be reversed easily, as reflected by the reluctant implementation of the provisions of the Declaration and Treaty of the SADC of 1992, the Facilitation of the Movement of Persons of 2005, and the AU Free Movement of Persons protocol of 2018 which sought to promote the free movement of people in Africa. The demise of the SADC protocol and the continued need for travel documentation means that the same people across different national boundaries continue to be separated, and yet logic dictates that they have to interact. These people continue to interact and ignore border impositions. This leeway also allows other migrants to exploit these gaps in border management. For example, migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe have a long history of cross-border migration into South Africa. The barriers imposed by the border have compelled migrants to negotiate these challenges, despite the legal and institutional implications.

The management of the border is closely linked to the exclusion/inclusion dichotomy (see also Griffin, 2010). Stricter border management procedures and securitization strengthen the extent to which groups are excluded from the host society. However, of significance to this discourse is the fact that such exclusion is only a reflection of the formalised and legalised channels of border crossing (Crépeau, 2013). Nonetheless, although irregular border crossing is inclusive as it is not encumbered by legal restrictions, the economic and socio-cultural costs involved may hinder other emigrants. Taking these everyday realities seriously, requires a deeper appreciation of extra-legal or illegal acts which are not simply reducible to disobeying and undermining legally constructed borders – rather they constitute an intrinsic part of the more complex border apparatus itself (see also Griffin, 2010).

As noted above, the Zimbabwe-South Africa border divided the people with similar historic, socio-cultural, and linguistic relations. Such borders prevented the free travel of people and has certainly acted as an impediment to the right of interaction and association between such people (Fratianni, 2004). Subsequently, immigration management – framed as it is by a focus on exclusion, restrictive access and the prevention of free movement – often does not grasp the new realities of contemporary forms of cross-border migration, particularly the social aspects of such migration (Chimimba, 2021). These complex realities have been captured in contemporary literature, which sought to bring insight into the 'migration-security nexuses' and the complexity of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa (Crush et al., 2015; Mlambo, 2010; Sibanda, 2010; Thebe, 2011, 2013).

### 7.2.1 Overcoming the border barrier

As highlighted above and as discussed in Chapter 6, the Limpopo Valley harbours people from the same ethnic group who were separated by the creation of the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. If it were not for the hand of fate, they would still be interacting freely without the fear of being apprehended for failing to conform to the legal regulations of adhering to border control and regulations when migrating. Participants to the study revealed that their presence, although dynamic, is a result of the Zimbabwean and South African governments' ignorance of the fact that, prior to colonisation, people on both sides of the Limpopo River lived as a unified society separated by a physical feature (river) and united by socio-cultural and linguistic factors (see also Moyo, 2016).

In interviews, the Zimbabwean Ndebele and Venda-speaking migrants all saw the border as a major barrier to be negotiated. As one of the migrants noted:

> *The border strengthened and maintained the order that was set during the apartheid and colonisation era ... It separated people who, for a long time, were a single culture with same socio-cultural and linguistic elements, as is still seen today* (Interview with Nickson Mpala, Pretoria, 2020).

The migrant, like others who participated in the study, however, believed that the barrier can easily be overcome. Migrants often referred to the past times when people from Zimbabwean societies successfully crossed the border informally to work in South Africa. One of the migrants observed:

> *The border is not new. It was there when our fathers crossed to South Africa. Did the government allow them to cross it? No. But, they still crossed and worked and returned home when the time came for them to return. Did the people turn against them? No. Because they understood that they were part of them. Was there no border enforcement? It was probably much tougher than now. You should remember that there was no transport at the time, and still they succeeded. What does that tell you?* (Interview with Mehluli, Pretoria, 2020).

Migrants negotiating the border to gain access into the South African society was therefore common practice, which as indicated, had a long history, particularly among people from the Matabeleland region.

### 7.2.2 Obtaining dual citizenship

The study established that one of the strategies used to negotiate border spaces was through the acquisition of legal status. This often entailed obtaining dual citizenship by Zimbabwean migrants and mostly those from the southwestern parts. This is even corroborated by Moyo (2016) who established that one of the most popular techniques adopted successfully by migrants was the adoption of dual nationality, citizenship, and double identities as a way to negotiate the border. The dual citizenship then helps one cross the border legally. As one respondent noted 'it is simply a matter of producing the required documents on either the Zimbabwean or South African side' (Interview with anonymous respondent, Beitbridge border, 2021). In this research, ten migrants had dual nationalities and were living legally in South Africa. Seven migrants said that they had legally applied for and obtained South African identity cards and passports with the help of their relatives on the other side of the border.

These relatives migrated earlier in the 1980s and managed to acquire South African identity cards/documents. Even those who did not have dual nationality had relatives who were dual citizens. Some had relatives who were *bona fide* South African citizens. Interestingly, some of these migrants got their citizenship in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, from where their forefathers originated. As one migrant explained:

> *It was not difficult to gain South African citizenship. I am a Gumede and there are many people of the same surname in KwaZulu-Natal. What you needed to do is to identify one and introduce yourself, and along the line, you will discover that you are related. These new relatives are often willing to assist. They assist because you are their son. What they say in their language is that, 'umtwana usebuyile, udinga usizo' (our child is back and requires help). That is all. Many of us have citizenship through these relatives. These are true relatives and there is shared blood along the way* (Interview with Methuseli Sokhela, Pretoria, 2020).

There are numerous cases of migrants from Zimbabwe, particularly, from the main Ndebele group, who have found relatives in KwaZulu-Natal. The migrants mentioned that they were assisted to acquire identity documents by these relatives. For example, through a life world narrative I came to understand the life of:

> *…Nhlawulo Khanye who was 58 at the time of the study and originates from Sivalo in the Nkayi area of Zimbabwe. He says he emigrated to South Africa in 1992. He was working in a security firm in 1993 when he met a man from Ndwedwe in KwaZulu-Natal. They became close as they were workmates and mostly did the same shift. As their relationship grew, the man suggested that he was going to take him to meet people of the same surname in his home area. When he finally met the people, he was welcomed like a son and assisted to acquire a South African document. Nhlawulo's siblings, including three brothers and two sisters, also joined him in the late-1990s and were introduced to the family. These were also assisted with identity documents. These have become a second family and their children had been visiting Nhlawulo's family in Zimbabwe (Nhlawulo Khanye narrative, Pretoria, 2020).*

Related to the above is the case of the Jeles and the Dhlomos, some of the early immigrants into South Africa from southwestern Zimbabwe. As one respondent revealed:

*My late grandfather, Langa Jele, came to work in the mines in the 19th century but he never went back to Zimbabwe after his contract had ended. He worked as a gardener in Johannesburg for many years for a white couple. However, he had his friend "Umkhulu" Lwandile from KZN, who was also a gardener whom he would drink with at a local shebeen and become friends. They would go to his home together for some weekends and family gatherings in the villages of Tongaat. That's when Umkhulu Langa met Langa's sister Babekazi Andile, who was married to the Jele family, where he was introduced and welcomed. That's how my grandfather was assisted to get his own ID and he has helped his brothers and sisters to get their own ID's. Ever since that time we have regarded ourselves as a family, they come to my uncle's (the real brother to her father) place in Pretoria west, as he owns a big house there when they have any business to take care of in Pretoria. Before Corona, we went with Babekazi Andile's last-born daughter to a family wedding in Bulawayo and we just treat her as a family as we really feel we are one* (Interview with Naledi, Pretoria, 2020).

Another migrant, Dhlomo, one of the older migrants in the research, revealed that he came to South Africa in 1988 and never went back to Zimbabwe. He worked as a cleaner at a food outlet in Pretoria. His neighbour, *ubaba* Jabulani Khumalo, informed him that he knew someone with a similar Dhlomo surname in KwaZulu-Natal where he originated from. Dhlomo was taken back home with his colleague in 1989 who introduced him to his 'relatives' who eventually helped him with securing an ID as a way to get a better job in South Africa. Commenting on this, Dhlomo said, 'history made us one with our Zulu brothers.' He further noted how they have assisted each other since that time by giving an example of how he has assisted some of his children with securing jobs in Pretoria (Interview with Dhlomo, Pretoria, 2020).

The ties between Zulus and Ndebeles have also been acknowledged by Zulu leaders. In one of his speeches, former President Jacob Zuma once joked that the Ndebele are welcome back in South Africa, as long as they bring back the cows that they stole from King Shaka. This was the reason and explanation often offered regarding King Mzilikazi leaving Zululand. There is a general belief that he ran away with Shaka's cattle as captured in a song by a popular Zulu traditional music group, Izingane Zoma. This narration is meant to demonstrate that Zimbabwean migrants are part of South African society and tied in through history.

Wherever the hand of border control does not reach, the people within the Valley have no shackles to tie down their quest for profitable interaction across the Limpopo. These sentiments are the basis of social networks between the people of South Africa and those from southwestern Zimbabwe. For example, Thavhiso Mabidi was 63 and from Beitbridge District in Zimbabwe. He came to South Africa in 1987 when he was 30 years old. He had come to join his father. Thavhiso said they had part of the family that was living in Vhembe District in South Africa. He also indicated that most of his family in Zimbabwe were living in South Africa and held both Zimbabwean and South African citizenship. He also had a home in both Zimbabwe and South Africa and interacted regularly with kin in Vhembe. 'We still meet and have to visit Vhembe for cultural ceremonies because that is the main home. The family in Vhembe is head of the lineage' (Life History Interview with Thavhiso, Betitbridge border, 2020).

Thus, it can be argued that migrants are not willing to let go of their identities in both countries, they do that so as to achieve benefits of being nationals in the countries. Also, relatives in South Africa are always willing to assist migrants to get official documents because of the relationship that exists amongst them. But more importantly, these dual identities also help them when crossing the border.

Another migrant said:

> *I have both identities, and this has helped me in many ways especially here in South Africa. I can get a job just like an ordinary citizen, residence, and all civil and other benefits. Both my parents, just like most old folks in the country, benefit through the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA)* (Interview with Nickson Mpala, Beitbridge border, 2020).

The revelation above gives credence to the claim that the people in the Limpopo Valley are of the same origin, and thus related. This fact has boosted the confidence of these local people to cross the border even without the requisite papers. In this regard, another elderly migrant, whose birth origins are also in the Limpopo Valley, conveyed similar sentiments:

> *Before the whites appropriated our lands, people moved freely, crossing the Limpopo whenever the need arose. When there was drought down south [Venda], the people there came up North [the Zimbabwean side], and likewise, the people on this side would*

*migrate down-side if there were famine due to poor rainfall. Today Zimbabwe is famished, it is only logical for the people to travel to South Africa to seek succour just as our forefathers did* (Interview with Solomon, Beitbridge border, 2020).

This shows the benefits of having dual citizenship for migrants from southwestern Zimbabwe. Thus, the migrants proved that they are legal citizens of both Zimbabwe and South Africa. The fact that some migrants from southwest Zimbabwe are entitled to documentation for both countries demonstrate the complexity of managing the Beitbridge border. According to Moyo (2016) border communities define themselves in connection to their Venda language on both sides of the border, as well as the apparatus of state control visible in both nations' immigration procedures and regulations.

### 7.2.3 Cross-border movements facilitated by locals

This research has established that the people who assist the migrants to cross into South Africa are residents of Beitbridge. This is confirmed by Crush and Tevera (2010) who point out that *izimpisi* are mostly local people who know the Limpopo Valley terrain intimately, as well as the risks associated with crossing the Limpopo River. This is because of their familiarity with the environment and the fact that cross-border movements are their daily routine for having relatives on both sides of the river. Hence, the relationship that they have with communities make it easy for them to move people across. Familiarity with the environment is important as it allows them to move across the border undeterred.

Expert cross-border facilitators were particularly significant because of the Limpopo River, which had to be navigated with great care. The study also found that the *izimpisi* who assist people to navigate the cross-border process are 'experts' who wield a set of skills to cross the flooded river, evading crocodiles, navigating the torrents, and who have full knowledge of the terrain. Of significance is the role and nationality of the *izimpisi* as an important cog in the migration space along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. An account by Tshabalala (2017) endorses the significance of the *izimpisi* within an African set-up as follows:

> In Southwestern Zimbabwe society, hyenas have long been associated with defilement and cleansing rituals. According to Dr. Phathisa Nyathi, a preeminent historian of the customs and beliefs of the region, hyenas specialise in doing those tasks that are likely to defile the community as they are to be done by ordinary people (Tshabalala, 2017:203).

Lufuno, one of the migrants, noted that the migration process is anchored by an intricate social network (Interview with Lufuno, Beitbridge border, 2020). The facilitators for crossing the border thrive on such a network. On the other hand, the harsh decision to emigrate is cushioned by the optimism of better opportunities which the facilitators signify. In other words, the process is premised on trust and assurance among the stakeholders. Trust is earned through various means, and these are centralised on satisfying the expectations of the parties involved – the migrants, the border-crossing agents, and sometimes the border control officers. Interviews revealed that cross-border facilitation by cross-border communities has a long pedigree and was done as a principle of African *Ubuntu*, where people would assist each other in times of need as a moral obligation.

> My father, and my grandfather before him, assisted people to cross into South Africa. In the 1950s many people were fleeing the brutality of the white regime and so they were attracted to South Africa which offered better job opportunities. My grandfather formed a syndicate that aided cross Limpopo into South Africa for a fee. The Shona as far as Chipinge did not know the terrain and these were mostly their clients. My father, in the 1970s, inherited this lucrative business and expanded it to include other people as far as Mangwe to become their informers as well as spreading the news that their syndicates were effective in assisting helpless people in South Africa. The business flourished and in the late 1990s, I also joined it and began to be identified as the impisi, as people in this business are called. I was proud to join such a venture because of its economic returns as you can see, I am well off, above my peers [he owns three houses in Beitbridge town and several cars]. Also, I felt obliged to be an impisi to correct the wrongs

Due to the existence of such assistance, migrants are able to navigate through the barriers imposed by border restrictions. Hence, this history shows the complexity of the process as well as the expertise of the facilitators which makes it possible for migrants to negotiate the border.

### 7.2.4 Social networks

Social networks have always played a major role in cross-border dynamics for Zimbabwean migrants in a context of a history that divided people into different nationalities. The physical

demarcation of a border and legislation has failed to break the social bonds and relationships that transcend the physical boundaries.

#### 7.2.4.1 Nested social networks and border entry

It is crucial to note that the undocumented migration of Zimbabweans to South Africa from the southwest involves individual and collective actions and agency. This stems from the very process of border negotiation which involves a multiplicity of factors. Such claims are in tandem with findings established elsewhere. In a study by Klopper (2006) focusing on the Southern Mozambique and South African borders' social networks were found to play a role in the migration of undocumented immigrants. Other scholars also concur by pointing out that the undocumented migration process is embedded in a complex web of social networking (Chimimba, 2021). This relates to the undocumented migration by not only Zimbabwean but Malawians and Mozambicans who also flock to South Africa through the use of (un)designated border entry points. In the context of this study, it should be noted that these social networks are located in different geographical environments, from Zimbabwe to South Africa. Figure 7.1 shows this complex web of migrant networks.

Social networks play different social roles which are developed and nurtured (Williams, 2019). It reveals that a migrant is supported by a myriad of social players who loosely fall into three groups, forming concentric cycles: kin, non-kin social, and service providers (Fix, 2004; Foote, 2017). Noteworthy is the fact that cross-border transporters fall within both 'non-kin social' and 'service providers' groups. This confirms the social aspect of the migration process as propagated by the cross-border transporters. Some of the network systems were discussed in the previous section. The section showed how locals, particularly *izimpisi*, have used their knowledge of the geographical environment and skills to assist migrants to navigate the challenges associated with the border.

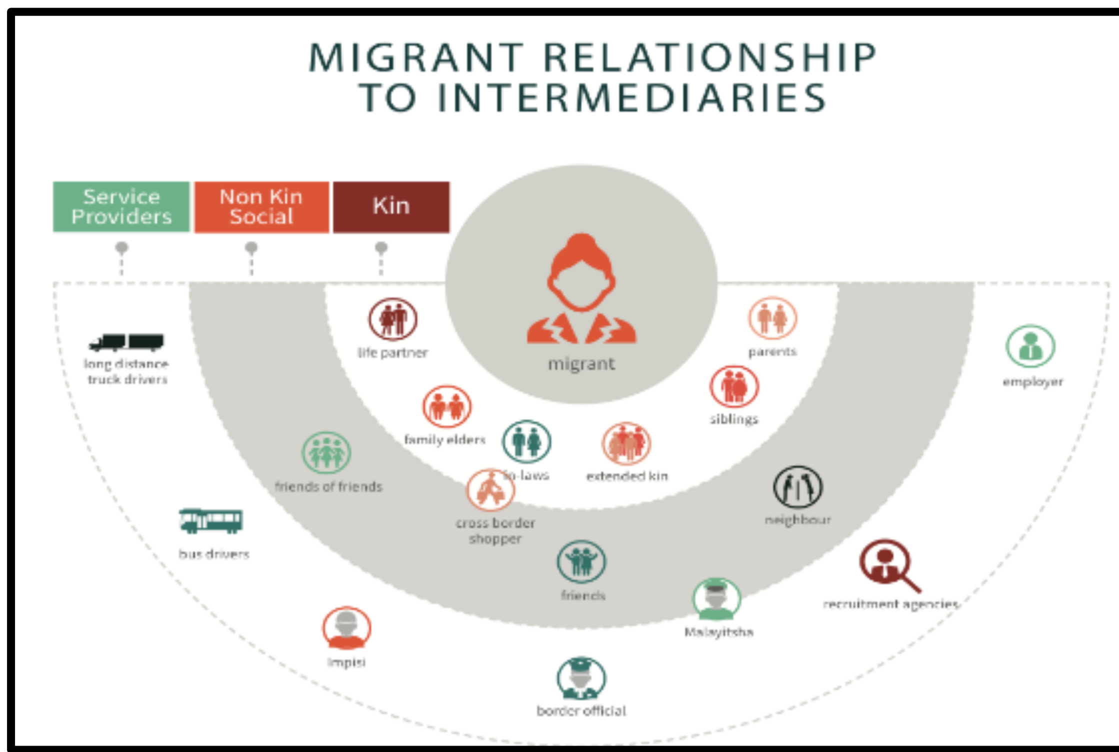


**Figure 7.1: The social web enshrouding a typical migrant**
Source: Adopted from Zack et al., 2019

#### 7.2.5.1 The importance of social networks in the movement of migrants

**Facilitating Migration**

The study established that social networks not only facilitate the assimilation, integration of migrants in South African communities, but that these networks also help in navigating the border. Social networks include people in Zimbabwe, people in South Africa including early migrants and locals, and agents including *omalayisha* and *izimpisi*. Chimimba (2021) has focused on the process of networking in the movement of goods and people, while Thebe and Maombera (2019) described networks in the cross-border migration of children. Sibanda (2010) also discussed the importance of social networks in South Africa. Social networks in the form of cross-border agents such as *omalayisha* and *izimpisi* are helpful agents who assist migrants, not only those from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe, but also others from different parts of Zimbabwe. However, the *omalayisha* normally ply the Johannesburg Bulawayo route. In this regard, they do enjoy a long-standing transactional relationship, border officials (immigration officials), security forces, migrants, and migrant relatives in the host

countries. Such a web of relations then facilitates the easy passage of undocumented migrants either within the legal and illegal ports of entry.

Whilst the border negotiation is important in understanding the topic under investigation, it is critical to note that pre-existing familial networks make it easier for poor people to migrate by providing cash, loans, and gifts to help migrants pay for travel to their destination areas (Chimimba, 2021; Maombere, 2018). Migrants between the ages of 20 and 35 reported that older migrants who had previously lived in the country provided money to bribe officials and agents who then smuggled them across the border. In general, an aspiring migrant cannot 'do it alone' (Interview with Grace, Pretoria, 2020). It is for this reason that 'one has to grease the hands of different interested parties ranging from transporters to border and security officials' (ibid.). In light of such claims it is a correct observation to state that an aspiring migrant would thrive upon the social web where relatives and non-relatives would converge to assist them to achieve their goal of travelling. Extant studies, for example a study by Thebe (2011) elaborates on this subject and process in intricate details. According to his accounts, these migrants enter into various forms of contract with cross-border transporters. The contract entered with cross-border transporters determines how the border is negotiated. 'Advance payments' often allow migrants' safe passage through the formal border post, while 'pay forward' arrangements would mean the use of informal entry points. Such claims also resonate with findings established in this study. As part of a participant observer, I also witnessed how *omalayisha* and bus crew members facilitated the crossing of Zimbabweans without passports. Though mixed, they were from different parts of Matebeleland.

In probing respondents, it was, however, made clear that certainly all migrants utilised contract arrangements, either to cross the border or to facilitate the movement of their kith and kin. The undocumented migrants mostly relied on such contacts to move into and out of South Africa. Because of social networks, migrants never saw cross-border movements as a difficult process, especially when well-resourced (financially). Some of the undocumented migrants mentioned that they did not face any hurdles when crossing the border. They emphasized that social networks helped in facilitating their movement. For example, Josephine, a 28 year old woman from Bulilima noted that her brother-in-law had paid a reliable *omalayisha* to bring her to South Africa without any challenges (Interview with Josephine, Pretoria, 2020). Such a disclosure was also in line with the narration of a 23 year old Mbali from Nkayi. Mbali's uncle

recommended and paid a trusted *omalayisha* who had facilitated the migration of his own children to South Africa before to also bring him over without proper documentation (Interview with Mbali, Pretoria, 2020).

Early migrants also play a role in recommending to (would-be) migrants the mode of transport based on reliability. For example, Nonhlanhla noted that when she first migrated to South Africa, her brother-in-law organised a reliable *omalayisha* to bring her to South Africa. He paid 1 500 ZAR so that she could pass through the border and not through illegal routes (Interview with Nonhlanhla, Pretoria, 2020). Family members also play a role in encouraging those from the southwestern parts to migrate to South Africa and join fellow family members. A notable example is Naledi, whose aunty advised her to move to Pretoria in 2012 to join the rest of the family. The aunty even booked a bus ticket for her (Interview with Naledi, Pretoria, 2020). The study, however, established that some relatives often discourage those migrating from using illegal means when crossing the Beitbridge border post. This advice also extended to the discouragement in the use of unfamiliar forms of transportation and drivers. To protect their relatives, migrants preferred to use well-known cross-border transporters rather than unknown ones. For instance, in an interview with Abokoe she mentioned that her mother had discouraged her from travelling with an unfamiliar *omalayisha* (Interview with Abokoe, Pretoria, 2020). This, however, is not to generalise the trend as some prefer the illegal routes as established by the study.

However, Abokoe had to use the *omalayisha* given that her sister who stays in Mpumalanga had already paid and the *omalayisha* was not willing to refund the money for them to use instead on 'ubaba uNdimande', who always helps them bring their family to South Africa (ibid). Thus, in facilitating migration, they preferred a safer route. This involves going using the legal border route rather than going through the river and forests. Further to that, migrants' families are inspired by minimising, if not eliminating, the risks associated with illegal border crossing, namely confrontation with security personnel, especially the border patrol crack team.

**Information sharing**

Migrants in this research noted that their decision to migrate was seeded through information sharing with fellow migrants. These are relatives, friends, colleagues, or neighbours who would have successfully migrated to South Africa. Such a group of people is instrumental in providing crucial information on how to navigate the border and evade deportation. Thus, such networks help not only with information, but they also provide financial resources to pay for passage into South Africa. Such help makes the migration of the undocumented migrant much easier. Consistent with this claim, one interviewee revealed how she decided to migrate to South Africa without a passport:

> *I had finished my first degree but there was no job in Zimbabwe. Three years had elapsed since the Public Service Commission had informed graduates to register with them so that we would be assisted with job-seeking. I have a cousin in Johannesburg who said that I can find work in South Africa as a teacher in private schools even if I did not have SAQA certification. She sent me money to travel with omalayisha even though I did not have a passport. She assured me that if I travel with that omalayisha my journey would be smooth. But still, this was like jumping into the unknown, but I had to do it because I had limited options* (Interview with Josephine, Pretoria, 2020).

Social capital is thus one of the strongest currencies of passage into South Africa, at least for people from the southwest parts of Zimbabwe as established by this current inquiry. Tshabalala (2017) points out that whether one has the required, valid, and legal travel documents, social networks also help in navigating one into South Africa. For instance, as established in this study, at times migrants (though a few) are turned back at the border when they fail to give a valid reason as to why they must be allowed to enter into South Africa. Through informal interactions with migrants at the border, some disclosed that they at some point witnessed migrants with passports with no issues, yet these migrants were denied entry. However, I must state openly that it was difficult to verify the veracity of such claims. But considering that such possibilities exist, would-be migrants and their families would thus be bent on eliminating any risk of being turned back at the border. Hence, they resort to the use of *omalayishas.*

### 7.3. Exploiting the porous border

As of today, the issue of porous borders (Johnson et al., 2012) and securitisation has remained one of the contested issues. Globalisation has in part become one of the driving forces behind porous borders, owing to the growth in trade, communication, and technology (Mello, 2008), although the smuggling of people and contraband along the Zimbabwe-South Africa border has a long history (Moyo, 2022; Pophiwa, 2017). The undocumented movement of people across the border has been heightened by the porous and weakly regulated border. This has fuelled large scale movement of undocumented migrants. However, this phenomenon is not only owing to the weak border regulation, but to the overwhelming pressure on border governance due to the political economy factors in the sending country (Zimbabwe).

Legal border crossing requires a valid passport or an emergency travelling document. However, in the Zimbabwean situation since 2019, it has been difficult to access a passport due to the lack of foreign currency to buy the paper and ink to produce them. This has led to the prioritisation of emergency passports which cost US$318 (plus or minus 5000 ZAR) (Maromo, 2020).

Many aspiring migrants and those whose passports had expired were unable to obtain new documents due to the high prices. Not only that, but before the decentralisation of passport production services, it was difficult to access passports owing to backlogs coupled with limited production capacity. Furthermore, in order to remain legal in South Africa, a permanent or temporary residency permission must be obtained, which must be accompanied by an official stamp from the Department of Home Affairs office issuing the permit. The purchase of a South African identity card demonstrates permanent residency status, as does South African citizenship (also known as an ‘ID’ or ‘ID book’) as required by law (see also Griffin, 2010). Several of these documents are depicted in Figure 7.2.

**Figure 7.2: A South African ID; Zimbabwean passports; Zimbabwe special permit in the Zimbabwean passport**
Source: Research Field (2020)

Securitization of the Zimbabwean and South Africa borders have become instrumental in curbing illegal cross-border movement. This natural barrier is artificially strengthened with a 200-kilometer-long security Nabob wire, which is patrolled daily on both sides of the border by Zimbabwean and South African police (Diamon, 2009; Irish, 2005). The interviewed border officials bemoaned the fact that border security infrastructure is not effective in containing the movement of undocumented migrants from Zimbabwe. They mentioned that Zimbabweans use legal and illegal means to cross into South Africa. Despite its apparent invincibility, border jumping and smuggling of migrants using formal entry points (smart entry methods) and informal entry points (dirty entry methods) characterise the daily lived reality of migrants who are enmeshed in constant acts of negotiating the border. The availability of these methods has implications for immigration management and demonstrates the difficulty and complexity of Zimbabwean migration.

What is critical to note, is that the Beitbridge Border, just like any other border elsewhere, is an institution that is not above the social space, and thus may be manipulated to serve the interests of the players therein (see also Laine, 2016; Lamb, 2014; Rumford, 2008). Cross-border transporters (bus drivers, truck drivers, *omalayisha)* and *izimpis*i, form part of the paraphernalia of the borderland as they assist migrants to negotiate the border, as will be discussed in the next sections.

### 7.3.1. Dirty entry methods

Some undocumented migrants from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe highlighted that they used dirty entry methods to cross into South Africa. This involves the use of undesignated entry points through the river and the forest with the assistance of the *izimpisi* in most cases. These human smugglers are similar to the Mexican coyotes who transport undocumented migrants across the US-Mexico border (Donato et al., 2008; Dolfin and Genicot, 2010; Krissman, 2005). The names *izimpisi* and *coyote* refer to predatory wild animals that hunt in packs. Thus, one might argue that the imagery is meant to give assurance to their clients that they are well versed with the forest. In Ndebele, travelling through the forest is referred to as *dabulapu*. This word's literal meaning is unknown, but it may be derived from *dabula*, which means to tear (see also Hungwe, 2013). Most migrants from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe resort to the use of these illegal entry points to get into South Africa. This often entails finding ways to evade the security officers.

#### 7.3.1.1 Familiarity with the undesignated point of entry

Most male migrants aged between 25 and 40 years noted that they used the informal entry points not only once, but twice or even more when migrating to South Africa, because they could not afford the high rates that are demanded by cross-border transporters to pass through the formal border. Due to desperation, they sought the services of the *izimpisi* whose fares are a bit affordable. Nthambiso, a 25-year-old man noted that:

> *It is affordable to use izimpisi than the omalayisha and buses because you pay more money yet there is another way you can use to cross the same border for less. Also, there are limited risks of being intercepted and deported back to Zimbabwe* (Interview with Nthambiso, Pretoria, 2020).

Thabani noted that he had used the services of the *izimpisi* countless times as they are familiar with the border and formulated numerous unknown routes (by border officials) to move goods and people far from border security. Border officials confirmed that the *izimpisi* were notorious for evading the soldiers that patrol the border, and damaging the old security fence which had been erected before the new one was recently installed by the South African government to curb illegal cross border movement. Similarly, most Venda people living close to state-lines make use of illegal routes as they are unfamiliar with official border use. Local authorities and village chiefs are aware of this phenomenon and usually turn a blind eye. These routes are used

to attend ceremonies and gatherings in Makhado, Bale, Gundo, Malale, Nzhelele, Mutale, among others in Musina, as well as other villages across the border.

This research noted that Venda-speaking people sneak into South Africa in the morning to access services such as groceries, hospitals, etc. Thus, Moyo noted that:

> Some Venda-speaking people cross the border in the morning to buy commodities in Messina and travel to back to the Zimbabwean side of the border in the evening. Some have become used to the Immigration officials and do not have to present their travel documents. They have to buy the Immigration officials a ‘drink’. For such people traveling to Messina and back to Beitbridge on the Zimbabwean side, this amounts to a shop-ping trip in the ‘same community’. Furthermore, some of these Venda-speaking people from the Zimbabwean side of the border have crossed without presenting their documents. They claimed that they had struck a ‘good working relationship’ with Immigration officials, some of whom spoke mostly Venda. Over and above those who bought ‘drinks’, these Venda-speaking people stated that this allowed them to cross to the South African side of the border (Moyo, 2016:435)

One interviewed migrant said:

> *We do not have problems with SAPS, but the main problem is the Zimbabwean soldiers and police who demand large amounts for us to come to South Africa* (Interview with Nickson, Beitbridge, 2020).

An official at the border stated that immigration officials are in short supply on both the Zimbabwean and South African sides of the border (see also Muzondo, 2020). The South African sides, where most government regulation takes place, are frequently understaffed and suffer from crippling congestion from both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. People regularly cross ‘illegally’ (that is, through the river and the bush) at or near the border (see also Griffin, 2010). During my fieldwork in 2020, I observed how and why it becomes easier to cross the border for undocumented migrants. This is also because most immigration officers in the area are either preoccupied or too busy with processing documented crossers to notice or detain anyone else. However, other factors including lack of manpower also contribute.

#### 7.3.1.2 The vitality of the *izimpisi*

While there are many cases of migrants who have potentially lost their lives trying to cross the flooded river, many migrants mentioned that the *izimpisi* plays a significant role in facilitating movement of people to South Africa. Lufuno noted that at times the *izimpisi* work in collaboration with cross boarder transporters to ensure the safe passage of their clients when their networks at the border would have informed them about certain operations that will be at the border. The duty of the *izimpisi* is limited to ensuring safe passage in crossing the Limpopo River and the thick forests. However, such a responsibility is not to be taken lightly as many dangers lurk in the river and the bush.

Literature is replete with stories of drowning, crocodile attacks, rape cases, sexual harassment, robbery, and murder when border jumpers cross the Limpopo at undesignated entry points (Chimimba, 2021; Crush and Tevera, 2020; Rukema and Phopiwa, 2021; Zack et al., 2019). As such, the *izimpisi* are experienced and have the necessary skills in executing their duties of facilitating the safe passage for illegal migrants. Thabani noted that:

> *… the izimpisi must know many languages, be strong, and most probably be equipped with some weapons to fend off amagumaguma. The ability to speak and converse in various languages is instrumental in securing safe passage for the emigrants* (Interview with Thabani, Pretoria, 2020).

Migrants noted that the *izimpisi* (who are speculated to be traditional men) jumps in the river first to check if they are no crocodiles before migrants cross the river. Lufuno noted that crossing the river was done in the early hours of the morning between 2am and 4 am.
One migrant who crossed the Limpopo River in 2015 recounted:

> *We crossed the river around 3 am. The water during that period was not too much, it was in my hips. The men who assisted us to cross were very harsh and they were scolding people, especially women with crying babies to make them quiet. However, I thank God that we all survived the horrific experience and also, we were told that the previous day 2 children had died in the river. I was surprised to talk to one of the men nicely when we had crossed. He told me that they do not joke when they are doing business as the activities are between life and death* (Interview with Josephine, Pretoria 2020).

The Limpopo River's water levels are consistently high during the rainy season. This results in many river crossers having to remove their clothing in order to stay dry. A version of the story told indicates that when the group exit the river, they are so close in proximity to each other that it is unavoidable to glance at all naked bodies (see also Tshabalala, 2017). This exposes women of being at risk of sexual violence and assault, especially from criminal groups like the *amagumaguma*.

Female migrants noted that they feared using the forest because of alleged rape stories which are often perpetrated by the amagumaguma. There are also men who are sexually abused by the *amagumaguma* (see Rutherford, 2020). As such, female migrants aged, both single and married (who participated in the study), would prefer to avoid using the informal routes as they felt 'scary' and unsafe. They preferred to use the official border and pay more money to *omalayisha* for assistance. The majority of the migrants mentioned that they preferred using the official routes and gladly pay for such a service since its safer more dignified. Two migrants, who participated in the interviews noted that they used undesignated entry points when they first came to South Africa. This was attributed to the socio-economic hardships which characterise southwestern Zimbabwe, and indeed the rest of the country, which made it difficult to raise enough money to pay *omalayisha.* With what they had, they could only afford the services of the *izimpisi* and they braved the risks associated with illegally crossing the Zimbabwe-South Africa border. This does not necessarily mean that these people are risk lovers, but such courage may be attributed to the quest to survive. George, a 38 year old migrant narrates his ordeal as follows:

**Table 7.2: George's narration**

| I travelled to Beitbridge from Umzingwane, my home area, in a *kombi* and it left me at the filling station. I had no connections to assist me to cross the Border. Three guys approached me and asked me if I was crossing. I think they spotted me out through my bewilderment and the small satchel I had. Since they seemed friendly and cooperative, I agreed that indeed I was also crossing. They advised me that we will travel together in the evening. Within the hour some other migrants joined us. Then we were told not to form a crowd but to walk in twos or threes so that we would not attract the police. I was comfortable with the group because we all spoke Ndebele, and the guys knew my home area. At around 6 pm we started moving, going South, along the Limpopo. The three guys knew the paths, even those which |
|---|

were seemingly concealed. After walking for over two hours, we crossed the Limpopo. Since it was in July, the water only reached our knees. After walking for some time again on the other side of the Limpopo we crossed the Fence which the three guys cut using very big pliers since the razor wire was resistant to other common pliers. After crossing the wire, my three accomplices began to be brisker and more distant. Suddenly, one of the guys whistled, coding the unknown. Within that minute we were surrounded by machete-wielding men and one of them had a gun. I then knew that we were ushered into a gang of *amagumaguma* by my erstwhile friends. One of the people we were travelling with tried to escape, but after about ten steps, he was shot dead. In the melee which followed, I ran in the opposite direction. The *amagumaguma* tried to follow me, but since it was dark, they could not catch me. I ran in the bush, but after some time I became disoriented, and it became just a matter of moving, the adrenaline for survival giving me the will to keep on. At dawn, I then discovered that I was on a citrus farm. I sought where I could sleep. In the morning I saw some farm workers, and these later assisted me to find a job at the farm. I worked there for three months, after which I travelled to Joburg where I heard there were better job prospects. Now I am a waiter in Pretoria.

Source: Interview, 2020

The revelation above highlights the dangers associated with travelling alone without the necessary social linkages (services of reliable *izimpisi*) for such a precarious journey characterised by a high probability of danger. Migrants who used *dapulapu* expressed fear of *maguma guma* and wild animals. However, the discussion reveals how it has become easy to access either side of the official border without going through formal processes. It also reveals the extent to which migrants would go to achieve their cross-border movement objectives. Whatever the risk and the danger involved, and what security measures are put in place, migration of people will always exploit the complexity of the border. While the use of dirty entry methods has been popular with migrants and have been used with success since time immemorial, the availability of networks has opened safer opportunities for migrators to navigate their way into South Africa without taking risks.

**7.3.2 Smart entry methods**

Undocumented migrants also mentioned that they used legal ports of entry to cross into South Africa. This involves the use of formal points, mainly through the official border post, and it

might involve bribing one's way through. This is the most preferred method of entry and exit by Zimbabwean migrants. They use it when they enter South Africa and when they return to Zimbabwe. The use of smart entry methods does not require one to possess legal documents, which is referred to as legal entry and exit. It is a process that involves networking, negotiation, and the ability to pay. However, it does not mean that if you are able to pay, you can access this border without social networks. The study established that migrants use a range of social networks to navigate their way into South Africa. The most popular are cross-border transporters involving cross-border bus crews, truck drivers as well as the notorious people smugglers along the Zimbabwe-South African route - *omalayisha.* The next section discusses this process and what is involved, and how this complicates immigration management and border control.

#### 7.3.2.1 Cross-border Transporters

In negotiating border crossing, it was established that migrants make use of cross border transporters. According to Rodrigue (2020:350), 'cross-border transportation refers to the activities, infrastructure, and flows that enable the movement of people and goods across international borders.' In the case of the Beitbridge border post, the border players, particularly the agents and cross-border transporters (the *omalayisha*, truck drivers, and bus drivers), use their social capital, and border experiences, to strike successful border-crossing deals. Transporters are entrusted with assisting people to cross the border and they are committed to doing so in order to establish their reputations as competent cross-border transporters (see Thebe, 2011).

The migration process may be seen as an economy of subsistence whereby all stakeholders need to be satisfied by securing benefits through crossing the border. Since the migration process revolves around social networks, they have become entrepreneurial in that they invest in their services for the future (Johnson et al., 2011; Lamb, 2014). If one client is satisfied with the services offered, they refer the transporter to other people, thereby enlarging the clientele of the latter and this means more income and benefits. Through interviews conducted with fourteen migrants, both male and female noted that they had used cross-border services to migrate to South Africa through the reference of their friends and family. For example, Gracious, a 40 year old woman noted that her brother organised with the *omalayisha* to facilitate her way to South Africa. The undocumented migrant mentioned that her brother paid

for the services when she arrived at Bosman station in Pretoria (Interview with Gracious, Pretoria, 2020). Nonhlanhla also noted that her brother-in-law organised her transport with his friend who is a well-known and reliable *omalayisha* (Interview with Nonhlanlha, Pretoria, 2020). Mbali noted that her sister specifically told her of a reliable *omalayisha* to use. She gave an account of her story as follows:

**Table 7.3: Mbali's account at Beitbridge border post**

| My sister sent me money with the *omalayisha* and she advised me that I should not cross the border through the bush but at the Border. The *omalayisha* told me he needed ZAR 1800 for transport to Pretoria. In the car, we were three emigrants. The other two had their papers and I was the only one without a passport. When we arrived at the border post, I was jittery but the *omalayisha* assured me that everything would be well. On the Zimbabwean side, he told me to stay in the car while he went to talk with the 'others'. The others turned out to be two policemen who were manning the customs area where people were stamping their passports. After a seemingly loose banter, the police then called one man who was in civvies, and I later knew that he was a central intelligence agent. As they talked, the *omalayisha* then went to process his papers. The plain clothes agent then approached our car and told me to walk with him. As I had seen him with the *omalayisha*, I did not panic but followed him. We walked and he was telling me some jokes, telling me to relax, as we were following the legitimate migrants who were hurrying to stamp their passports so that they would not be left by their vehicles. On the way he called someone on his mobile phone. As we reached the South African side, he told me that someone will take me from there. Instead of following those who were stamping their passports on the South African side, I was handed over to a South African police member, and this one could speak fluent Ndebele, my mother language. I remained with him until our car came and he assisted me back into it. The *omalayisha* later told me that I could have been spared the hustle of walking but that day there were bigwigs at the Zimbabwean side who demanded a thorough inspection of all vehicles. The other two emigrants then joined us after stamping their passports and we continued with our journey. I did not ask how much money he gave to the officials for such a smooth border-crossing. |
|---|

Source: Research Interview, 2021

Amongst the cross-border transporters, networks exist which can help migrants in negotiating border passage. For example, one migrant, Thabani noted that he travelled with a bus to South

Africa, but before they reached the border the bus driver told him and two other passengers who had no passports, to use a small kombi to pass through the border (Interview with Thabani, Beirtbridge border, 2021). They then boarded the bus again in Musina. Similarly, when Grace came to South Africa from Zimbabwe, she had no passport as they were only prioritising passports for people from Harare. She travelled by bus, but at the border, the bus driver told her to join another woman who had a baby, and a man, who also had no passports to board a haulage truck to cross the bridge. The migrant mentioned that the truck driver told them about the complexity of the border-jumping process. When their truck reached the first entry point the driver showed his passport then the officers asked for the passengers' passports. The driver offered the border officials 200 ZAR and they were allowed to pass (Interview with Grace, Beitbridge border, 2021). To successfully negotiate the border, transporters employ several tactics including *ukutshokotsha*, the use of ghost passports, and sometimes blatant smuggling by hiding migrants in concealed vehicles.

### 7.3.4 Ukutshokotsha and ghost passports

#### 7.3.4.1 Ukutshokotsha

The study established that Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest areas make use of the concept of *ukutshokotsha* in navigating the border. *Ukutshokotsha* is described by scholars as a negotiation strategy that is used at the border post. This is explained as:

> … an expedited way of building enough trust to allay the perceived risks of negotiating with 'strangers'…[It] provides another layer in the apparent absence of trust relations and genial reciprocity by which exchanges in the facilitation of movement still proceed within tight time constraints (Tshabalala, 2017:250).

The interviewed migrants noted that they rely on cross-border transporters as they have the social capital to facilitate their passage into South Africa. They even facilitate the migration of those who do not have legal documentation. In doing so, the migrants do not need to go through the formal border screening processes. At the same time, they are also not exposed to the risks of using undesignated entry points.

Related to the above, *ukutshokotsha* emerged as a social process whereby individuals engage in social interaction to gain access to resources or places that they should not be accessing. Three undocumented migrants – two males and a female – noted that they had come across this concept when they were travelling either to or from South Africa. For example, Zodwa mentioned that she boarded a bus at Bosman with no passport as she had lost it. Before departure, one of the bus drivers notified the passengers that they offer assistance to passengers without proper travel documents. About 20 of the 69 passengers did not have proper documentation and required assistance to cross the border, albeit illegally (Interview with Zodwa, Beitbridge Border, 2020). The respondent narrated how they ended up paying bribes ranging from R200 to R1000. Everything went smoothly until they arrived at the Musina Weighbridge inspection point. The driver attempted to avoid the weighbridge route where all buses must stop, but he was stopped by police. All passengers were asked to disembark. Upon disembarking, their passports were checked at the inspection point. Zodwa reiterated that they had already bribed the drivers with the expectation that they will negotiate with the security officials. Such revelations go to show how migrants navigate and negotiate border spaces especially when they do not have the required visas or when they do not have legal documentation.

> *As one driver exited the bus, he, however, notified us that they required some more money to bribe the officials. He said the following, 'please, those who do not have passports, we need R200 to bribe these officials' and he went on to collect R20 from each of us. The weighbridge official and the driver exited the bus. At that point all passengers boarded the bus again. The driver did not ask for more money at the next checkpoint; he negotiated with the border agents and we passed through the check point* (Interview with Zodwa, Beitbridge border, 2020).

Archie also noted how their bus drivers negotiated their way through the border when they were returning to South Africa after the festive season in 2009. Many passengers in the bus had no passports and after the negotiations they managed to cross the border without any challenges (Interview with Archie, Pretoria, 2020). All these revelations show how migrants who are working in cahoots with the bus crew negotiate the border through paying bribes and negotiating with border officials. This, however, should not be misconstrued as applying only to migrants from the southwestern parts as this is a prevalent phenomenon applied by bus crews

on various different routes. Sipho who came from Bulawayo and who travelled to South Africa without proper documents:

**Table 7.4: Sipho's account of crossing the border**

| I had finished a Fitter and Turner Programme and I aimed to seek a job in South Africa. So, I invested in securing some travelling documents and the visa money so as to legally travel. However, the passport offices had a three years' backlog – the Home Affairs minister had said that the paper to make the passports is imported and there is a shortage of forex to secure them. So, I waited for over a year after applying for the passport, hoping that things would change for the better, but it changed for the worse as the whole country was experiencing an economic downturn in 2008. I opted to travel undocumented with *omalayisha*. On the Zimbabwean side, all the border officials looked starved, and their uniforms portrayed a lack of support from the government as they were faded and scruffy. The *omalayisha* voiced that 'things' may get a little nasty since his syndicate at the border was transferred to work at Chirundu. However, I had faith in him since he had assisted most of my relatives to cross the Border. I stayed in the car while he processed his papers. At the gate, the police asked for our papers. While one of the police was leaning inside, at the driver's window, the *omalayisha* gave him ZAR500 and this quickly disappeared into the pocket of the policeman. He then seemed to examine the papers which he was given by the *omalayisha* thoroughly, and his colleagues were moving around the car, seemingly searching for anomalies. After giving back the papers, he signalled for us to go through them. On the South African side, the *omalayisha* knew almost every official. I again stayed in the car when he got out. Instead of hurrying to process his papers, he spent most of the time hugging and bantering with the border officials. One of the officials came over to 'search' the car and he did not ask me for any papers, and I knew things were going well. At the gate, when the papers were checked, he put ZAR500 into his passport. After pocketing it, the official jokingly said they needed more since they were many and this was said in a low voice. The *omalayisha* secretly gave him a ZAR200 note, and we were allowed to pass through. |
|---|

Source: Research Interview, 2020

The cross-border facilitators are well-versed in the art of *ukutshokotsha*. From these accounts, it is apparent that the cross-border transporters knew that the police desperately needed the money as their salaries had been eroded by inflation. Thus, the policemen trust the cross-border

transporters and do not think of them as a trap from their superiors to check on corruption. With this trust they then easily accept the bribe money which acts as an instrument to reach a favourable outcome for both players. As Tshabalala points out:

> Unlike *kukiya-kiya*, by which actors do whatever they can to put a deal together…, or haggling, a negotiation for a price at the open market, *ukutshokotsha* is the specialised art of attaining short term goals (opening the way) where relations of acquaintance may be missing between the transporters and those they are negotiating with, but where absence can be made up for through the performance of trustworthiness (Tshabalala, 2017:225).

**7.3.4.2 Ghost passports**

The other strategy used by migrants and the bus crew when navigating the Beitbridge border post, is the use of ghost passports to cross into South Africa. Tshabalala (2017:246) defines 'ghost passports' as '…passports whose holders enlist the services of third parties, such as *omalayisha* and regular bus drivers, who then take the passports to the border post to get them "stamped" on their behalf'. Ghost passports are a way to circumvent the legal requirements of staying in South Africa. As highlighted above, the person then stays in South Africa as either a permanent or temporary resident. Some migrants were granted the ZEP permits after the Zimbabwean crisis (Crush, 2011; Takaindisa, 2021). However, because not all immigrants to South Africa were offered these permits, the undocumented migrants have to negotiate their entry in order to stay in South Africa. Hence the emergence of ghost passports. Initially, these passport holders have a legal basis to stay in the host country as visitors, students, or workers in the 'critical' sectors of the country. However, they then often need to renew or extend their legitimate stay in the country and therefore they send the documents with cross-border transporters. Seven migrants who participated in the research, both males and females, noted that at one point they had made use of this concept. They entrusted their documents to cross-border transporters who negotiated with immigration officials to get their expired documents validated.

The ghost passport approach is especially effective for migrants in South Africa who have 30-day visitor's visas but are unwilling or unable to cross the border for various reasons (see also Griffin, 2010). Abokoe for example noted that when she had to take her passport, she had just accepted employment in a restaurant. However, she always wanted to be a legal migrant, hence

she would pay a bus driver to take her passport to the border to have another visitor's permit affixed to it, and delivering the validated passport back to her (Interview with Abokoe, Pretoria, 2020). In this instance, the passport shows a departure and re-entry date. In the same way, Gugu sent her passport to the border with a trusted *omalayisha* whom she said would always go with her groceries to her child and mother. She said that she paid 500 ZAR for the service which was an affordable price as some migrants were paying 800 ZAR or even more to get their passports stamped (Interview with Gugu, Pretoria, 2020).

As highlighted above, most of the people who engage the cross-border transporters for the stamping of their passports cannot secure professional jobs and therefore most of them are employed only informally. By virtue of their jobs, therefore, these migrants are mobile. As such, if they do not have enough money for the processing of their documents, they sometimes find it easier to travel to the border and make a U-turn, or to spend a few days at home and then come back, and sometimes crossing the border illegally. Some migrants even noted that they were given passports that belonged to people whom they do not know so that they could move across the border without problems. The migrants noted that the border officials did not ask questions but simply proceeded to stamp the passport.

The research study established that corruption was a major issue at the border. This is considering that migrants frequently 'pay their way' by handing over cash to DHA personnel when they produce their passports for scrutiny. When I brought up the corruption issue with a border official, I was astonished by his frankness in admitting its pervasiveness. He noted:

> *Corruption is common – all over. If a person finds a loophole in the system, they're going to take advantage of it. The other thing is that the Venda people especially are related to the locals and they mean no harm. They go and do their normal activities on the other side of the border and go back home* (Interview with the immigration officer, Beitbridge, 2020).

Another immigration official also argued that the prevalence of 'corrupt activities' at the border was due to a general 'lack of control' especially of people who are related but divided by the border. Hence corruption, particularly by immigration officials accepting bribes from migrants to let them pass with or without documentation, is popular. In this regard, we see how corruption aid the movement of undocumented migrants not only from the southwestern parts

of Zimbabwe but also from other parts and even as far afield as the DRC, Zambia, and Malawi. Migrants from these countries also pay their way through the use of the bus crew or *omalayisha*.

### 7.4 Negotiating the border during COVID-19

The spread of COVID-19 resulted in strict border control measures to contain the pandemic. As such, land borders were temporarily closed during the height of COVID-19. According to Takaindisa (2021:1), 'the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new and unprecedented challenges in 2020 by negatively infiltrating all dimensions of human life at different levels, universally'. According to the WHO (2020), COVID-19 was a novel disease that exposed the unpreparedness of governments to pandemics of this nature. One of the measures which were adopted by most governments across the world, including South Africa and Zimbabwe, was the closure of borders (Moyo, 2022). According to Louw-Vaudran and Chikohomero (2021) the festive season of 2020 was highlighted by dramatic sights of tens of thousands of people assembling at the border crossing between South Africa and Zimbabwe, where operations had been halted due to COVID-19 limitations. Furthermore, there were subsequent lockdowns that South Africa utilised as convenient grounds to carry forward their long-desired aim of limiting Zimbabwean migration into South Africa. As a result, the multifaceted implications of COVID-19 impacted (im)mobility for undocumented Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa (see also Moyo, 2022; Takaindisa, 2021). Zimbabwean migrants were affected as most could not go to work and, at the same time, they also failed to travel back home. Only a few managed to use haulage trucks to pass through the border to go back home to Zimbabwe.

#### 7.4.1 Government measures to curb COVID-19

South Africa, like every other African country in the region responded to COVID-19 by enforcing lockdowns and border closures as a way of curbing the disease (see also Moyo, 2022). On 15 March 2020, the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, declared a national state of disaster and imposed measures such as immediate travel restrictions and the closure of schools from 18 March. The first national lockdown was announced on 27 March 2020 for 21 days (Takaindisa, 2021). This was followed by many lockdowns which restricted the movement of people across borders. However, this did not stop the movement of people as highlighted by one immigration official.

Patricia de Lille, the Minister of Public Works, had stated a week earlier that a 40-kilometer barrier would be built on the Zimbabwe-South Africa border post (see also Takaindisa, 2021; Zanker and Moyo, 2020; Zvomuya 2020). The barrier was estimated to cost 37 million ZAR (Business Tech Online, 2020). According to Takaindisa (2021:5), 'the South African government's justification for erecting this fence was to ensure that no undocumented or infected persons cross into the country'. However, many argue that securitization of the border cannot contain the migration of Zimbabwean people to migrate to South Africa. The study findings revealed that migrants use both legal and illegal means to cross into South Africa to search for better job opportunities. The driving force are the push and pull factors. Furthermore, the mobility is made easier by the existing strong social networks, especially for people from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe. It is critical to note that:

> The fence was constructed at the beginning of the national lockdown in April 2020, after the President had closed all borders. It was hoped that it would deter migrants from crossing the border into South Africa and thus curb the spread of the Coronavirus. But it was obvious within days that the fence was ineffectual; holes had appeared and parts were trampled over (Pearson, 2021:01).

The other stringent measure which further incentivised the Zimbabwean migrants to use legal methods, was the issue of a valid COVID-19 certificate. During the peak of COVID-19, the South African and Zimbabwean border officials required travellers to produce a negative COVID-19 certificate which was valid for only seventy-two hours (Government of South Africa, 2021). It needs to be noted that the COVID-19 certificate needed to be obtained from renowned laboratory companies. Moreover, the Beitbridge port of entry was overcome with congestion owing to the COVID-19 health restrictions. For example, it turned out that 'the majority of the people who came to the POE came without negative COVID-19 PCR certificates, and Port Health through NHLS tested all those without the certificates, which led to long queues' (Government of South Africa, 2021:5). Therefore, some of the immigrants opted to use the illegal means of crossing the border. These migrants had little to lose, as they had limited options (Interview with Thabani, Pretoria, 2021). Additionally, returning migrants were forced to be quarantined for two weeks irrespective of producing a negative COVID-19 test certificate. An announced by President E. Munangagwa followed on the 30th of November 2021 as a measure to curb the Omicron variant:

> With immediate effect, the following measures will apply: All returning residents and visitors have to undergo PCR testing and will be quarantined at [their] own cost for days recommended by WHO, even if they present a negative PCR test result from elsewhere (Mavhunga, 01 December 2021 VOA News).

However, these restrictions resulted in the increased use of undesignated points of entry to circumvent these added hardships for crossing the border. As such, some of the residents who were being held at the Beitbridge Border Quarantine Centre escaped.

A key informant noted that military helicopters, drones, and dinghies were introduced at the Limpopo River by the South African government (see also Takaindisa, 2021) which would protect, or rather ensure, that migrants complied with the measures that were put in place. In addition, the South African government established a Border Management Authority (BMA) to provide integrated border management services. The BMA reflects South Africa's increasingly militarised and securitized approach to borders (Takaindisa, 2021). Takaindisa (2021) argued that the border post is a prime example of how COVID-19 has given South Africa the chance to pursue nationalistic immigration policies while portraying Zimbabwean immigration as a humanitarian crisis requiring military-style containment measures, supposedly to stop the coronavirus from spreading.

### 7.4.2 Methods used by migrants to negotiate the border during COVID-19

Two immigration officials noted that the pandemic and the subsequent border closures only made it more urgent and logical for people to cross the border in an undocumented way (see also Moyo, 2022). The border closure, combined with the situation in Zimbabwe, resulted in a significant increase in smuggling through undesignated points. Informal traders who rely on cross-border trade resorted to using undesignated crossing points to make a living. An immigration official reported:

> *The border has been chaotic as many people tried to make their way into South Africa following announcements that there would be lockdowns in either South Africa or Zimbabwe due to a surge in COVID-19 cases. Moreover, the borderland people have been hoarding goods, particularly groceries from Musina as a contingency plan against the imminent border closure* (Interview with an immigration officer, Beitbridge border, 2020).

This interview extract revealed another group of local trans-migrants at the Beitbridge border post: the small-scale traders who cross the border regularly to buy goods in Musina to sell in Zimbabwe. Nonetheless, Rukema and Phopiwa (2020:289) point out that 'there is no special treatment for border residents to cross the border without documentation' even though they are of the same ethnic Venda group. However, as highlighted above, five of the ten research migrants with dual nationality noted that they went to Zimbabwe at least once during the period, mostly for emergency reasons such as death.

Among 8 out of 32 migrants interviewed noted that they had successfully negotiated the border despite the fact that lockdown measures were in place. Among the migrant group were male and females. However, most of them were male (6) as most females admitted that they were afraid of using undesignated routes during this period due to measures that had been put in place to secure the border. For example, Josephine mentioned that she cancelled her journey to Zimbabwe due to the pressure at the border, but her husband went home to see the children (Interview with Josephine, Pretoria, 2021). Many migrants gave different reasons for going home despite the implementation of the tight measures that made it difficult to go to Zimbabwe (Anonymous interviews, Beitbridge border, 2020). Three migrants noted that they went home via the illegal route because the border was chaotic and full. The other three noted that they had emergencies in the form of death and sickness which forced them to travel back home, hence they had to use illegal ways (Anonymous Interviews, Beitbridge border, 2021).

George and Sifiso both noted that the border posts were particularly chaotic, with both travellers and trucks delayed for days. George informed the researcher that he left Pretoria by bus from Bosman station on the morning of 22 December 2020. When they reached Musina at 10pm there was traffic congestion and chaos and they landed up sleeping at the border. On 23 December their bus had only moved a bit (until it reached the weighbridge) before it was stuck in traffic again. That was when he decided to use the illegal routes with the assistance of the *izimpisi* as he had only been given a few days off and the delays on the border would defeat the purpose of spending time with his children as his wife Josephine was not travelling. On his return, he used the same route (Interview with George, Pretoria, 2021). Another migrant, Archie, admitted that he used the illegal route when he returned from Zimbabwe as the border was already full due to the lockdown measures that had affected Zimbabwe (Interview with Archie, Pretoria, 2020).

Another migrant pointed out that the South African lockdowns forced him to use the illegal routes. Sipho noted that when President Ramaphosa announced that all South African ports of entry would be closed until the 15th of February 2021, he was still in Zimbabwe for the Christmas and New Year's holidays. He narrated his ordeal as follows:

> *You see, if I stayed home my family would die from starvation, and so I had to make a tough decision. I had to come to South Africa – whether I die from COVID-19, or increased SADF at the border, it was the same* (Interview with Sipho, Pretoria, 2021).

As highlighted earlier, some Zimbabwean migrants noted that they had to travel due to unforeseen circumstances. These circumstances ranged from death of family members or relatives to sickness. For instance, a migrant who is a security guard travelled to Zimbabwe to attend his mother's funeral and came back to work even in the wake of stringent COVID-19 measures that were in place (Interview with Langa, Pretoria, 2021). This was the same for Zodwa, a 40-year-old house helper who said that she had spent four years without going home so that many relatives passed away in her absence. However, the death of her two siblings and the severe sickness of her grandmother, who subsequently passed on, made her travel to Zimbabwe. She further noted that lockdown measures could not stop her travelling, however, her passport had long expired. She knew that the border was for use by documented migrants only, however, undocumented migrants only needed funds to pay *omalayisha.* She highlighted that when she came back, she paid 2500 ZAR and arrived back at work safely (Interview with Zodwa, Pretoria, 2021).

In some cases, migrants resorted to the use of haulage trucks to cross the border. For example, Nthambiso said he paid 3000 ZAR to be hidden inside the truck and he managed to pass through the official border. He admitted that this was expensive for him as he was not formally employed, but his mother had died and the car that was carrying the body from South Africa to Zimbabwe could not allow anyone to accompany the deceased's body due to COVID-19 restrictions (Interview with Nthambiso, Pretoria, 2021). Some migrants noted that they crossed the border undocumented which is the usual norm. For example, Thabani, a male migrant reported that, even before the corona virus he had always crossed the border via the Limpopo River, with the assistance of the *izimpisi*. He jokingly said, *'My sister, my border is the Limpopo River, and there is no lockdown in the river'* (Interview with Thabani, Pretoria, 2020). This

was the same for Thandi who noted that, ever since coming to South Africa she had always made use of the services of the *izimpisi* even though, during that period, their prices were very high as a result of the stiff measures that were put in place (Interview with Thandi, Pretoria, 2021).

Research findings established that human smugglers doubled their charges during the pandemic lockdowns as they seized the opportunity owing to increased demand (see also Johnson et al., 2011; Lamb, 2014; Moyo, 2022; Takaindisa, 2021).

### 7.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed how Zimbabwean migrants, specifically those from the southwestern part of Zimbabwe, navigate and negotiate their way at the Beitbridge border post. In doing so, they engage in both legal and illegal ways to find their way into South Africa. Various illegal methods are being used by undocumented migrants to make their way into South Africa. The chapter, however, engaged with an extended discussion of the history of migration and relations that existed before the establishment of the border. These pre-existing relations in some way also facilitate the easy mobility and transitioning for some Zimbabwean communities, especially those who have relations with the Venda people residing in the Beitbridge area.

The chapter also engaged with a discussion of how migrants navigate the border through the use of cross-border transporters (facilitators), like the *omalayisha*, *izimpizi*, bus drivers, and long-distance haulage truck drivers who assist the migrants. The relationship is not out of benign motives, nor is it inspired by 'benevolence'. It is a transactional relationship considering that each party benefits. For example, the *omalayisha* are business entrepreneurs whose ambitions include the growth of their business empire. This may include a new and larger *bakkie*, another trailer, and other assets which will allow them to serve more clients. This scenario signifies more profits and benefits. The study established that the facilitation of easy crossing of undocumented migrants into South Africa is also aided by corrupt border officials and state security agents from both the Zimbabwean and South African sides.

Border officials, like most bureaucratic public servants, are always in need of extra money. The respective governments cannot satisfy the wants and needs of these players at the border to

dissuade them to engage in corruption. However, looking at the South African side it was established that the porous and weak governance of the border also in part contributed to this influx of undocumented migrants into South Africa. The main argument that weaved through the chapter, is that migrants, specifically those from the southwestern parts of Zimbabwe find their way into South Africa at both the official and unofficial points of entry through the assistance of various actors. However, besides the help of these various actors, it was established that the weak regulation of the border plays a role at least in part, in aiding the easy movement of the migrants. But more importantly, considering the theoretical notions adopted for the study, networks also play a role in either financing the illegal migration process, establishing the connections/networks (e.g. contact with *omalayisha*) as well acting as sources of information to their fellow migrant relatives. In this regard, it can be concluded that social networks play a significant role in facilitating the migration of Zimbabwean South-Westerners staring from the place of origin (Zimbabwe) to the border post (Beitbridge) until they reach their place of destination (various South African communities). Having presented an extended empirical discussion through the various chapters, I will now conclude the study in the chapter that follows.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 8.1 Introduction

This final chapter provides a comprehensive summary of key findings of the study and its key arguments and offers a succinct conclusion to the findings on the study of human social networks in aiding the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part. The thesis explored the historic and social elements of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary. Using a broad historical and stakeholder approach, it traced the historical linkages of the migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa. The thesis also discussed the historical trends and complexity of the migration process by migrants from southwest Zimbabwe paying particular attention to how socio-linguistic ties between Zimbabwean and South African ethnic groups aided this process. The study also examined the associated complexity of a porous border, weak governance of borders, securitisation and role of cross-border agents, transport operators and corrupt border officials who assist undocumented migrants to cross into South Africa. A deeper understanding of such complexities helps in developing strategies that can reduce migration of (un)documented migrants from Zimbabwe. Furthermore, it also adds to the academic literature on human social networks and migration, a research terrain that is very relevant considering the increasing attention being given to undocumented migration regionally and globally. Generally, the conclusion draws from the historical and empirical findings conducted with key informants and (un)documented migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. The study set out to examine the role of human social networks in facilitating migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part, who share particular socio-linguistic and cultural ties with South African communities. In this regard, the study was guided by the following objectives.

## 8.2 The Research Objectives

The study’s main objective was to establish the role of human social networks in facilitating the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa.

### 8.2.1 The specific objectives of the study were:

1) To understand the South African migration policies in so far as they relate to (un)documented migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic background with their

2) To establish how the historical incidents of migration into South Africa are playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa.

3) To examine the role of socio-linguistic and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities in facilitating the migration and subsequent integration of the former with(in) the latter.

4) To interrogate the nexus between porous borders and the migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest into South Africa.

## 8.3 Reflection on the research objectives and summary of the chapters

The research comprises of eight chapters. To grasp the research problem, chapters two to eight were guided by the main research objective and the appropriate theoretical lens.

**Chapter 1** provided the introduction to the thesis, its background, the problem statement, motivation, and justification of the study. It provided brief theoretical reflections, as well as a justification of the choice of case study, the scope of the study and its objectives. It defined the research questions and considered the research contributions and boundaries, the key concepts at hand, and the thesis structure.

**Chapter 2** focused on exploring at length literature on global and regional migration trends, porous borders, weak border governance and management and migration policy dynamics. The scholarly debates focused on the existing gaps in literature related to the 'migration-security nexus', porous borders, the securitization debate, and human social networks from the pre-colonial era to the contemporary. The chapter is twofold: after a critical review of global, regional, and local literature on the dynamics of migration, the second part discusses the theoretical framing undergirding the research on migration of south westerners from Zimbabwe to South Africa. As such, I adopted a dyad model to examine the research findings. The first theory that was utilised is the human and social networks theory. The empirical study established that human and social networks facilitates interactions which in turn assist in the migration process. I also utilised the push and pull model to theorize the migration of

(un)documented migrants from Zimbabwe: why migrants leave their country of origin (sending country) and how they manage settle and assimilate with ease in South Africa (receiving country). These two theoretical frameworks were essential to this research to understand why and how Zimbabweans from southwest part migrate to South Africa.

**Chapter 3** explored the methodological approaches that were utilized to gather empirical data for the research. It gave a clear view of why certain methodological choices were made use of. The chapter also outlined the philosophical approach which was utilised in guiding the study. The philosophical paradigm was deployed to understand the varied experiences of (un)documented migrants in Sunnyside in Pretoria. The research utilised qualitative data. I utilized the qualitative approach to get varied perspectives on migration of undocumented immigrants from southwest Zimbabwe, the complexity of border management, border control and South Africa's policy position on migration. I used different methods in collecting data which included key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders such as border officials, historians, community leaders and researchers. Further to that I conducted semi-structured interviews with migrants from southwest Zimbabwe, observations, telephonic and zoom interviews, a review of relevant literature, as well some case study analyses of the Beitbridge border post (Zimbabwe) and Sunnyside (Pretoria, South Africa). The chapter outlined the sampling methods that were utilised to access the research population. I also discussed ethical issues and problems that were encountered during fieldwork and how they were solved.

**Chapter 4** was two-pronged. It first revisited the issue of the border in order to set the tone for the research and also as a way of understanding immigration management. The chapter highlighted that the border did not only divide related ethnic people into two different nationalities, but that it also put a barricade to restrict movement. However, despite the border acting as a barrier, these constraints have been subjected to relentless negotiations, and have regularly been breached (as later discussed in chapter seven).

The chapter's objective sought: *To understand the South African migration policies in so far as they relate to (un)documented migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic background with their own members.* Thus, the second section of the chapter analysed South Africa's policies in response to rising migration flows from Zimbabwe and other African countries This was done first by critically analysing South Africa's apartheid policies related to migration. The chapter traced various migration policies that were adopted by the South African government during the apartheid era to the contemporary to govern migration flows. The

chapter discussed how South Africa has always maintained migrants only as economic migrants. During the apartheid era black South Africans were kept in the Bantustans/homelands through the Bantu Self Government Act of 1959 and the Group Locations Act of 1950 which separated blacks from whites by putting them in the homelands based on their language and culture (Evans, 1997). These were North-Sotho units, Xhosa units, Swazi units, Zulu units, Tsonga units, South-Sotho units, Tswana units and Venda units (Drummond,1991). These Africans only came to work in white South African areas when their services were required. Thus, they were only viewed as 'migrants or temporary sojourners' who returned to their homelands on a regular basis (Lipton, 1972).

The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa (Crush, 1984; Moyo, 2021) further created a demand for more labour in South Africa. Thus, African labourers from nearby countries like Zimbabwe, Eswatini, Botswana, and Malawi were recruited formally through companies such as TEBA and its predecessors, the NRC (Native Recruiting Corporation) and Wenela (Witwatersrand Native Labour Organisation) (Adepoju, 1988; Mlambo, 2010). However, just like the local South Africans, these migrant workers were required to return to their countries once their contracts expired. They were also confined to selected sectors of employment such as mining.

With the end of the apartheid era, South Africa was at an advantage economically due to its flourishing mining industry which benefitted from the contributions by other African nationals who worked in its mining and agriculture sectors. As a result, other African nationals (mostly from Africa in general and the SADC region in particular) ended up migrating to South Africa for economic and political reasons. South Africa thus responded by enacting laws and policies which accommodated only economic migrants. These include the Immigration Act of 2000 and other subsequent policies which followed, but clearly, they all targeted specific economic migrants as they excluded other migrants. One may, however, argue that South Africa can be credited for enacting the Refugees Act.

The chapter further discussed policies that were specifically promulgated for Zimbabwean migrants in general, but also aimed specifically at those from the southwest who are the subject of this thesis. South Africa's documentation of Zimbabweans started in late-2009 with the ZDP up to the ZEP which had been adopted after the ZSP and expired on 31 December 2021. As much as these permits allowed Zimbabweans to work and do business, they were temporal. Overall, this chapter argues that Zimbabwean migration to South Africa has a long and

enduring history stemming from the shared historical, socio-cultural, and linguistic factors. The study established that there are various push factors that force undocumented migrants to migrate to South Africa. It was established that undocumented migrants from Africa and other SADC countries migrate to South Africa in search of better working and living conditions. Research findings revealed that many of the migrants flee from conflicts, political and economic instability, to mention but a few. Overall, such an influx of undocumented migrants has forced the South African government to craft laws that govern migration flows. In the context of south westerners from Zimbabwe's Matabeleland region, it was established that they resort to go to South Africa owing to the collapse in the political economy (push factors) as well as the pull factors (better living and employment opportunities) in South Africa. Such evidence validates the utility of the push and pull model which was utilised together with the human social network theory.

**Chapter 5** traced the history of migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest and other parts of the country to South Africa since the apartheid era. Research findings revealed that early migrants from southwest Zimbabwe decided to settle in South Africa permanently thereby establishing networks that continued to influence and facilitate migration in the post-apartheid era. The objective of the chapter was to *establish how the historical incidents of migration to South Africa is playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa*. The chapter argued that there are three main categories of migration: involuntary, voluntary, and clandestine. Voluntary migration was formalised migration, which was facilitated through the brokerage of recruitment agencies, notably the WNLA, which facilitated the recruitment of Zimbabweans to work in South African mines. This can also be referred to as involuntary migration as migrants were forced to migrate to South Africa due to the availability of lucrative employment opportunities in South Africa and the lack thereof in Zimbabwe. According to scholars (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Mlambo, 2010), involuntary migration took place alongside voluntary migration. These were movements that were undocumented in many cases and migrants were not confined to the mines but often ended up in different sectors in the South African economy. Lastly, the clandestine movement was the formal cross-border movement from Zimbabwe which dominated before the 2000s, and Zimbabweans crossing into South Africa mostly did so legally. Hence this led to the creation and establishment of human networks by the early migrants.

The research findings established that history played a pivotal role in the establishment and maintenance of human networks in South Africa by migrants from southwest Zimbabwe.

Therefore, these human networks have played a significant role in assisting late migrants to migrate from Zimbabwe to South Africa. It was established that historical incidents continue to influence and facilitate contemporary migration. Some of the migrants who were interviewed for this study revealed that they migrated from Zimbabwe in the 2000s to join their relatives and friends in Sunnyside in Pretoria, South Africa.

Guided by the push and pull model, the chapter examined the motivations and determinants for forced migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to cross to South Africa. As such, the chapter highlighted why migrants from southwest Zimbabwe have preferred to migrate to South Africa since colonial times and have continued to do so even after independence. It was found that their decision to migrate was a result of social exclusion, economic hardship, as well as the political crises experienced in Zimbabwe. The empirical data from the fieldwork highlighted that exclusion could further be regarded as creating push factors for migration to South Africa by late migrants as they migrate and assimilate with ease owing to pre-existing human networks. Interviewed migrants reiterated that social networks assisted them to assimilate and find homage and acceptance in South Africa due to shared historical, kinship and linguistic ties with relatives (as discussed in Chapter 6).

**Chapter 6** examined the role of human and social networks in facilitating migration of (un)documented migrants from the southwest part of Zimbabwe to South Africa (Sunnyside in Pretoria). To dig deeper into this complex phenomenon, I focused on the existing historical, socio-cultural, and linguistic ties which exist between Zimbabwe and South Africa. The research findings established that South African tribes – which includes Xhosas, Sothos, Zulus and Vendas – make it easy for the migrants to settle in the communities. The objective of the chapter was to *examine the existing socio-linguistic and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities which facilitates the migration and subsequent integration of the former with(in) the latter*. The empirical research findings established that migrants from southwest Zimbabwe share some historical, sociocultural, and linguistic relationships with some South African ethnicities which makes it easy for them to integrate, adapt and assimilate in host societies. The research findings gathered that these migrants in some instances practise cultural activities together and that they regard themselves as relatives who were separated by arbitrary borders. For instance, some Zimbabwean Ndebele pay allegiance to King Makosonke, the King of Ndebele in South Africa, while the Zimbabwean Venda also pay allegiance to King Mphephu, the Venda King (see Moyo, 2016). The research also noted that South Africans themselves in some instances even visit their relatives in

southwest Zimbabwe as a way of maintaining and cementing the relationships that exist between them. An example of this is the visit by King Zwelonke Sigcawu to the Zimbabwean Xhosa people in Mbembesi in 2011 (*Newsday* 2011, December 3). This research finding is similar to what was highlighted by Mujere (2019) who found evidence that the Sotho in Zimbabwe maintained their relationships with the Sotho in South Africa. Thus, this interaction between the Zimbabweans and South Africans continue to facilitate their migration from Zimbabwe and help in the subsequent settling in and assimilation within South African communities.

The study also found evidence of the effect that shared language makes it easy for migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to assimilate and settle in receiving societies like Sunnyside in Pretoria. For example, they integrate in society, at work, school and in other spaces without much challenge.

**Chapter 7** analysed how undocumented migrants negotiate and navigate their entry into South Africa. It investigated the illegal routes such as porous borders, the use of cross-border transporters such as *izimpisi* and *omalayisha*. Further to that, the chapter discussed the pivotal role played by different actors like corrupt border officials, bus and truck drivers, the army, and police as cross-border agents. The chapter also discussed the importance of the assistance they receive through social networks, which had been established due to historical incidents of migration, and socio-cultural ties which facilitate settling in South Africa (as was discussed in chapters 5 and 6). The objective of the chapter was to interrogate *the nexus between porous borders and the migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the southwest into South Africa.* As was noted in Chapter 4, the controlling of migration between two nations is a duty handled by responsible authorities such as security forces, the police and revenue collection authorities. Their duty is to regulate and control the movement of goods and people and avoid smuggling. Hence a person is supposed to possess a valid passport to cross the border and to be granted a working or study visa and permanent residence to become a legal citizen.

Also, as noted in Chapter 6, the Beitbridge border divided people with shared socio-cultural and linguistic relationships and in some cases also blood relatives. This then forced migrants to devise strategies that enabled them to visit their kith and kin on the other side of the border without paying attention to the complex border restrictions (see also Moyo, 2016). The study found evidence that the border separated people of the same ethnic groups, with the worst scenario being that of the Vendas, who are physically divided by the Limpopo River despite

being bound by the same language and culture which facilitates interactions, hence making management of the border complex. Complicating the situation is the relationship that exists between Zimbabwean Ndebeles and Zulus, the Fengus, the Xhosas, and also the Basothos in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Human networks between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African ethnic groups (as discussed in chapters 5 and 6) help migrants to negotiate the border. The chapter highlighted that there are interactions amongst different players which include migrants who migrated earlier, cross-border transporters, as well as the border populace which are involved in the border business. Thus, this supports the claim by scholars (Lamb, 2014; Rumford, 2008) who argued that it is the role of both the state and ordinary citizens, as well as non-citizens in building, upholding, and removing borders. As a result of the interactions that take place between people with shared histories, cultures, and languages, managing the border becomes complex.

The findings in this chapter highlighted that the physical demarcation of a border and the legislation governing movements cannot diminish the social aspects and the relationships that transcend the physical boundaries. Thus, the existing social networks and interactions overcome the barriers imposed by the border.

All of the chapters discussed above contributed to answering the study's central research question: The initial goal of the study was to investigate the following question: *How, and in what ways, do human social networks facilitate the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa?*

This research question required an exploration of how human social networks assist migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to migrate into South Africa. It also required an empirical analysis of how migrants are able to assimilate into South African communities due to shared historical socio-cultural and linguistic relationships between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African communities. Thus, the research began with an analysis of the historical context of the Zimbabwean migration to South Africa during the apartheid era to the contemporary. The premise was that in order to understand the complexity of the porous border, it is essential to analyse the historical, social, and cultural interactions that formulate the human networks that guide contemporary migration to South Africa. The argument of this thesis is that, contrary to official proclamations, it is difficult to manage the migration of certain Zimbabwean groups into South Africa, despite the implementation of borders that define

nationality and strict immigration regulations, because these cannot eliminate the social and the human elements.

This research question required an exploration of how porous borders represent an obstacle to social interaction. Thebe and Maombera (2019) captured the porousness and the social aspect of the border in their article *'Negotiating the border': Zimbabwean migrant mothers and shifting immigration policy and law in South Africa.* The scholars argued that human agency and the fact that the natural, represented by the physical and dangerous river, the electrified fence, and an equally treacherous forest, and the administrative, cannot erode the significance of the social element. The centrality of history and socio-cultural elements cannot be overlooked. Although issues concerning the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe are often cited as having contributed to migration from Zimbabwe, particularly after the turn of the century, certain socio-cultural and historical events, which link some Zimbabwean population groups to South Africa, have also acted as a major pull factor, which cannot be ignored. Thebe (2013) has alerted us to the quest for belonging, and how certain Zimbabwean population groups sought homage and have found acceptance in South Africa in the context of perceptions of neglect in a country where they are seen as unwanted and are labelled 'dissidents'.

**8.4 Reflections on the study's major findings**

1. The study's main finding is that migrants from southwest Zimbabwe are assisted by human and social networks to migrate into South Africa. These human networks consist of relatives, friends, cross-border transporters, and migration officers. The study established that familial and social ties are crucial networks that aid (later) migratory flow into South Africa. As alluded to earlier, migrants who migrated to South Africa established networks that have been assisting late migrants in different ways. Residents from Beitbridge assist migrants to cross the border as they are familiar with the terrain. In my analysis, I noted that some locals are *izimpisis* (translated as 'hyenas' due of their knowledge of the forest) who assist people to negotiate the border as they operate as cross-border agents. These agents have relationships or networks with cross-border transporters as well as border officials. Hence one can conclude that a migrant depends on a web of human networks to

negotiate the border (see Thebe and Maombera, 2019). The border is porous and allows the smuggling of goods as well as people (see Chimimba, 2021).

2. The study has found that there are indeed complex relationships and interactions (historical, socio-cultural and linguistic relationships) which exist between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African ethnic groups, which facilitate the assimilation and integration of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe into South African societies like Sunnyside in Pretoria. The border divided people with shared socio-cultural and linguistic relationships, and in some cases also blood relatives. This then has forced these people to devise strategies that allow them to visit their kith and kin on the other side of the border without paying attention to the complex border restrictions. The border separated people of the same ethnic groups, with the worst case scenario being that of the Vendas who were physically divided by the Limpopo River despite being bound by the same language and culture, hence making management of the border complex. Adding to this difficult situation has been the relationship that exists between Zimbabwean Ndebeles and Zulus, the Fengus, Xhosas and also the Basothos in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

3. Another finding was reflected in the importance of history in explaining the relationship between people from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African communities. Chapter 6 highlighted how some groups migrated from South Africa to Zimbabwe thereby leaving their families behind. But this does not mean that relationships ended; instead, they maintained the kind of life they had, as well as their relationships with their families. This is evidenced by similarities in the names of people, cultures, languages and places in both Zimbabwe and South Africa. Mlambo (2010) noted that the Mfecane wars were responsible for separating the Ndebele people and this was made permanent by the establishment of borders. However, these people have maintained communication. Similarly, the Basotho and Fengu people mainly migrated from South Africa to Zimbabwe in the 19th century accompanying missionaries and, like the Ndebeles, they did not cut their relationships with their families in South Africa. This is evidenced by the fact that in some instances they still perform cultural ceremonies together and pay allegiance to their South African 'kings'.

4. The last finding is that the Beitbridge border is not only physically porous due to the natural phenomenon of the raging river, a fence, and a hazardous forest, but it is also 'socially' porous. Thus, the enactment of tough laws as well as the scary natural phenomenon has failed to stop the porousness of the border. This is because it is not easy to eliminate the relationships which exist between the people of southwest Zimbabwe and certain South African communities who share the same socio-cultural and linguistic relations. Thus, the fact that people are related in some cases makes it even harder to manage the border. This is further aided by human and social networks which share information on the relationships that exist, and which helps the people from southwest Zimbabwe to find relatives in South Africa. One may note that, although the border is a physical aspect, and laws are the legislative aspect, neither of these will ever take away the social and human elements involved in migration.

Also, the border itself is managed by humans which in a way is a social element. These humans are members of society – family, friends, neigboours, etc., - who may hold positions of authority, but remain members of society. In the spirit of *Ubuntu*, it makes it impossible for one to denounce a migrant to go to the other side of the border to attend a funeral or visit a sick relative, or to ignore social relationships. Social relationships are the cornerstone of African societies. A child belong to society, and it is imperative that someone who is in a position should assist kin, friends, neighbours.

Of course, the 'cold drink fee' is paid to security agents at the border post in order to circumvent border processes. We might choose to call it corruption, but one may choose to call it otherwise as the amounts are really small, signifying an element of *ubuntu*. This leads one to note that as long as borders are managed by human beings, it will be difficult to manage them due to social relationships unless they are policies that adequately address the social issues. Therefore, in spite of the enactment of strict laws and scary natural phenomena, the border post has failed to stop the illegal movement of undocumented migrants.

Overall, these findings have made empirical and theoretical contributions to the studies on contemporary migration, border control and border management. Furthermore, it has added to the scholarship on migration of south westerners from Zimbabwe into South Africa. Judging

by the existing literature there is glaring absence of research looking at the sociological aspects of migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern parts into South Africa.

### 8.5 Empirical and theoretical contributions of the study

The study provides topical, complex, and relevant research on the nature of migration of (un)documented migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to South African communities. This research is necessary, given the ever-increasing migration of undocumented immigrants to South Africa in their hope for better living and working conditions. These findings add to a growing body of literature on the complexity and dynamics of migration on a regional and international level. Further to that, this timely research makes several noteworthy contributions to policymakers, national governments, migration practitioners and scholars who are grappling with resolving the conundrum of the Zimbabwean migrations to South Africa. This is so given the current debates on migration-security nexus, human security, international migration of undocumented migrants, porous borders, border control and the need for securitization to secure borders. As such, this study will be an addition to the existing corpus of academic literature on migration, cross-border movement, historical incidents and how these factors have influenced migration as well as migration policy shifts.

The study examined at length and breadth the extant literature on international, regional and local migration, porous borders, border security and governance, policies and dynamics in order to situate the study. This then helped to map the inadequacy and flaws of academic literature on migration, especially for migrants from southwest Zimbabwe. A critical review of existing scholarship revealed that there is a lack of sustained scholarly literature focusing on the role of human social networks in facilitating the migration of people from southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa. To this end, the current inquiry focusing on this complex phenomenon fills this lacuna in empirical studies and in the theorisation of migration through a human social network lens.

To date, the complex phenomenon of migration from southwest Zimbabwe and the dynamics of human social networks have not elicited sustained academic scrutiny in sub-Saharan African migration research (Hungwe, 2013). Another noticeable fact is that extant scholarship on migration tends to give salience to economistic articulations as the major driver of migration

from Zimbabwe (Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2012; Raftopoulos, 2006). As such, existing studies have mainly focused on push factors without a critical analysis of the pull factors. This empirical study, however, established that undocumented migrants are incentivised to migrate to South Africa in search of better living and working opportunities. Significantly, this research offers a novel contribution to our understanding of how human and social networks aid the migration of Zimbabweans from the south western parts to receiving communities in South Africa (like Sunnyside in Pretoria) and even beyond and as far as KwaZulu-Natal.

Thus, this study provides pertinent insights on the cross-border movement of people who share socio-cultural and linguistic relationships but who were separated by borders. Further to that it provides important insights into any future research focusing on border management, porous borders, cross-border movement, international migration, securitization and the 'migration-security nexus'. Methodologically, there are few empirical studies that specifically focus on the narratives (life histories) of (un)documented immigrants from southwest Zimbabwe. In this way, this study contributes to the scholarship on migration, with new nuances on porous borders and the migration of undocumented Southwesterners into South Africa.

The study utilised the push and pull theoretical model in situating the study. Through this lens I examined the decision of migrants from southwest Zimbabwe to migrate to South Africa due to the exclusionist treatment they were receiving in Zimbabwe. This can be traced from the colonial times, when they were placed in areas with infertile land, to the time after independence as they were experiencing political and social exclusion from the Zimbabwean society (Musemwa, 2006; Siziba, 2013; Thebe, 2013). This theoretical contribution is also pertinent insofar as it sheds light on the pull factors in South Africa which include the fact that South Africa is at an advantage economically and the fact that migrants from south west Zimbabwe share socio-cultural and linguistic ties with host communities. The research established that interactions that happen between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and some South African communities make it easy for the migrants to settle and assimilate in South Africa with limited challenges. What becomes unique with (un)documented immigrants from south western parts of Zimbabwe is that their transition into South Africa (Sunnyside, Pretoria) is made easier due to pre-existing familial and social ties.

The push and pull theoretical lens helped to facilitate an in-depth analysis of why (un)documented immigrants from southwest Zimbabwe migrate to South Africa. The theoretical lens was useful in examining varied socio-economic, linguistic, and political factors that push, motivate, and incentivise undocumented migrants to leave their home country (Zimbabwe) for South African communities (like Sunnyside in Pretoria). As such, I hold that utilising such a model is useful in migration research, particularly in examining why people decide to migrate.

The research also made use of the human social network theoretical lens. This highlighted how migration is facilitated through relationships and interactions of kinship linkages. Migrants who migrated earlier to South Africa in the 1970s and -80s established human networks in South Africa and have been assisting later migrants to South Africa. Some of these migrants married South African women whilst some maintained their Zimbabwean women. However, they managed to settle well and to acquire South African citizenship legally. The findings of this study highlighted that, through human networks, undocumented migrants are advised regarding which cross-border transporters to use with ease for their migratory purposes. In some instances, arrangements are made to make the payments upon arrival of the undocumented migrant. Thus, I argue that South African policy does not sufficiently cover Zimbabwean migrants.

Overall, the empirical study has contributed to the literature on borders and migration. These findings contribute in several ways to our understanding of the relationship and interactions that take place between communities who share the same historical, socio-cultural, and linguistic relations despite being divided by borders. The research has also shed contemporary light on the contentious issue of migration, and human social networks, porous borders, and how this influences South Africa's policy shift. In this light, it provides the basis for further research on how the government of South Africa needs to accommodate Zimbabwean migrants in its immigration policies following the end of the ZEP. The thesis argues that South African immigration policies are exclusionary towards Zimbabwean migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic relationships with some South African communities.

## 8.6 Practical Recommendations

Due to the complexity of migration globally we need practical recommendations that can potentially address such a phenomenon. This study has raised our understanding of interactions that take place between migrants from southwest Zimbabwe and how they navigate their way into South African communities. Hence some critical questions were raised regarding what needs to be done to address this phenomenon and, in particular, the illegal migration of undocumented migrants from Zimbabwe; and whether practical solutions could be proffered to this conundrum. This section looks at the specific policy lessons arising from the study and considers what may be done differently to address the complexities of managing the border. This was divided into broader implications, and specific implications for Zimbabwe and South Africa.

### Broader Policy Implications

*Freedom of movement for humans and goods*

Chapter 6 of the thesis proved that there are various people from southwest Zimbabwe who share socio-cultural and linguistic relationships with some of the local South African groups; it further highlighted how some groups are even related. This sort of case is not only found on the Beitbridge border. It is the case for all the South African borders: the Mpumalanga border between South Africa and Lesotho (Sothos), the Northwest border between South Africa and Botswana (Tswanas), and the border between South Africa, Mozambique, and Swaziland (Shangans). Thus, the case study of Zimbabwean migration, especially that of southwest Zimbabwe, was used to demonstrate the interactions resulting from shared relations which complicates border management. The management of borders has become almost impossible due to the Swatis in Mpumalanga and in Swaziland who spoke virtually the same language with nothing in between. The same situation is found with the Venda in Beitbridge, Zimbabwe, and the Venda in Vhembe, South Africa, as they speak the same language and are brothers; and lastly, the Tswana's in Botswana and those in Northwest, South Africa. It becomes difficult to manage the border, when considering the relationships of people who are related to each other, especially when the relationship allows them to cross the border by using unofficial entry points in some cases.

African countries should consider opening their borders to allow the freedom of movement of both humans and goods (Hirsch, 2021). The Protocol to the Treaty establishing the African Economic Community relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment (Free Movement of Persons protocol) was signed by most African countries (30) in Addis Ababa in January 2018 (AU Protocol to the Treaty, 2018). The mandate of the protocol includes the need to facilitate free movement of people, as well as of capital products and services (AU Protocol to the Treaty, 2018). The protocol is critical for promoting integration and ushering in a slew of other benefits. These include advances in science, technology, education, research, and tourism promotion (ibid.). Furthermore, it would enhance inter-African commerce and investment, increase remittances within the continent, stimulate labour mobility, create jobs, and raise living conditions. This AU Protocol of 2018 is similar to the SADC Draft Protocol on Free Movement which was introduced in 1995 (See Oucho and Crush, 2001) to allow free movement of people and goods in SADC countries. SADC states particularly South Africa supported by Namibia and Botswana rejected this Protocol in 1997 (Oucho and Crush, 2001). However, in July 2005, the SADC Organs' Ministerial Committee considered and approved the Draft Protocol on the Facilitation of Movement of Persons. This is not yet been enforced due to fewer ratifications by SADC member states.

Similarly, five years after the enactment of the Free Movement of Persons protocol, only a few African states have ratified their actions. Yet, article 33 of this protocol indicated that it will only come into force 30 days after the date of receipt by the chairperson of the Commission of the 15th instrument of ratification (AU Protocol to the Treaty, 2018). The concept of this protocol maybe likened to the European Union with its Schengen visa system: The visa is intended for brief and transitory stays in or for transit through the Schengen region of no more than 90 days in any 180-day period. A visa obtained by one Schengen state is valid for travel in any other Schengen state, but must be applied in the country of main destination. This problem is that the issues of the African borders are not only issues of South Africa and its neighbours. The borders were mistakes that were made when they were delineated, as they divided the same people into different countries (Kapil, 1966; Allott,1972). As a result, proper policies for migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic relationships are required, as migrants are here to stay. Interestingly, small African countries are eager to open their borders (Hirsch, 2022). For example, Benin and the Seychelles grant visa-free entry to all African travellers who have the necessary travel documentation. By stark contrast, the, richer and larger African countries are the most hesitant to open their borders due to economic factors (Hirsch, 2021).

*Embracing the African culture of 'Ubuntu'*

According to Van Breda (2019), Ubuntu is an African concept which means '*humanity to others*'. Before colonisation, most African societies developed through the concept of *ubuntu* whereby they would assist one another to develop economically through the concept known as '*nhimbe*' in Zimbabwe, *harambee* in Kenya, *chilimba* in Zambia,(Mbithi and Wisner, 1972; Sithole, 2015). Communities helped each other in daily tasks such as harvesting, weeding fields, constructing a house, gathering manure or other tasks (Accord, 2018:45).

*Nhimbe* is essential for preventing selfishness, and, most importantly, keeping people engaged within communities (Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021; Sithole, 2015). It is concerned with communal security rather than individual well-being, and it symbolises an African culture of togetherness (Accord, 2018; Gukurume, 2013). Scholars (Accord, 2018; Gukurume, 2013; Mahohoma and Muzambi, 2021; Mawere and Nyamekye, 2015; Sithole, 2015) in different fields have spoken about how this concept can be used for development purposes in different contexts. Borrowing from the *Nhimbe* concept, African countries should work together to help each other in terms of economic development by bringing together resources at their disposal. According to scholars (Accord, 2018; Sithole, 2015) benefits of utilising the *nhimbe* method include high participation and attendance by everyone in the community,building relationships, reinforcing ties as well as restoration of traditional leader responsibilities and authority.

*Nhimbe* is becoming less popular as a result of modernization and maybe selfishness, although it is still practised in rural regions. This concept however is being adopted by European countries to foster development in their own countries. For instance, economic adjustment programmes by European Union members to Greece over the period 2010–2018 in order to boost her economy. Thus, African countries can also adopt this method to help recover their economies. This will then curb the migration of people from their countries in search of better economic opportunities.

**Specific Concerns for South Africa and Zimbabwe**

I recommend that South Africa should formulate better migration policies to regulate migration and xenophobic sentiments. South Africa's domestic and foreign policies on migration should focus on securitization and human security to guarantee and protect the rights of refugees and undocumented immigrants. In addition to that, the migration of (un)documented migrants from Zimbabwe is an ongoing phenomenon and will not end in the foreseeable future. Migration scholarship has often pointed to South Africa's porous borders and the challenges these pose for immigration policy. To address the issue of porous borders, the Zimbabwean and South African governments should emphasize legal migration. In the meantime, South Africa should consider renewal of the ZEP permit to reduce the number of undocumented Zimbabwean migrants. However, in the long run, South Africa will need a more permanent solution, especially amongst migrants who share historical, socio-cultural and linguistic relations. In as

much as they are bureaucratic structures, they are superseded by long-standing social factors. Due to the established relationships it is an obvious case that even if these migrants are to be sent back to Zimbabwe they will always come back. Hence as a more permanent solution to the problem, the South African government can consider naturalising Zimbabwean southwestern migrants who are already in South Africa as citizens. Also, it is essential for the sending country (Zimbabwe) and the receiving country (South Africa) to consider having bilateral agreements for open borders especially for migrants with established relations in South Africa.

It is further recommended that the ANC's cordial and bilateral relations with ZANU-PF be utilised as leverage for political and economic reforms in Zimbabwe. This would potentially address political and economic issues that force (un)documented migrants to flee from Zimbabwe to South African communities. The economic crisis of Zimbabwe poses serious consequences to South Africa, especially with regard to security threats and an influx of migrants in search for working opportunities. Again, the influx of Zimbabweans also puts strain on South Africa's social and public services, including the health sector. Further to that, there should be regional pressure and diplomatic efforts from SADC to resolve the Zimbabwean crisis. The SADC should also pressure Zimbabwe to reform so as to at least try to halt the regional migration crisis.

### 8.7 Recommendations for further study

Based on the empirical findings, I offer a number of recommendations that are crucial in dealing with the migration of (un)documented immigrants from southwest Zimbabwe to South Africa. However, it is important to stress that such recommendations will help in dealing with international migration crisis as a whole. Further research needs to examine more closely the links between certain tribes, places, and human social networks. In this regard, similar studies should focus on why some Ndebele-speaking migrants decide to migrate and settle in some South African places as far as KwaZulu-Natal.

Further research is needed to develop a deeper understanding of the complex linkages between different tribes from southwest Zimbabwe and South Africa and how this aids migration. To dig deeper into the importance of human social networks, socio-cultural and linguistic ties, there is need for studies specifically focusing on whether migrants from southwest Zimbabwe

are immune from xenophobic attacks. As such future studies should focus on comparative studies on migrants from other provinces like Manicaland, Masvingo and Mashonaland and those from southwest Zimbabwe. Such a research foci will be important in examining the significance of human social networks and linguistic abilities in settling and assimilating in South African communities. Although my thesis focused on how the human social network facilitates migration from southwest Zimbabwe, it will be also important to explore other push factors. Research should interrogate whether human and social networks only attract undocumented migrants without push factors. Such nuances should critically examine the major driving factors behind migration. Further questions should explore factors that motivate or attract (un)documented immigrants from Malawi and Zimbabwe to South Africa. In the light of this, a further study could assess the growing wave of xenophobia attacks and anti-immigrant narratives in South Africa.

The issue of porous borders remains a subject of discussion amongst policymakers and migration scholars across the globe. As such, further studies regarding the nexus between porous borders and the migration of (un)documented migrants will be worthwhile. Such research should also focus on the efficacy of securitization of borders and its impact on human security. In conclusion, this empirical research has demonstrated the importance of human social networks and its impact on the contemporary migration of (un)documented from southwest Zimbabwe to Sunnyside in Pretoria. Through critical analysis, I have identified key areas for future research that can help to address the issue of porous borders, the smuggling of goods and the illegal cross-border movement of (un)documented immigrations from Zimbabwe to South Africa and sub-Southern Africa at large.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Informed Consent – Key Informants

Title of the study

Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa

My name is Lydia T. Chibwe, a PhD student enrolled for a PhD in Development Studies programme in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting this study to investigate how and in what ways do human social networks facilitate the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa. The study seeks to provide an alternative understanding of Zimbabwean migration into South Africa, and its implications for South Africa's quest for immigration management of Zimbabweans. This, therefore, serves as a request for your participation in the study. Please take time to read through this letter as it gives information on the study and your rights. If you would prefer me to read the letter, I will read it in the language that you prefer (English/Ndebele/Shona).

What will happen in the study?

The study will involve interviews with you on information and views on aspects that the study is interested in understanding. The interview will take about an hour of your time and with your permission, may be voice recorded so that I do not miss any important information that you share. You can choose to have the interview session in English or in Shona

Risks and discomforts

There will be no danger/harm to you as a participant. It may however be difficult for you to share some information, and you will be free not to answer any questions that may make you uncomfortable. If you experience some level of discomfort after joining the study, and you would like to stop participation, please be free to let me know. You will be allowed to stop participation without any prejudice and the data already collected will be discarded.

Are there any benefits for joining the study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for your participation. Your contributions will assist me in developing a dissertation for my qualification.

Confidentiality

Apart from me as the researcher, the data will be shared with my supervisor, Prof. Vusi Thebe of the University of Pretoria. You may choose to remain anonymous, and every effort will be made to ensure that the information you share is not linked to you. In case you choose to remain anonymous, your identity will not be revealed and you will be identified through a pseudonym. The data will be stored in a password protected computer during fieldwork, and in the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Development Studies, for a period of 15 years for archiving purposes. If the data is used during this period, it will only be for research purposes.

The results will be produced in the form of a dissertation and scientific paper, or may be presented at both local and international forums like workshops and conferences. The voice recordings of the interviews will not be broadcasted on radio, television, internet or on social media but will be utilised to make findings for the study.

Any questions?

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on +2761 123 6305 or lydiateechibwe@gmail.com on the details listed below.

Consent Declaration

I, the undersigned, have read the above and I understand the nature and objectives of the research Project of Lydia Chibwe as well as my potential role in it and I understand that the research findings will be published. I understand that the interview/discussions may be voice recorded. I voluntarily consent to participate in all discussions, to give my expert opinion and to provide details about my experience and opinions keeping in mind that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage.

I also grant the researcher the right to use my contribution to the research project in completing this project as well as other projects that may emerge from it in future.

| Full name of participant | Signature of participant | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Full name of the researcher | Signature of the researcher | Date |

**Appendix B: Informed Consent - Migrants**

Title of the study

Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa

My name is Lydia T. Chibwe, a PhD student enrolled for a PhD in Development Studies programme in the Department of Anthropology and Archaeology at the University of Pretoria. I am conducting this study where I investigate how and in what ways do human social networks facilitate the migration of Zimbabweans from the southwestern part into South Africa. The study seeks to provide an alternative understanding of Zimbabwean migration into South Africa, and its implications for South Africa's quest for immigration management of Zimbabweans. This, therefore, serves as a request for your participation in the study. Please take time to read through this letter as it gives information on the study and your rights. If you would prefer me to read the letter, I will read it in the language that you prefer (English/Ndebele/Shona).

What will happen in the study?

The study will involve interviews with you on information and views on aspects that the study is interested in understanding. The interview will take about 60 minutes of your time and with your permission, it may be voice recorded so that I do not miss any important information that you share. The interviews may also be extended, which may mean that repeat visits may be conducted. You can choose to have the interview session in English, Ndebele or Shona.

Risks and discomforts

There will be no danger to you or your household'. It may however be difficult for you to share some information, and please be free not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. If you experience some level of discomfort after joining the study, and you would like to stop participation, please be free to let me know. You will be allowed to stop participation without any prejudice and the data already collected will be discarded.

Are there any benefits for joining the study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for your participation. Your contributions will assist me in developing a thesis for my qualification, but they may also carry benefits in terms of informing policy debates on immigration.

Confidentiality

Apart from me as the researcher, the data will be shared with my supervisor, Prof. Vusi Thebe of the University of Pretoria. Every effort will be made to ensure that the information you share is not
linked to you or your household. Your identity and that of your household will not be revealed and you will be identified through pseudonyms. The data will be stored in a password-protected computer during fieldwork, and in the Department of Anthropology, Archaeology and Development Studies, for a period of 15 years for archiving purposes. If the data is used during this period, it will only be for research purposes.

The results will be produced in the form of a dissertation or scientific paper or may be presented at both local and international forums like workshops and conferences. The voice recordings of the interviews will not be broadcasted on radio, television, internet or social media but will be utilised to make findings for the study.

Any questions?

If you have any questions during or afterward about this research, feel free to contact me at +27 61 123 6305 or lydiateechibwe@gmail.com on the details listed below. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you (optional).

Consent Declaration

I, the undersigned, have read the above and I understand the nature and objectives of the research project of Lydia Chibwe, as well as my potential role in it and I, understand that the research findings will be published. I understand that the interview/discussions may be voice recorded. I voluntarily consent to participate in all discussions, to give my expert opinion and to provide details about my experience and opinions keeping in mind that I have the right to withdraw from the project at any stage.

I also grant the researcher the right to use my contribution to the research project in completing this project as well as other projects that may emerge from it in the future.

| Full name of the participant | Signature of participant | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Full name of the researcher | Signature of the researcher | Date |

**Appendix C: Interview Schedule 1**

I, Lydia T. Chibwe a student at the University of Pretoria. I am carrying research on Human Social Networks and Migration Patterns in Southwestern Zimbabwe into South Africa. The interview contributions will be used for educational purposes only. The informants will include traditional and community leaders on both sides of the border, historians and academics, and border officials. A paper with instructions for the interviewee will be attached.

KEY INFORMANTS

What are the policy and practical migration challenges faced by South Africa in effecting border control measures in the wake of an influx of (un)documented Zimbabwean migrants who share socio-cultural and linguistic backgrounds with South African communities?

1. What is the nature of South Africa's migration policies towards African foreigners in general?
2. What is South Africa's position on Zimbabwean migrants?
3. Is there a distinction between early and late Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa?

How are historical incidents of cross-border migration to South Africa playing out in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa?

1. Are there any South African/Zimbabwean ethnic groups with a history of migration to South Africa/Zimbabwe
2. How do historical movements aid in the contemporary migration of Zimbabweans into South Africa?
3. What is the role of social elements in migration and subsequent assimilation of Zimbabweans from southwestern Zimbabweans into South Africa?
4. How do human social networks impact the management of the porous Zimbabwean/South African border?
5. Does the migration of Zimbabweans who share some socio-cultural and linguistic relationships with some South African communities affect border management and control in any way?

MIGRANTS

To what extent and in what ways (if any) can socio-linguistic, historical and cultural connections between Zimbabwean and South African communities facilitate the migration and subsequent integration of Zimbabwean migrants with(in) South Africa?

1. Do you share any social, cultural and linguistic aspects with any South African ethnic group?
2. What is the significance of those socio-cultural linkages and social networks in the migration process?
3. How does the existing socio-cultural and linguistic similarities with some South African groups aid in assimilating into local communities?
4. What are the conditions of your existence in South Africa
5.How and with what effect do porous borders facilitate migration of Zimbabwean migrants from the South West into South Africa?

6. How do you negotiate the added layer of challenges associated with cross-border controls on the South African-Zimbabwean border?
7. Do you know any channels of cross-border movements on the South African-Zimbabwean border?
8. Does your social networking and human networks assist in terms of the decision to migrate and the migration process itself?

**Appendix D: Profile of key informants**

| Participant | Role |
|---|---|
| 1. Mr Pathisa Nyathi | Historian |
| 2. Prof Alois Mlambo | Historian/Academia |
| 3. Prof Lauren Landau | Academia |
| 4. Dr Gugulethu Ncube | Academia |
| 5. Dr Janet Munakamwe | Academia |
| 6. Mr Dhlomo | Academia |
| 7. Mr Mabhena Ngqabutho | NGO |
| 8. Ms Henrietta Dube | NGO |
| 9. Officer 1 | South African border side |
| 10. Officer 2 | South African border side |
| 11. Officer 3 | Zimbabwean border side |
| 12. Officer 4 | Zimbabwean border side |
| 13. Mr Mudau | Community leader |
| 14. Mr Peter | Community leader |

Total number of research participants: 14

Total number of the different roles: 5

Source: L.T. Chibwe (2021)

Profile of the research participants (Migrants)

| Name | Age | Year of Migration in SA | Ethnicity |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Sibusiso | 65 | 1982 | Ndebele |

| 2. | Thulani | 25 | Birth | Ndebele |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. | Mama Thatho | 59 | 2000 | Ndebele |
| 4. | Makhalima | 60 | 1998 | Ndebele |
| 5. | Skhosana | 63 | 1990 | Ndebele |
| 6. | Sifiso | 35 | 2000 | Xhosa |
| 7. | Dhlomo | 68 | 1985 | Ndebele |
| 8. | Gugulethu | 41 | 1998 | Ndebele |
| 9. | Nonhlanhla | 30 | 2016 | Basotho |
| 10. | Archie | 35 | 1999 | Basotho |
| 11. | Zodwa | 40 | 2001 | Ndebele |
| 12. | Thabani | 31 | 2000 | Ndebele |
| 13. | Ndlovu | 68 | 1985 | Ndebele |
| 14. | Nickson Mpala | 50 | | Venda |
| 15. | Mehluli | 62 | 2001 | Xhosa |
| 16. | Sipho | 26 | | |
| 17. | Methuseli Sokhela | 66 | 1986 | Ndebele |
| 18. | Nthawulo Khanye | 58 | 1993 | Basotho |
| 19. | Thayhiso Mabidi | 63 | 1987 | Ndebele |
| 20. | Misheck | 40 | 2000 | Venda |
| 21. | Solomon Mabuza | 59 | - | Venda |
| 22. | George | 38 | 2006 | Xhosa |
| 23. | Josephine | 28 | 2019 | Ndebele |
| 24. | Lufuno | 47 | | Venda |
| 25. | Nthambiso | 25 | 2000 | Xhosa |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 26. Nhlawulo Khanye | 58 | 1992 | Ndebele |
| 27. Gracious | 40 | 2005 | Xhosa |
| 28. Abokoe | 30 | 2012 | Basotho |
| 29. Mbali | 23 | 2015 | Xhosa |
| 30. Grace | 29 | 2010 | Xhosa |
| 31. Nonhlanhla | 37 | 2008 | Basotho |
| 32. S. Nare | 48 | 1995 | Basotho |
| 33. Naledi | 23 | 2012 | Ndebele |
| | Total number of research participants: 32<br><br>Total number of Ethnicities: 4 | | |