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**BORDERS AND IDENTITY: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG THE XHOSA
SPEAKING PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO AT TELE BRIDGE**

by

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DECLARATION

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3. I have not used work previously produced by another student or any other person to hand in as my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my beloved son, Motheo, and my late husband, Kopano. Pursuing this degree led to leaving Motheo behind at a young age, and it was not an easy choice to make. Kopano, though, always believed in me and encouraged me to chase the dream, no matter how difficult the path seemed. To Motheo, I am sorry I could not be present in your formative years, but I promise to always make you proud and to be the best mother I can be. Challenging as it was, I brought it home. Kopano, you can rest now.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between international borders and identity, in the context of the Xhosa-speaking people of Tele Bridge in South Africa and Lesotho, who live at the border separating the two countries. This border is a result of the partition of Africa by colonialists, as necessitated by the Berlin Conference of 1884. The study aims to understand how people with similar cultural identities perceive their sameness when living in different nations, and how the border may impact this. It examines the role of the Xhosa language in shaping identity, the effect of the border on culture, cross-border relations, and the community's relationship with the border, and aims to establish the necessity and significance of identity formation for these people. This study adopted a qualitative approach, and as the investigation of the problem was in its preliminary stages, an exploratory approach was used. Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were employed; including interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant observation, and document analysis. The findings revealed that Tele Bridge failed to reinforce the territorial boundary because the Xhosa speaking people disregarded the border. The border did not influence the culture and identity of the Tele communities, but instead, the shared culture of these communities influenced the operations of the border. Additionally, the Tele communities' interactions were largely unaffected by the presence of a border, mainly because they did not view the border as an obstacle to their relationship, nor did they see its relevance and the reason to be divided. The findings further revealed that the Xhosa language formed the basis of the existence of the Xhosa people. The results also showed that identity formation of the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge relied heavily on group membership, (ethnic membership in this case) as demonstrated by social identity theory. Their belonging was tied to their ethnicity rather than the perimeters of the states. This group membership comprised four key components for the Tele Bridge residents: shared language, shared culture, ethnic belonging, and cross-border relations. The study concluded that identity formation for these border communities is consistent with the stipulations of social identity theory. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the two governments acknowledge and recognise the coexistence of these communities. Tele Bridge residents have good relations across the border and live as one community, the two governments can capitalise on this relationship and collaborate to solve problems while facilitating the coexistence of Tele Bridge residents. Governments should also relax border regulations to allow for easier travel between border communities in Tele Bridge, by establishing legal channels of movement across the border.

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ACRONYMS

EDL	Enhanced Driver's License
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
SIT	Social Identity Theory
USA	United States of America
ZMM	Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The treaty of Westphalia that was signed in 1648 established the ‘territorial state’ as the basis of the modern state system and emphasized international borders as legal territorial boundaries between one country and another while also asserting their sovereignty (Okhonmina 2010). Towards the end of the First World War, for example, the United States President Woodrow Wilson gave his Fourteen Point speech regarding the need to separate imperial European states into smaller states with international borders in order to better govern and represent the people therein (United States Congress 1918). Woodrow Wilson added that the readjustment of borders should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of ‘nationality’ (United States Congress 1918). Anderson (2006) claims that the concept of borders prior to 1918 was not new; President Wilson was one of the first to favour the demarcation of international borders to separate one country from another in order to reduce the likelihood of future war. The Berlin Conference which took place from November 1884 to February 1885 was convened by the major European powers of the time to discuss the division of Africa among themselves. The conference resulted in the drawing of borders and the partitioning of Africa into separate colonial territories. The decisions made during the Berlin Conference had a profound and lasting impact on African borders and territorial divisions that exist to this day (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018).

Understanding the impact of borders on identity formation is critical for addressing conflicts, promoting dialogue, and fostering a sense of shared humanity in a globalized world. For example, the division of Germany into East and West during the Cold War had a profound impact on the identity of Germans. The Berlin Wall physically separated families and communities, leading to distinct identities on either side. The fall of the wall in 1989 and subsequent reunification brought about a process of redefining German identity, as people from both sides had to confront their shared history and find common ground (Light 2000). Another case is the partition of British India in 1947 into India and Pakistan which led to one of the largest forced migrations in history, resulting in immense violence and communal tensions (Muller 2008). This division based on religion significantly influenced the identity formation

of people on both sides of the border (Zamindar 2007). It created separate national identities for Indians and Pakistanis, as well as religious identities as Hindus and Muslims. Another example is the Basque Country that straddles the border between Spain and France. The Basque people have a distinct cultural and linguistic identity that sets them apart from the surrounding regions. The border has played a role in shaping their collective identity, as it divides the Basque community across two countries (Urla 1993). The Basque region has experienced separatist movements seeking greater autonomy or independence, reflecting the desire to preserve and promote their unique identity. In Africa, Nubia is a historical region that straddles the border between Sudan and Egypt. The Nubian people have a unique cultural heritage and a distinct linguistic identity. The border has influenced the identity formation of Nubians, as they navigate the political and cultural dynamics of both countries while striving to preserve their cultural heritage (Smith 2006). Western Sahara is another example of a disputed territory between Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). The border between these entities has created divisions among the Sahrawi people. The Sahrawis have their distinct cultural and ethnic identity, and the border has been a focal point for conflicts and political aspirations for self-determination (Murphy 2013). In light of the foregoing discussion, this study is about the implication of borders on identity formation of people living along the periphery of nation states, with specific reference to the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge in South Africa and Lesotho.

Typically, a nation is defined by shared characteristics such as religion, language, and culture that form its essence. These traits give rise to a form of identity that strengthens the concept of the nation by identifying those who belong to the nation and those who do not belong. From this perspective, nations are just as much a construct of the imagination as states and their international borders (Anderson 2006). This is because without people participating, nations cease to exist. Nations have become the essence of modern states and their borders, as nations provide the backbone of loyalty to the modern state and its organization. Whatever area people consider their homeland, serves as a basis of the state and its borders (Westmoreland 2015). Hence, nations without a state often seek to create a state for themselves.

Border placement is, however, arbitrary as people create borders as dictated by convenience. The rationale for border placement is broad; with geography often simplifying the selection of the site of a border (Westmoreland 2015). A border may also reflect the position of the military

at the cessation of hostilities, or the negotiated settlement after a conflict, or occasionally without conflict, may choose any reason for where to place a border (Westmoreland 2015).

1.2 BACKGROUND

There is an inherent paradox in the international borders in Africa - even though there is widespread agreement that the boundaries are arbitrary, the vast majority remain virtually untouched since the late 1800s, when they were first demarcated (Wilson and Donnan 2012). The stability of international boundaries in the world's most partitioned continent, where few political institutions have survived for long, is astounding because the delineation of African borders was primarily carried out without due regard for social or linguistic affinities. Moreover, the effectiveness of the colonial and post-colonial authorities tasked with enforcing these borders has been undermined by a lack of strength and consistency (Herbst 1989).

Therefore, the creation of borders in Africa has produced a non-accommodative consciousness of nationalism which often led to hostility. Borders distinguish nations, while simultaneously they are a point of convergence (Oommen 1995). Traditionally, the essence of a border was to separate one group of people from another. As such, a major function of the "border is to act as a barrier, protecting the 'us' or 'insiders' from 'them' or 'outsiders'" (Oommen 1995; Sibley 1995). In contrast, scholars of border studies argue that borders should not merely be viewed as symbols of division, but also as instruments of connection and encounter (Tevera 2020).

Borders must be scrutinised for their delicate and sometimes not so delicate alterations in meaning and form depending on the setting. Borders create new states where members of the same cultural identity are spread across two states separated by international boundaries. Moyo (2016), further argues that borders are a process in whose essence people partake by sometimes ignoring the very rigidity of its nature and create an environment best suitable for them.

It is important to understand what basis identity provides for why and where a border should be. For example, the self-conception of a people as a nation provides a need for modern states to require borders (Westmoreland 2015). When identity is found at the heart of border conflict, it is the driving force in the creation of borders. As such, identity would provide a strong rationale for the placement of borders (Westmoreland 2015). Other forces, such as cultural, economic value of land and natural geography may also be utilized to justify border placement.

But they are often subservient to nationalist goals founded by changes to the national identity (Westmoreland 2015).

This study investigates the concept of "similarity" among individuals sharing a common cultural identity and examines whether this shared identity remains intact even when the people are dispersed across two different nations. The establishment of nations involves the creation of bureaucratic systems necessary for governance, serving as the foundation of the state (Simon, Steel *et al.*, 2018). Consequently, the state delineates its boundaries to differentiate itself from other states and consolidate its power over the delineated territory (Newman 2006). Thus, national identity plays a pivotal role in justifying the structure of state borders. However, according to Newman (2006), borders are not merely physical divisions but are constituted by social processes that extend beyond geographic locations. It is, nonetheless, essential for governments to enact laws that provide guidance for individuals with similar cultural identities residing across international borders, such as the Tele Bridge border.

1.3 HISTORY OF THE TELE BRIDGE BORDER

Tele bridge is a border post situated between South Africa and Lesotho. It is close to Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa and Quthing, Lesotho. The border is located about 24 km south of Sterkspruit and 17 km north-east of Quthing. It was enforced in the eighteenth century by British colonizers who settled in the Cape Colony. The border is marked by the Orange river that runs through the two countries into the Atlantic Ocean. The river also forms part of the international border between South Africa and Namibia. The river is affectionately referred to as Senqu in Lesotho. This river separates the districts of Quthing and Mohale's Hoek in Lesotho. The communities across the river (the border) constitute people with a shared cultural identity. Even though the colonial and post-colonial frontier separated people who had evolved as a homogenous community separated by a river, their shared culture persisted for these border residents. Before the introduction of the border, people would move across the river without needing travel documents. The Xhosa speaking people along the Tele Bridge border are linked by a shared culture.

1.4 BORDERS

Traditionally, borders are geographic demarcations meant to separate nations. Brunet-Jailly (2005:634) illustrates that during the Middle Ages, “the feudal system was more concerned with the control of cities and territories, which, rather than having clear boundaries, had somewhat vague borders.” He further expounds on how borders served as a means of demarcating the territorial holdings of independent nations. Many view borders as natural territorial markers. Newman (2006) admits that as geographers, they had traditionally viewed borders as amounting to the physical and vastly observable lines of separation. However, their perceptions were modified upon realisation that it is the bordering process rather than the border itself that creates an impact on people’s identity. There is a growing literature about the conceptualization of borders in the contemporary world. Brunet-Jailly (2011) had argued that there are some elements of geographical reality on borders, especially those that are not man-made, but also attests that borders are human creations. As he put it:

Borders are not just hard territorial lines, they are institutions that result from bordering policies, they are thus about people; and for most settled territories they are predominantly about inclusion and exclusion, as they are woven into varied cultural, economic and political fabrics (Brunet-Jailly 2011:3).

Many scholars, (Paasi 1998; Newman 2003) concur that borders are not simple lines drawn on the sand, but human creations and institutions that have rigid policies meant to determine terms of inclusion and exclusion. Newman (2003:14) argued that “borders prevent the entry of undesired elements, be they people, goods, arms, drugs and albeit to a much lesser extent than in the past, information.”

Apart from the geographical and political definitions of the border, several authors have associated the border with numerous other aspects that equally contribute to border studies and towards a better understanding of the border. One of such study has shown that border culture is the glue that holds everything together in a rapidly changing world (Konrad and Nicol, 2011). The authors argue that borders are highly affected by global processes and newly formed relationships by states, hence they become the hub for these processes, but because of long forged relations by border citizens, the culture upholds everything. Culture thus plays a vital role in understanding borders. It enables our understanding of the impact of borders on human beings around borderlines. The interplay of language, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status are significant factors in shaping the potential for alliances or divisions among

communities that are spread across international borders (Rietel *et al.*, 2002). However, it is important to note that borders are not the same. They are physical constructions of the government, which also shape a series of meanings and possessions linked with a diversity of identities and they assist us to better understand the indefinite fit between nations and states. In practice though, people's relationship with the border contradicts theory. They perceive it as merely a line or a river that runs through two communities which has little to no impact on their movement across the border. Tele Bridge is no different from the above perception of borders. Nevertheless, there is no literature on the impact of the border and identity on the people living along the Tele Bridge border who supposedly hold identity documents from both countries. This study will be the first attempt to understanding border and identity dynamics in this area.

Gadal and Jeansoulin (2000:55) define a border as “the outer line of a surface or a totality of surfaces on which a political, economic, social system exerts its sovereignty.” Building on this definition, they further demonstrate how borders have a determinist character in that they are the result of adjustments of a society to a territory in the course of time. In the field of border studies, many studies share ideas about the characteristics of studied borders and their functions. One of the shared ideas is that “borders determine the nature of group (in some cases defined territorially) belonging, affiliation, and membership, and the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized.” (Newman 2007:33). The question of identity that is closely connected with the processes of inclusion and exclusion and with defining borderland, cultures and identities, has become a central and widely utilized question (Newman and Paasi, 1998:188; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Vila 2003b; Aldama *et al.* 2012).

People construct borders on numerous scales to establish a sense of belonging in the world (Newman 2007). The experience of belonging can manifest in various ways, such as being part of a shared physical environment, a network of friends, a familial unit, or within one's own sense of self. Frequently, borders are linked with divisions in physical space that separate distinct countries and nationalities. Borders encompass more than just a tangible line, fence or national boundary, as they can also be both visible and invisible. While they can function as a means of separation, they can also serve as a means of connection for individuals, nations, groups, and societies. Additionally, borders are not limited to the physical world, as they can also be present within works of fiction. In some cases, borders in the literature may reflect the social and historical context of the time in which they were written, while in others, they may

create an alternate reality where real-life rules, boundaries, and borders do not apply or do not exist (Newman 2007).

1.5 IDENTITY

The study of nationalism has always placed great importance on the concept of identity. The resurgence of conflict related to the issue of identity has bolstered scholarly attention on this concept. The interest has been stimulated by the potential impact of identity and the role identities are assumed to play in processes of inter-state economic and political integration. The study of identity related issues has produced a substantial body of theory linking various manifestations of identity to the subnational, national, international or supranational levels. Despite the obvious practical and theoretical relevance of the notion of identity, “cross national, empirical research on the nature, extent, and impact of subnational, national, and supranational identities in mass populations is rare.” (Smith 1992:57).

However, defining identity has been problematic because it has been heavily contested in social science circles. The ongoing flux of identity presents an obstacle to the development of a precise definition for the term. Rouse (in Zegeye and Harris 2002:244) defines identity as “forms of individual personhood or self-image, as well as collective self-image shared by the members of social groups and communities.” In addition, Zegeye and Harris (2002) cite a wide range of sources that associate issues such as uniqueness, differentiation, sameness and continuity with the definition of identity. The nodal point about the definitions is that such identities are not fixed because they are always being constructed and negotiated through repeated interactions of individuals who share and construct them. Zegeye and Harris (2002:245) conclude their analysis of identity by stating that “the concept provides an important tool for understanding the link between personal views, behavioural patterns and experiences of individuals, and the large cultural, social and political processes in which they are participants.” This brings the discussion to Tajfel’s (1978) theory that looks at the relationship between individual (personal) and group (social) identities: national identity being an example of the latter.

A critical understanding of identity in relation to the border cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Numerous social science scholars have constructed theoretical frameworks that address these matters, incorporating implicit or explicit allusions to national identity. Social identity theory,

as modified by Ravenburg (2000), is significant to this study as it defines identity and then seeks to provide an understanding of the role of the media in national identity creation in South Africa. Social identity theory first gives a discussion of personal identity and then analyses group identities of which national identity is a typical example. The theory is relevant as it acts as a point of departure in the understanding of national identity per se. Other theoretical discussions that follow highlight the key conceptual explanations of national identity and provide a framework through which a fuller understanding of what is involved in the construction of identity is achieved. The central concern of the latter theories is on the nature of a national identity and under what circumstances people are more likely to identify with the nation.

1.6 FORMULATION AND DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Miles (2016a) describes a problem statement as what would be studied and uses data and research to confirm the need to address the problem. The difference in the cultural landscape, is that socio-economic systems and different political setups play an important role in terms of the relationship between the border and identity (Leimgruber 1988). In addition, Trenkler and Wolf (2005) asserted that borders typically represent substantial obstacles to social interaction, movement, and information flow. In a similar vein, Ollunga (2016) argues that borders are not only barriers but also a significant cause of conflict. According to Broek and Smulders (2013), the border is a source of frustration for those on both sides. While Anderson (2006) asserts that postcolonial identities in various African states are fluid in the presence of colonial borders, Moyo (2016) emphasises how people find ways to construct their own identities despite the confined jurisdictions that they find themselves in. National borders, particularly post-colonial artificial borders, are a double-edged sword, as demonstrated by the extracts. The assumptions above about national borders accurately reflect the socio-political, social-economic, and sociocultural realities of the Venda-speaking people of contemporary South Africa and Zimbabwe. Moyo (2016:430). illustrated how “the confines of their territories did not stop them from forming identities suitable for themselves.” In another study, Waiswa *et al.* (2016) focus on the Karamoja cluster, a region spanning Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan. It examined how the borders in this region have influenced ethnic identity formation and contributed to conflicts among different ethnic groups. The findings revealed that borders in this region have played a significant role in shaping ethnic identity formation and have

contributed to conflicts among different ethnic groups. The study highlights how the political boundaries in the Karamoja cluster have influenced group identities and interactions, leading to tensions and disputes between ethnic communities across the borders of Uganda, Kenya, and South Sudan. Greco (2019) explores the implications of colonial and post-colonial borders on identity formation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It examines how the arbitrary nature of these borders and the subsequent conflicts have shaped ethnic, regional, and national identities in the borderland communities. The findings showed that the arbitrary nature of the borders and the resulting conflicts have significantly shaped ethnic, regional, and national identities in the borderland communities. The study highlights how the historical borders imposed during the colonial era and the subsequent border disputes and violence have influenced how different ethnic groups perceive themselves and their connections to the nation and neighbouring regions. Hayes (2017) examines the impact of borders on identity formation in the context of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and Western Sahara. It investigates how the border between these entities has affected the Sahrawi people's collective identity and their struggle for self-determination. The study showed that the contested border between these entities has significantly influenced the collective identity of the Sahrawi people and their struggle for self-determination. The study highlights how the presence of the border and the ongoing territorial dispute have shaped the Sahrawi people's sense of belonging and their strong identification with their homeland, despite being divided by political boundaries. In addition, Vaughan and Patterson (2017) explore the influence of borders on the identity formation of Somali diaspora communities residing in Kenya and Ethiopia. It investigates how the national borders and the resulting political dynamics shape the diaspora's sense of identity and their relationship with the respective host countries. The study found that the national borders and the resulting political dynamics have a significant impact on the diaspora's sense of identity and their relationship with the respective host countries. The study highlights how the Somali diaspora's identity is shaped by their historical ties to their homeland and their interactions with the host countries' political structures and policies.

The above studies explore identity formation of border communities in different parts of Africa, focusing on several factors and attributes to identity. However, they do not consider how border communities' interactions impact on the coloniality of the border. The above studies also do not address the issue of coloniality of borders or a break away from the colonial border effect that seems to characterise Tele Bridge. The present study therefore explores the impact of the

border on identity formation, and further establishes whether culture, either contributes to reinforcing the colonial border, or have a decolonising factor.

1.7 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A research question is a perceived knowledge deficit within a subject area or field of study (Browner *et al.* 2007). In the context of the research problem identified, the main research question is: How do Xhosa speaking people along the Tele Bridge border construct their identity?

The question is broken down into the following sub questions:

- What role does the Xhosa language (IsiXhosa) play in the formation of identity of the Xhosa speaking people along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele Bridge?
- How does the border affect the culture of the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border?
- How do the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border relate to each other and the border?
- Why is identity formation at the Tele Bridge border significant for the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho?

1.8 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Research aims and objectives refer to the main goal or overarching purpose of a research project (Thomas and Hodges 2013:3). They are in a form of precise statements demonstrating key issues to be addressed in the study. Research study objectives must define the specific aims of the study (Hanson 2006).

The study aims to examine the relationship between borders and identity in the context of the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border between South Africa and Lesotho. The purpose is to contribute to the literature as well as provide information for policy formulation that practically seeks to address issues that are related to border and identity in a broader context. This study is guided by the following specific objectives:

- To determine the role played by the Xhosa language (IsiXhosa) in the formation of identity of the Xhosa speaking people along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele Bridge.

- To examine the effects of the border on the culture of the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border.
- To analyse how the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border relate to each other and the border.
- To establish the necessity and the significance of identity formation at the Tele Bridge border for the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho.

1.9 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The literature on borders and border studies addresses various debates and politics on borders, their meaning and how they affect people's lives. However, there is a dearth of information on the Lesotho-South Africa borders. To the best of my knowledge, no study has been conducted on the Tele Bridge border and its influence on identity construction for the Xhosa speaking people who live along the border. The potential effect of Tele Bridge on the identities of the people living along this border are not in any existing literature. This is the first study to understand the relationship between this border and identity.

1.10 CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCIPLINE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

This study is about two states within the international system that are separated by an international border; seeking to examine how this border influences the construction of identity for citizens of these two states. It therefore contributes to the literature on borders. Most studies on borders focus on Western centric borders, and when they study African borders, they still use Western perspectives. This study focuses on African borders from a post-colonial African setting with the aim of bringing an African understanding to the broader study of borders. The study provides an empirical contribution and practical recommendations for policymakers and practitioners working in border areas, such as strategies for promoting social cohesion and intercultural understanding, whilst focussing on the realities of the Tele Bridge border communities and those that resemble it. It sheds light on the experiences and perspectives of people living in border areas, which could deepen our understanding of these communities and the challenges they face. The study provides insight into the ways in which borders, and boundary lines impact the identities of the people living in these areas. It further helps to identify the factors that influence identity formation in these contexts, including cultural, social,

economic, and political factors. Overall, this study provides valuable insight into the complex and multifaceted nature of identity formation and how it is impacted by the presence of borders.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

This thesis comprises seven chapters with each chapter expanding upon a specific area of focus.

Chapter 1

Chapter one introduces the study by providing a brief overview of the research topic, its importance, and its relevance to the field of study. It describes the research problem that the thesis aims to address, the significance of the problem and the motivation for conducting the study, including the potential significance of the study, expected contributions to the field of study, and potential impact on practical or policy issues. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the specific questions that the research study aims to answer and the objectives that it aims to achieve.

Chapter 2

Chapter two is a review of the literature relevant to the topic - borders and identity formation. It begins by examining borders globally before focussing on the African continent, and then South Africa and Lesotho. Through this, the chapter provides an understanding of how borders are viewed and understood and the effects of borders on identity formation for the people living along the periphery of international states. Lastly, the chapter identifies gap in the published literature. The chapter, thus, provides the perspective and sets parameters within which the research problem and research questions were investigated.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework

This chapter places the study into a conceptual context and describes the lens through which the study is viewed. It provides a structure for organizing and understanding the data and helps with making predictions about the relationship between borders and identity formation of border communities. The chapter also provides a theoretical basis for the study, as well as defines the concepts studied and the relationships between them. It identifies the key theories, models, and ideas that have been developed in the field and how they relate to one another, thereby assisting in the interpretation and communication of the findings.

Chapter 4: The research methodology

This chapter presents the methodology adopted and explains the research processes employed in the study. The chapter describes the steps taken in conducting the study in order to ensure that the study is replicable, meaning that other researchers can follow the same steps and obtain similar results. It provides an overview of the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used in the study. It includes a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the methodology. In summary, it details the research methodology utilized and the justification thereof.

Chapter 5: The case study

In this chapter, the study introduces the research site (Tele Bridge border post), its location, site history, and the people who reside in this border region, touching on their demographic, cultural, and economic profiles. The geographical layout of the study area is described, as related to its influence on identity construction. The chapter discusses the social and physical features of the study area, and the border itself and how they impact people's identities.

Chapter 6: Qualitative data analysis

This chapter involves the process of organizing, examining, and interpreting the data collected from the Tele Bridge borderlands. It serves to answer the research questions and to draw meaningful conclusions from the data. The purpose of the chapter is to show the relationship between the two concepts, borders, and identity in action, at Tele Bridge. The chapter thus describes the research findings.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Subsequent to the analysis of the data collected, conclusions are drawn, considering the theoretical framework being utilized. Thus, Chapter seven presents the key findings of the study and provides a final assessment of the research study. It communicates the significance and implications of the findings, discusses whether the objectives of the study were met, and which methods assisted in achieving this. This chapter addresses the main findings of the study and discusses how these findings relate to the research questions and objectives. The chapter discusses implications of the findings for theory, practice, policy, as well as proposes recommendations and areas for future study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The study is about the effect of a border on identity construction of the Xhosa speaking people living along the Tele Bridge border. The aim is to establish how borders influence identity formation, particularly for border communities. There is a large body of literature regarding the effects of a border on a wide spectrum of human existence. These include its effect on the economy, peace and security, political stability, and instability, among others. Identity, likewise, has been discussed by scholars, along with its meaning, significance, and the different types. As the focus of this study is on the effect of a border on identity construction, the above will not be reviewed in detail, but will be highlighted for their relevance to the subject of this study. First the chapter focuses on a discussion of borders and identity. Second, this chapter examines factors that contribute to the identity construction of border communities, discussing each factor and how it influences identity formation. This literature review was used to identify gaps by critically assessing published studies.

2.2 BORDER

The European colonisers created the postcolonial African borders in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 to control the movement of people and create order and ‘otherness’ to improve surveillance and control of resources. It is therefore important to establish how borders form or disintegrate nations and how people’s identities are formulated along borderlines. As Donnan (2012:20) explained:

Border peoples, because of their histories, objectified, and subjectified cultures, not only have to deal with the institutions of their own state but with those institutions of the state or states across the border, entities of equal and sovereign power that overshadow all border relations.

Borders and borderlands received much attention following the realisation that there is no single and simple definition of a border. As versatile establishments, borders can be understood through a broad spectrum of acquaintances. Given the degree to which borders have an impact

on people's lives in the world, it is important to establish and understand the different lenses through which they can be perceived. Several studies have shown that borders are not merely physical lines and rivers that separate states. Their essence goes beyond what meets the eye. The border is not reducible to the classical definition of the limits of a sovereign state, because even as a division between states, it is not contained entirely within the states (Nail 2016:2). Consequently, many studies have focused on the miscellaneous nature of borders in Africa and around the world.

Traditionally, borders are geographic demarcations meant to separate nations. Brunet-Jailly (2005:634) states that "during the Middle Ages, the feudal system was more concerned with the control of cities and territories, which, rather than having clear boundaries, had somewhat vague borders." He goes on to show how borders served as demarcations to delineate the territorial holdings of sovereign states. Many view borders as natural territorial markers. Newman (2006) admits that as geographers, they had traditionally viewed borders as constituting the physical and highly visible lines of separation.

However, most scholars' perceptions changed upon the realisation that it is the bordering process rather than the border itself that creates an impact on people's identity. There is a growing body of literature about the conceptualization of borders in the contemporary world. Brunet-Jailly (2011) had earlier argued that there are some elements of geographical reality on borders, especially those that are not man-made, but also attests that borders are human creations.

Borders are not just hard territorial lines, they are institutions that result from bordering policies, they are thus about people; and for most settled territories they are predominantly about inclusion and exclusion, as they are woven into varied cultural, economic and political fabrics (Brunet-Jailly 2011:3).

Many scholars, such as Paasi (1998) and Newman (2003) share a similar view. They allege that borders are not simple lines on the sand, but human creations and institutions that have rigid policies meant to determine terms of inclusion and exclusion. Newman (2003:14) argued that "borders prevent the entry of undesired elements, be they people, goods, arms, drugs and albeit to a much lesser extent than in the past, information."

Apart from the geographical and political definitions of the border, several authors have associated the border with numerous other aspects that contribute equally to border studies and

towards a better understanding thereof; one of which has shown that border culture is the glue that holds everything together in a rapidly evolving world (Konrad and Nicol 2011). The authors argue that borders are highly affected by global processes and newly formed relationships by states, hence they become the hub for these processes, but because of long-forged relations by border citizens, the culture upholds everything. Culture also plays a vital role in understanding borders. It enables our understanding of the impact of borders on human beings around border areas. Language, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status also play a role in determining possible alliances or fundamental differences that link or oppose communities that are spread across international borders (Rietel *et al.* 2002).

It is worth noting that borders are not the same. They are physical constructions of the government, which also shape a series of meanings and possessions linked with a diversity of identities, and they assist us in better understanding the indefinite fit between nations and states. Agnew (2008:175) further reiterates that “borders matter, then, both because they have real effects and because they trap thinking about and acting in the world in territorial terms.” According to scholars such as Paasi (2009) and Haselberger (2014), postmodernists argue that borders extend beyond physical boundaries depicted on maps and atlases, encompassing virtual borders as well. They contend that borders are not solely confined to state domains, as Aniche (2021) suggests. Postmodern proponents prioritize the notions of flexibility, mobility, and diverse interpretations of borders, as emphasized by Golunov (2014). Consequently, these approaches underscore the existence of multiple borders rather than a singular concept, as highlighted by O'Dowd (2010). In practice though, people's relationship with the border oftentimes contradicts theory. The concerned people perceive it as merely a line or a river that runs through two communities which has little to no impact on their movement across the designated border. Tele Bridge is no different from the above perception of borders. Nevertheless, there are no previous studies on the impact of the border and identity on the people living along the Tele Bridge border who supposedly hold identity documents from both countries. This is the first study to understand border and identity dynamics in this area.

2.3 IDENTITY

Identity is complex in nature, and this tempers the establishment of a single definition of the concept. Another aspect that aggravates the situation is that identity is continuously in a state of flux, that is, it is forever changing. Hogg and Abrams (1988: 2) define identity as “people's

concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others.” In addition, Deng (1995: 1) describes it as “the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture.” Considering how identity is perceived, Hall (1989:132) notes that:

identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. ... [Until recently, we have incorrectly thought that identity is] a kind of fixed point of thought and being, a ground of action ... the logic of something like a ‘true self.’ ... [But] Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself.

In a related study, Alida (2017) acknowledges that identity is a process influenced by several discourses, autochthony being one of them. He argued, “understanding identities as produced by discourse also means acknowledging that identities are not stable and will be articulated in different and contrary ways depending on discursive contexts” (Alida 2017:43). In conjunction with this argument, other scholars concur that identities are always changing, and that no one definition can be sufficient to capture all that explains the phenomenon. As Eriksson (2005:15) states:

The discursive approach to the subject means that it cannot be assumed that people have fixed and coherent identities which are expressed through speech and writing. Instead of being seen as a neutral medium through which already fixed identities and views are communicated, language constructs and instigates identities and thoughts. Since experience and identities are constituted within discourse, and since discourses are open-ended, identities and experiences are often articulated in contradictory ways.

In contrast to the above scholars, Wendt (1992:397) argues that “identities are relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self.” Another opposing view is that while they associate identity with oneself and their relationship with one another, as a personal endeavour that people have to go through, Kowert and Legro (1996:453) view identity in a rather detached manner from individuals, to more of a political discourse, as they put it, “identities are ... prescriptive representations of political actors themselves and of their relationships to each other.” Different debates on identity are explained further in Chapter Three. This section served as a brief discussion of the main concepts before engaging in the debates about what factors play a role in shaping them.

2.4 THE CONTRIBUTION OF LANGUAGE TO IDENTITY FORMATION

The understanding surrounding identity in this context is that there are several factors that influence the process of identity formation. Fong (2004:34) defines cultural identity as “a social construction, a communicative identity that enjoys a common system of linguistic signs and nonverbal behaviours meaningful to members of a group.” The members have a sense of belonging, and a common tradition, history, language, as well as a decent set of codes of conduct. For Lourdes (2008:66) “identity then encompasses all that relates to self, belonging, systems of beliefs and sentiments of self-worth. It is the total sum of ways of living built up by a group of human beings transmitted from one generation to another.” One of the important elements in the formation of identity is language. Language is the principal vehicle for thinking about the world and transmitting those thoughts to others. There’s a vital relationship between identity and language. Language is a fundamental aspect of identity. It is how we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values (Dastgoshdeh and Jalilzadeh 2011).

Language has always been the primary tool for expression and communication. Given the significance of language in human interactions, it is no surprise that scholarly focus has been broad – focusing on diverse issues – and seemingly agreeing to the divergence of perspectives. For Hossein (2017), language is one of the most important pillars of identity. While he acknowledges that aspects like ethnicity, geographic location and religion are equally important, he emphasised that knowing the language automatically enables one to identify with others who speak the same language. He argued:

Language is one of the most important parts of any culture. It is the way by which people communicate with one another, build relationships, and create a sense of community. As people with different cultural backgrounds interact, one of the most difficult barriers they face is that of language (Hossein 2017:1).

As Nelson Mandela said “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his mother language that goes to his heart.” From this quote, it is evident that language has a huge impact on how people view themselves, their surroundings and how they interact with others. Language is not only a means of communication, but a tool that gives people a sense of identity. Language is innately associated with culture. An individual’s culture is therefore an integral part of their identity. Bakhtin (1981:660) contends that “language performs the social function of communication of the group values, beliefs and

customs, and fosters feelings of group identity”. Language is also a vehicle through which people can conserve their intrinsic cultures and keep their traditions alive. As such, it is essential for societies to preserve their culture. Baker (2001) adds that the loss of a language means the loss of culture and identity. In essence, it is through language that we construct our sense of self and subjectivity. In the same vein, coming from a critical theory viewpoint, Gegeo and Gegeo (1999:25) argue that “language is essential to identity, authenticity and cultural survival and people’s learning and thinking processes.”

Language is thus an important element in identity construction, or preserving culture per se and goes a long way in determining how people make sense of their world and how they perceive themselves. Consequently, we cannot speak of identity without acknowledging the role played by language in its formation. For Norton (2000), construction of one’s identity is both a social and cultural process, and it is carried out through the use of discursive practices. Hence, the ability to use a specific language in a specific context influences the development of identity (Trechter and Bucholtz 2001). In a study about the significance of the mother tongue in constructing identity, Meng (2020) drew on the experience of Chinese people learning English. After realising that English is the most spoken language globally, the Chinese government enacted a law that made it mandatory for elementary school children to be taught English. The reason was to ensure that Chinese people are integrated in international standards. While global integration is important, Meng deduces that learning the English language inevitably leads to learning English culture, and if not deeply rooted in their mother tongue, their Chinese beliefs and values are likely to be invaded by foreign cultures. From this argument the strong influence language has on culture is notable. Learning another language has the potential to erode or dilute one’s culture, which boils down to identity. In the same vein, learning your mother tongue strengthens one’s culture, resulting in a clear and firm identity construction. This evidences that language and identity are inseparable, so much that one inevitably learns culture the moment they decide to learn a different language, which brings to light the importance of language in identity formation. This statement is substantiated by Littlewood (2013) in a study about communicative language teaching where he pointed out that “when we adopt a new mode of speech, to a certain extent, it means that we abandon the original cultural identity and accept another cultural cognitive style; different cultures determine different values, and different values construct different ways of cultural cognition” Littlewood (2011:37).

In another study, Norton (2021) acknowledged that language plays a pivotal role in facilitating communication. However, the main emphasis is that “every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation” Norton (2021:410). In this regard, the value of people, who they are, and hope to become (identity construction) is no less than the language they speak. Identity construction is associated with access to resources. In his view, identity construction is a continuous process, just as much as the accumulation of resources is. Therefore, people make sense of whom they are depending on, the resources they have at the time, and this is largely influenced by the language they speak. Acquiring resources and having future aspirations as he put it, is an internal and external process facilitated by language. Whatever individuals aspire to have or to become, first needs to be modelled through language.

Additionally, on the relationship between language and identity, Mahmoodi-Shahreabaki (2018) holds that there is no consensus amongst scholars from different disciplines on the causal direction between language and identity. He argues it is unclear whether identity makes people use a specific language or language leads to an adoption of a new identity. However, he acknowledges there is a seamless relationship between the two. To counter this confusion, he conducted a sociolinguistic study on the subject, reflecting on Labov (1972) who contended that language reflects identity. He concluded that “speakers define their positions with other individuals by using a specific linguistic variety that conveys more than what is said” Thus, language helps people convey their identity consciously or subconsciously. The speakers’ identity is conveyed by communicative acts that are comparable in both verbal and nonverbal ways (Bodomo and Teixeira-E-Silva 2012). A speech community then is created, which consists of a sizable number of individuals who routinely engage in similar patterns of verbal communication habits (Gumperz 2009). Furthermore, single individuals’ language variety (also called idiolect), is not detached from the variety of a language used by a community or group (also called dialect). A crucial point here is that the mechanism of the relationships between idiolect and dialect is variable and is mostly unconscious (Kraljic, Brennan and Samuel 2008). Sometimes, individual speakers maintain dual identities by use of two linguistic varieties to communicate in double-speech communities. It is not true in any sense to conclude that social identity is the sum of every single individual’s identity. In other words, both intra and interlinguistic identities may change in different ways through time. Within the speech

community, speakers continuously adjust their identities and contribute to the group's identity. Language is a pillar of identity undertaking. Thus, the way you talk is part of the speech, and how you speak reflects your appreciation of the community's identity (Gumperz 2009).

In another study Byram (2006) acknowledges that people are categorised by the language they speak. He further purports that there is a solid connection between language and identity. However, this relationship may sometimes bring complications in one's identity construction. There are cases where people speak more than one language, and according to him, there always exists the potential to breed identity confusion. With further reference to Switzerland where people speak several languages; and Germany where some languages are connected to more than one identity, he presumes language can also be detrimental to identity construction. In a similar study, Dastgoshadeh and Jalilzadeh (2011) believe that learning the English language for instance, as an international language to ensure inclusion on the global stage, is a threat to their own identities because learning a foreign language means learning foreign culture, which is most likely to affect the knowledge of own language which is a carrier of culture. In their view, "it is believed that languages become endangered when they are not passed on to children or when a metropolitan language dominates over others. Languages are much like living creatures that become endangered when numbers dwindle" (Dastgoshadeh and Jalilzadeh 2011:661).

Previous and current studies on the role played by language in the formation of identity and its significance focus mostly on the sociolinguistic sphere. Emphasis is placed on how the community benefits from the conservation of culture and language. For example, Mercuri (2012) accentuates the importance of understanding the interconnectedness between language choices and cultural identity for teachers who teach students from diverse backgrounds. Again, the focus is on a group of people. Children are taught language to preserve the culture and ensure that they transmit culture to the coming generations in their mother tongue. Societies are concerned about keeping their language alive in the hope that, as the carrier of culture, it will help maintain the culture. Little attention has been paid to the possibility that language can limit individuals in formulating their own cultural identities. Usually, people are categorised by the language they speak, and this automatically places an individual in a certain ethnic group that speaks the same language. In this regard, communities run a risk of placing everyone in a group by default, without establishing whether or not that individual feels a sense of belonging with the ethnic group in question. It is highly possible, for example, that one can be born

Spanish and speak Spanish but still not identify with the Spanish people. Language in this case is to the detriment of identity construction of an individual because by default they will have been categorised under a group they do not identify with. As such, it is equally important to investigate whether language is really a vehicle through which identity is constructed, restrained or a combination of both.

The literature on identity and language has focused on the relationship between language and identity, and the role of language in shaping and expressing identity. However, there seems to be a paucity of studies on how language and identity intersect with and are influenced by factors, such as geography, history, and social and political structures. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature on how language and cultural identity are negotiated and maintained in situations of cultural and linguistic contact, such as immigration. Another gap in the literature is the examination of how language and identity intersect with and influence individual and group agency, and how individuals and groups actively construct and negotiate their own identities through language use.

2.5 THE EFFECT OF AN INTERNATIONAL BORDER ON THE CULTURE OF THE PEOPLE LIVING ALONG THE PERIPHERY

The Westphalian convention of 1648 emphasized the importance of international borders as legal territorial boundaries between one country and the other. This treaty laid the foundation for the contemporary state system by establishing the ‘territorial state’ as the basis of the modern state system (Okhonmina 2010). The Berlin conference of 1884-85 spurred the partitioning of Africa into spheres of influence by European states (Gashaw 2017). South Africa and Lesotho, the focus of this study, were no exceptions to the post-1884/5 artificial borders consolidation zeitgeist.

Colonial borders mark the extinction of indigenous borders and the emergence of alien borders which later transformed into nation-states. Generally, borders mark the separation between two regions. Many countries around the world depend on international borders for various reasons. An international border represents the extent of sovereign authority a government has over a particular portion of space. It is widely recognised that borders are an important part of the world today, and complex too. In Africa particularly, borders have been drawn geographically without respect to the cultural realities of the people being divided. This placement further

exacerbated the complexity of borders for local people. The notion of geographic borders and their effect on culture is observed within the context of border communities that share the same culture.

Culture is defined as “all the ways of life including arts, beliefs, and institutions of a population that are passed down from generation to generation” (Avruch 1998:6). To add to this definition, Spencer-Oatey (2008:3) refers to culture as “a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence, but do not determine each member’s behaviour and his or her interpretations of the meaning of other people’s behaviour.”

Culture, like borders, is multi-faceted. There is no single comprehensive definition that encapsulates all that culture is. Several scholars have provided working definitions of the concept that attempted to provide a clear and concise explanation of culture. Some definitions focus on the shared values, beliefs, and behaviours of a group or society, while others highlight the social and material elements that shape and are shaped by cultural practices. Culture can also refer to the accumulated knowledge and traditions of a group, as well as the ways in which people express themselves and create meaning in the world around them. Ultimately, culture remains a complex and multifaceted concept that encompasses many different aspects of human experience and social life. However, Nieto (2001) provides an index of characteristics of culture for a better analysis of the concept. As he put it:

Culture is dynamic and always changing. Culture is shared and identities and roles fluctuate throughout any given day. Authentic cultural knowledge is the product of the context in which it exists and cannot be separated from the daily lives of individuals. Culture is contextualised by socio-economic factors as well as history and differential access to power. Culture is socially constructed through daily interactions and the relationships between existing power structures and society. Culture is learned through our families and communities. Culture is dialectical and beyond broad labels such as good or bad (Nieto, 2001:143).

Similarly, Konrad (2013) argue that culture is a constantly changing phenomenon, that relies on power structures and other external factors. Utilising an example of the U.S.-Canada border, he presumes that “culture is everywhere yet nowhere, culture is an idea ever more imagined, produced and reproduced by society” (Konrad 2013:41). He attests that we live in a rapidly transforming world, and culture dominates as social constructs to guide and direct our actions

and identities. For him, a thriving expression of culture within and across nation-state borders shows the investment humans have made in who we are and where we came from. Similarly, Mitchell (2000:74-75) posits that “there is no culture in the world, only differing arrays of power that organize society in this way, and not that. Hence there is only a powerful idea of culture, an idea that has developed under specific historical conditions and was later broadened as a means of explaining material differences, social order, and relations of power.” For these authors, culture is more of an idea deeply rooted in human beings about their heritage and the future than anything tangible and existent.

The above arguments together with the fact that culture on its own is a continuously changing phenomenon, presents another fluid concept, a border. Like culture, “borders are often more or less than the lines and barriers that they appear to be, they are emerging as filters and conduits, and as redundant and meaningless lines” (Konrad 2013:42). Borders are regions of transition and convergence, where culture continues and discontinues. Consequently, the influence of global factors and forces (which are very present in border zones) on local cultures constantly changes and reinvents them. Now, international borders have come into communities where culture is practiced. The literature, therefore, focuses on the effects of a border on homogenous culture.

A large body of literature on border effects on culture falls under the umbrella of borderlands theory. A key tenant of this theory, Anzaldua (1987:3) describes the borderland as an interface of two nation-states where a third country is born. Anzaldua’s borderlands theory stipulates that while border culture is unique and dominant in the borderlands, the people who inhabit and promulgate this dominant culture still identify as having distinct mother cultures, giving them a cultural dualism. In the same vein, Konrad and Nicol (2011) promote the observance of border culture and iterate the ontological shift from the observation of the interaction of two cultures across a geographic border towards the observance of the conglomerate culture in its own right. Lauding borderlands as the “vanguard landscapes of globalisation” (2011:70), they insist that the border landscape is critical infrastructure to the cultural economy of borderlands and therefore warrants further study which will give insight into the ways of life in these borderlands.

A second ontological shift, still within the borderland’s theory gamut, is the experiences of persons residing in the borderland culture. Central to Borderlands theory is the process of cultural semiotics unique to the borderlands, best described by Orozco-Mendoza (2008:37-49)

as the challenging, confronting, and reaffirming of one's own culture before coming to a stasis; the confrontation of past identities and anticipation of future ones; and putting the self together in the individual, social, political economical and emotional contexts of the borderland culture. This allusion to first a disaggregation and thereafter reconstitution of personal cultural identification for those residing in the borderlands is also reflected in the works of Sassen (1996) to identify the unrecognised racial and gender presences in borderlands, Chavez (2008) in promoting a stronger recognition of the role of colonial antecedents in the formation of borderlands culture, Segura and Zavella (2016) who take gendered view of borderland culture with a focus on the unique role of women in borderland culture and its expansion, as well Perez (2021) who explores experiential epistemologies of borderland culture. A common refrain in this body of literature is the maintenance of Anzaldua's concepts and narratives that are specific to the border culture of the Mexican-Texan border and a writing style that merges Spanish and English languages to form unique concepts and nexuses, which begs the extent of the theory's applicability and employability in analysing non-American Mexican border culture contexts.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) take a closer look into the notions of persons that inhabit the borderlands, insisting that they are not homogenous but span three categories, each with their unique border culture. The first category is permanent inhabitants of borderland settlements, and the second is persons who cross the border every day, thereby "living a life of border crossings" (1992:11). On a different track, Brunet-Jailly (2011) writes on the analytical lenses through which borders can be viewed. Of the four lenses, he talks about the specific culture of borderland communities. In his view, culture determines the relationship between border communities. Different cultures across the border ripen the effect of dividing, whereas, if the culture is the same, an international border is easily bridged. While acknowledging the works of Paasi, Newman, and Keating in their contentions about the significance of culture in shaping the environment in border regions, Brunet-Jailly (2011:638) agrees that "indeed, although international borders divide stateless nations, borderland communities may remain unified by culture – ethnicity, language and/or religion – or by the nature of local political institutions." He goes on to make an example of the borders that divide the Kurd, Flemish, and Basque people at different points. Shared culture and their political clout in all these instances bridged the territories and challenged the very rigidity of the border. Their activism influences the functioning of the border. In the interaction of these two dimensions, the theoretical hypothesis is that if each analytical lens enhances or complements one another, what emerges is a stateless nation unified by culture. Despite the existence of an artificial border, a group of indigenous

people polarized by this existence created an identity which subtly or assertively undermines the new nation states where they belong, and by implication they established a stateless society.

Outside of the Texan Mexican context, in African border cultures and their observation, a common focus is conceptual grounding in transversal elements including but not limited to cross-border languages, which are used to iterate the arbitrary drawing of colonial borders that are persistent to date and the illegitimacy of these borders. Citing instances of Kiswahili in the eastern African bloc, Arabic in the African Maghreb bloc, Fulfulde in western and Sahel Africa, Nguni and Sotho-Tswana in southern Africa, Ndlhovu-Gatsheni (2013:20) attests that “artificial colonial borders fade in the background of pre-border culture which starkly, through persistent cross-border languages, reinforces the indigeneity of culture and its transcendence over a pervasive colonial agenda.” Coplan’s (2001) work on the Lesotho-South Africa Caledon River border and the Caledon Valley iterates this position, noting that despite the use of borders to punctuate the independence and sovereignty at the centres of both countries, “What 'the Basotho' ultimately want, independence or no independence, is the continuing development Caledon Valley's organic multi-racial way of life.” (Coplan, 2001:81), suggesting a unique culture in the Valley by virtue of being a borderland. The people along the Caledon River border, share the same culture – language, ethnicity, religion, and more. Therefore, they too have since adopted means to bridge the border. There were instances during the COVID-19 movement restrictions where several people from the two sides of Caledon lost their lives due to illegal river crossing during heavy rainfalls. In their defence, family members claimed it is nothing out of the ordinary to cross the river to the other side, and they traced it back to time immemorial. In the same vein, Moyo (2016) notes that in the South Africa-Zimbabwe Musina borderland, the peoples share a culture, which may be unique to the border, but more importantly one that predates the demarcation of a national border using a river. And unique to this perspective is that rather than the formation of a conglomerate culture in the borderland, the inhabitants “challenge the bordering by adopting double identities and refuse to recognize the imposed border straddled by their lives” (2016:50). Likewise, Nshimbi (2019) on the Zambia-Malawi-Mozambique borderlands, showed that shared culture has enabled border communities to challenge the primacy of state ideology and supremacy. He indicates that these border communities ascribe to the same King who resides in Zambia, and are expected to pay tribute to the King as an acknowledgment and embracement of their culture. Against this background, it is evident that culture across borders plays a pivotal role in how border communities interact with each other. Their activism influences the operation of the border,

and this could go either way, depending on the culture and of course, the political institutions of the states involved.

Another unique trajectory within the literature, while accented by the second process in Anzaldúa's borderlands theory, is the concept of diasporic culture. While largely unexplored, the Chinese-Philipino geography for its exploration by Miao (2021) extends the question of borderlands and border cultures from terranean to maritime borderlands, as is the case in the Chinese-Philipino context. This diasporic culture is about positioning and not essence, it is not static and the people who occupy the terranean periphery of this maritime border use tools such as code-switching, and multilingual proficiency as cultural capital in the borderlands. This further suggests that the effect of a shared maritime border is unique and fosters a different kind of culture on the terranean border periphery and among the people occupying it.

A meta-observation of the literature on the effect of borders on culture and those living in the border periphery indicates that there is a valid reason to study borderlands and their cultures while maintaining that they are not homogenous or self-constituting in their uniqueness to the inland cultures.

However, the gap in this literature is the lack of attention to the ways in which culture is shaped by and shapes power structures and external factors, such as colonialism and the drawing of international borders. While some scholars have recognized the complex relationship between culture and power, there is a need for more in-depth analysis and exploration of this dynamic. Additionally, there is a need for further examination of the ways in which culture is learned and transmitted within families and communities, and how these processes are influenced by social and economic contexts. There is also a need for more research on the ways in which culture is negotiated and contested within and across national borders, and how cultural practices and identities are affected by globalization and other transnational forces.

2.6 BORDER COMMUNITIES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP ALONG THE PERIPHERY

There are two main channels of thought on relations between international border dwellers. The first focuses on relations across the international border. In the first channel and observing relationships between persons inhabiting borders, Dąbrowska-Prokopowska (2022:25-26) uses social identity models to codify relations between borderland inhabitants. Through a lens of

cultural evolution theory, ‘intuitive morality’, “rooted in [human] biological survival strategy” is identified as the basis for interactions between borderland dwellers. Dąbrowska-Prokopowska (2022) holds a common refrain in her work, that relations between borderland inhabitants should not be observed solely through the individual or through groups, but through a systems perspective, wherein the borderland landscape and culture is a complex system, where the individual’s relations to another is an equally valid representation of group relations and dynamics as inter-group relations, which are the culmination of myriad mutually dependent variables, including but not limited to the different cultural, political, and economic contributions to the complex system contributions by each individual (Dąbrowska-Prokopowska 2022:38).

Moving away from the focus on the organic cohesion of interactions and relations in contexts of disputed borderlands Nikofova’s (2005:192) observation of relations between borderland inhabitants in Russia-Estonia, which have a history of a border dispute, observes the violence and animosity between two transborder communities in the 1990s; the Cossacks, an all-male group and the Setos. The Cossacks see themselves as defenders of and belonging to the border periphery and the Setos as “ethno-cultural Others.” (Nikofova 2005:192).

In a similar focus, Chatterjee, Sen, and Banerjee (2021:17) observed the local perceptions of international borderlands and identified that the relations across three borderland peripheries of a single international border are heavily influenced by the state-centric identification of the border. Their findings illustrate that illegal immigrants that settle at the borderland are automatically associated with antisocial and nefarious activities, but those with legal crossing status are sociable and welcome. This otherization across the border is strongly reflected in the inhabitants’ relations in adjunct to a strong sentiment to protect the borderland they reside in from infiltration by others across the border and a strong need for border control processes (Chatterjee, Sen and Banerjee 2021:17).

A second channel in the literature focuses on the relations between border inhabitants of a single border settlement. Bacas and Kavanaugh (2013:12) insist that the interactions and relations between borderland inhabitants in a borderland locality cannot be studied without considering the soft structure of social hierarchy and asymmetry that backdrops the border landscape. They note that social asymmetry that is determined by the reach of state power in the borderland and is exercised through the coercive power of state agents in the border

settlements determines the kinds of social, political, and symbolic capital that border dwellers have and therefore the interactions between each other in this asymmetry.

Taking a trans-historic examination of the border communities in eastern Ethiopia, González-Ruibal (2021:4) warns against a single-lensed study of border localities, using either isolating colonial ethnology or globalisation-centred postmodern anthropology. Because the reality of border dwellers in these localities are characterised by:

“moments of integration and openness, along with others of closure and isolation ... by shifts between moments of integration and moments of stasis ... [wherein] connectedness and fluidity are not inherently positive:they create both winners and losers ... [It therefore begs] researchers to explore the reasons behind increased connection or disconnection” across both lenses.

Still, within the localised observation of border communities, Radu (2010) showed that the longer people reside in a borderland community, the roles and identities that marked them at the time of their arrival change, and thereby change their relations to each other. This exemplified the evolution of relations between persons coming into a specific border locality and those considered native to this locality.

Nonetheless, there is lack of attention to the ways in which the social hierarchy and asymmetry of border communities shape and are shaped by the interactions and relations between borderland dwellers. While some scholars have noted the importance of considering power dynamics in the study of border communities, there is a need for more in-depth analysis of how these hierarchies and asymmetries are established and maintained, and how they impact the lives and experiences of borderland dwellers. Additionally, there is a need for additional research on the ways in which borderland communities navigate and negotiate their relationships with the state and state agents, and how these relationships are influenced by the reach and exercise of state power in the borderland. There is also a need for more studies on the ways in which borderland communities are affected by and respond to shifts between moments of integration and isolation, and how these shifts impact social, economic, and cultural practices within the community. Finally, more research is required on the ways in which borderland communities are affected by and respond to globalization and other transnational forces, and how these processes shape the experiences and identities of borderland dwellers.

2.7 BORDER COMMUNITIES AND BELONGING

One of the ways people give meaning to their lives revolves around the concept of belonging. Social interactions that demonstrate belonging to a certain community via beliefs, practises or values reinforce our sense of identity. Almost certainly, the choices people make in their lives, be they economic, social, political, or spiritual, form part of a community to which they belong. Conventionally, people always associate with others, spaces, and places whenever they are required to reveal their identity. This is because, in as much as people are individuals, they form part of a group which they always identify with. Belonging and identity are constantly in a flux. A sense of belonging cannot be a once-off reality in a constantly changing world. For instance, as the environment changes, the economy, politics, religion and all people's sense of belonging also changes. The SIRC (2007:7) confirms that "developing a sense of belonging is an ongoing process that involves membership in, or exclusion from, a wide variety of different groups during the course of our lives."

Gasparini (2010) also explores theoretical scopes of territorial belonging primarily in association with identity in a far-reaching manner and particularly, to community. His initial theory is that belonging is a vigorous sense of attachment to something other than oneself. He argues this active sense is composed of three fundamentals, 'territory, values and social relations.' Gasparini explores belonging from various angles to arrive at a point where it is possible to reconceptualise it. His analysis shows that community is the prime source of territorial belonging. In a similar perspective, Madara (2019) acknowledges the significance of community in the sustenance of belonging. Nonetheless, his definition of a community is unorthodox. Contrary to several authors who link community to territory, he claims "in the contemporary world, the definition of community has surpassed physical boundaries and now encompasses the interrelationships of people across the world" (Madara 2019:1). He goes on to concede that past studies have shown that community nurtures a sense of belonging, shared interests, and identity. In his view, a "sense of belonging includes community support, cooperation, unity, and solidarity with others. It involves seeing the community as a symbol of certain values, norms and practices shared among members of a particular group of people" (Madara 2019:3). In conjunction with this argument, Mahar, Cobigo and Stuart (2013) affirm that "a sense of belonging means being similar to other people instead of focusing on activities that may contradict the popular belief with a certain group." There is a sense of belonging among members of a community with a common history, language, and culture.

Alida (2017) focuses on the politics of belonging and identity between the native Congolese people and the Rwandophones who reside in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). His analysis is that there are several discourses that constitute identity and belonging. However, his main emphasis is on the autochthony discourse. The native Congolese do not have a problem with the Rwandophones acquiring citizenship and enjoying the fruits of the land. However, their main grievance is the ownership of land. Their argument is that land belongs to the native Congolese people, thereby implying that Rwandophones do not belong to the DRC and cannot own the soil. Conversely, the Rwandophones have been residing in the DRC for centuries, and feel they belong to the DRC because they were born there and had lived their whole lives in the country where they are told they do not belong. They further admit that “belonging to the nation-state does not necessarily require a tie to the soil” (Alida 2017:43). The suggestion that Rwandophones do not belong in the DRC talks to territorial belonging, which implies that Rwandophones territorial belonging is of no relevance because of where they were born and their ethnicity. This leads to the debate on ethnic belonging, which they can have in Rwanda but not in the DRC; hence their argument that belonging does not necessitate one to have been born in a particular place. Thus, territorial belonging does not necessarily determine people’s sense of belonging, as it can be attached to several other discourses like language and culture which are equally authentic. In the border regions, especially where the inhabitants are of the same ethnic group, identical language and other attributes of ethnicity accelerate a sense of belonging between the people.

According to Konrad (2014:54) “belonging is more developed if a sense of indigeneity prevails in the cross-border community, that is that people living in the cross-border community can trace their roots to an indigenous community in the region, or if they can claim “indigeneity” by virtue of their founding “settler” status.” True indigenous people in the cross-border region do not acknowledge the imposed “Ex-European” border as a valid boundary within their traditional territories.” He further explains this contention by making reference to the Mohawk, who steadfastly maintain that they have the right of unrestricted movement and activity throughout this “cross-border” zone along the St. Lawrence River between Massena, New York, and Cornwall, Ontario.

2.8 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AT THE PERIPHERY OF STATES; WHY IT MATTERS

Identity construction is defined as “a general term that refers to the social construction of identity based on self-concept, the incorporation of group perception, and the internalization of multiple identity statuses” (Coffman-Rosen 2017:1). In a similar vein, Herman (2011:779) extends on this definition and points out that “identity formation has to do with the complex manner in which human beings establish a unique view of self and is characterized by continuity and inner unity. It is therefore highly related to terms such as the self, self-concept, values, and personality development.” Inability to create one's own identity results in failure to create a shared identity with others, which can cause instability as an adult in many areas (Erikson 1963).

As mentioned above, failure to establish one's identity leads to multiple hiccups at a later stage in one's life. Identity and belonging are inextricably linked, as should be the case. When we have a clear sense of who we are and what we stand for, it is easier to find communities and settings in which we can truly thrive (Miles 2022). To build on to this, Upreti (2017:54) notes that “identity construction is another name for individuation. Individuation is the development of separate personality at a particular stage of life in which individual characteristics are possessed by a person or a person is known to others.” Identity construction is an essential part of human existence, to avoid issues like identity crisis or confusion, as these may result in dire consequences. This is true even more so in border regions where border communities are faced with unique circumstances compared to other people further away from the border. Proximity to the border comes with challenges. As Cantu (1993:3) put it:

The pain and joy of the borderlands--perhaps no greater or lesser than the emotions stirred by living anywhere contradictions abound, cultures clash and meld, and life is lived on an edge--come from a wound that will not heal and yet is forever healing. These lands have always been here; the river of people has flowed for centuries. It is only the designation "border" that is relatively new, and along with the term comes the life one lives in this "in-between world" that makes us the "other," the marginalized.

Cantu (1993) refers to living on the border as a wound that will not heal. Her analysis is based on the fact that the borderlands between the United States of America (USA) and Mexico are dominated by high disease rate, infant mortality, poor sanitation and no access to the land that they have always believed to be theirs. She states that crime is rampant in this area and these

agonies are always present in their lives, hence the notion, of a wound that will never heal. She sums up her analysis by noting that “however, one must also see border life in the context of its joys, its continuous healing, and its celebration of a life and culture that survives against all odds” (Cantu 1993:2). In her view, the wound of living in border region will never heal and at the same time is paradoxically forever healing. The celebration of culture that has survived the onslaughts of social, economic, political, and emotional challenges helps the community to heal. The Cantu (1993) study is unlike the Tele Bridge border communities in the sense that Tele Bridge is a small border post with small communities along it; and much of the ills happening at the border between the USA and Mexico amount to the size of the border and the community, and the rate of mobility across the border. While challenges like poor sanitation and poor education may be similar, Tele Bridge is not subjugated by drug crimes and diseases for example. However, Cantu’s work is relevant to this study for revealing that living in borderlands poses several challenges to border communities, irrespective of the manner of such challenges. Although she did not mention identity confusion in so many words, the fact that people along the USA-Mexican border argue “this land that is our land--and has been our land for generations --is not really ours” speaks to identity confusion. Her study is also relevant to this study when it comes to the celebration of culture that has survived against all odds.

Wapner (2020) conducted a study in the same borderlands as Cantu (1993) but focused on the mental health effects of living in the USA-Mexican borderlands. Like Cantu, Wepner emphasises that this border area is faced with extensive drug crimes, poverty, and low levels of education, amongst others. Her study discovered that communities living along this border met the criteria for mental disorders. Young people of this border region were faced with the challenges of trying to escape poverty and involvement in social ills and learning a new language, for those who were immigrants. These glitches brought a lot of stress to these border communities and resulted in mental disorders. Although this is not the case in Tele Bridge borderlands, this study helps to bring out the complexities of living along the periphery of states, which leads the discussion to the importance of identity construction for people living along international borders. Identity construction is an on-going process, but there are some aspects of self that need to be developed before one becomes an adult. And only if a person has successfully established who they are will they be able to decide who they want to be going forward in life. For example, some children may identify themselves as daughters or sons of their parents, or by their names. But as they grow older, they may add culture or language to their identity. With time, as they become adults or professionals, they may want to associate

their identities with their professions or careers. It is easy to do this when the initial stage of identity construction coined by Erik Erickson's theory of identity development is fully achieved. According to Erikson (1968), the primary and most significant developmental tasks for the development of adolescents are to resolve the identity versus role confusion crisis, construct their own distinctive sense of identity, and locate the social environment in which they can belong and form meaningful relationships with other people (Chen *et al.* 2007). It is therefore necessary for the people living in Tele Bridge borderlands to construct their identities in a complex region like theirs to avoid confusion going forward.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The presented excerpts clearly show that, in the African context, governmental boundaries are an feature born of the 1648 Westphalia Treaty and the 1845 Berlin Conference. In a number of African countries, the outcome of colonial powers' imposition of borders continues to be an unsettled matter even to this day. The colonial borders are unquestionably a defining characteristic of contemporary African nation-states, but they have clearly created agony in the hearts of African people by polarizing and condemning citizens of identical cultures to exist as strangers to each other despite cultural similarities. This is the reality of the Venda-speaking people in South Africa and Zimbabwe; and despite being descended from the same ancestral civilisation, the Sesotho-speaking South Africans and Basotho living along the Caledon River Border are similarly divided along national lines.

A consequence of colonial borders that separated Africans of the same ethnic groupings along national lines is the formation of an improvised identity, also known as an unrecognised or informal identity at national borders. These are individuals that have a common ancestry and are attempting to build an informal identity apart from their national identity. Brunet-Jailly (2011:638) stated that despite the existence of a recognised national identity, indigenous populations tend to develop a stateless community characterized by indigenous history.

This is visible at the Tele Bridge Border and the Caledon River Border, where South Africans and Basotho have constructed a makeshift identity. This can be described as the development of an identity intended to rectify the national divisions caused by colonial construction. In this setting, belonging is a double-edged sword heavily dependent on the lens through which it is viewed. If evaluated from a state-centric perspective, belonging would be considered

negatively since it poses a threat to the state in terms of security, identity, and documentation. But from an Afrocentric viewpoint, belonging would be viewed as revolutionary since it seeks to undo the colonial knot. This is a gap that this study seeks to fill, as most of the writers noted the possible role of culture in border issues. The merits and downsides of belonging in border regions would be discussed in depth, as well as the role homogeneity and heterogeneity play in the construction of belonging and improvisational identity.

CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

International borders, the subject of this study, emerged against the backdrop of the territorial state that was established at the Westphalian treaty, which emphasized the necessity for borders. There are two main concepts of interest in this study, borders and identity. This chapter aims to provide definitions that speak to the purpose of the study and provide a framework for viewing how the notions are manifested. Relevant variables will also be brought forth to clarify this relationship. To achieve this, I developed a conceptual framework that borrows insights from Moyo (2016) and Nshimbi (2019). The chapter is divided into two sections and starts by defining concepts. The second part frames the way the interaction between the two concepts, borders and identity, are perceived, including related variables significant for mapping how and why concepts are related. There are three main perspectives through which borders are viewed in this study, namely, physical entities, institutions, and processes. Identity and identity formation, on the other hand, are viewed through social identity theory.

3.2 FUNCTIONS OF A BORDER

A border is first and foremost presumed to designate a line that separates different territories, causing them to be distinguished from one another. A border can also be visualised on different levels: as a territorial border marked by border controls or walls, as a social border characterised by status symbols, or as an aesthetic border which can be perceived and construed in different ways (Doll and Gelberg 2014:15).

Rarely does a border serve as a simple demarcation between groups that can be easily distinguished based on their culture, ethnicity, religion, or language. In fact, a border frequently results in division along these lines: communities that once spoke the same dialect or language or came from the same ethnic stock, but are now divided by a political frontier, frequently develop differently, whether naturally or because of state pressure (Laven and Baycroft 2008).

O'Dowd (2001:67) further defines borders as “the ubiquitous product of the need for order, security, and belonging in human life”. For Lee and North (2016:2),

the border represents a relatively static model of territorial demarcation that can be expressed physically, whether through human-constructed border stones, walls, or fences, or through natural features such as rivers, mountain ranges, and even trees that become endowed with human-constructed meaning as border markers.

In this study, borders will be addressed as geographical entities, processes, and institutions as shown below. In the field of border studies, many studies share ideas about the characteristics of studied borders and their functions. According to Newman (2007:33), one of the shared ideas of the border is that “borders determine the nature of group (in some cases defined territorially) belonging, affiliation, and membership, and the way in which the processes of inclusion and exclusion are institutionalized”. The subject of identity, which is directly associated with the processes of inclusion and exclusion as well as with the defining of borderlands, cultures, and identities, has also become a crucial and frequently exploited question (Newman and Paasi 1998:188; Sadowski-Smith 2002a; Vila 2003b; Aldama *et al.* 2012). Since boundaries are the result of historical construction, the meanings that are ascribed to them are also in a state of constant flux. This is because the meanings of boundaries shift in tandem with developments in both international socio-political relations and the internal relations that exist within states (Paasi, 1996). Processes of where one belongs and does not belong are undertaken by states in setting territorial boundaries. According to Gupta and Ferguson (1992:45), “states play a significant role in the popular politics of place marking and in the creation of naturalized links between places and people, and it is partly for this reason that it is typical to assume that all individuals should be part of a nation and have a national identity and state citizenship”. Paasi (1996:96) builds on the functions of the states in setting boundaries, that ultimately influence people’s identities and notes that “as far as the basic parameters of global geopolitical landscape are concerned, the state still appears to provide the fundamental framework for discussing boundaries.” The introduction of colonial borders disrupted the ethnic and cultural settings of people living along such borderlines. Anderson (2006) asserts that postcolonial identities in various African states are fluid due to the presence of colonial borders. In the same breath, “conditions in border areas vary markedly according to the size differences between nation-states, their political relationships, their levels of development and their ethnic, cultural and linguistic configurations” (Martinez 1994:218). States execute the processes of inclusion and exclusion through the issuance of national

identities, regulating the flow of imports and exports (such as goods and services, and information, arms), and movement of people as it pertains to when, where, and how it happens. In a study about Rwandophones living in the DRC, Alida (2017:42) demonstrated how:

Narratives around the politics of origin have arisen and have played an important part in politics of inclusion and exclusion of people as citizens of a specific place. Thus, questions concerning origin articulated through discourses of autochthony, are currently among the most crucial and contested issues in relation to the politics of place, belonging, identity and contested citizenship.

According to Brunet-Jailly (2011:3), “in contemporary geopolitically and geographically oriented research, borders are no longer only about territorially bounded authorities, and they are not just sea and airports of entry, or border crossing, but ... also increasingly virtual or simply impalpable”. Therefore, Brunet-Jailly (ibid.) suggests that such understandings of borders need to be developed to go “beyond our territorialist and geopolitical intellectual and policy traditions”. Scholars such as Konrad, Newman and Brunet-Jailly have highlighted “the gradually growing significance of the cultural and humanist point of view in understanding and conceptualizing borders in geopolitically and geographically oriented border studies” (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Konrad and Nicol 2011:74–75). Geographers, Konrad and Nicol, even suggest that culture and power are “the key variables for explaining how borders and borderlands originate, are sustained, and evolve” (Konrad and Nicol 2011:75).

Newman (2007) further argues that humans construct borders and boundaries on various scales to create a world in which they can belong to. The experience of belonging can manifest in various ways, such as being part of a shared physical environment, a network of friends, a familial unit, or within one's own sense of self. Frequently, borders are linked with divisions in physical space that separate distinct countries and nationalities. Borders encompass more than just a tangible line, fence or national boundary, as they can also be both visible and invisible. While they can function as a means of separation, they can also serve as a means of connection for individuals, nations, groups, and societies. Starr (2006:8) notes, “borders and the territories they separate, may also represent the cause of a conflict, the source of conflict, or the stakes of a conflict. In most cases, the border yields conflict where the two states separated by the border have remarkable economic statuses. Dielh (1996:74) expands on how borders can be a source of conflict. He argues that people in borderlands fight over “tangible intrinsic significance of territory, which includes natural resources, control over populations and access to trade, and intangible or symbolic features of a place its historic value, group identity or ethnicity of border

communities.” On the same note, Brunet-Jailly (2011) presents perspectives in which a border should be seen. He alleges that culture is a core determinant of relationship between border communities. In his view, different cultures at the border ripens the effect of the border, but homogeneity triggers border porosity. The Oshoek border post between South Africa and Swaziland runs through the Swati ethnic group on both sides. The notion that cultural homogeneity triggers border porosity and hastens the germination of improvised identity construction at the border holds true in the case of Oshoek community members. Furthermore, the tensions between Somalis and Kenyans at the Northern Frontier District further illustrates how different ethnicities perpetuates the effect of the border and increased tensions among border communities. The conflict went as far as bloody confrontations where the Somalis who identified as Christians were killed and raped, which stemmed from difference in ethnicity. Nevertheless, this study analyses borders through three distinct perspectives, it views borders as physical entities, processes, and institutions, which are discussed below.

3.2.1 BORDERS AS PHYSICAL ENTITIES

3.2.1.1 Geography and borders

Physical geography is essential to a discussion of the politics of geography. When analysing a map, it is easy to conclude that in many instances, borders were created on top of physically convenient features and barriers. Rivers, coastlines, and mountain ranges all make for simple dividing lines between populations. Thus, a physical border is the most obvious kind of boundary that exists naturally and forms a barrier between two regions. Physical boundaries can include rivers, mountain ranges, oceans, and deserts. Political boundaries between nations or governments frequently develop along geographic limits. For instance, the Pyrenees Mountains form the border between France and Spain, while the Alps divide France from Italy. Between countries, states, and more localized political entities like counties, rivers are frequently used as borders. For example, the Rio Grande makes up a sizable portion of the border between Mexico and the US. Many of the states it passes through, such as Iowa and Illinois, Arkansas and Tennessee, and Louisiana and Mississippi, are divided by the Mississippi River (NASA 2020). Another example is the Zambezi River that separates Zimbabwe and Zambia. Geography may provide the foundation for a successful border, as opposed to national identity. Nonetheless, the physical line is frequently the greatest option for a border because it naturally divides nations. Countries develop claims to the land they already possess for

practical reasons. Kolossov and Scott (2013:3) reiterate that “natural borders are a result of humans characterising spaces as natural areas, political boundaries rarely match ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries.” Additionally, van Houtum (2005:313) argues that “the world political map showing lines separating container boxes is largely a representation of political elites, because many people do not recognize or associate themselves with such ossified and fixed divisions.” The border between South Africa and Lesotho at Tele Bridge is marked by the Tele River while the Limpopo River runs through South Africa and Zimbabwe at the Beitbridge border. The two border regions are characterised by people of the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background from both sides of the rivers; Xhosa speaking people between South Africa and Lesotho, and Venda speaking people at Beitbridge. This is consistent with the argument by Kolossov and Scott (2013) that borders usually do not match the ethnic categorisations of people being divided.

Natural geography frequently plays a significant role in shaping the behaviour of states as they compete for resources and the economic power that accompanies them. Nonetheless, in certain situations, natural geographic characteristics are not utilized as borders. Instead, it is frequently observed that a nation's interest in a feature supersedes its usefulness as a boundary. This is because the worth of a piece of land, whether due to historical or mineral factors, necessitates the expansion of borders beyond the physical terrain feature. Valuable resources such as gold in rivers, gems in mountains, and minerals in canyons may be concealed by natural features. For instance, Lake Malawi, the boundary between Malawi and Tanzania, possesses minerals, and both countries claim ownership of the lake. However, Malawi strongly feels the lake belongs to it because it was decided by the colonial masters that Lake Malawi falls under Malawi, but Tanzania was given rights to use the lake for fishing and transportation. To emphasise this, Masina (2012:1) argues “Malawi sources its ownership of the entire lake to an 1890 treaty between former colonial powers Britain and Germany and says it was later reaffirmed by the Organization of African Unity as Malawi was gaining its independence in the early 1960s.” Malawi has since claimed full ownership of the lake and took decisions on the lake that Tanzania did not agree with. Malawi’s argument was that following the decision by colonial masters about who owns the lake, the Heligoland treaty of 2002/2007 reinforced Malawi’s ownership of the lake. Mungoshi (2012:1) explains:

By this treaty it is clearly stated that the eastern boundary of Malawi and Tanzania is on the shores of Lake Malawi. However, the treaty allowed the Tanganyika [now Tanzania] territory to use the waters for fishing and even for transportation, otherwise they recognize

that the shores were the boundary and then there was the Organization of African Union which said upon independence the existing boundaries should be respected.

Following Malawi's full ownership claims over the lake, Malawi allowed a British company to extract oil and gas from the lake. Tanzania did not take this well and a dispute erupted, where Tanzania was threatening war. Tanzania claims that the agreements made during the colonial era are not binding and that most of the international law favours bordering countries sharing common water resources (Masina 2012). Another example of shared bodies of water that form boundaries is the Okavango River between Angola, Namibia, and Botswana. The river is one of the largest in southern Africa. For the Okavango River to be used for industrial purposes, the three countries must reach an agreement on how to explore such alternatives because they all have ownership rights over the waters.

While natural features can serve as clear boundaries, owning both sides can have economic benefits. However, even if there are economic justifications for taking over an area, the rationale for seizing and maintaining control is often rooted in a nation's identity. Territorial claims are a product of human invention, and individuals have moved to make them a reality in order to expand their influence. On the global stage, national interest is generally considered a more legitimate basis for territorial claims than economic reasoning.

Similarly, the value of owning a geographic feature along the border can yield benefits for both countries that share the territory, or it can be to their detriment. There have been disputes over shared geographical features like the case of Lake Malawi. East African countries, Ethiopia and Eritrea, have had dire contestations over unclearly marked territories and this fuelled tensions amongst other East African states as they have always been dissatisfied with the delay by post-colonial states to correct the improper divisions amongst people of the same ancestry and culture. Most states that are divided by natural borders like rivers, lakes, oceans, and deltas often face the challenge of who owns what and this results in disputes. Okumu (2010:279-280) illustrates this with examples from the African continent:

The recent (2009) standoff between Kenya and Uganda over the ownership of Mizingo Island in Lake Victoria, the 2008 border incident between Eritrea and Djibouti, the continuing Somali nationalism in the region, and border skirmishes between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) over the oil-rich Lake Albert region, all indicate that border disputes are on the rise. In addition to the potential for armed conflict,

undemarcated, indefinite, porous, and unmanaged boundaries are being used for illegal cross-border activities that threaten national sovereignties and destabilise regional politics.

While the above involved disputes over natural riches in border areas born from improper divisions, the border separating France and Germany has been the subject of intense conflicts resulting in significant bloodshed. After each conflict, negotiated settlements have caused the border to shift across large swaths of land, including Alsace-Lorraine. Despite the lack of valuable resources present in the contested area, both France and Germany base their claims on the land on their respective identities. The drawing and redrawing of the French-German border during the 19th and 20th centuries was a part of the larger process of the creation of nation-states, which led to the interpretation and conceptualization of borders as national borders throughout most of Europe. This transition is especially noticeable in France and Germany because of how deeply ingrained nationalist feelings were following the Revolutionary and Liberation Wars. German travellers began to view the French-German boundary less as a region with continuous cultural shifts and more as a linear national barrier after 1815 (Hopel 2012). The border between France and Germany is marked by the Rhine River. Due to multiple restructurings of the border, identities and cultures have been impacted severely, and this resulted in wars that destabilised ethnic set ups. Hopel (2012) explains that during the French Revolution of 1789, the revolutionaries adopted the concept of "natural borders", which in the context of the French eastern border was primarily defined as the Rhine River. This idea had been discussed by French scholars from the Renaissance period, who referenced ancient sources to demonstrate the ideal geometric form of France. This concept was also adopted by French rulers and politicians for both symbolic and practical reasons. Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu (1585–1642) and Louis XIV of France (1638–1715) had used this concept to justify their territorial expansion. Additionally, during this period, the idea emerged that a region's inhabitants should decide which nation they belonged to. This principle of self-determination was revolutionary at the time and was first applied with the reunion of the papal enclave of Avignon with France in 1791. Following this, numerous communities east of the Rhine River made requests to the French National Assembly to be reunited with the Republic. World wars, sophisticated democracy, and modernity have not altered the reality that Germany believes it has a title to the area since Germans reside there, while France considers their medieval claim to the land to be superior.

The Eastern Cape Province-Lesotho border post at Tele Bridge emerged against the backdrop of colonial and post-colonial border creations that continue to shape nations across Africa and

the world at large (Moyo 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). Africa's long history of colonisation and the accompanying imperative to conform to colonial policies culminated in the creation of borders, which through their provisions constitute a process of identity formation. This is similar to the Beitbridge border between South Africa and Zimbabwe, where the Limpopo River runs between people of the same culture. Although there have not been bloody contests between the two countries like France and Germany, and the border has not gone through multiple restructuring that tampered with people's belonging and identity, what remains similar is that the Rhine and Limpopo Rivers, as markers of territorial states, have affected issues of identity for the border communities in question. These two scenarios are like the Tele River that separates South Africa and Lesotho. The river runs through the Xhosa ethnic group on both sides of the border. Unlike France and Germany, where there is a suggestion for people to choose where they belong to, the situation at Tele Bridge is different because belonging for these border communities is related to ethnicity rather than territory. As a result, the Tele Bridge inhabitants belong with each other irrespective of the river that runs through them.

3.2.2 BORDERS AS INSTITUTIONS

There has been an important shift in the study of borders in part due to the recognition that borders are institutions rather than just lines on a map or in the sand (Paasi 1998). One cannot simply view borders from a physical point of view to draw conclusive verdicts about them. Typically, an institution is a social structure through which people cooperate and which can influence their behaviour and their way of life. Institutions have rules that govern human behaviour and can enforce them (Miller 2007). The border's reliable institutional foundation, which endures across time, is the distribution of authority in space. The specific roles that boundaries serve, in contrast to this trait, are examples of how the institution is flexible. Borders are viewed as distinct institutions that spatially demarcate the proper exercise of state power. According to this interpretation, boundaries are institutionalized rules that allocate authority according to space and designate which ruling body may rightfully claim the exercise of it (Muller 2013). Primarily, states play a pivotal role in creating and maintaining territorial borders through the Westphalian system that drew lines on the map without regard for ethnic and cultural settings of the people being divided. Post-colonial states did not attempt to correct these irregularities, instead, they maintained them and proceeded with their institutional functions of inclusion and exclusion. However, the issue of border effectiveness is not mainly

in the hands of the state, although states are institutions that are at the forefront in controlling the movement of people, goods and services. Kolossov and Scott (2013:5) agree, “border making processes are largely functions of the state power, while the concomitant power to sort people according to their degree of belonging to certain ethnic, cultural, political and social groups is embedded within society itself.” Similarly, borders are institutions with their own set of rules that govern their conduct and the process of bordering. As Newman (2003:14) stated, “border institutions govern the extent of inclusion and exclusion, the degree of permeability, the laws governing trans-boundary movement, exit from one side of the border and entry into the other side.” As institutions that enable governments to employ and manage their human, economic, environmental, and other resources and assert exclusive claims to territorial authority, borders exercise power as makers of sovereignty (Murphy, 2010). Across all aspects of life, institutions affect the way we live and have access to political, economic, or legal opportunities. Likewise, borders determine access to goods and services, information, and the movement of people from one country to another. As borders regulate what is allowed and not allowed to cross the border they act as a protective entity. Although the border determines what comes in and out of the state to protect those within, Paasi and Newman (1998), however, assert that their functions maybe challenged. Societies passively or actively determine how they interact with borders. Not only can nation states define their borders, but also individuals within those borders may amend or reject them. Borders must be replicated (which includes their violation) to stay continual and effective; otherwise, they eventually cease to exist (Schonwald *et al.* 2022). In the same vein, Brunet-Jailly (2005) adds that often, if communities spread across the border share the same culture, be it language, ethnicity and other components, border communities will find a way to negotiate border functions, which is more unlikely if the border runs through people of different cultures. Apart from the protective function, borders are also political institutions. Tele Bridge border, the subject of this study, is no exception to the above arguments about the categorization of borders as institutions that operate under certain laws. Like other borders, Tele Bridge was established by European colonisers and strengthened by the two post-colonial governments, South Africa and Lesotho, that put in place regulations that guide its operations as an institution.

Despite their seemingly precise representations on maps, borders are political constructs designed by politicians, lawyers, and academics, at least partly, to display their own imaginary projections of territorial power (Baud and Van Schendel 2019). Even though physical border landscapes and concrete boundaries are often loaded with national symbolism, we can think of

boundaries as existing simultaneously in the countless practices and discourses that make up the socio-spatial delimitations that place some people inside and others outside of them (Paasi 2009). Boundaries are reflected – either openly or subtly – in politics, governance, economy, culture, the formation of ethnic relations and other types of national socialization. For example, in the formation of ethnic relations, boundaries are reflected through the role they play in determining where border communities belong in terms of territory and influences how such relations are maintained. As mentioned earlier, shared culture and ethnicity across the border challenges the effectiveness of the border, making it somewhat porous, whereas people of different ethnicities and culture across the border emphasise its existence and effectiveness. Ultimately, whether openly or subtly, borders are reflected in the formation of ethnic relations. Border communities who share culture are impacted by the border when they need to practice their culture. Irrespective of whether the border allows or prohibits the practice of culture, it factors in when culture must be practiced.

These behaviours create the groundwork for our understanding of state sovereignty; of 'us' as an abstract, imagined society with a distinct identity, and of the relationships between 'us' and 'them' (Paasi 2009). In the same vein, Baud, and Van Schendel (2019:214-215) view borders as political markers. They identify two ways through which they base their viewpoint. Firstly, is the states' territorial consolidation. Most states attempted to restrict regional autonomy because they couldn't stand the rough edges any longer. Secondly, borders became symbols of how powerful states are over their own societies by establishing the state as the most powerful force.

Borders are used by states as markers of territory. There have been incidences where states took up unclaimed zones to limit the occurrence of loosely defined border territories that could be claimed by multiple states. The United States-Mexico border is a typical example of a border area that was not clearly defined. The border area was contested by England, France, and Spain. Granted, the area was just a river with no formal border in place, the above-mentioned states made plans to conquer the area by drawing up maps and signing treaties. However, their grip was not firm, and this gave the Americans an upper hand to occupy the territory. The point here is that borders are political institutions designed by states through politicians and other stakeholders. The decision to demarcate a border range is political.

3.2.3 BORDERS AS PROCESSES

Borders were viewed as motionless philosophical objects with mainly physical features. Their geographical stance took precedence, neglecting all other aspects which are equally important. Contemporary border studies, however, acknowledge and view borders beyond their visible features, with the recognition of social, cultural, economic, and other forms of borders, that regardless of their invisibility, influence the organisation of society. Kolossov and Scott (2013:2) attest that “borders are not given, they emerge through socio-political processes of border-making or bordering that take place within society.” Primarily, the creation of borders was a process carried out by states in the privilege of power, with the state or states in question authorizing the demarcations. In this way, the existence of borders is a passive process taken regularly by states. Secondly, the bordering process continues to disregard the static nature of borders as previously conceived. From an alternative viewpoint, borders are products of influential societal processes that have led to the division of territories and people. These processes are subject to change, causing borders to persist as remnants that continue to captivate our imagination but no longer serve a fundamental purpose (Agnew 2008). Borders are not mere practical constructs to be unquestioningly accepted; they are intricate human creations that are constantly subject to scrutiny. In extreme cases, existing borders are the outcome of past processes that are either no longer in effect or are being overshadowed by transnational or global pressures. Essentially, physical borders are becoming increasingly obsolete, and adhering to them restricts our ability to explore alternative political, social, and economic possibilities.

The contemporary school of thought does not consider borders to be something given or natural. There is always a likelihood of political change and contention on borders. Their existence does not supersede political action but attain their societal significance as an outcome of political processes and the complementary legitimization of approaches that produce borders (Baud and van Schendel 1997). Consequently, from this point of view, borders must be considered as “historically and politically contingent”; they “are continuously remade on the basis of concrete political, cultural, and economic practices” (Stetter 2008a). Borders are understood as manifestations of “social practices and discourses that may be simultaneous and overlapping” (Paasi 1999a:670). From a social constructivist perspective, the focus shifts from the entity to the process itself: from borders to bordering (Sendhardt 2014).

Bordering has also seen a conceptual shift from viewing borders as usually stationary geographical outcomes of socio-spatial dynamics towards understanding them as active functional processes. Bordering may be described as the daily building of borders through political discourses and institutions at its most fundamental level (Scott 2015). As he put it, “there are (at least) two broad and interlinked ways of how bordering can be understood: one *pragmatic* (deriving generalizable knowledge from practices of border creation, confirmation and transcendence) and the other *critical*, theorizing, questioning and contesting the conditions that give rise to border-generating categories” (Scott, 2015:1). The notion of “bordering suggests that borders are not only semi-permanent institutions but are also non-finalizable processes” (Kolossoff and Scott 2013:3). As a result of changing links between geography and society and the bordering processes these relationships imply, borders are perpetually reproduced. As Newman pointed out, “it is the process of bordering, rather than the border line per se, that has universal significance in the ordering of society” (Newman 2003:15). Thus, the conventional understanding of borders as static constructions allowed place for a new theoretical perspective on boundaries as “historically dependent processes” (Newman and Paasi 1998:201). According to Paasi (2005:18) “this constructivist school of border studies examines beyond the outward, tangible, and ostensibly objective expressions of boundaries, such as fences, walls, rivers, or mountains and focuses on the social practices and discourses in which boundaries are produced and reproduced.” This school of thought understands borders as “dynamic cultural processes” (Paasi 2003:464). That is, borders are constantly susceptible to political disputation and alteration, and borders are products of political, social, cultural, and economic processes. The border making itself renders borders as processes.

Kolossov and Scott (2013) argue that people play a primary role in the process of bordering. Without their participation and cooperation to border operations, functions, and regulation, bordering becomes immaterial. Simmel (1992:697) agrees, “it is not the countries, parcels of land or city districts which set up boundaries between each other; instead, the inhabitants themselves produce and effect the impact of the border.” This means that social behaviours, such as those that develop from the bottom up, can be used to change or reinforce borders. To support the above arguments, Sendhardt (2022:119) reiterates that “in order to remain constant and effective, borders must be reproduced (which also includes their breaching), otherwise they would eventually become irrelevant and disappear. Michel Foucault additionally suggests that borders must be crossable to be perceived as existing: borders can only be experienced when they can be crossed.” Benjamin (1991:1025), describes crossings as thresholds, as “transition

zones’, where negotiation processes constantly take place.” Additionally, “everyday border-crossing practices – activities that would generally be considered ‘normal’ outside the context of a national border – gain special meaning through or make sense only in this context.” (Sendhardt 2022:121).

The bordering process further emphasises the need to redefine borders beyond their physicality. Borders might be physically or psychologically existent, but the bordering process contributes much to how they are understood. Physical border existence alone cannot explain the border if bordering is not happening. The border needs to be crossed for its existence to be relevant. Thus, when it comes to bordering, there has been a conceptual shift from viewing the boundary as a physical and frequently static geographic conclusion to one in which the borders are seen as dynamic functional processes (Kolossoff and Scott 2013). Additionally, people play a primary role in the process of bordering; without their participation and cooperation to border operations, functions, and regulation, bordering becomes immaterial. Simmel (1992:697) agrees, “it is not the countries, parcels of land or city districts which set up boundaries between each other; instead, the inhabitants themselves produce and effect the impact of the border.” This means that social behaviours, such as those that develop from the bottom up, can be used to change or reinforce borders. To support the above arguments, Sendhardt (2022:119) reiterates that “in order to remain constant and effective, borders must be reproduced (which also includes their breaching), otherwise they would eventually become irrelevant and disappear. Foucault (2011) additionally suggests that “borders must be crossable in order to be perceived as existing: borders can only be experienced when they can be crossed.” Benjamin (1991:1025), describes crossings as “thresholds, as ‘transition zones’, where negotiation processes constantly take place.” Additionally, “everyday border-crossing practices – activities that would generally be considered ‘normal’ outside the context of a national border – gain special meaning through or make sense only in this context.” (Sendhardt 2022:121). In this way, the physicality of the border and its functions require human interaction for borders to survive. In any case, people are the ones responsible to dilute or solidify the existence of a border.

Given the broad spectrum through which borders are perceived and understood, and their complex nature, this study conceptualises borders as physical entities, processes and institutions that are subject to change and alterations depending on the setting and environment they are being viewed from. Their physicality may not be the determining feature of their

existence, but it cannot be ignored. Depending on the specific border, border region and communities, the meaning of the border can oscillate between symbols, bridges, lines of separation, processes and institutions. In this study, Tele Bridge border will therefore be viewed: as a physical entity due to the Tele River that marks the division of South Africa and Lesotho; as an institution with a set of rules that govern it; and as processes that entail the border making itself and the bordering process that is sustained by the actual process of border crossings, as Tele Bridge community members continue to dictate how and when they cross the border dictated by convenience and need, irrespective of the set rules.

3.3 WHAT IS IDENTITY?

The study of nationalism has always placed great importance on the concept of identity. The resurgence of conflict related to the issue of identity has bolstered scholarly attention in this concept. The interest has been stimulated by the potential impact of identity and the role identities are assumed to play in processes of inter-state economic and political integration. The study of identity related issues has produced a substantial body of theory linking various manifestations of identity to the subnational, national, and international or supranational levels. Despite the obvious practical and theoretical relevance of the notion of identity, “cross national, empirical research on the nature, extent, and impact of subnational, national, and supranational identities in mass populations is rare.” (Smith 1992:57).

Defining identity has been problematic because it has been heavily contested in social science circles. The ongoing flux of identity presents an obstacle to the development of a precise definition for the term. Rouse (in Zegeye and Harris 2002:244) defines identity as “forms of individual personhood or self-image, as well as collective self-image shared by the members of social groups and communities.” In addition, Zegeye and Harris (2002) cite a wide range of sources that associate issues such as uniqueness, differentiation, sameness and continuity with the definition of identity. The nodal point about the definitions is that such identities are not fixed because they are always being constructed and negotiated through repeated interactions of individuals who share and construct them. Zegeye and Harris (2002:245) conclude their analysis of identity by stating that “the concept provides an important tool for understanding the link between personal views, behavioural patterns and experiences of individuals, and the large cultural, social and political processes in which they are participants.” This brings the discussion to the Tajfel (1978) theory that looks at the relationship between individual

(personal) and group (social) identities with national identity being an example of the latter. Several definitions of identity are provided below as a point of departure.

1. Identity is “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Abrams and Hogg 1988:2). This definition fits into the kind of identity in question at Tele Bridge border. The study seeks to establish how border communities in this region understand their identities as individuals, what constitutes the basis of their identities and how they relate with each other across the border.

2. “Identity is used in this book to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture” (Deng 2011:1). The inhabitants of the Tele Bridge borderlands are of the same ethnic group, race, language, and culture. This definition talks about identity touching on the relevant aspects that resemble the situation at Tele Bridge. Therefore, this study also attempts to understand how individuals and groups define themselves on the basis of ethnicity, language and shared culture.

3. Identity “refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities” (Jenkins 1996:4). The study sets out to establish how people, as individuals and groups across the Tele Bridge border distinguish their cross-border and internal relations with each other. Belonging to the same ethnic group across the border, the study seeks to establish how they define their social relations. hence the relevance of this definition.

3.3.1 IDENTITY FORMATION

Generally, identity formation involves the process of developing a unique perception of self within a person, and it is characterized by a continuous process of growth and integration. It is therefore closely related to the concept of self, self-concept, and values, as well as the concept of personality. Throughout the process of normal human development, people seek to establish a cohesive view of themselves. A person's identity is formed on many levels and is influenced by a variety of factors, such as race, culture, occupation, ethnicity, and spirituality. Identity formation defines each person to themselves and to others. It also involves a sense of association depending on the affiliations people have with several groups, family being one of them. In this study, the aim is to explore how identity is constructed in borderlands, but as a

point of departure, the study focuses on identity formation in general, using empirical evidence from previous studies on how people perceive themselves as individuals and as members of the community, that is, self-conception and group membership. As demonstrated by social identity theory, identity itself is a complex and multidimensional concept that is always in a flux. In the process of repeated interactions between individuals, identities are always constructed and negotiated. According to Tajfel (1972:292), the main principle of social identity theory is that “people derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups and categories they belong to—their social identity, originally defined as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership”. This makes the process of identity formation equally complex because identity is continually changing. The key focus is on ethnicity and the language which the people speak, with the assumption that they play a key role in how people perceive of themselves. As Koczan stated, “language choice has always been closely tied to the notion of identity and underpins popular notions of identity formation and integration” (Koczan 2019:2).

Grotevant and Cooper (1998) view identity formation as a lifetime process structured by cycles of exploration and consolidation, as well as experiences of competence and vulnerability. According to Buckingham (2008:6) “the formation of identity often involves a process of stereotyping or cognitive simplification that allows people to distinguish easily between self and other, and to define themselves and their group in positive ways.” There are several studies that have focused on how identities are constructed by individuals and groups, and how one develops a sense of belonging to a group or community. These processes take place on a social as well as an individual level.

Individuals form identities at the adolescent stage, and individuals who fail to develop their identities at this stage often struggle to develop shared identity with others, which may ultimately lead to adult instability in a variety of areas. Essentially, an individual's identity is based on whether they have considered various options and established firm commitments to whatever they identify with, be it career, religion, sexual orientation, or a set of political views. However, the opposite of this does not necessarily mean total dismay. Identity formation is an ongoing process in a person’s life, and the failure to develop it at an earlier stage of life does not equal the failure to develop it as an adult. There are various ways through which individuals construct their identity, with no specific or well-defined procedure that guarantees positive

results. The aim of this study, therefore, is to establish how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge construct their identity, and the significance thereof.

Accordingly, the discussion shifts from the general process of identity construction to identity formation vis-à-vis borders. Prokkala (2009) argues that national boundaries are used to define identities that are formulated via social and cultural processes, legacies, mythologies, and institutionalization, and that borders represent state structures, power dynamics, as well as the standards and values that define identities (Anderson *et al.* 1996). Post-colonial identities are fluid due to the artificial borders consolidated by the colonial masters. However, Prokkala (2009:32) proclaims that "although identity is acknowledged as a key to the study of borders, identity is considered either a constant or stable entity, undifferentiated as collective or individual, or superficially defined as an attribute." The current study argues that membership in a culture and an ethnicity are considered identities. Consequently, identity formation in borderlands involves affiliation with group membership, be it, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, racial, territorial, and regional settings; and these have an influence on the type of identity border inhabits construct. As Konrad (2014:51) stated:

Comparative approaches have shown how ethnic and national identity vary across borders, borderlands residents identify as "border crossers" or "border re-enforcers" who may share cultural traditions but not identity narratives, identity is constructed through territorial exclusion and inclusion, distinctions between national identity and borderlands identity, multiple border identities, sometimes constructed through everyday practices and local ways, and that some practices shape regional and national identities while others consist of personal ideas and experiences.

Konrad (2014) discusses identity formation in the borderlands of Virgin Islands and the Pacific Northwest; and in the analysis, suggests that borderlands affinity and national identity make up borderlands' identity. In a previous study, Konrad and Everitt (2011:52) argue that "perimeter security aligns with notions of national identity, yet also enables the continued articulation of a transnational borderland identity. Integration expresses borderland affinity, and it allows both national and borderland identities to co-exist. In a sense, identity crosses the border even when the impact of the boundary changes and may do so more demonstratively in times when the border is re-asserted or altered." Identity formation in some countries like the Canada and USA borderlands has become difficult as border communities are faced with challenges of states tightening their borders to protect national identities and security. Konrad (2014) alludes that

Canada, the USA, and relevant institutions have taken advantage of federal recognition of and participation in programs to expand options for identity verification in an effort to lessen the growing gap between hegemonic national and borderland identities and to acknowledge pluralism and multiple identities (ethnic, indigenous, and global) that are apparent in the cross-border region. One of the initiatives that have succeeded is the issuance of Enhanced Driver's License programme. He defines it as "one wallet sized card is the auto license and proof of identity and citizenship that allows residents of the cross-border region to affirm both national and regional identities with a universal document that signals belonging" (Konrad 2014:53).

Identity formation is a complex continuous process influenced by several factors, on a normal setting. Constructing identity in border regions becomes more complicated as these are zones of convergence and divergence, where multiple cultures meet, clash and merge. Borderlands are regions where political, cultural, and social identities converge, cohabit, and occasionally clash. However, this study argues that despite everything, the existence of the post-colonial border, its regulations, its mandate to exclude and include, states' autonomy and territoriality, multiple identities, people of the same ethnic group in borderlands use common language, shared culture, ethnic belonging, and their cross-border relations to construct or as determinants of their identity construction. Colonial and post-colonial borders intensified identity formation along borderlines by separating people of the same ancestry, lineage, and culture. This complicates identity formation process further. Flynn (1997:312) reiterates on the challenges brought by arbitrary borders:

Like the U.S.-Mexico border, most international boundaries in Africa arbitrarily divide ethnic groups as well as kin groups. Such arbitrary borders are a colonial legacy, testaments to Africa's colonized history and European governments' struggles for control over people, land, and resources. The fact that colonists paid little attention to indigenous cultural groups and ethnic boundaries, dividing friends and family into different colonial territories while incorporating ancient enemies into the same colonial territory, is often cited as a leading factor in the contemporary political instability of many African states.

Additionally, cultural homogeneity in border regions triggers border porosity and encourages the germination of improvised identities. Consequently, the post-colonial border may have undesirable outcomes for identity construction of borderlands communities if the people spread across the border are heterogenous. Nonetheless, in the case of Tele Bridge border inhabitants, where people belong to the same ethnic group, identity formation rests heavily on ethnic

homogeneity, and the border has little to no impact on how people construct their identities. Identity formation, as defined by social identity theory (SIT) below, is consistent with the theory.

3.4 BORDERS AND IDENTITY IN ACTION AT TELE BRIDGE

The section above provided the basis through which borders are viewed by describing different definitions. This section focuses on the conceptualisation of borders. A critical understating of identity in relation to the border cannot be achieved in a vacuum. Numerous social science scholars have constructed theoretical frameworks that address these matters, incorporating implicit or explicit allusions to national identity. Social identity theory, coined by Tajfel (1978), is significant to this study as it attempts to define identity and then seeks to provide an understanding of the role of culture (language, ethnicity, social behaviours, and physical attributes, among others) in the formation of identity. Social identity theory first considers personal identity and then analyses group identities. According to SIT, people develop collective identities based on their affiliation with particular groups, such as racial/ethnic and gender identities. People classify themselves and other notable groups into "us" and "them" based on their social identities (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Self-categorization based on membership in a group may be so salient that it can be automatically engaged even in the presence of modest inputs. People participate in intergroup comparisons that show a favourable bias toward their in-group, act in a discriminatory manner toward out-groups, and employ coping mechanisms including internal/external causation attributions for group failures in order to retain a good sense of social identity (Brewer 1979; Brewer, Manzi, and Shaw 1993; Fiske and Taylor 1991; Hewstone 1990).

The social identity approach examines group dynamics, relationships between groups, and self-concept from a social psychological standpoint (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Its main principle is that “people derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups and categories they belong to—their social identity, originally defined as the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Tajfel 1972:292). The conceptual emphasis is on the collective self—a self-defined in terms of the group and connected to other group members—and is founded on a thorough critique of individualistic notions of the self and group operations (Brewer and

Gardner 1996; Markus and Kitayama 1991; Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier 2002). Social cognitive processes associated with social identity produce group and intergroup behaviours.

The theory is relevant as it explains how people make sense of self as individuals, and most importantly as part of a group, or a collective. The postulations of the theory highlight the key conceptual explanations of identity and provide a framework through which a fuller understanding of what is involved in the construction of identity is achieved. The central concern of the SIT is on the nature of identity and under what circumstances are people more likely to identify with each other. The SIT stipulates that people develop collective identities based on their affiliation with groups, such as racial/ethnic and gender identities. The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border belong to the Xhosa ethnic group. As a collective, people put more weight on ethnicity to construct their identities. Shared culture and common language act as catalysts to the already existent group by virtue of belonging to the same ethnic group. Group identities give people a sense of value and belonging, even more so when they share territorial belonging. As SIT argues, people construct their identities based on their membership in a group, and this happens prominently in an almost organic manner even in the presence of modest inputs. This argument bears resemblance to the situation at Tele Bridge with border inhabitants who regard themselves as one, because they all fall under the Xhosa ethnic group. The Tele Bridge border separates people of the same lineage, ancestry, and culture. Having these attributes in common categorises them into a particular group, hence their identity construction rests primarily on their group membership. Identity construction, as explained by SIT, holds in the case of Tele Bridge border inhabitants because sharing culture, language, and ethnicity groups them by default, making it possible to identify with each other.

International borders, the subject of this study, emerged against a backdrop of the territorial state that was established at the Westphalian treaty that emphasised the necessity for borders. There are two main concepts of interest for this study, borders and identity. The aim of this chapter is to provide a framework for viewing how borders and identity are manifested in reality; I developed a conceptual framework that borrows insights from Moyo (2016) and Nshimbi (2019). Although the two studies use similar frameworks to analyse border communities they differ significantly on the approach adopted towards the border. Below are aspects from both studies that this study resonates with. Moyo (2016) points out:

1. South Africa and Zimbabwe adopted a strict adherence to the post-colonial border.

2. The existence of border citizens has been necessitated by the fact that both the South African and Zimbabwean governments have been blind to the fact that before colonization, people across the Limpopo River lived as one community separated by a simple river.
3. Communities across the Limpopo River are bound by the same language and culture.
4. The Venda speaking people at the Beitbridge border have, in agentive and dynamic ways, adopted double citizenship and identities in order to beat the territoriality of sovereignty.
5. There is a lack of attention to the reality that there may be overlaps in terms of where citizens of both countries belong.
6. The frequent and major flow of movement from Zimbabwe to South Africa is due to the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and South Africa's mandate is to flush out a tide of illegal immigrants.
7. There have been South African citizens travelling to the Zimbabwean side of the border for community and family reasons.

Nshimbi (2019) posits:

1. Economic and sociocultural actors in these borderlands engage in cross-border activities out of necessity, convenience, for survival, and as practises which they, being inhabitants of the borderlands, have traditionally followed.
2. The majority of the ZMM countries' people continue to share strong cross-border ethnic and cultural ties, as demonstrated by the Chewa and Ngoni people.
3. The Kulumba signifies and is the epitome of resilient ethnic and sociocultural ties manifesting historical transboundary traditional political entities that have survived the onslaughts of the formally structured Westphalian state and its well-defined borders. Such ties, which may be based on ethnic (as in the case of Chewa), social or cultural identities, undermine the border and erase its effect, by virtue of interactions of people in communities that transcend national borders.

Even though Moyo's focus is on the two countries that adhere to a strict post-colonial border while Nshimbi focuses on three countries that do not necessarily adhere to this system, what stands out from both studies is that shared culture and language across the border plays a big role in maintaining and strengthening good relations between and amongst border communities regardless of the border system adopted by countries in question.

This study is about the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge between South Africa and Lesotho. Similar to Moyo, before colonization, people across the Tele River lived as one community separated by a river. Likewise, South Africa and Lesotho have ignored the reality that these communities were at some point in time one. These two communities too are bound by the same Xhosa language and culture as in the case with the Venda speaking people of Beitbridge border and the Chewa speaking people of Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. South Africa and Lesotho at the Tele Bridge have also adopted a strict adherence to the post-colonial border like South Africa and Zimbabwe at Beitbridge. Moyo (2016) and Nshimbi (2019) deliberate about border communities belonging to the same ethnicity and culture spread across rivers. They demonstrate through their case studies how shared culture makes it easy for these communities to bridge the border and continue to brace centuries old relationships. There is a striking resemblance amongst these border communities. However, it is worth mentioning that, unlike the situation at Beitbridge as demonstrated by Moyo (2016), which is the same as the situation at Tele Bridge, the countries involved in Nshimbi's study do not adhere to the strict post-colonial border. Despite the lack of rigidity at the ZMM borderlands, what the two studies have in common is that, regardless of the nature of border regulations, shared culture, language, and ethnicity are the glue that holds communities, spread across the border, together.

As indicated by Moyo (2016), the Venda speaking people of Beitbridge have engaged in unconventional means to adopt double citizenship and identities to avoid being restricted to one country while their lives are spread across the border. Similarly, the Xhosa speaking people at Tele Bridge have also adopted double citizenship and identities to beat the territoriality of sovereignty. Moyo (2016) indicates that the adoption of dual citizenship bred overlaps concerning where the citizens of South Africa and Zimbabwe belong to, similar to circumstances faced by the citizens of South Africa and Lesotho at the Tele bridge border. In a similar study about borders and identity, Flynn (1997) talks about the Yoruba-speaking people of the Sheba border between Benin and Nigeria. Like Beitbridge border and Tele Bridge, the Sheba borderlands are marked by the Okpara River. This border region used to

engage in a lot of trade in the past. Cross-border traders depended on local communities to assist in the transportation of goods across the Okpara River with facilities that ease movement even when the river is overflowing. Adversity hit the political and economic environment between the two countries with trade negatively affected. This did not stop border communities from pursuing their relations and brotherhood across the border as Flynn (1997:311) explains:

Border residents in the Yoruba-speaking Shabe region along the Benin-Nigeria international border have relied on transborder trade as a source of income since the border was first established by French and British colonial governments. Over the past 20 years, however, economic change in the region has significantly reduced transborder traffic and its accompanying income-earning opportunities for local borderlanders. Border residents have subsequently forged a strong sense of "border identity." This identity emerges primarily in contexts of transborder exchange and is based both on residential claims to the region and on borderlanders' perceived rights to participation in transborder trade.

Flynn (1997:312) further explains "one way in which border residents have responded to the decreased trade traffic, omnipresent customs guards, and plunging economic opportunities is by forging a collective "border identity" based on their territorial claims to the region and their perceived right to participate in, and profit from, transborder trade."

Contrary to the situation at Beitbridge border and Tele Bridge where border communities rely on ethnicity and shared culture as the basis for their identity, the Shabe border residents stake and lay claim to the border based on their territorial right to participate in trade. Border communities along the Limpopo River, Tele River, and Okpara River view borders as less of boundaries that separate them, but more as bridges that bring them together as one people. However, the Yoruba-speaking people of Shabe border take it a step further and redefine the border, and instead call themselves the border, 'we are the border' not the structure itself. Their authority comes from understanding their interstitial position that they have full control of movement across the border. Flynn (1997:313) argues that "borders can become corridors of opportunity when border residents can maintain some freedom of movement across and around them." The Shabe border is an example of such corridors, primarily because the Yoruba-speaking people of these borderlands have taken it upon themselves to ensure everyone's and their own movement at this border region. However, Beitbridge border residents and Tele Bridge border residents have decided to engage in unconventional ways of beating the territoriality of the border, which does not give them full control of movement across the

border, let alone the facilitation of open cross-border trade that becomes their mainstream source of income. The Sheba border residents have forged a collective border identity, as opposed to double identities forged by Beitbridge and Tele Bridge border residents.

On the Beitbridge border, another point that Moyo (2016) makes is of the major and regular nature in which Zimbabwean citizens frequent South Africa. He contends this is due to the economic crisis in Zimbabwe and South Africa's mission to do away with illegal immigrants. This notion aligns with the situation at the Tele Bridge where the majority of migrants crossing the border are from Lesotho to South Africa due to the same economic predicament that Lesotho is facing. Likewise, there are South African citizens who travel to Lesotho for personal reasons including family and community commitments.

In the same breath, Nshimbi (2019) shows how interaction amongst the citizens of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, who speak Chewa and Ngoni, has stood the test of time. In his view, relationships across these borders survived and remained strong, despite the existence of well-defined borders that could have potentially ended them. This, he argues, is a result of ethnic ties and cultural identities that were developed and nurtured over a long period of time, which ultimately undermine the border and its supremacy. This is witnessed through the interactions of these communities regardless of the existence of the border. Likewise, communities along the Tele Bridge border are of the same ethnic group, the harmony between these communities and how they interact with each other resembles the situation of the Chewa speaking people of Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. Nshimbi discusses how these communities "engage in cross-border activities out of necessity, convenience, for survival, and as practices which they, being inhabitants of the borderlands, have traditionally followed" (Nshimbi, 2019:48). For the people of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique, the border acts as a bridge. The states involved are not trying to separate border citizens from each other. They cross the border as an acknowledgment that they are entering a different territory. However, with the Venda speaking people of Beitbridge, two states are trying to stop people of the same culture from freely interacting with each other; that is why citizens found or implemented ways to negotiate the border. The possession of two identity documents helps them enjoy the benefits of being in each country without feeling out of place. This thesis not only takes the cited views into consideration but takes them further by identifying the gaps in the literature that previous studies have not discussed. Of great importance, is to further understand and explore how

border residents of the same ethnic, cultural, and linguistic background, understand their identities beyond national perimeters.

According to the above arguments, the border is likely to affect the formation of identity of the people living in the border communities. The border plays a vital role in the formation of identity for the people living along it, like the Tele Bridge residents. Colonial and post-colonial borders, Tele Bridge included, were arbitrarily placed without considering the social ties between the people being separated. Families and friends, ethnic groups, members of the same linguistic category and same racial grouping were divided. Examples of these exist at Tele Bridge borderlands. The border separates people of the same lineage with multiple cases where siblings, parents and their children are spread across the Tele River, resulting in members of the same family having different national identities. This brings the discussion to the issue of citizenship. The border determines people's citizenship but fails to explain their ethnic identity. As mentioned earlier, identity formation in this study is viewed through Social Identity Theory, that explains individual identity construction in relation to group membership. The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge identify with their ethnic background, cultural ties and linguistic setting. These three aspects already categorise these border inhabitants into groups. Now, the Tele Bridge, subtly or openly, influences how these people construct their identities. There is more to the idea of borders than simply defining geographic spaces, they also define groups of people who share cultures and identities. In this sense, borders have a notable relationship with identity formation since they produce separate states that may have their own identities, some of which are granted greater power than others (Eisenhardt 2019). For example, the border between the former South-West Africa, now Namibia and South Africa has been drawn without respect for the cultural settings of the people being divided. This case is unique because for a long time, South-West Africa was part of South Africa. After the border was drawn, the citizens of Namibia were given an opportunity to determine their national identities because they are entitled to both. In this regard, the border facilitated the fluidity of identity and territorial belonging. However, in the case of Tele Bridge, the two states involved have already decided on people's identities, but border communities themselves become agents of their own identity by adopting means that better explain their identities.

Culture also plays a prominent role in identity construction. Culture affects the scale and direction of the relationship between borders and identity. It changes the effect that the border has on identity formation. When the culture of the communities living along the border is the

same, as in the case of the Venda-speaking people at Beitbridge and Tele Bridge, identity formation tends to be uncomplicated. However, when the cultures are different, like the borderlands of the DRC and Rwanda, identity formation becomes challenging. Shared culture creates homogeneity between border communities, and the opposite of this emphasises the rigidity of the border and ripening the imposition of identities due to the border. Culture heterogeneity at borderlands often breeds tension and violence amongst ethnic groups spread across the border. According to Brunet-Jailly (2005), “the specific culture of borderland communities plays a vital role in shaping the framework through which borders can be understood.” He contends that “borderland communities either enhance the effect of dividing territory and communities when their culture, that is, their language, ethnicity, socio-economic status and place of belonging differs, or bridges an international boundary when they share the same culture” (Brunet-Jailly 2005:638). He further explains that nations are significant in solidifying or diluting states’ supremacy in border regions, by undermining the integrity of borders especially if the border runs through people of the same culture. He makes reference to Keating’s (1999) argument that there are nations without borders that are linked by shared culture. Flynn (1997) also demonstrated the importance of nations in the effect of the border. Although his contentions were on trade facilitations, he alluded that people in the borderlands of Sheba decide how the border operates in terms of mobilities and what is allowed and not allowed across the border. The reason behind their authority is shared culture. In the same vein, Nshimbi (2019) acknowledges the important role played by borderland communities who share culture. He talks of the Chewa-speaking people of ZMM, who had a cultural practice, Kulamba, that was extinguished by colonial masters. The practice was later resuscitated by Kalonga Gawa Undi X, who saw the practice beyond its cultural value, viewing it as a tool to stimulate integration. The practice of Kulamba “provided the necessary condition upon which Zambia and the surrounding region could achieve economic stability, peace and prosperity” (Nshimbi, 2019:48). In other words, communities along the border are just as important as other state institutions because they also test the narrative, they oversee the local culture, this makes them an imperative element in how the border functions. As he puts it “indeed, although international borders divide stateless nations, borderland communities may remain unified by culture or by the nature of local political institutions.” (Brunet-Jailly 2005:638).

Ultimately, shared culture in the Tele Bridge borderlands resembles the situation at the Beitbridge border, where border citizens use shared culture to adopt multiple identities because they argue their lives are spread across the border. The notion of culture also speaks to the idea

of a common language in borderlands. In most cases, people of the same culture speak the same language, especially because residents of Tele Bridge live in the same area. People use language to communicate, and to transfer knowledge and information. The commonly spoken language at Tele Bridge borderlands is IsiXhosa. Language forms a large part of identity formation. According to Nkhoma-Darch (2005), border inhabitants speak an identical language, and by implication, this accelerates a sense of belonging and identity between them. Baker (2001) agrees that language matters and is a core determinant of identity. People who speak the same language gravitate towards each other because they feel a sense of value, importance, and belonging when they speak the same language. For example, the Yoruba-speaking people of Benin and Nigeria refer to each other as brothers. Belonging to the same borderlands and drinking water from the same river, coupled with a common language, eased their identity formation process, hence they define or identify themselves through group membership, which goes back to how identity formation is viewed in this study. Linguistic groupings, like the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, allow people to see themselves as part of a collective with which they can identify.

Another significant component of identity formation is belonging. As it relates to the border and identity, belonging can be perceived in two categories: territorial and ethnic. Territorial belonging is determined by the border, while ethnic belonging relies on aspects of identity, that extend to ethnicity. Territorial belonging further speaks to issues of citizenship. Gupta and Ferguson (1992:25) define borderland as "an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject." National identities or citizenship are attributes imposed on people through arbitrary borders by colonial masters. However, in border regions like Tele Bridge, where people also share ethnic belonging, citizenship has nothing to do with belonging. Border inhabitants put more weight on ethnic belonging, and it contributes heavily to their identity formation. Group membership, in this case, ethnicity, is one of the determinants of identity construction for Tele Bridge inhabitants. The existence of a border determines territorial belonging; belonging, on the other hand, makes it easy for people to formulate their identities.

3.5 CONCLUSION

The primary focus of this study is to explore the significance of identity formation at the periphery of African states. First, it is important to establish how identity is constructed in the

Tele Bridge borderlands to understand why it is essential to do so. Several definitions of borders have been provided in the chapter. Borders are complex, multi-dimensional entities that may have contrasting impacts on identity that can be understood across space and time. Borders create new states where members of the same cultural identity are spread across two states. In this chapter, borders are viewed as physical entities, institutions, and processes. Their complexity and delicate alterations in meaning and form, depending on the setting, called for several analytical frames of examination. Identity, on the other hand, remains problematic in social science circles because of its heavily contested nature. Another factor hindering the establishment of a clear definition of identity is that it is continually changing. Notwithstanding, the chapter offered several definitions as a point of departure. Furthermore, the chapter addressed how identity is generally formulated. Identity is constructed on many levels and influenced by a variety of factors, and it involves a sense of association depending on the relationships people have with different groups. Social Identity Theory was employed in this chapter to explain identity formation of the people belonging to the same ethnic group. To build this conceptual framework, insights were borrowed from Moyo (year) and Nshimbi (year), whose studies have similar aspects to the Tele Bridge borderlands. Their work helped shape the lens through which the Tele Bridge case can be viewed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the research methodology adopted in this study. Research projects are guided by a methodology, which sets the direction for the entire process. The methodology indicates how the research is conducted in studying the phenomenon under investigation and what philosophical assumptions can be used to underpin the study (Quilan *et al.* 2015). The field of investigation determined the selection of suitable methodologies and aimed to provide answers to precise research inquiries. The methods adopted in this study are suitable for understanding the relationship between borders and identity formation at the Tele Bridge. This chapter describes the research methods used for data collection, data analysis, research design, limitations of the study and adherence to research ethics.

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Research paradigm refers to “the way of viewing the world and a framework or an analytic lens from which to understand the human experience” (Kuhn 1962:67). It refers to a fundamental set of beliefs and theoretical structure that incorporates assumptions about ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Rehman and Khalid 2016). The way people view the world is influenced by several factors such as their economic stance, political perspective and perhaps their upbringing or religious affiliations. A paradigm therefore indicates a structure or an apparatus of scientific presumptions (Olsen *et al.* 1992). Research paradigms naturally reflect and shape people’s assumptions, beliefs, and views of the world they live in and want to live in. There are several paradigms used in Social Science studies; positivism, interpretivism (also known as social constructionism) and critical theory to name a few. Interpretivism, adopted in this study, is discussed below.

4.3 INTERPRETIVIST PARADIGM

Interpretivism is defined as “an alternative research philosophy with its own ontological and epistemological assumptions” (Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991:18). It is a response to the over-dominance of positivism and refutes the idea that one’s provable reality exists independent of our senses (Grix 2004:82). Interpretivism is of the view that reality can be understood through multiple lenses. At its core is the belief that truth varies according to social interactions. We make sense of reality through interactions and interpretations we have with the social world, instead of the existence of an objective reality (Berger and Luckman 1966). Interpretivism is of the notion that reality can only be understood subjectively because it is a human construct (Kroeze 2012). Interpretivists acknowledge the possibility of an independent reality out there but argue that “humans can only know it through the filtering lenses of their sensory organs” (Kroeze 2012:2). According to this paradigm, truth and reality are not discovered but created. Thus, reality is always facilitated by people’s senses, making it almost impossible to know reality as it is.

Interpretivism affords the researcher the opportunity to view reality in its naturalistic setting, an important component of this study’s methodology. This study uses data collection and analysis methods that rely on the natural setting of the respondents. Interviews and observations are conducted at the subjects’ place of residence. The nature of in-depth interviews and non-participant observation guarantees the researcher enough time to interact with the participants in order to obtain as much information as possible. It is through these prolonged interactions that we can construct a meaningful reality. With interpretivist approach, emphasis is placed on understanding the individual and how they make an interpretation of the world around them (Rehman and Khalid 2016). One of the objectives of this study is to understand how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge make sense of their identity and how they view themselves and their counterparts across the border. Borders and identity, may have multiple interpretations, depending on the angle they are being viewed from, or depending on the impact they have on individuals. Therefore, the suitable approach for this study is interpretivism. The complexity of borders and the bordering process itself, potentially has an impact on how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge make sense of their reality. Their interaction with each other and the border, according to the interpretivist approach, has an impact on their understanding of the social world and events around them. As Bogdan and Biklen (1998) emphasise, reality is socially constructed.

Interpretivism “refuses to adopt any permanent, unvarying standards by which truth can be universally known” (Guba and Lincoln 2005:204). The core argument of interpretivism is that reality is multidimensional and complex. Unlike positivism, which focuses more on the scientific analogy of both social and natural worlds, and emphasises confirming or disconfirming theories, with interpretivism, the formulation of theory is not a precursor to research, but rather a consequence of it, as it is founded on the data that is generated through research (Kivunja and Kuyini 2017). This study attempts to understand the realities of the people living along the Tele Bridge. It does not try to prove or disapprove a theory, but rather to contribute to it based on the data gathered from the ground. Hence, when using an interpretivism paradigm, data are collected and analysed in a manner consistent with grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Interpretivism emphasizes subjectivity when dealing with data. This can be measured through the criteria proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) to test the credibility of the interpretive study, which are: validity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is “a plan that describes how, when, and where data is collected and analysed” (Ngulube 2015:8). A research design is used for planning when undertaking a research study (De Vos *et al.* 2004). It ensures that the evidence obtained enables the researcher to answer the initial questions as unambiguously as possible (De Vos *et al.* 2004). Research design is essential for the smooth functioning of all research procedures resulting in maximum information with the least amount of expenditure of time and money (Flick 2018). Research design, in other words, specifies how the data should be collected and analysed, and how these fit together to answer the research question.

Robson (2002) identifies three approaches of research design: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive. Each type of design serves a different purpose, which is why he bases his classification on the purpose of the research. For example, the purpose of an exploratory research design is to create a problem for further enquiry or to formulate a hypothesis. Exploratory research is appropriate for phenomena with limited prior data, so a new perspective can be generated (Saunders *et al.* 2007). However, exploratory research offers tentative results and are therefore inconclusive. On the other hand, explanatory research sets out to explore phenomena that have not been explained adequately. It focuses mainly on the causes and

reasons for a particular situation. While it might be suitable for providing evidence to sustain its findings, it may be problematic to reach applicable conclusions on account of causal research findings (Greene and Jane 1984). In the same vein, coincidences in events can be interpreted as cause-and-effect relations. Lastly, descriptive research explains or describes the phenomena or case in depth (Creswell 2017). A descriptive design uses a wide variety of approaches to explore variables. In descriptive design, the researcher pins down and attains information on a characteristic of a specific phenomenon under investigation. However, as there is no previous study on identity construction at the Tele bridge, thus there is limited to no data available on this subject matter. Therefore, exploratory research fits neatly into the Tele Bridge case.

4.4.1 EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

Exploratory research refers to an investigation of a problem that is in the preliminary or early stages (Babbie 2007). Burns and Groove (2001:374) defined it as “research conducted to gain new insights, discover new ideas and for increasing knowledge of the phenomenon.” These studies are conducted to better understand the current problem but are not intended to provide conclusive results (Saunders *et al.* 2007). Its purpose is to address new problems on which limited, or no prior research has been conducted (Brown 2006). Initially, the researcher begins with a general concept and uses the research as a means of identifying issues that are worthy of further investigation. Hence, exploratory studies are commonly conducted when the matter in question is at an initial stage. These studies are “associated with discovery, creativity and serendipity” (Stebbins 2001). There is no literature on how the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge construct their identity and why it is important for them to do so, which makes exploratory inquiry, that takes a survey approach, more befitting this study. An exploratory study can establish a list of potential causes to a problem, and further research could confirm the most likely cause (Marlow 2005). Exploratory research is often referred to as grounded theory or interpretive research due to its ability to answer questions of what, why, and how (Stebbins 2001). Unlike descriptive studies where findings are not helpful in unearthing the cause behind the described phenomenon, exploratory studies can help identify possible causes of the problem, which can further be investigated to determine the cause of the problem (Ethridge 2004). As previously stated, the main objective of this study is to examine the relationship between borders and identity construction in the context of the Xhosa speaking

people of the Tele Bridge border between South Africa and Lesotho. The purpose is to contribute to the literature as well as provide useful information for policy formulation that practically seeks to address issues that are related to border and identity in a broader context. To achieve this, it drew qualitative results using a cross-sectional approach to the data collection methods. The nature of this study further justified the quest for an exploratory approach, that responds to the why, what, and how aspects of the research question. This approach was chosen because of its flexibility and provides increased room for spontaneity in the interaction between the researcher and the participants. Additionally, an explorative research design allows the researcher to explore a topic at different depths. Whereas descriptive studies focus on describing individuals, groups, or circumstances and the manner in which they occur, exploratory research focuses on increasing the researcher's understanding of a subject. While exploratory research lacks statistical strength, rendering it unsuitable for generalisations, it is useful in determining why and how things occur. The main research question of this study is broken down into four questions that focus on answering the 'what, why, and how', which makes an exploratory inquiry more pertinent. Questions of what, why and how give contextual detail into human behaviour (Guba and Lincoln 1989:300). The flexible nature of the exploratory approach allows the respondents to tell their stories in their own words (Crabtree and Miller 1999), allowing the respondents to be able to explain their views of reality of the phenomenon under study. This enables "the researcher to understand the respondents better" (Lather 1992:87-92). 'Which then provides rich data for theoretical and practical use' (Boeije 2010:11; Babbie and Mouton 2001). Accordingly, the study adopted an exploratory design with the purpose to attain indisputable information for a better comprehension of the phenomenon under study.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A research methodology is a roadmap that elucidates the procedures utilized throughout the investigation. It draws emphasis on systematic ways of providing answers to the research questions and solving the research problem (Creswell and Miller 2003; Berg 2001). The research design is influenced by the nature and scope of the research questions that a study aims to address. According to Creswell (2003), there are three types of research methodologies commonly used in the human behavioural sciences, namely quantitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches. This study adopted a qualitative approach. Qualitative

methodology, also referred to as a “naturalistic approach, is used when observing and interpreting reality with the aim of developing a theory that will explain what was experienced” (Newman *et al.* 1998:27). According to Creswell (2005:76), the goal of qualitative research is to explore and understand a central phenomenon, which is a concept or a process. Quantitative or mixed method approaches could have been useful to answer the ‘why’ questions using objective methods - that allow for testing and measuring of findings or exploring possible correlations amongst them - but people’s perceptions and behaviour towards the border and their own interpretations of identity needed an in-depth inquiry which led to the qualitative methodology.

4.5.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research could be described as “an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world” (Denzin and Lincoln 2000:4). Interpretive research helps investigate the mode in which people make sense of the events in their lives. This study sought to explore the relationship between the border and identity construction and therefore adopted a qualitative research approach. Creswell (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994:189) define qualitative research “as an inquiry process of understanding where a researcher develops a complex and holistic picture, analyses words, and reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting.” This study’s objective was to acquire a deep understanding on how and why identity is constructed by the two communities who live along the Tele Bridge border by gaining insight into the situation. Through its techniques that allow for deeper inquiry on the subject, qualitative research methodology affords the study more insight than other approaches. Through this methodology, the researcher was able to study the subjects in their natural setting, making it virtually impossible to manipulate variables.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) note that a qualitative approach is good in achieving a deeper understanding of the social processes and how they impact on the individuals under study. The Tele Bridge border, the subject of this study, potentially has an impact on the people living along it. This is important for the study to discover through using an approach that is best suited to extract the relevant information; and in this case, the qualitative approach fits well. Additionally, “qualitative inquiry seeks to discover and describe in narrative reporting what particular people do in their everyday lives and what their actions mean to them. It identifies meaning-relevant kinds of things in the world, kinds of people, kinds of actions, kinds of beliefs

and interests, focusing on differences in forms of things that make a difference for meaning” (Erickson 2022:43).

According to Creswell (2005:76) the goal of qualitative research is “to explore and understand a central phenomenon, which is a concept or process.” The meaning of a border, as a concept, defined in chapter three, is placed within the context of identity formation (as a process) and their implications on the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. “Studies conducted under this approach require methods that probe deeply and analyse intensively.” (Cohen and Manion 1994:106). Qualitative inquiry is multimethod. Thus, different methods of data collection and analysis are used to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the Tele Bridge on the communities living along it. In many qualitative studies, several of these data collection methods can be used to get the best description of an event and the meaning it has to the individual or individuals being studied (Christensen 2015:69). This study uses numerous methods of data collection.

A case study is defined as “an in-depth study of a particular situation rather than a sweeping statistical survey” (Shuttleworth 2011:102). When a topic is too broad and difficult to study, it is narrowed down to a case study so that it is manageable and practical. Case studies are “specific explorations and the inquiries of individuals which can be on groups, cultures, communities or even programmes” (Lunenburg and Irby 2008:96). Due to their very nature, case studies offer the opportunity to get in-depth information through probing and seeking clarity on pressing issues. Baxter and Jack (2008:544) provide a nuanced definition of a case study as:

....an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood, using a range of different methods.

A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin 1984:23). A case study can adopt an exploratory research design or descriptive research design in the same study (Creswell 1994; Yin 1984:15). This study adopted an exploratory design consistent with the data collection methods and the kind of information required.

Christensen (2015:68) asserts that “the most important task of the qualitative researcher is to understand the insiders’ views, then the researcher also takes the role of objective outsider.” This helps the researcher to relate the data to the objectives and purpose of the study. The reason for the adoption of a qualitative methodology in this study was to ensure that a wide range of border issues and identity are covered within the available means. Whether it is the border itself, its existence, the policies and laws that govern it, or other factors not known to the researcher.

Qualitative inquiry affords the opportunity to obtain an in-depth understanding and analysis of how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele bridge make sense of their reality, how they view the border, and what impact it has on their identity construction. Welman (2005:6) outlines how “anti-positivists believe that it is inappropriate to follow strict natural-scientific methods when collecting and interpreting data. Their argument is that quantitative method is applicable in the study of science not in the phenomena of human behavioural sciences.” Its failure to interpret perceptions and beliefs rendered it inappropriate for the current study where people’s view of the world is important. With all these factors at play, the qualitative research method, due to its ability to make an in-depth inquiry, was the most suitable method to be used in this study.

4.5.2 QUALITATIVE METHODS

This study used qualitative data collection methods, namely, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, and non-participant observation. As mentioned above, it was a case study. I employed these methods to fill the gaps identified from the review of the literature. I used focus group discussions to extract information that might have been left out during individual interviews. They were conducted with community leaders and people who were more knowledgeable on the debates around the Tele Bridge. These included headsmen, ward councillors, chiefs, and representatives selected from the initial sample for in-depth interviews. Focus group discussions are “useful for needs assessment and project evaluation purposes because participants build on each other’s ideas through piggybacking during the discussions” (Leung 2009). The researcher becomes the facilitator, sets the tone and the appropriate direction for the discussion, while encouraging every member to participate.

Non-participant observation was triangulated with these methods to supplement and provide a more detailed and vigorous understanding of how things are on the ground, which could not be

achieved through interviews and questionnaires. Non-participant observation was the last method used to collect data in this study. It was significant for the acquisition of information that could not be attained through face-to-face interaction with the participants. Non-participant observation is “used with other methods to provide nuanced and dynamic appreciation of situations that cannot be easily captured through other methods” (Liu and Maitis 2010:611). It has been criticized for being biased because subjects are more likely to change their behaviour when they know they are being watched (Thompson 2016). However, when the researcher sees what goes on with their own eyes, they cannot be easily misled because judgments can be made through observation of body language (Mills *et al.*, 2010).

4.5.3 STUDY POPULATION

Polit and Hungler (1999:37) describe the study population as “a collective or totality of all subjects, objects or members that conform to a set of specifications.” In this study, the population was the Xhosa-speaking people who reside along both sides of the Tele Bridge border between Lesotho and South Africa, whose lives straddled across the border. Populations create boundaries for “the scope of a study and provide environmental and context cues for the reader” (Casteel and Brindier 2021:343). Figure 1 is a map showing the communities where the research study was conducted.

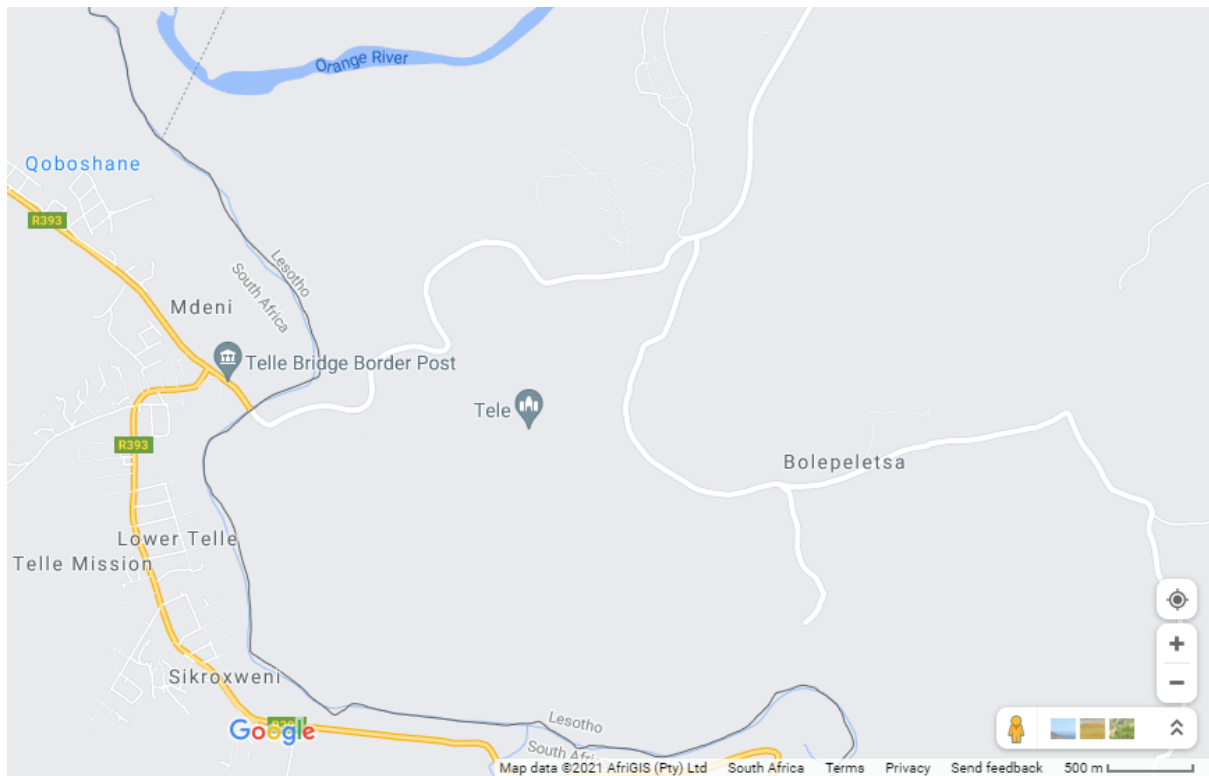


Figure 1 Research jurisdiction <<https://www.google.com/maps/@30.4292069,27.5686822,14z>
[Accessed 15/06/2021]>

4.5.4 SAMPLING

Sampling refers to the selection of a representative subset of a population for the purpose of identifying parameters or traits of the entire population, and can involve various methods, processes, or techniques (Gentles *et al.* 2015). In the study of Social Sciences, there are two types of sampling, probability and non-probability sampling. These can be used independently or concurrently depending on the needs of the study. Probability sampling refers to the technique in which the selection of a sample from a larger population is based on the principle of probability, or loosely speaking, based on chance (Trochim 2002). The second technique is non-probability sampling, and is defined as “a sampling technique in which the researcher selects samples based on the subjective judgement of the researcher rather than random selection” (Acharya *et al.*, 2013:332). This study adopted a non-probability sampling approach to gather data relevant to the research questions. Morgan and Sklar (2012:72-80) posit that “non-probability sampling is used frequently in qualitative research where the aim of the investigation is to create an in-depth description of the phenomenon and not to generalize the findings” (Nieuwenhuis 2016:111-112).

4.5.4.1 Types of sampling

Purposive and convenience sampling as non-probability sampling techniques were used to recruit respondents in this study. Palys (2008:697) states, “purposive sampling is a selective choice of whom to interview.” This involves a preselected criterion relevant to the interest of the study. That is, it depends on the researcher’s own judgement to choose participants, keeping in mind the research objective. Participants are chosen for and with a specific purpose. Convenience sampling also involves non-randomization. The researcher chooses the closest live individuals as subjects, and these are people who are readily available (Acharya, 2013:332). As opposed to random sampling, purposive sampling allows for the selection and identification of information-rich individuals. This method allows the researcher to focus on subjects that are more proficient with the subject in question; who are also able to assist with relevant information based on specific characteristics that they possess.

4.5.4.2 Purposive sampling

Participants were purposefully selected to meet the needs of the study, that is, they were selected based on their knowledge in order to extract essential information. Christensen (2015:509) describes “purposive sampling as a technique where a researcher specifies the characteristics of the population of interest and then locates individuals who have those characteristics.” The reason for their selection was not because they represent the entire border community in both countries, whose identities are affected by the border, but because they were the closest ones to the Tele Bridge border, the subject of this study.

The sample size for this study was 40 respondents. As the study was qualitative, the size of the sample was sufficient to draw information necessary for analysis that meets the requirements of a study of its kind. The study was conducted in two communities along the border, whose lives are affected by the border in one way or another. The criteria for selection included age, citizenship, language, individuals whose relations and livelihood activities spread across the border, and key individuals who were familiar with the politics around the Tele Bridge border (community leaders and ward councillors).

Participants included people of all genders above 18 years of age. The age was important as people below 18 are minors who require assent from their parents or guardians to secure interviews. Time was of essence, and this was more likely to be time consuming as was the case with securing consent from community leaders. In addition, minors are most likely not

familiar with border aspects such as politics, its history and how communities have evolved over time, their culture, and social dynamics. Including all genders was a means to have an inclusive representation of the community as it was not comprised of one gender. Participants were also selected based on their citizenship and home language.

The study focused on the Xhosa-speaking citizens of South Africa and Lesotho and comprised 20 individuals from Lesotho and 20 from South Africa, aggregating to 24 women and 16 men from the two countries combined, who were citizens in their respective countries. This was to ensure that all subjects fall under the same cultural grouping. Participants' level of education and employment status were not a factor when selecting the sample as this study was not specific to a particular level of education or employment status, but on their place of residence, along the border.

The subjects were also selected based on their knowledge to extract essential information. These were individuals whose relations and livelihood activities spread across the border. Interviews with the key individuals in the community, including the chiefs and councillors, were conducted to obtain the leaders' perspectives of the community and an official perspective on the issues that concern the research. By selecting participants who have extensive knowledge, expertise, or experiences related to the research topic, purposive sampling maximizes the potential for obtaining rich and insightful data (Palinkas *et al.* 2015).

Participants in the focus group discussions were selected through convenience and purposive sampling. They comprised 10 respondents from each country who had taken part in the individual interviews. The most suitable sampling technique for these participants was convenience sampling because participants were readily available. The researcher met the respondents on the time and place chosen by them for the interviews. The researcher selected participants who were considered experts or key stakeholders in the particular field or context, ensuring access to valuable information and insights that may not be readily available from a random sample (Creswell and Poth 2017).

In terms of observation, the researcher was embedded in the community for three months and since there was no direct interaction between the researcher and the subjects, no sampling technique was required at this stage. Observation was used alongside the two methods mentioned above. The researcher conducted community tours to familiarise herself with the community and to understand the physical geography.

4.5.4.3 Sample size

Oribhabor and Anyanwu (2019) describe a sample as a subject population selected as representative of the larger population. This number has an impact on the accuracy of the research findings and the ability to draw conclusions thereof. Sample size is an integral part of the study as it determines the precision of the results. Larger sample sizes are often associated with minimal possibility of error, the reason being that they provide an accurate picture and representation of the issue under investigation. This works best in qualitative studies to confirm or disconfirm a theory based on numbers. Smaller samples on the other hand are associated with misrepresentation. However, using large samples in single qualitative studies is not advisable because the findings may not always be accurate or applicable to a larger population. The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it is mostly appropriate for small samples, while its outcomes are not measurable and quantifiable (Collis and Hussey 2003). In this study, the scope of scientific claim was limited to in-depth interviews of 40 respondents, two focus group discussions and non-participant observation of the Xhosa speaking people in Tele Bridge. Tables 1 and 2 outline the description of the sample size according to their area of residence.

Village	Number of participants	Municipality
Qhoboshane	9	Senqu
Palmietfontein	3	Senqu
Mdeni	2	Senqu
Lower Telle	2	Senqu
Sikroxweni	2	Senqu
Sitoromo	2	Senqu

Table 1. Description of sample size (South Africa)

Village	Number of participants	Constituency
Tele	10	Tele
Bolepeletsa	3	Tele
Dilidili	2	Tele
Mjanyani	3	Tele
Ts'epong	2	Tele

Table 2. Description of sample size (Lesotho)

4.6 INSTRUMENTS

Research instruments are tools used to collect and analyse data from the study population. They vary across methods adopted for data collection. Instruments used in this study, their significance, and contribution to the study are discussed below.

4.6.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

Abawi (2017:2) defines a questionnaire as “a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.” When conducted accurately, it becomes a useful tool through which reports can be made about people under investigation (Roopa and Rani 2012). This study used questionnaires to obtain information about the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. The aim was to investigate how the border influences identity construction for the above-mentioned communities. There are different types of questions asked in a questionnaire. Matrix questions have identical response groupings to several questions. Closed-ended questions have responses that are a yes or no. Respondents are not expected to give their opinions, instead, they can either agree or disagree with what is being asked. Finally, open-ended questions allow respondents to reply in their own words. These are questions that require respondents’ opinions, and are usually short. This study used open-ended questions. According to Rahman (2020:1) responses received from this type of questionnaires are “frank and anonymous, and unlike interviews, questionnaires are good for sensitive and ego-related questions.” Open-ended questionnaires were used in addition to in-depth interviews to enrich triangulation. The use of multiple data collection

methods, such as open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews, allowed for data triangulation. By comparing and contrasting the findings from different methods, the researcher enhanced the validity and reliability of the study. To ensure this, the researcher used content validity. I assessed the content validity of the questionnaire by reviewing it against the research objectives, conceptual framework, and relevant literature. This ensured that the questions align with the research aims, cover the intended dimensions or constructs, and capture the necessary information. Triangulation helps corroborate the emerging themes, identify patterns, and provides a more robust understanding of the research topic. Additionally, the integration of open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews strengthened the methodological rigour of the study. It allowed the researcher to cross-validate the findings obtained from different sources and methods, providing a more robust and comprehensive analysis of the research topic. This enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of the study's findings.

Questionnaires were administered after the individual interviews. While the interview schedule was used as a measure of control in the individual interviews, a series of open-ended questions were used for questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions of varying nature. There were instances where one question had a few branching questions for further clarification. They were designed in a manner that did not limit the responses. That is, they did not adhere to yes or no answers, but were brief and straightforward. The researcher administered a series of questionnaires that took one to two hours to complete. The researcher asked questions and provided clarity where necessary. Questionnaires were conducted at the respondents' area of preference. Responses were written down by the researcher alongside the use of a recorder.

4.6.2 INTERVIEWS

Interviews are defined as “a conversation for gathering information that involves an interviewer who coordinates the process of the conversation and asks questions, and an interviewee who responds to those questions” (Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush 2006:1). Unlike mailed questions, interviews have a high response rate because people who cannot read and write are able to answer interview questions (Sociology Group 2017). In Social Science research, there are three types of interviews commonly used to collect data. These are structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. With structured interviews, there are predetermined questions that the interviewer asks, and they are in a specific order (Easwaramoorthy and Zarinpoush 2006). Semi-structured interviews are slightly different from structured in the sense

that interviewees respond to predetermined questions in their own words, instead of adhering to closed-ended questions (Fox 2006). Lastly, in unstructured interviews, the interviewer engages with the respondents on a wide range of topics and questions without following any structure. According to Kumar (2011:145) “unstructured interviews allow the researcher to formulate questions and raise issues on the spur of the moment, depending upon what occurs in the context of the discussion. Unstructured interviews allow for an in-depth treatment of issues by respondents and have the advantage that even those issues that were not covered by the questions may be addressed.” Unstructured interviews are also referred to as in-depth interviews, and are discussed below. This study used in-depth interviews. Interviews have been criticized for their biasness in that, respondents’ answers may be affected by the interviewer’s presence. However, the interviewer’s presence can help detect non-verbal reactions of the interviewee.

4.6.2.1 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews are “a qualitative data collection method that allows for the collection of a large amount of information about the behaviour, attitude and perception of an interviewee” (Adams and Cox 2008). In-depth interviews are useful for exploring concepts for further enquiry and descriptive analysis (Showkat and Parveen 2017). The nature of this study called for the use of in-depth interviews. Perceptions of the Xhosa-speaking people about the border, their relationship with it, and the role it plays in their formulation of identity are elements that require deep inquiry. A survey would not have been appropriate to unearth, for example, the difference or the similarity of cultures across the border in detail. In-depth interviews provided the platform for further clarity and understanding of the Xhosa-speaking people and how they view themselves and their realities from both sides of the border. This type of information cannot be acquired through structured or semi-structured interviews. One of the characteristics of in-depth interviews is that they inherently provide depth to the issue under investigation. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:139) stated that “many probing techniques are used in in-depth interviews, so that results are understood through exploration and explanation. The interviewer asks follow-up questions to gain deeper perspective and understand the participant’s viewpoint.” In-depth interviews give room for questions to evolve or possibly change to explore phenomena in detail (Christensen 2015). Based on its flexibility, issues that are not included in the interview schedule have a chance to be brought up during the interviews.

During the in-depth interviews and group discussion, the researcher used probing by frequently asking questions like ‘how’ and ‘why’ to seek more clarity by allowing the respondents to elaborate on their answers. When respondents could not understand the question, the researcher would rephrase it in other words until the respondents could understand. Each interview took one to two hours over a period of three months. Open discussions were held on a range of issues on the border, its use and access, its value, and how they relate to it. An interview guide was used to maintain a measure of control. Data were collected from the in-depth interviews with the help of a voice recorder (Strydom and Bezuidenhout 2014). All responses were recorded for purposes of precise quoting and notes were simultaneously taken down.

In-depth-interviews were conducted by asking open-ended questions. Respondents had a choice to respond to the interview questions in either English, Sesotho, or Xhosa. Lofland and Lofland (1996:183-203) state, “when respondents are given the opportunity to respond in the language of their choice, they evoke responses that are salient.” A translator was not needed for this study because the researcher speaks and writes English, Sesotho, and Xhosa. Forty community members were interviewed with the help of an interview schedule. The researcher used open-ended questions as this is linked with a high response rate because the researcher probes and clarifies where needs be. When using open-ended questions, “participants are able to express and articulate opinions that may be extreme, unusual or simply ones the researcher did not think about when creating the survey” (Albudaiwi 2018:2).

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Research data analysis is a process used by researchers for reducing data to a story and interpreting it to derive insights (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). This process helps in reducing a vast amount of data into smaller chunks. This study adopted a content analysis approach where the data collected is transcribed, and then organized “into meaningful patterns to provide meaning to the information drawn from the respondents” (Hsieh and Shannon 2005:1277-88; Marshall and Rossman 1999:150). The data is then compressed into fewer categories based on explicit rules of coding (Nieuwenhuis 2016:111). Themes that pattern across datasets and fit the description of the phenomenon were used in the analysis. Additionally, themes “that are associated with specific research questions were also used. This gives an opportunity to understand the potential issues descriptively” (Boyatzis 1984:4). Namey *et al.* (2008:137-161) state that using themes goes beyond counting explicit words and focuses on describing implicit

and explicit ideas. The data was divided into significant analytical units. The researcher familiarized herself with the content by repeatedly reviewing it. Once the researcher determined the key themes, she then proceeded to interpret the data in order to make sense of the findings. The results of the findings were then reported.

4.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

As discussed in Section 4.3, qualitative research is often criticized for its lack of credibility. Positivism is of the view that qualitative findings cannot be measured and analysed systematically, which renders them inadequate for generalization and credibility. However, interpretivist scholars proposed a criterion suitable for measuring the authenticity and the quality of a good study. There are several of these, but this study discusses validity and reliability below.

4.8.1 VALIDITY

Gregory (1992:117) defines validity as “the extent to which a test measures what it claims to measure.” A research study is valid if it measures that which it presumes to measure impeccably without mistakenly involving other issues (Lakshmi and Mohideen 2013). The integrity and application of the research methods, and the accuracy with which the results represents the data ensures validity of a study (Noble and Smith 2015). Validity is divided into two important parts, internal and external. According to Lakshmi and Mohideen (2013:2752), “internal validity covers whether the results of the study are legitimate through the use of appropriate methodology. External validity involves whether results given by the study are transferable to other groups of interest.” To ensure the validity of this study, the researcher employed and followed the appropriate steps from the selection of a sample to the actual process of data collection, recording, and analysis.

4.8.2 RELIABILITY

Reliability is defined as “the degree to which measures are free from error and therefore yield consistent results” (Lakshmi and Mohideen 2013:2753). Reliability is firm on consistency and

is the capacity of the study to reproduce similar scores when the same procedures are employed (Noble and Smith 2015). Due to the numerical, statistical, and mathematical nature of quantitative studies, it is easy to test reliability. Reliability involves the use of devices, procedures, and instruments to get values that determine consistency. However, qualitative studies deal with human behaviour, perceptions, ideas, feelings, and realities to name a few. It is difficult to measure people's behaviour for instance, because by its very nature, it is adjustable and contextual. Two or more similar studies have the potential to yield different results, regardless of employing the same procedures. Nonetheless, the sample size chosen for this study allowed the researcher to make a dependable inference that if the same procedure was to be applied on another border of the same context, the results would still be the same.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The protection of human subjects through the application of appropriate ethical principles is important in any research study Orb *et al.* (2000). In a qualitative study, ethical considerations have a particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process (Orb *et al.* 2001). This study was conducted in line with the University of Pretoria professional research code of ethics. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee before conducting the interviews and questionnaires. Letters of informed consent approved by the ethics committee were presented to the respondents during the fieldwork in which the respondents' role was explained.

This study dealt with human subjects – people in local communities – and I was cognisant of ethical issues that the study had to conform to. In this section, I highlighted these issues and how I handled them. I was cognisant of issues around informed consent. I provided an information sheet to the respondents, explained the purpose of the study, and sought permission from the chief to conduct research. At the community level, the chief introduced me to the community. Once granted permission, I sought permission from households to participate in the research. The study and its purpose were explained, and the people were informed of their rights, that they were not obliged to participate in the research, and that they had the freedom to withdraw during the process. I developed consent forms for participants to complete although participants could willingly participate in the study without signing these forms if they do not want to.

In any study that involves extracting information about people and from people, there are issues around privacy and some people may not wish their private information to be made public. Others may wish to participate and want to remain anonymous. In terms of anonymity, I maintained respondents' privacy through the use of pseudonyms instead of their identities and those of their households. In this way, even the researcher is not be able to link responses to the people. There was also an issue of honesty. Going forward with the research, I did not deceive, trick, or coerce people into participating in the study through false promises, and nowhere in the process did I make them believe that they were going to be remunerated for their participation.

The other factor in conducting research among people is maleficence. I did not, in any way harm anyone in the process. Respondents were not manipulated and cajoled during the interviews. All human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and respect; therefore, it was my obligation to respect their dignity and treat respondents as ends rather than means to ends. I was also cognisant of the risk of harm to self and to the respondents. To avoid this, I sought an escort recommended by the chief during my interactions with the community. Information collected from the field is going to be kept safe and out of public domain. I am aware of how much data can be manipulated to destroy people's lives, especially in this age of advanced technology, hence I have ensured that confidentiality is maintained. The information that I gathered gather from the people is protected and kept at the University for a period of 15 years before it is made available to the public for further research or reference. This study does not involve life histories of participants. Regarding myself, I enlisted the assistance of a local person who accompanied me during household visits and community tours.

4.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research limitations are prejudices commonly found in research studies. These are factors that the researcher has no control over, and they may have adverse impacts on the quality of the study. In this study, the first setback was time. There was insufficient time to conduct the study. The data collection period was reduced to three months because of pressing deadlines, and data collection commenced later than anticipated because of the length of time it took to secure permission letters from all the relevant authorities. If the time was sufficient, it would have allowed for extended non-participant observation, but because this was not done, the researcher

relied on secondary sources of information to compensate for shorter observations and this was used to help triangulate the data.

The timing of the study was another challenge. It was not easy to have face-to-face interactions with people and have them gather in groups because of the Covid-19 pandemic regulations to curb the spread of the disease. The researcher and the respondents had to adhere to safety regulations, which hindered smooth interaction. The researcher had to obtain a Covid-19 clearance test before conducting the study. This was done to put the respondents at ease because the researcher was from the Covid-19 hotspot province, Gauteng.

Financial constraints played a big role in the process of conducting this study. Accommodation and transport were expensive. The lack of funds had a significant influence on the amount of time spent in the field, compared to the time the researcher could have taken if there were adequate funds. To address this problem, the researcher had to maximize on the number of interviews conducted within the limited time. Instead of interviewing two people per day, she increased the number of interviewees to four.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the methodology adopted in this study. It started by explaining and outlining the research paradigm applied in the research. This was to provide the lens through which data is treated throughout the study. Interpretivism was discussed and the rationale for its selection. Research design was then discussed as an important tool or glue that holds the whole study intact. In conducting any research study, there must be a plan on how data are to be collected, analysed, and used. It is through the research design that such can be achieved. Exploratory design was chosen over explanatory and descriptive based on its suitability for this study. The chapter further discussed data collection methods. The qualitative nature of this study called for qualitative methods and analysis, and they are discussed. Each method was selected to provide insight on specific objectives. The adoption of qualitative methodology was for its ability to provide in-depth understanding and analysis of concepts and processes that were necessary for this study. Participants' profiles were described for purposes of clarity on the kind of subjects selected for the study. This was followed by describing and justifying the sample size and sampling techniques used. These differed across methods of data collection

and are explained. This chapter explained the importance of using research instruments (questionnaires and interviews) and discussed them in detail.

The chapter demonstrated how content analysis was used and why it was the most suitable approach for this study. Validity and reliability of the study are discussed. It is important to conduct a credible study whose results can be verified and accredited across disciplines. The chapter gives an overview of the research ethics considered in this study. This was significant because any study that involves human subjects, danger, or harm to subjects and self are a possibility. It was important therefore, to address these issues. Lastly, the chapter discussed the limitations of the study. These are factors that have adverse implications on the study, and they are highlighted in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

LOCATION OF THE STUDY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the study area. It provides a contextual overview of the Tele Bridge region's socio-economic and geographic landscape. This will be achieved through the use of secondary data on the area of focus. Tele Bridge, the study area, is situated between South Africa and Lesotho. The chapter describes, among other things, the topography of the Tele area, the geographical layout, the social and cultural profiles of the community, as well as their demographic profile, touching on aspects of ethnicity, race, and language. The aim is to paint a picture of the people under investigation and their environment to understand the border's influence on identity. As discussed in Chapter Four, people's environment plays a big role in how they interpret the world and their reality. This study adopted a worldview that sees people's behaviour or reality as a product of their interactions. It is, therefore, important to understand where they come from, and who and what they interact with on a regular basis, so as to understand how the border influences identity.

5.2 HISTORY OF THE BORDER

Tele Bridge was built in 1920 by the British colonisers who settled in the Cape Colony, and later redefined as a border in the 1960s. It was enacted in the late 1960s by British colonisers who settled in the Cape Colony. Borders, as they exist today in many parts of the formerly colonised world, are a colonial construction and a legacy of colonialism. Colonial powers played a significant role in drawing and imposing borders during the era of European colonialism, primarily from the 15th to the 20th centuries and especially following the Berlin Conference.

5.3 LOCALITY OF THE BORDER

Tele Bridge is a border post situated between South Africa and Lesotho. It is close to Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa and Quthing, Lesotho (Figure 5.1). The border is located 29 km south of Sterkspruit and 17 km north-east of Quthing, and 194.5 km south of the capital city of Lesotho, Maseru. The border is marked by the Tele River, which merges with the Senqu River, also known as the Orange River, one of the most significant rivers in Lesotho and southern Africa, that runs through South Africa and Namibia into the Atlantic Ocean. The Orange River also forms part of South Africa's and Namibia's international borders. The river is affectionately referred to as Senqu in Lesotho and is internationally known as the Orange River. The same river separates the districts of Quthing and Molekane's Hoek in Lesotho. Geographically, Tele Bridge is located at 30.1641 degrees longitude, 27.3996 degrees latitude, and 1746 m above sea level (South African Ports of Entry 2022).

Lesotho shares borders with South Africa in all ten districts of the country. Being entirely landlocked, Lesotho's only neighbouring country is South Africa. The Tele Bridge border is in the southern region of Lesotho in a small district occupied by three ethnic groups, Basotho, Baphuthi and the Xhosas. However, the other two ethnic groups, the Basotho and Baphuthi, are found further away from the border. The border region is occupied by the Xhosa speaking people, hence the focus on this ethnic group.

Safari (2008) classified Tele Bridge as a non-commercial border, suggesting the prohibition of trade across the Tele Bridge border without a valid Border Concession issued and endorsed by the South African Revenue Service (SARS) Customs. These Border Concessions are valid for a year and granted to businesses and people for entrepreneurial purposes across the Tele Bridge. The Port Coordinator for the Eastern Cape Province and Lesotho borders coordinates and communicates with all parties involved about operations at the border posts and the immediate borderline (Safari 2008).

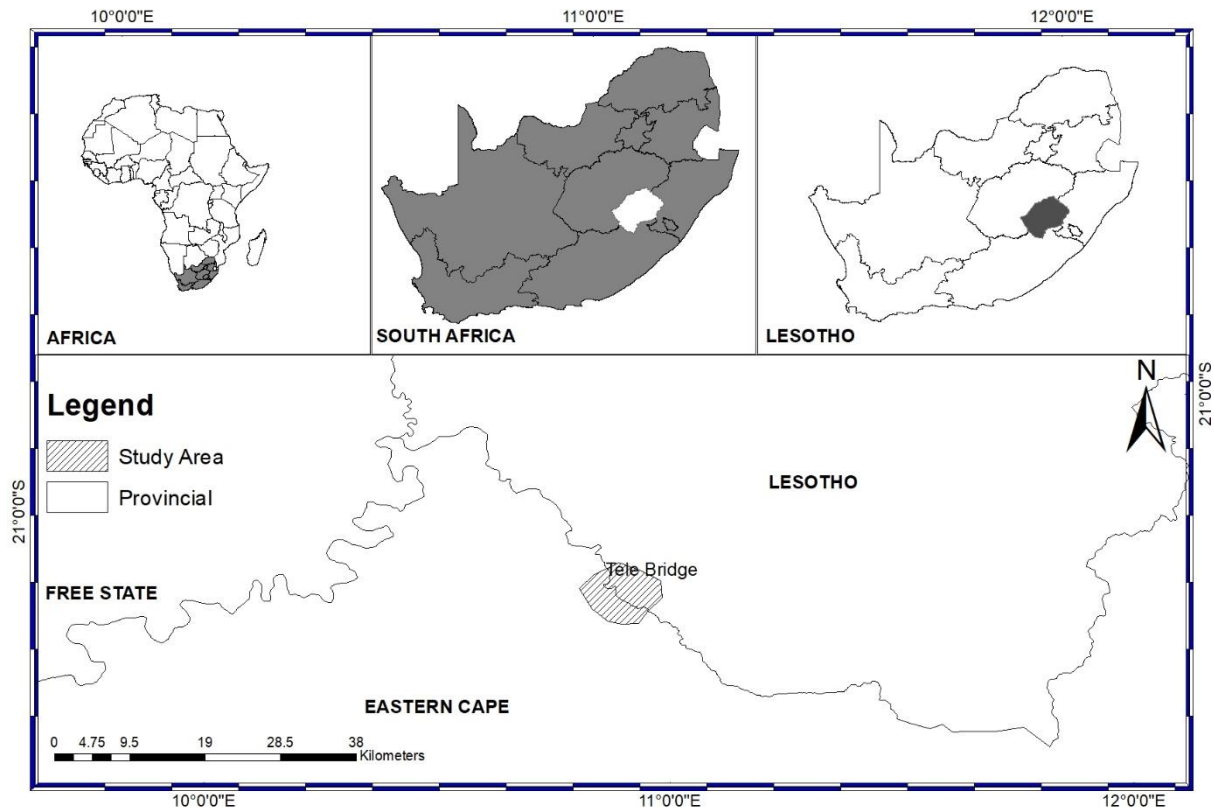


Figure 5.1 Location of the study area

Source: The author

5.4 TOPOGRAPHY

Tele Bridge built in 1920 by the British colonisers is a one-way steel motor bridge that runs over the Tele River. The length of the border is approximately 318.22 m. Tele Bridge border is situated where the South African R392 road meets an unnamed road in Lesotho “and has theoretically served the purpose of defining where the territorial extents of the two countries start and end and, by the same token, where citizens of both countries belong” (Moyo, 2016:427). The single-paved carriageway is host to the rural Xhosa ethnic group.

South of the Tele Bridge is characterised by open land used for agricultural purposes. Across the border, opposite the agricultural land on the South African side is a rocky field that precedes a rural residential area. On the west side of the border, there is an open field used for residential areas and a large area occupied by trees and grasses. To the north side of the bridge lie hectares of agricultural land on both sides of the Tele River up to the Orange River, followed by a mountainous area on the Lesotho side and an open field on the South African side. The area further north of the Tele Bridge is dominated by gullies and hills. From Lesotho's side, Tele Bridge appears to be in a valley and lies in the foothill region. Additionally, both sides of the

border have a recognisable number of boulders and rocks. Far behind the villages, on the east side of the border, are mountains. Figure 5.2 below shows the topography of the Tele Bridge area discussed above.

Topography often determines the kinds of animals that can live in a certain place. For example, most mammals in the tropics have evolved over time to be able to live in hot places with little water. This is because resources are harder to get at higher elevations, where there are fewer humans to maintain the natural resources (Dongya and Xudong 2020).



Figure 5.2 Topography of the Tele Bridge area

Source: Google maps (2022/02/10)

5.5 GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY

Location is more than just one's home; it is a complicated interaction of variables like temperature, geography, resources, and accessibility to markets. Our environment today has been significantly shaped by the geologic events that have occurred throughout Earth's history (Dongya and Xudong 2020). This region has three different types of rocks. According to the JGDM Environmental Plan (2011:17), "these are Karoo Supergroup, Basaltic lavas of the

Drakensberg Group and Beaufort, Molteno, Elliot and Clarens Groups of Sandstone and Shale.” The deposits in this region result from the geographical layout, mountains, and part of the Drakensberg, which explains the poor quality of soils found in the area. In addition to determining whether humans can live in a particular place or not, geography also affects people's lifestyles as they adjust to the types of food and weather that are available (Pollard *et al.* 2014). Geography further influences farming practices to produce food for both consumption by people and livestock. People from both sides of the border consume the same type of food based on these shared agricultural practices. Food availability patterns establish a connection among cultural and ethnic groups.

Furthermore, food is frequently used by people to maintain their sense of cultural identity (Kittler *et al.* 2016; Alonso 2015). In their study, Reddy and van Dam (2020) observed similar results where Singaporean women in multicultural societies maintained food practices from their ethnicity and culture. Food played an important role in connecting them to the culture. They were able to bond with people from the same ethnic group by consuming similar foods.

Tele Bridge residents were no different from this analogy. People from both sides of the border consumed similar foods. The geographical set-up is the same across the border, and residents produce the same food. As a result, the geographical layout of this region called for similar livelihood activities, which included farming and small-scale trade of agricultural produce, mostly done through the barter system. People from either side of the border would trade food produce in exchange for labour. There were incidences where individuals would have a surplus of a particular grain or vegetable and exchange it for another product they do not have. This practice involves people from both sides of the border. For instance, when one subsistence farmer has a surplus of maize, and the other one from across the border has more beans, they exchange one product for the other. In this way, both individuals have maize and beans for consumption. Food produced in this border region, as regulated by the geographical layout, speaks to the identity of the residents in that they can identify with each other through the consumption of similar foods.

Food produced and consumed in this border region also plays a vital role in cultural and religious activities. Apart from the nourishment of bodies, food brings people together, and how it is prepared and acquired goes back to identity issues. Sibal (2018:47) attests that “food is considered to be multidimensional, as something that shapes us, our identities, and our cultures, and in the end, our societies.” Food plays an essential role in the cultural and religious

activities of this community. People from both sides of the Tele Bridge used food as an essential part of their cultural and religious activities. Cultural and religious events involve everyone and anyone from within and across the border. People gather together and bond over food. There are certain types of food prepared for specific events. This speaks to identity because these events are either cultural, religious, spiritual, or otherwise.

The Tele Bridge border is in a mountainous region. This geographical feature plays an integral part in people's livelihoods, their relationship with each other within and across the border, and the practice of their culture and religion. Price (1998:3) assures that “mountains are important for natural resource provisions such as water, fuel wood and raw materials to densely populated lowlands.” Rural communities use these provisioning ecosystem services as a source of food, medicine, energy, and livelihoods (Ngwenya *et al.* 2002). Mountains provide protection from the harsh winter cold, but their steep slopes prevent easy access to rivers that provide for human existence or fertile floodplains. Low-lying and wetland areas are more prone to flooding and tropical storms (Dongya and Xudong 2020). The mountains also play a role in the cultural practices of the Tele Bridge residents. Men go to the mountains for initiation school and stay in the mountains for the duration of the course. This practice is common to people from one side of the border. Men from both sides of the border attend the same initiation school as dictated by convenience. Mountains strengthen the practice of culture and bring people together in kinship and solidarity. Similarly, in academia, where institutions or students give specific affiliations like the class of 2022, for example, the same applies to initiation schools, as people who were initiated at the same place affiliated with each other and formed a community. In a study about mountains and their significance, using the case of the Drakensberg, South Africa, Ngwenya *et al.* (2002:4) argue, “the cultural significance of the mountain was however emphasised by the people of Acornhoek as it is embedded in the preservation of traditional practices such as initiation schools for the youth and traditional ceremonies.” Cultural mountain ecosystem services are essential to communities for spiritual, educational (Bernués *et al.* 2014), and traditional reasons (De Beer 1999). The importance of mountains for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge spreads across several aspects of human existence. Mountains are also a source of medicinal herbs and plants. In a nutshell, the geographical layout of the Tele Bridge region has implications for the identity of the Xhosa speaking people of this area as it affects what they eat, their livelihood activities, their religion, and cultural practices.

Geography also affects people's physical features and general outlook. People's physical structures differ from one region to another. Tele Bridge residents from both sides of the border have similar physical features. A typical example of the role played by geography on people's appearance can be seen in the appearance of Africans from different regions of the continent. People from West Africa look different from the ones in southern Africa, and this owes much to geography.

5.6 CLIMATE

5.6.1 RAINFALL

This area has unpredictable climatic conditions, with the wet season occurring from October to April when moderate to erratic rains fall. The average rainfall ranges from 400 mm – 600 mm, with a maximum of 800 mm (Mokhele 2004:120). Aside from the spatial variation caused by climatic conditions, rainfall can differ yearly, with droughts having occurred. Occasionally, it rains throughout the year or hardly rains at all. The Senqu (Orange) River valley receives the least annual rainfall of all the neighbouring areas in the region (Pomela *et al.* 2000; Pooley 2003). According to the IDP (2017-2022), "rainfall tends to come from thunderstorms and in sudden flashes, and this often results in flash floods which block roads." In addition, the mountainous terrain also creates a conducive environment for frequent hailstorms

Different cultures interpret rain, its absence, or presence, in different ways. This also applies to the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. The perspectives of belief systems in cultures with opposing world views, like the two sides of a coin, are represented in how people experience rain (Eze 2021). People along the Tele Bridge believe that rain falling during or just before special events is a blessing and a good sign from God or the ancestors. For example, Mdende (2013) associated the rainfall a week preceding President Mandela's funeral with blessings from his ancestors. She referred to it as a good omen, suggesting that the spirits have agreed and that the funeral will be a success. People living along the Tele Bridge border also perceive rain as a blessing if it pours just before events such as weddings. They believe the rain washes away all that was not good and paves the way for a brighter celebration. Rain is also perceived as a blessing if it pours after a funeral, for it washes away the past and ensures a smooth passover to another realm.

In Tele Bridge border, the spiritual connotation of rain extends to practices or rituals - to either pray for it to come or to prevent it. People performed rituals to prevent rain if it comes in the form of destructive storms. This was mainly undertaken by the elderly or trusted traditional doctors in the community. Praying for rain was also a community responsibility, which involved the chief gathering the people together, in a collective effort. Young girls participate in a cultural game called *lesokoana* to invite rain. Thus, rain had a role in the enhancement and practice of culture. For example, when a child is born, they are put in the rain naked, as a traditional practice to prevent them from becoming a thief when they grow up. These practices were performed on both sides of the border, and people from across the border took part in these activities.

Rain is a water source for irrigation, animal, and human consumption. It influences people's way of living. Farming patterns are regulated by rain, encouraging community members to cultivate certain types of food. Similar food consumption speaks to the cultural identity of the people in question. Rain is significant in preserving culture because certain cultural practices can only be performed in the rain. Rain also signifies a connection between the past and present to predict the future. When rain falls, people believe the ancestors are communicating, making it easy for the living to predict the potential message from the ancestors. Spirituality, culture, and ways of living are elements of identity.

5.6.2 TEMPERATURE

Despite varying climatic conditions between years, generally, winters are icy and dry, with June being the coldest month of the year (Chatanga and Seleteng-Kose 2021:67). Temperatures drop significantly at night until the early hours of the morning. Summers are moderately warm and wet; January being the hottest month of the year. However, temperatures drop after sunset leading to cooler evenings. The average winter temperature winter varies from -7 °C to 20 °C, and in summer from 16 °C to 42 °C (JGDM Environmental Plan 2011). Generally, this area has two major seasons: summer (October to April) and winter (May to September). As temperature varies significantly from year to year, one cannot easily make annual forecasts based on the current situation. Similar to geography, temperature dictates the types of food produced in this region. Farming is largely influenced by climatic conditions, which then has a direct link to people's identity regarding food, ways of living, and clothing.

5.7 AGRICULTURE

5.7.1 SOILS AND CROPS

Various soil types are present in this area - such as clay, silt, and mainly loam. With rocks and hills dominating the landscape, there are relatively few arable areas for farming. Despite being carried out on a small scale, primarily for subsistence, agriculture remains this community's prime livelihood source. Even though the land may be of low quality, it is still utilised by the people. Agriculture is challenging due to the infertile soils, minimal rainfall, and infrequent droughts. Residents use water from the Tele River for irrigation when there is a sufficient supply.

In addition to precipitation in the form of rain (green water), bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, wetlands, and underground reservoirs (blue water) constitute crucial sources of water for human use (Hoekstra *et al.* 2012). Rivers and associated wetlands also provide many other ecosystem services and hold intrinsic value for many cultures (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005). Tele Bridge residents use water from the river for irrigation, for drinking, transportation, cultural, as well as leisure activities like swimming. People from both sides of the Tele River use it as a source of water, which translates to livelihoods, which then speaks to identity. In addition, there are cultural practices in this community that are carried out in the Tele River. River flows are associated with livelihood, identity, place-based traditions, religious beliefs and rituals, linguistic systems, or educational methods (Anderson *et al.* 2019). The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge from both sides of the border identify with the Tele River in so far as their practice of culture and religion is concerned. The river also sustains their livelihoods.

The commonly grown crops in no specific order are maize, wheat, sorghum, sugar beans, green beans, peas, pumpkin, rape, turnip, spinach, and fruits such as peaches, apricots, prickly pears, plums, and nectarines, amongst others. Some of these are grown in summer (mainly leafy and green crops) and others in winter (grains and legumes).

5.7.2 ANIMALS

The kinds of animals that can exist in a particular location are frequently determined by topography. For instance, most mammals in the tropics have evolved to tolerate high

temperatures and little access to water. This is because resources are harder to find at higher elevations, where fewer humans maintain the natural resources. Agriculture involves both crop production and livestock rearing. Domestic animals found in this locality include dogs and cats. Most bred domestic livestock are cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys, horses, pigs, and poultry. Domestic animals are commonly fed at home, while domestic livestock is taken outdoors to the grazing land to consume wild plants and drink water from the river and small artificial dams in the area. Grazing happens throughout the year and occurs at grasslands and agricultural fields that have just been harvested with some deposits of vegetation left. Each community uses land from its side of the border for grazing. These are accessible and open to the public. The only time grazing land becomes exclusive to specific individuals is when livestock feed from agricultural fields belonging to individuals. The owner of the field would then give access to a selected few. Fights would erupt if uninvited livestock owners trespassed. These tensions would happen on either side of the border amongst people on the one side. Apart from these rare occasions where people would fight over grazing land that belonged to individuals, public grazing land brought livestock herders together. Taking animals for grazing also served as an extramural activity. Herdsmen would convene and play traditional games, practice cultural songs, and teach younger boys to look after livestock properly, work as a team to relieve each other from exhaustion, and identify fertile grasses. There are no tensions over livestock rearing or grazing in this border community. However, the Xhosa speaking people from the South African side of the border blamed several livestock theft incidences on the people from Lesotho. This resulted in hostility towards each other. Victims of theft took matters into their own hands through mob justice because the authorities were deaf to their grievances.

Climate and topography undoubtedly impacted the type of livestock found in this region. Nonetheless, the commonly reared animals in this community also play an essential role in cultural practices. Animals are significant in human life for their practical benefits and as sources of inspiration for many cultural endeavours including religious systems, art, and literature (Romeu *et al.* 2018). Tele Bridge residents used animals in several cultural and religious practices. For instance, a cow is slaughtered for multiple reasons when there is a funeral in a household. In no order, it is slaughtered to accompany the deceased, clothe them, and send them off to the ancestors. Spilling blood is believed to facilitate the connection between the living and the dead. When a female dies, the family slaughters a female cow, and a male cow for when the deceased is male. Slaughtering a cow for the deceased is not negotiable for this community. It is a tradition that has been practised for a very long time, and if the

family fails to do this, it is believed that the deceased will not rest and will always haunt the family until they slaughter a cow for them. Apart from cultural and religious purposes, cattle were also used for farming. In households where modern machinery (tractors) could not be afforded, cattle were used to plough and perform other duties that farming equipment would do.

There were other animals reared in this community, such as goats. Goats were frequently used in cultural and religious practices. They were used to welcome the bride into the family, to welcome new-born babies, and to fetch the deceased's spirit if they died elsewhere other than home. Goat's milk was also used for medicinal purposes. Community members believed that goat's milk has healing properties and high nutritional value, especially for children. The same for sheep. There were some traditions and rituals that required the use of sheep. Ultimately, the animals found in this border community were dictated by, amongst other things, geography, topography, and climate. Nevertheless, culture and religion also necessitated the use of these animals.

Due to animal cross-border movement, Tele Bridge residents could not lend each other animals for farming purposes as they would with cars, tractors, and other farming equipment. A low diversity of wildlife is found in this region; herbivores, and omnivores. The surrounding mountains are a habitat for these animals. Although not frequently, hunting happens in this community for food supply, cultural, or religious reasons. Traditional doctors and healers use some parts of wild animals for healing and rituals. There are no restrictions as to where people from either side of the border can hunt; the range is open to everyone.

5.8 ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

A substantial amount of rainfall from the Drakensberg mountains (averaging 1000 mm annually) supplies the Orange River, the Tele River, and the Blikana River with water throughout the year (Figure 5.3). In doing so, the community benefits from ecosystem services from the rivers. The river supplies food (fish), sand, water for irrigation, and domestic supply. A noticeable amount of agricultural activity occurs along Tele River on both sides of the border.

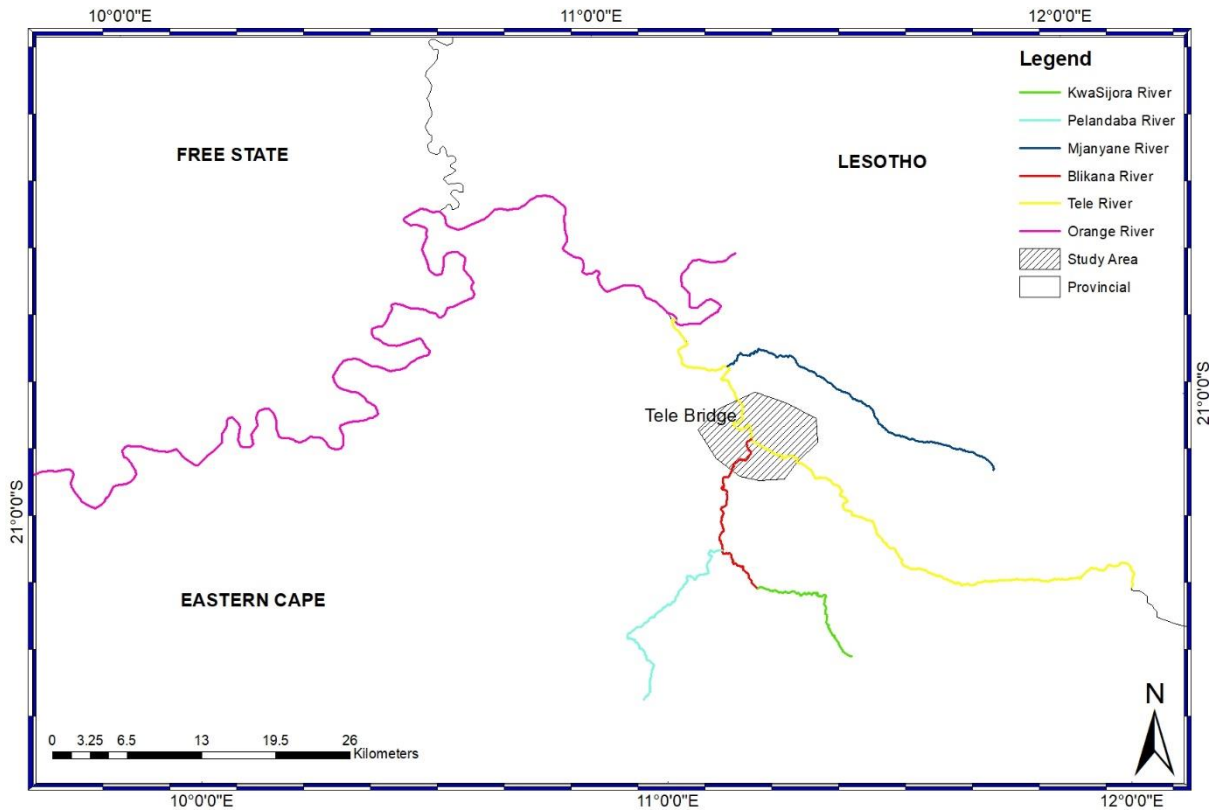


Figure 5.3 Rivers in the Tele community

Source: The author

The study area is in a montane grassland biome as shown in Figure 5.4. Grasslands are known to have high biodiversity and can provide significant ecosystem services such as water supply, carbon storage, pollination, and cultural services (Bengtsson 2019). In the study area, the montane grassland provides grazing land for livestock, thereby supporting agricultural production and medicinal herbs. The grassland biome also provides nonphysical services like climate regulation, recreation, tourism, and inheritance of national culture (Liu 2020).

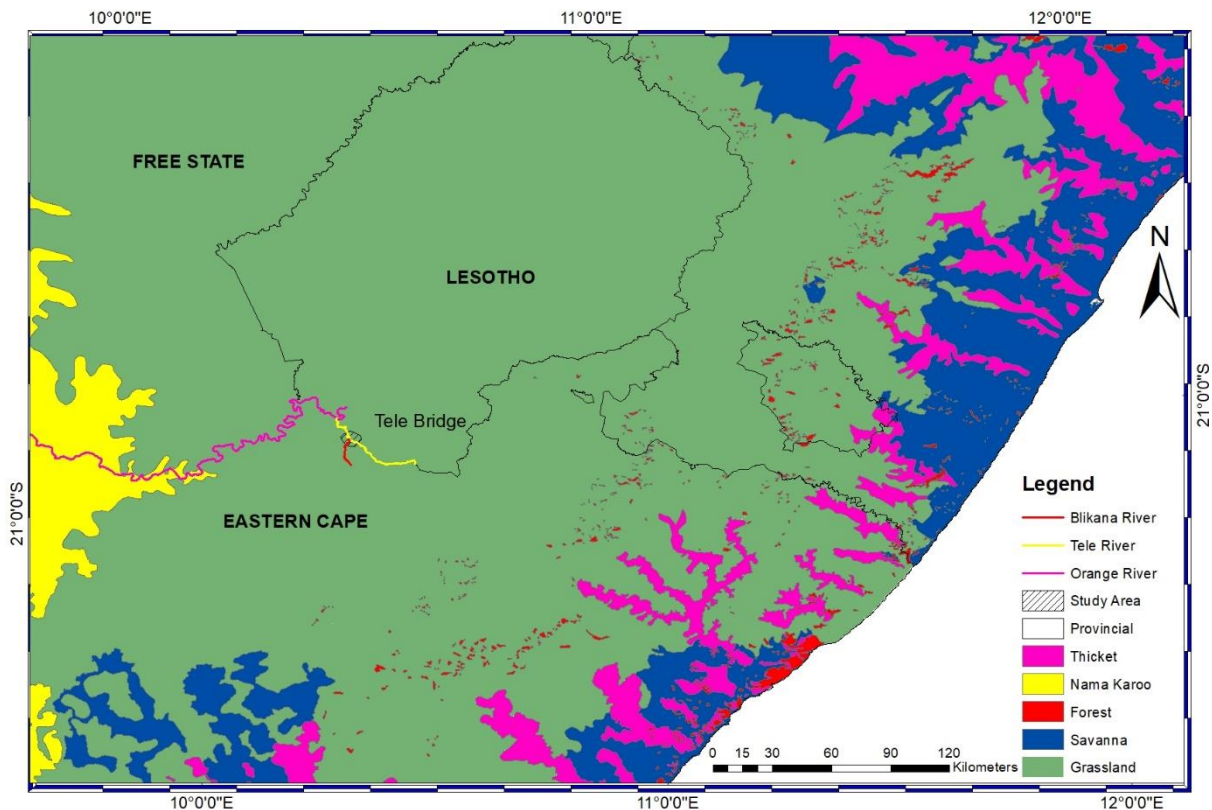


Figure 5.4 Biome of the study jurisdiction

Source: The author

5.9 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

The research jurisdiction is comprised of two communities at Tele, separated by the border or a river. The community on the South African side is made up of six villages of varying rurality. These are, Qhoboshane, Palmietfontein, Mdeni, Lower Telle, Sikroxweni, and Sitoromo. Villages are relatively far apart from each other, separated by small bridges, forests, and roads. On the Lesotho side, the community is comprised of five villages; Tele, Bolepeletsa, Dilidili, Mjanyani, and Ts'epong. Comparatively, these villages are closely spaced – unlike on the South African side where there are clear demarcations of households – there are no physical boundaries in sight because most of them are not fenced. On both sides of the border, some villages are crossed by the main road, sometimes marking the boundary between villages; at other times, it is simply just a road in one village. All the villages reside along the Tele River at different points of it. Some are next to the border, and others are further up. The community is predominantly rural, with varying family structures.

The Tele Bridge community is situated in a rural area between South Africa and Lesotho. A significant number of border regions are in rural areas in Africa. Griffiths (1986:213) argues,

“a border region, by definition geographically marginal within a state, is also likely to be economically marginal unless it has some outstanding attribute such as mineral wealth or natural harbour, and the marginality of such areas is emphasised by poor infrastructural development.” Olayinka (2016) further builds on this argument with a specific focus on Nigerian rural border regions. He maintains that “Nigerian rural border communities like many other rural communities lack infrastructural facilities like roads, potable water, electricity, good communication network, education and health facilities among others” (Olayinka 2016:142). The Tele Bridge community is no exception to this African reality. The quality of life, access to opportunities, and economic development is also deficient in this area. People in the border communities are faced with challenges such as poverty, diseases, unemployment, and violence (Will 2010).

The two states at this border region, South Africa, and Lesotho, were prior British colonies that each gained independence at different times. After Moshoeshe's demise in 1870, Lesotho entered a colonial era. Basutoland joined the Cape Colony in 1871. It was reinstated to its position as a protectorate following the Gun War. Basutoland received its first elected legislature in 1959. The general elections were held six years later. Finally, Lesotho achieved complete independence on October 4, 1966 (Lesotho Independence Act 1966).

On May 31, 1910, South Africa formally declared its independence from Great Britain. On this day, General Louis Botha, then the prime minister, established a cabinet. On September 15, 1910, parliamentary elections were held, and the South African Party (SAP), led by Louis Botha and James Hertzog, gained 67 of the House of Assembly's 130 seats. Leander Jameson's Unionist Party (UP) gained 39 seats in the House of Assembly. As prime minister, General Botha established an administration. On November 4, 1910, the parliament met. On December 14, 1912, Prime Minister Botha established a government as a leader (Oliver and Oliver 2017). South Africa then moved from colonial rule to the apartheid system, which did not help in freeing black people from oppression.

This brief history of the two states involved in this study is essential to explain the political and economic structures of the border communities in question. Political structures of a community influence identity. Nshimbi (2019:48) reiterated that “the Chewa ethnic group has long inhabited the contiguous borderlands of ZMM and are ascribed to King Kalonga Gawa Undi who resides in eastern Zambia.” Political affiliation speaks to issues of identity. People ascribe to certain structures because of their role in explaining who they are as a collective or

individuals. There are political structures in the Tele Bridge region that community members ascribe to. The political structures are different in both countries. However, both communities across the border are under traditional and constitutional leadership and often collaborate in the attainment of services. Traditional leaders handled things like land allocation on both sides of the border. The land was an essential attribute of identity construction for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. The food they eat, farmlands, and graveyards, to mention a few, all speak to land and identity. As a result, political structures played a role in identity politics. Traditional leaders were the custodians of culture. This further touches on the importance of political structures on identity. Transmission and preservation of culture in this community was a collective effort. However, traditional leaders encourage, initiate and direct culture practice by facilitating events. Constitutional leadership in both countries also allows for freedom of expression and movement, which permits border residents from both sides of the Tele Bridge to practice their culture within and across borders without hindrances.

The community of Tele is under the leadership of Chief Saleme Nkuebe of the Bakoena lineage in Lesotho. On the other side of the border, the community is governed by Mr Khethephi Nomvula, a former military superintendent elected after his retirement from the army, also referred to as *isibonda*. Lesotho and South Africa are under democratic rule, but traditional leadership is still very important in some parts of the country, especially in rural areas like the Tele Bridge region. Tele community is an example of an area where traditional leaders are influential. The bureaucratic administration offers services, such as identity documents and grants, to mention a few, and even in those instances, although not all the time, the authorisation of traditional leaders is still required, especially if officials encounter challenges with regard to documentation. However, services such as land allocation and communal dispute resolutions in the village are managed by the chief or the herdsman. Coming from a colonial legacy, Christianity is the dominant religion in the area, followed by traditionalism, or a combination of the two.

The community is entirely made up of African people. No other races reside in this area. There are two ethnic groups in this community, Basotho and Xhosas, the latter being dominant in numbers and influence. Despite hosting two or more groups, the most commonly used language is IsiXhosa. Practised culture and heritage are those of the Xhosa ethnic group. This, by no means, implies a total disregard for other cultures. The community encompasses people of all age groups, from infants to the elderly, with the youth making up a considerable percentage of

the population. There is a low level of skills among residents of this community. On the South African side in particular, many rely on government provisions and services for livelihoods or primary activities like farming (SASSA 2013). The unemployment rate, including those not looking for employment, rose to a high of 65% in the last decade (STATSSA 2016). Most people rely on grants on the South African side of the border, and in Lesotho, they rely on offering cheap labour in South African households. The dependency score is 72.4% (STATSSA 2016). There are a few schools in the community, two primary schools, two junior secondary schools, and one high school, on the South African side. No tertiary institutions are found in this area. The community's level of education is low. On the side of Lesotho there are three primary schools, and no secondary or tertiary institutions. This explains the low education level of the residents.

5.10 ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Tele Bridge is one of the least developed border areas between South Africa and Lesotho. There are no industrial activities, large-scale business enterprises or developed infrastructural facilities as its topography hinders industrial development. The location of the nation in the world and its climate are two significant determinants of development. The fact that the poorest nations are in the tropics, where it is hot, the soil less fertile, the water scarcer, and diseases thrive, is not a coincidence. Some nations simply have a disadvantage due to geography (Ford 2021). The Tele Bridge is situated within a rugged topography, which poses a significant obstacle towards the development of economic infrastructure. This includes a lack of agricultural land for crop and livestock farming, and access roads to move around. The mountainous topography makes it difficult to develop large-scale businesses like malls and shopping complexes.

Economic activity in this border region is predominantly small-scale and driven mainly by low-wage jobs and subsistence farming. Due to a lack of economic opportunities in the Tele Bridge region, the community, especially people from the Lesotho side of the border, has experienced much labour migration to the mines in South Africa and the farms in the Western Cape Province, South Africa. Men had to look for employment away from their families to earn a living while their wives stayed home to care for the family. The outcome has been the widespread migration of males to employment centres, particularly in the Republic of South Africa, to generate cash revenue that will meet their household's needs, while women stay at

home to manage domestic activities like field cultivation and the distribution of cash earnings (Mueller 1977). Earnings from these sectors of the economy, which mainly absorb unskilled labour, are then used for livelihoods.

Ember and Ember (1973) argued that before being influenced and disrupted by Western cultural concepts and behaviours, all human communities had their own distinct economic systems. Contemporary modes of production have taken over ancient livelihood strategies. For instance, as one of the primary sources of food supply back in the day, hunting is no longer considered practical or relevant in the modern-day economy. Consequently, people have acclimatised to current ways of livelihood activities. This also applies to Tele Bridge residents. Labour migration was one of many sources of livelihood for these border residents. Small-scale business enterprises such as tuckshops, grocery stores, food stalls, and street vending were another source of livelihood in this community. In the absence of lucrative economic opportunities, local people have had to adapt to viable and feasible ways of economic participation, in addition to their primitive strategies that included a barter system from time to time and occasional hunting, among other things.

Although agriculture is primarily practised for subsistence and usually done on a small scale, it also plays an important role in the livelihoods and economic activities of the community members. When households have surplus produce, particularly crops, they help feed other people and sell fruits and vegetables in the streets on both sides of the border. Border inhabitants farm similar types of food and harvest at the same time. As a result, people from both sides of the border access similar foods at the same time. However, the quantity of production differs from one household to another. This is where some individuals can sell their surplus and others must buy to curb their deficit. Subsistence farming also included the rearing of livestock. These served as a source of food, wool, fuel, transport, and barter for other communities in the Tele area. As such, livestock production plays a significant role in the region's economic activities (Dzimba and Matooane 2005). Members of the Tele community from Lesotho also offer labour to their counterparts in South Africa – mainly domestic work and herding livestock. The nearest town to this community is Sterkspruit, South Africa. It absorbs many workers from Tele in Lesotho and South Africa. They work in salons, supermarkets, petrol stations, and small alcohol outlets, while some are street vendors.

Apart from labour migration, which was substantially undertaken by the people from the Lesotho side of the Tele Bridge, urbanisation was largely executed by the people from the

South African side of the border. Due to increased work prospects and higher commercial options and returns compared to rural areas, more individuals have been drawn to relocate from rural to urban locations. According to the United Nations (2008), indigenous peoples in urban areas may face prejudice, battle to preserve their language, identity, and culture, and struggle to teach the next generation, all of which can lead to the loss of indigenous culture, heritage, and values. Essentially, urbanisation has led to the disconnectedness of the indigenous people from their ethnic group and the use of language. Urbanisation was not exclusive to the South African Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, despite being dominant on the South African side of the border.

5.11 CONCLUSION

Tele Bridge border, the focal point of this study, is located in a rural area between South Africa and Lesotho. The Tele River marks the borderline. This chapter provided a description of the location to understand how the border influences identity. As a point of departure, the chapter discussed the locality and site history of the Tele Bridge, touching on aspects of where the border is located in terms of its geographical position and its proximity to the nearest towns in both South Africa and Lesotho. It was highlighted that Tele Bridge is a non-commercial border that does not facilitate the movement of goods and services. There were a few exceptions regulated by the SARS customs to allow businesses and particular individuals to transport their goods on terms and conditions for a specified amount of time.

The chapter further discussed the topography of this location to paint a picture of the arrangement of its natural and artificial physical features as they relate to the influence of the border on identity. Topography dictates the type of resources found in an area. In turn, resources help define aspects of people's identities. This is made evident by the fact that resources found in the Tele Bridge region contribute significantly to the practice of culture and religion. The discussion moved further to the geology and geography of this border region. In addition to determining whether humans can live in a particular place or not, geography also affects people's lifestyles as they adjust to the available food and weather. Geography further influences farming practices to produce food for both consumption by people and livestock. Subsequently, geography plays an important part in people's identities, in so far as livelihoods, culture, religion, and lifestyle choices are concerned. One's place of residence proved to influence behaviour, mannerisms, conduct, the food one eats, access to resources, and many

other aspects of human life which equate to identity. Geography has implications for identity vis-à-vis people's livelihoods, cross-border relations, and relations between inhabitants on either side of the border.

Climatic conditions, temperature, and rainfall, to name a few, shape agriculture. These conditions have a profound effect on farming techniques and the choice of crops cultivated. Furthermore, climatic conditions have a significant impact on the livelihoods of individuals. In particular, rainfall plays a crucial role in shaping the culture of the Xhosa speaking community of Tele Bridge. The chapter established that some cultural practices could only be performed in the rain, which could have a dire impact on individuals if not followed.

The study also revealed that soils, crops, and animals found in the Tele Bridge region also speak directly to identity issues. The border and associated identity determine the dynamics around these crops—agricultural labour, commerce, festivities related to agriculture, and the significance thereof. As it is with mountains, crops, and other resources found in this area, animals had several uses besides the provision of food. The study revealed that the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge used domestic and wild animals in religious and cultural practices too.

The Tele Bridge community's demographic, cultural, and social profiles furnish important information about the study participants, which is indispensable for ascertaining whether they represent the target population and can be generalised to the larger population. By examining this data, the study could discern patterns within specific categories. The demographic information, for instance, enabled the study to draw inferences about distinct groups within the community who exhibit varying cultural proclivities. Moreover, the data revealed gender differences in the participants' interpretations of events. Demographic information was also useful in identifying similarities and differences among various groups of individuals. For instance, the study discovered that younger people in the community were more receptive to the idea of relocation than their elderly counterparts. Demographic data, therefore, provides a window into the background traits of the population under scrutiny.

In conclusion, this chapter discussed economic activities that the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge from both sides of the border engage in for livelihood purposes. The study revealed that community members participate in ancient and contemporary means of livelihood strategies. Small-scale farming was this community's most commonly practised livelihood

strategy. People from both sides of the border relied heavily on subsistence farming. Unlike other channels of acquiring or sustaining livelihoods, whose dominance differed according to which side of the border people occupied, farming was practised by people from both sides in the same manner. Although agriculture was primarily practised for subsistence and usually on a small scale, it played a significant role in the livelihoods and economic activities of the community members. Another source of livelihood strategy was labour migration. The study showed that this was mostly practised by the Xhosa speaking people of Lesotho. Men in Lesotho would migrate to the Republic of South Africa to seek employment in exchange for cash earnings that would be used to take care of their families in Lesotho. The mining and agricultural sectors were the most prominent industries responsible for absorbing labour migrants. Men from the South African side of the border would seldom participate in labour migration, though it was not expected. The Xhosa speaking people of South Africa would move to urban areas to look for better economic opportunities. Urbanization was the most prevalent means of sustaining livelihoods on the South African side. Apart from labour migration, urbanisation and farming, Tele Bridge residents engaged in a barter system occasionally. Although not commonly practised, this system achieved meaningful livelihood activities.

CHAPTER SIX

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five provided a description of the study area by offering a contextual overview of the Tele area, the socio-economic and geographic landscape. It focused on the locality and history of the place, the demographic profile of the people living in the study area and resources available in the area. These were important to explore because people's access to resources also plays a role in how they conceive themselves. Issues of ethnicity, race, culture, level of education and employment give people a sense of who they are and with whom and which groups they belong to. From this perspective therefore, identity construction, as influenced by several factors, is investigated in relation to the border.

This chapter offers an analysis of how Xhosa speaking people along the Tele bridge border construct their identities. It lays out an empirically grounded analysis of the South Africa-Lesotho border at the Tele Bridge, focusing on the realities of the border and its effect on the people living along it. These realities are often viewed from post-colonial conventions on border operations, regulations, and governance. These assumptions revolve around, but are not limited to access, crossing, exclusion or inclusion, and security. Colonial powers divided many closely related ethnic groups into diverse regions. They lacked knowledge of the continent and its inhabitants, they disregarded cultural and ethnic ties; their interest was on land. The question this chapter is focusing on is not whether the colonial powers had knowledge of the continent they wanted to control or not. Instead, the focus is on the effects of partitioning on ethnic groups and its implications on identity. This chapter uses data gathered from the Tele community in both South Africa and Lesotho. The chapter aims to bring to light how the community and the people have been affected, positively or negatively, by the existence of the border.

6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY POPULATION

In this study, the population is the Xhosa-speaking people who reside along the Tele Bridge border on both sides of Lesotho and South Africa who utilize the border on a regular basis and those who do not. The primary data collection exercise for the study reached saturation at about

40 respondents. Qualitative research typically focuses on in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon or context, and representativeness is not the primary goal. Instead, qualitative research aims to provide rich, detailed insights and understanding of the experiences, and perspectives of a select group of participants. The study is conducted in two communities along the border, whose lives are affected by the border due to their proximity to it. The criteria for selection included age, citizenship, language, individuals whose relations and livelihood activities spread across the border, and key individuals who are familiar with the politics around the Tele Bridge border (community leaders and ward councillors). Participants include people of all genders, 24 females and 16 males, above 18 years of age. The study focuses on the Xhosa-speaking citizens of South Africa and Lesotho, which comprises 20 individuals from Lesotho and 20 from South Africa who are citizens in their respective countries. This is to ensure that all subjects fall under the same cultural grouping. The subjects are also selected based on their knowledge to extract essential information. These are individuals whose relations and livelihood activities spread across the border. In terms of anonymity, I maintained participants' privacy by using pseudonyms instead of their identities and those of their households as indicated in the Methodology Chapter.

6.3 THE PHENOMENON OF LANGUAGE AT TELE BRIDGE

6.3.1 LANGUAGE ACQUISITION METHODS

In any culture, language is an important part of communication, building relationships, and creating a sense of belonging (Holmes 2015). Tele Bridge community members learned the Xhosa language (IsiXhosa) through three different channels with varying degrees as shown in Table 6.1.

Number of people	Mode of learning
26	Household and family language/ mother tongue
10	Interaction with the community
4	Formal education

Table 6.1 Mode of language acquisition among Tele residents

Source: Fieldwork data

6.3.1.1 Mother tongue or first language

Most people in the Tele Bridge community on both sides of the border learned IsiXhosa through family and household interactions, that is, IsiXhosa is their mother tongue or their first language. This included people who were born in households where IsiXhosa is the primary language, either because both parents are Xhosa, one of the parents is Xhosa and, in some cases, where none of the parents were Xhosa. Three of the respondents who were non-Xhosa, two from the South African side and one from Lesotho who speak IsiXhosa as their first language explained that living and growing up in a place where IsiXhosa was dominant, and where their own families were speaking IsiXhosa as the primary means of communication left them no choice but to follow in the footsteps of their families. Respondents further explained there was little room to learn other languages because there would not be many people in the area to communicate with in another language, particularly Sotho, so it became pointless to learn other languages other than IsiXhosa. Of the 26 members for whom IsiXhosa is their mother tongue or first language, 14 were born to parents who are both Xhosa, seven from one Xhosa parent and one non-Xhosa, and five from Sotho parents (Figure 6.1).

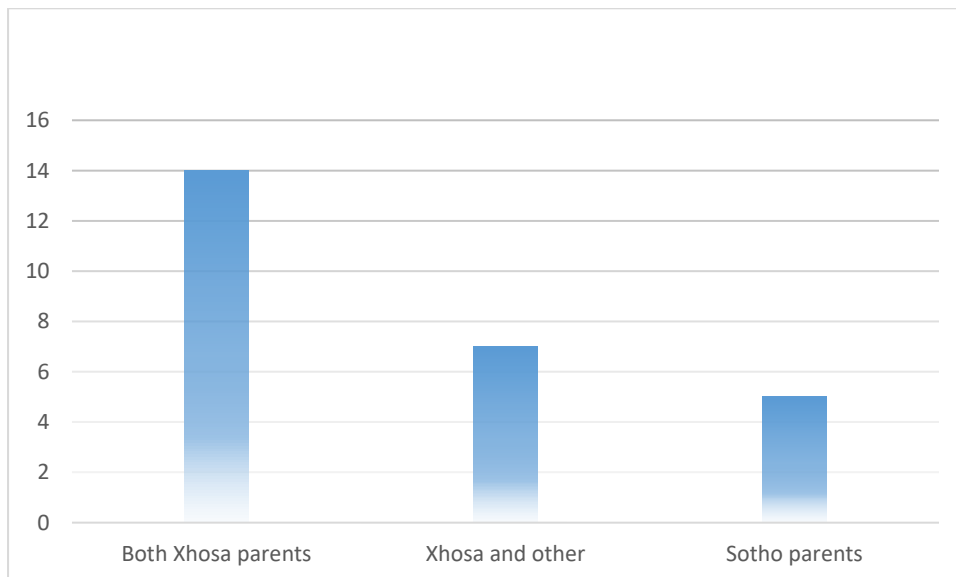


Figure 6.1 Respondents who speak *IsiXhosa* as their mother tongue

Source: Fieldwork data

Respondents in the category of people who speak IsiXhosa as their mother tongue learned the language through interactions with family, that is, they acquired it without any conscious thought or study. Many of these community members on both sides of the border also speak Sesotho but are more comfortable with their primary language hence the choice to speak IsiXhosa most of the time. Respondents born from both Xhosa parents, especially men between the ages of 36-51 and above, were adamant about speaking IsiXhosa and ensuring that their children also understand the importance of being fluent in IsiXhosa. Findings from this study revealed that men from both sides of the border in this community were upholders of culture, traditions, and norms, and were fixed on speaking the language and ensuring firm transmission to the children, as they argued, one of the fundamental aspects of knowing who they are is through the language they speak. They argued, it is through understanding mother tongue that one can fully articulate their surroundings. This was no surprise, as Prah (1995:45) argued:

Mother tongue is the primary code for the perception of reality. Second and third languages, construct their intellectual edifice from the perceptual foundation established by the mother tongue. In the language learning process, before a second language is sufficiently internalized to grow as an autonomous system, the primary or mother tongue serves as a reference point for categorizing and arranging thought and linguistic patterns for the second (weaker) language.

Participants who came from households where one of the parents was not Xhosa, who numbered seven from both sides of the border, were more open to the idea of speaking both languages interchangeably as opposed to households occupied by both Xhosa parents. This was more evident in households where the mother was not Xhosa by birth. For instance, Mr Sibiya, who resides on the South African side of the border, was born to a Sotho mother and a Xhosa father. During the interview, he spoke both IsiXhosa and Sesotho alternately. When asked about his preferred language when crossing the border, he alluded that he speaks either IsiXhosa or Sesotho depending on the language border officials use at the time. However, for Miss Thandeka, who resides in South Africa, born to both Xhosa parents, there was a level of resistance to speaking other languages other than IsiXhosa even though she could speak at least three native languages. When asked the same question, she indicated that she speaks IsiXhosa when crossing the border and when she is on the other side of the border because many residents on the other side and the officials know and understand Xhosa and there is really no need for her to speak any other language. However, in the same category of people whom IsiXhosa is their mother tongue and born from both Xhosa parents, between the ages of 18-35

with tertiary education, differed in approach to those in the same age category but no tertiary education. Tertiary education holders were always not strict on speaking IsiXhosa regardless of what other people were speaking. This was evidenced on both sides of Tele Bridge. For example, Mr Thobela, a 28-year-old man with a university degree, born to Xhosa parents; when asked which language he speaks with his family, relatives, and the community, he said a combination of IsiXhosa, Sesotho, and English. This was not the case with the people in his age range in possession of primary and high school qualifications. By and large, evidence shows that younger people with higher qualifications along this border region, despite Xhosa being their mother tongue, were flexible to speaking other languages without disregarding the importance of speaking IsiXhosa as their first language.

There were also people not born of Xhosa parents who learned IsiXhosa through family and household interactions. There were five people in this category, three from South Africa and two from Lesotho. They were born in Tele Bridge borderlands and grew up speaking IsiXhosa as their first language. They speak IsiXhosa in their households, with their families, and the community. Their first names are in IsiXhosa, but they have Sesotho surnames. Their families have been living in this community before the existence of the border. Their forefathers initially had Sotho names however, this changed after the introduction of the border. To fit in and avoid discrimination, they were given Xhosa names, and because IsiXhosa is their first language, it only made sense to their parents to give them Xhosa names that they can easily relate with. Their children also speak IsiXhosa as their first language.

In an interview with Mr Qondanisa (2022), a 68-year-old who resides in Tele village, on the Lesotho side of the border, speaks IsiXhosa as his first language. He was born in the Tele region and raised by both Sotho parents who speak IsiXhosa as their first language. His parents bore Sotho first names and surnames. Him, his siblings, and their children have Xhosa names. He indicated that he identifies with the Xhosa people more and that it would have been an injustice to have been given a Sotho name when he barely understands Sotho. Mr Qondanisa grew up in a household where IsiXhosa was the only language used, and for him, IsiXhosa is the only language in which he can express himself fully. The most common mode of learning IsiXhosa in this community was through interaction with family as that is where children learn to speak before they become active members of the community.

6.3.1.2 Community interactions

Another channel of language acquisition for the Tele Bridge residents was through community interactions on both sides. There were 10 people who learned IsiXhosa through this method, six from South Africa and four from the Lesotho's side of the border. This group comprised of people from two categories. Those who had one Xhosa parent but grew up in a place where Xhosa was not spoken by the community. Their parents were also not speaking IsiXhosa with them since they all used English as a mode of communication. They later relocated to the Tele Bridge borderlands and learned IsiXhosa through community interactions. These were people between the ages of 18 and 34 who were from the Xhosa ethnic group. The other category of people who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions were those who had no Xhosa bloodline but grew up in the Tele Bridge borderlands, where IsiXhosa is the most commonly spoken language. One respondent from the Lesotho's side of the border revealed that his parents are both not Xhosa and do not speak IsiXhosa, but he grew up with Xhosa neighbours and friends. He indicated that most of his friends from a young age were Xhosa, and through interactions with them, he learned the language. He further clarified that when they were young, his friends and their families would speak to him in IsiXhosa, and during playtime at school they would speak IsiXhosa. Consequently, he ended up speaking more IsiXhosa than his mother tongue in most of his daily interactions, and hence as an adult now, he relates more with Xhosa speaking people than any other group. Of the six respondents from the South African side of the border who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions, five had at least one Xhosa parent and grew up elsewhere and came back to the Tele Bridge region at a later stage in their lives. Their parents had left the borderlands in pursuit of better livelihood opportunities. One respondent learned the language through community interactions because none of the parents were Xhosa but growing up with people who speak IsiXhosa caused him to learn the language. The same applies to the people on the Lesotho's side of the border who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions. The reasons for this mode of language acquisition were the same. However, of the four people in this group, two had one Xhosa parent and two were non-Xhosa.

Ten of the respondents on both sides of the border, who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions indicated that Xhosa is not their first language but is nonetheless their preferred language of choice. The respondents revealed that living in an area dominated by Xhosa speaking people, especially those who were not born of Xhosa parents, they did not have much choice but to learn the language to enable easy communication between them and their friends

and everyone in their surroundings. For example, church services were conducted in the IsiXhosa language around the border region. Schools near the border taught IsiXhosa as one of the subjects, as well as festivities and games were conducted in IsiXhosa. Learning the language came with the consequence of not feeling excluded from their friends and the rest of the community members. Respondents who were born to at least one Xhosa parent, who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions, acknowledged that growing up in a different location where they were not exposed to the language either through the community or their families had an impact on them as Xhosa people. They then revealed they had to take it upon themselves to learn the language when they relocated to Tele Bridge borderlands. In an interview with Miss Thobekile (2022), who resides in Ts'epong, expressed:

I cannot blame my parents for not ensuring that we learn our mother tongue because they probably thought exposing us to an English-speaking society and schools would have given us greater opportunities in life, as many believe, but not knowing our language is as good as not knowing who we are as a people and where we come from as a family. I did not want to continue losing myself and made sure I learn the language as soon as I got back home.

Most people in the Tele Bridge borderlands speak IsiXhosa as the main language of communication and interaction. People under this category also speak IsiXhosa more frequently than their mother tongue. Respondents pointed out that they are not coerced to speak IsiXhosa but choose to do so for convenience and because they easily connect with each other and the entire community around and across the border using a common language, IsiXhosa. Nkhoma-Darch (2005:20) addressed a similar issue in reference to people along the frontiers of Europe who speak Irish, English, Russian, and Flemish. She indicates that people are “sometimes obliged to adopt majority languages for educational, social, political, or even for all purposes. Some individuals and groups lose their original languages altogether or begin to speak a variety of the original language diluted by contact with culturally dominant but sometimes unrelated majority languages.” Respondents who learned IsiXhosa through community interactions were mainly men and women between the ages of 18 and 35.

6.3.1.3 Formal education

Ten percent of the study population learned IsiXhosa through formal education. This group included people born from two Xhosa parents who grew up in non-Xhosa speaking cities and countries and people born from one Xhosa parent and one parent from outside South Africa

and Lesotho. Four respondents in this study population learned IsiXhosa through formal education. All four respondents were from the South African side of the border. Three of the respondents were people whose parents had worked abroad, and one whose parents had gone abroad into exile. Respondents indicated that they felt out of place in the land of their ancestors because they could not connect properly with their family members residing along the border and elsewhere in the country and with the community at large. They argued that their interactions with people were limited to those who could speak English. This affected their participation in cultural events along the borderline because of the language barrier they were faced with. Respondents revealed that not knowing IsiXhosa also made them feel out of place as they could not fully understand the activities which were carried out using IsiXhosa. Respondents' decisions to enrol for IsiXhosa lessons was influenced by the realisation that they could not fully integrate into the Tele Bridge community, and this comprised their ability to learn their heritage, norms, traditions, and values, amongst other things.

Respondents having two Xhosa parents in this group were keener on speaking IsiXhosa than those who were born from one Xhosa parent. The latter learned the language to be able to integrate with the community, while the former felt they missed out on important aspects of being Xhosa because they could not understand the language of transmission. One male respondent, who learned the IsiXhosa language through formal education, disclosed how not knowing the language affected his self-worth and self-concept as a man. In an interview he said:

I feel lost and less of a man in this community because I have not been to the initiation school. Almost all my family members and members of the community my age have gone for initiation. I cannot take part in funeral preparations performed by men for example, because in their definition I am still a boy (*inkhwenkwe*). I get ridiculed for not having been to the initiation school and this affects my self-worth. I have decided to enrol for IsiXhosa classes so that I eventually go to the initiation school because the teachings are conducted in IsiXhosa. I need to learn the language so that I am able to grasp all the teachings, and come back to society as a proper man, according to the standards of my community (Anonymous, 2022a).

The respondent learned IsiXhosa to be able to participate in cultural practices, the main one being initiation because not being initiated made him feel worthless. Mtezuka (1995:64) conducted a study in the Limpopo Province, South Africa, about the importance of initiation school and concluded from the findings that “an uncircumcised man is never dignified. Before

the initiation, young men are regarded as relatively unimportant members of the family and communal life. It is even believed that before the initiation, the male has not been united with his soul and consequently is not really human” (Mtezuka 1995:63; Elliot 1989:15).

Respondents’ reasons to learn IsiXhosa differed, especially for men and women, but for those whose parents were both Xhosa, learning the language was an attempt to get in touch with their roots. They indicated that given a choice, they would have preferred to learn IsiXhosa through informal measures like the rest of their family members, but because they grew up in foreign countries where no one spoke IsiXhosa except for their parents, who were reluctant to speak the language, they find themselves having to learn it this way. They argued IsiXhosa is their native language, and it only makes sense that they learn it properly to fully understand the ways of living of the Xhosa people in the Tele Bridge borderlands.

6.3.2 LANGUAGE AND ITS USE IN TELE BRIDGE BORDERLANDS

6.3.2.1 Communication tool and form of expression

First and foremost, IsiXhosa was mainly used for communication in the Tele Bridge region, on both sides of the border. At the first point of contact with the respondents, they greeted in IsiXhosa. *Molo sisi* (hello sister) which was consistent throughout our interactions. Respondents used IsiXhosa to communicate and express themselves even when they had an option to use another language. For example, in an interview with one respondent from the Lesotho’s side of the border, who used both IsiXhosa and Sesotho interchangeably throughout the interview, when I asked culture related questions, she strictly responded in IsiXhosa. Her knowledge of the Sesotho language was satisfactory, but there were questions she preferred to answer in IsiXhosa. It was evident from her responses that culture was a subject close to her heart and she preferred to express herself in her mother tongue. She spoke and understood Sesotho because of her proximity to the Sotho people but chose to speak IsiXhosa on subjects and questions that required elaboration and further clarification. This was corroborated by an interview on the South African side of the Tele Bridge with a respondent who could speak both Sesotho and IsiXhosa and opted to speak IsiXhosa when questions required elaboration. From the interactions with Tele Bridge residents, it was evident that IsiXhosa was not the only language they could speak and understand but they were more comfortable speaking IsiXhosa along the border region over other languages. They were able to express themselves efficiently

and adequately through IsiXhosa. When respondents were asked about their most preferred language during daily interactions with their families and the community at large, they indicated that IsiXhosa is their first choice. Respondents for whom IsiXhosa is their mother tongue articulated how the language allows them to express themselves in ways they would not have been able to if they were to use another language. This also speaks to Nelson Mandela's argument in the literature review chapter that if you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his mother language that goes to his heart. Language is not only a means of communication, but a tool that gives people a sense of identity. In an interview with Mr Nkosi (2022), a 52-year-old, who resides on the South African side of the Tele Bridge, and born of two Xhosa parents, when asked about his preferred language of choice in his daily interactions with other community members around the border region, he said:

I grew up in a household where IsiXhosa was the only spoken language, but I had Sesotho speaking friends as a child. There were other people around who spoke Sesotho and that is how I learned the language. However, as a Xhosa man, there are circumstances that call for the strict use of IsiXhosa. I speak the language with my wife and children. I reprimand my children in IsiXhosa, I share important information with them in IsiXhosa. They understand Sesotho as well, but IsiXhosa makes much more sense to me because I am a Xhosa man (Nkosi, 2022).

In another interview, a respondent from the Lesotho side of the border pointed out that as much as they can speak one or two languages in their household, when it comes to communicating important things, they always speak IsiXhosa. He stated:

My father is Xhosa and my mother is Sotho. We speak both languages in the house dictated by convenience, but when we talk about things like traditional and cultural events underway, lobola negotiations, funeral preparations, and even asking for favours like transport money to visit a friend or a family member from our father, we speak *IsiXhosa*. When we talk casually about anything, as soon as the conversation leans towards important family matters, he speaks IsiXhosa (Anonymous, 2022b).

From the above excerpts, Tele Bridge residents used IsiXhosa to communicate and express themselves efficiently. Some respondents had knowledge of other languages other than IsiXhosa but still preferred IsiXhosa especially when it comes to communicating important and sentimental information. Those who spoke Sesotho and IsiXhosa interchangeably during the

interviews, on both sides of the border, resorted to IsiXhosa when questions required them to fully engage in a conversation. This showed that IsiXhosa was not just a preferred choice of language, but one that allowed them to express themselves fully. This was witnessed throughout the interactions with Tele Bridge residents on both sides of the border that irrespective of speaking other languages, when it comes to communicating valuable, fundamental, and sentimental information, where they need to be clearly understood, they would resort to IsiXhosa. This was seen on several occasions when respondents who could speak both Sesotho and IsiXhosa opted to speak IsiXhosa when they were asked questions about culture, for example. Ozfidan (2017) studied the Turkish and non-Turkish people who reside in eastern and south-eastern Turkey who were ethnically Turkish and non-Turkish, and showed that people could speak multiple languages but still preferred to use their mother tongue over the others, and they even chose a specific day to celebrate mother tongue languages. The respondents of his study emphasized that speaking their native language is vital since it preserves their culture, identity, and ability to participate in public life. Tele Bridge residents' choice to stick to mother tongue when they need to express themselves fully is thus not in isolation with how people from different ethnicities conduct themselves. The Turkish ethnic group from eastern and south-eastern Turkey portrayed the same behaviour when asked about the importance of speaking their native language. In this study, Tele Bridge residents showed that they use IsiXhosa in the borderlands to communicate with each other and to express their feelings, emotions, sentiments, fears, and important information that needs to be clearly communicated.

6.3.2.2 Preservation of culture

Tele Bridge residents on both sides of the border also used IsiXhosa to preserve culture. Respondents conducted their cultural events using IsiXhosa. For instance, funerals, initiation schooling, rituals, traditions, and norms were all communicated and conducted using IsiXhosa only. In an interview with a respondent from the Lesotho's side of the border, who speaks and understands both IsiXhosa and Sesotho, when asked why IsiXhosa is her preferred choice of language when performing rituals or traditions, she responded: "I learned the same traditions in IsiXhosa, I understand them better in IsiXhosa, and I might lose some important elements of these traditions if I use a different language" (Anonymous, 2022c).

Another respondent from the Lesotho's side of the border further indicated that their culture as Xhosa people is influenced by IsiXhosa in the sense that it remains alive as long as they continue speaking the language and conducting their cultural events in IsiXhosa. He said:

If we adopt the modern city life that you youngsters live in big cities, we will lose grip of who we are as *amaXhosa*. Do you slaughter animals to appease your ancestors in Gauteng? Do you perform your clan rituals over there? Do you go to the river to cleanse? All these are impossible in the city because of how you have decided to live your lives and abandoning your native languages (Anonymous, 2022d).

Respondents conveyed that speaking IsiXhosa along the Tele Bridge borderlands keeps their culture alive. Through their responses, it was evident that loss of the mother tongue language impacts on culture and its practise. Respondents believed that speaking IsiXhosa all the time and living around the border region helps them preserve their culture, because in contrast, living in the cities and speaking English instead of native languages exacerbates the loss of culture. This finding is confirmed by Hossein (2017) in the literature review chapter that, language is one of the most important parts of culture as it allows people to communicate and transmit their culture from one generation to another. The literature review chapter further contended that language is also a vehicle through which people can conserve their intrinsic cultures and keep their traditions alive. This is witnessed in the realities of the Xhosa communities along Tele Bridge. Through interactions with the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge on both sides of the border, it was established that there is a close relationship between language and culture. Rabia (2012) agrees that language influences culture in so far as its passage from one generation to another is concerned. Evidence shows that there is a strong connection between IsiXhosa and culture at the Tele Bridge border. A vivid illustration of this was in the response one of the community members gave.

In an interview with Mr Gugushe (2022), a 67-year-old man, who resides on the South African side of Tele Bridge, when asked how he passes important cultural values to his children and what language he uses to communicate these values, he revealed that IsiXhosa facilitates almost every form of communication between him and his children. He indicated that he passes important cultural values to his children through storytelling, reading books, taking them to heritage villages and cultural events, and maintaining visits to the grandparents from time to time. All these events are held in IsiXhosa. He emphasised the importance of using IsiXhosa to communicate cultural values pointing out that if they were to use a different language,

meaning would be lost in translation and run the risk of not transferring the values in their purest form, which will ultimately result in a society that does not have a full grasp of its culture. This argument is consistent with the point made by the theorist Baker (2001) who assured that the loss of language means the loss of culture and identity. In his argument, language is a vehicle through which people can conserve their intrinsic cultures and maintain their traditions. As such, it is essential for societies to preserve their culture.

Most respondents illustrated that they use IsiXhosa to pass on their culture to the upcoming generations. They revealed that their cultural events are conducted in IsiXhosa and no other language. They have heritage villages where young children and the youth are encouraged to visit to acquire knowledge and history of their ethnic group. Respondents showed that these centres have books written in IsiXhosa, stories narrated in IsiXhosa and other forms of art translated in IsiXhosa. Respondents above 40 years of age showed more interest in encouraging their children to preserve IsiXhosa in an era where most children attend multiracial schools where English is the principal language of communication. Community leaders in particular, were in the forefront of organising cultural events for children to learn IsiXhosa to preserve their culture.

Mr Sonto (2022), one of the community leaders, who lives in Qhoboshane, South Africa, showed that he and his brother who had since relocated to another country facilitated the building of a community hall and sports grounds where people gather in numbers to embrace their culture. These activities are conducted in IsiXhosa. Respondents stipulated that it is vital for the upcoming generation to fully understand the language so that they can absorb knowledge and culture without meaning being lost in translation. From these postulations, it was clear that there can be no understanding a culture without learning the language first. Language is necessary for the establishment of culture. Culture is rooted in language, and language is its essence. Therefore, it can be concluded that language plays a pivotal role in preserving culture, hence the unwavering effort from most community members to keep IsiXhosa alive. Without language, no culture can survive. Respondents revealed that speaking Xhosa means keeping their culture alive. Mr Ndlovu for example, mentioned that IsiXhosa helps him stay connected to his tradition, cultural values, and his roots. He indicated that it is important to speak IsiXhosa so that when he passes knowledge, values, and heritage to his children, he uses the language of origin so that meaning and essence are not lost in translation.

From the findings of this study, IsiXhosa was used by the border residents of Tele Bridge on both sides of the border to preserve culture. IsiXhosa is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity for these border inhabitants. It is how they convey their innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that they transmit and express their culture and its values. Language, both code and content, is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of identity. Words and language, have the power to define and shape the human experience.

6.3.2.3 Form of identity

Language is “not simply an assortment of words but an entity that connects an individual to his family, identity, culture, music, beliefs, and wisdom” (Zalmay 2017:1). For the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, on both sides of the border, language played a big role in how they see themselves. Tele Bridge inhabitants’ conduct, behaviour, choice of music, cuisine, and religion were all influenced by language. For example, people along this border, on both sides of the river, listened to the same type of music, which was sung in IsiXhosa. This was witnessed during the interviews. They went to the same type of churches, with five prominent protestant churches in the community on both sides of the border (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Zion) but there were others such as charismatic churches which did not gain much popularity in the border community. The border community on both sides affiliated with the prominent churches mentioned above. Church services (traditional churches) were conducted in IsiXhosa on both sides of the border. IsiXhosa facilitated important parts of their identity, religion being one part. During interactions with this community on both sides of Tele Bridge, I discovered that respondents’ personalities and thoughts about issues were similar, and these were revealed through and communicated in IsiXhosa. The language shaped their thought processes and development. These are important elements of identity. For example, respondents gravitated more towards traditional churches because services were held in IsiXhosa, while charismatic church services were held in English. Respondents revealed that they relate more with traditional churches because of the use of mother tongue. Another respondent on the South African side of the border indicated in an interview:

I do not only prefer going to the Roman Catholic church because I grew up in it, but also because I relate more with the Xhosa teachings and worshipping than I do with the other churches whose services are conducted in English (Anonymous, 2022e).

Another respondent from the Lesotho's side of the border collaborated this idea and conveyed that:

The level of fulfilment from attending a church service conducted in IsiXhosa far outweighs the one I get from English services. I connect more with God when I pray and worship in IsiXhosa, hence my choice to stick with Methodist church (Anonymous, 2022f).

Through these interviews, it was evident that IsiXhosa in the Tele Bridge borderlands was also a form of identity. Important elements of identity, food, music, religion, culture, were all influenced by IsiXhosa. Most respondents on both sides of the border had Xhosa names and surnames. Key areas on both sides of the Tele Bridge that resonate strongly with identity politics in this community bore Xhosa names. These included villages, schools, mountains, and the community hall. In general, the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border regard language as one of the major pillars of identity development, even more so for those people who grew up in different cities and countries where English was the main medium of communication. There were four people in this category, and of these, three were more insistent on the importance of knowing IsiXhosa for them to understand who they are and where they come from. The Xhosa language is a hallmark of accreditation and cultural identity for the border communities of Tele Bridge.

Miss Vuyelwa is a 36-year-old woman who grew up in the United States of America. Her parents moved abroad when she was five years old. She started and finished school in America. The only medium of communication in the city she was living in was English. When her family and her got to America, they would still speak a little bit of IsiXhosa in their household but that faded away with them (Vuyelwa and her siblings) attending English speaking schools. She eventually forgot the Xhosa language; the need to assimilate to a new environment aggravated the situation. In her opinion, forgetting IsiXhosa also meant losing her roots. She lost the closeness connected with Xhosa and the attachment to her entire family. For her, forgetting the language unavoidably increased her loss of cultural identity and this made her feel lost. Upon her return from America, she took it upon herself to learn IsiXhosa; this was to ensure accurate transmission of her culture and history, all the attributes that make her the person she is. Her argument was that not knowing her mother tongue has

dangerous implications on how she perceives herself, that it makes little sense to her to identify as a Xhosa person while she cannot speak her native language. (Vuyelwa, 2022).

Box 6.1 Case of Respondent

Source: Fieldwork data

Language played an important role in how Tele Bridge community members made sense of their identity. It was revealed during the interviews that respondents held their language in high regard and used it in many ways that were not limited to communication. For example, when respondents were asked what speaking IsiXhosa meant to them, and if at all it was important for them to speak the language, the majority said speaking IsiXhosa means being in touch with their roots, and that the language gives them a sense of identity and belonging. In her argument, Miss Thandeka (2022) when interviewed, said:

I feel more in touch with who I am when I speak my mother tongue.

Respondents conveyed a solid connection between IsiXhosa and identity in the Tele Bridge borderlands, the same way Moyo (2016) and Nshimbi (2019) demonstrated the influence of language on identity. Moyo (2016) contended that the Venda-speaking people of Beitbridge across the Limpopo River are bound by the same language and culture, and that they have, in agentive and dynamic ways, adopted double citizenship and identities in order to beat the territoriality of sovereignty. In another study, Nshimbi (2019) demonstrated how the Chewa speaking people of Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique (ZMM) countries undermined the rigidity of the Westphalian's system and continued to nourish their centuries' relations. This was also made easy by shared culture and language. Thus, language helps people convey their identity, language automatically enables one to identify with others who speak the same language. A specific language is usually associated with a particular group of people. You interact with the culture of the language's speaker when you communicate in their language. Language, both code and content, is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity.

6.3.2.4 Spiritual and sentimental value

For most respondents in this community, language is not only a tool for communication, but it also has a spiritual and sentimental value. The general feeling amongst community members

was that language goes far beyond communication. The majority of respondents in this community not only use language for communication and culture preservation, but they also regarded language as a focal point for all human interaction and activity. Tele Bridge residents on both sides of the border used IsiXhosa to connect with their ancestors and communicate valuable information with them. Respondents revealed that as part of their culture, they are expected from time to time to perform rituals connected to their ancestors or even to their African spirituality. An example of such rituals was appeasing the ancestors. This was done on both sides of the border, with differing practices from one household to another. The difference in practices was not determined by which side of the border the respondent was, but by clan groupings. In an interview with Mr Vuyo (2022), he stated:

For generations, my family has always slaughtered a goat or two on New Year's Eve, to thank the ancestors for protecting us the whole year and asking for protection again in the new year.

Respondents revealed that these rituals are carried out in IsiXhosa because it is the language that their ancestors know and understand. The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge borderlands, on both sides of the border perceived language as a medium uniting past, present, and future generations. In an interview Mr Jabulani (2022) indicated:

It is my responsibility as a man in this family to continue the legacy left by my forefathers and ensure the younger generation follows suit. Failure to preserve this will arouse wrath from our ancestors. There was a time in 2018 when we postponed the ceremony to mid-January without informing the ancestors, and we suffered dire consequences after that. Our crops, on hectares and hectares of land got struck by massive hail and there was nothing to harvest. An elder had advised us to inform our ancestors of the delay but we did not think it was necessary. It was after the storm and severe damage that we understood the level of importance the ceremony has to our ancestors. We therefore slaughtered a goat to ask for forgiveness. And yes, all these activities are conducted in IsiXhosa.

Tele Bridge residents on both sides of the border felt it was their responsibility to guarantee the preservation and continuation of IsiXhosa as the medium between the living and the dead. For example, Mr Thabisile, who resides in Dilidili, was a firm believer in speaking his mother tongue and ensuring the continuation of the language through organising and hosting events that focus mostly on the young generation, and where IsiXhosa is the only medium of exchange. He was born and raised in this community. He held unshakable sentiments towards

IsiXhosa. For him speaking IsiXhosa signified a spiritual connection between him, his late parents, and his extended family.

Tele Bridge residents linked IsiXhosa with their ancestors who were also Xhosa speakers. When respondents were asked if speaking IsiXhosa meant anything to them, they admitted that they use IsiXhosa to pray and communicate with their ancestors. Being the only language that their ancestors spoke, they felt they had to ensure its survival so that they continue to ask for protection and blessings from the ancestors. Another key factor was that if the language gets extinguished in this rapidly changing world where international languages dominate, there is a high chance their ancestors will be angered, and that is the last thing they need in their lives. This spiritual acumen, therefore, enriches respondents' attachment and relationship with their language.

There were people in this community who had differing sentiments about IsiXhosa. Most young people between the ages of 18 and 35 were not so attached to the language as the elderly were. These respondents exhibited a nonchalant attitude when it comes to their attachment to IsiXhosa. People in this category were multilingual and had no sentiments towards any language. For them, any language they use at the time serves the purpose, they pray and speak to their ancestors in any language. Miss Zoleka (2022), aged 29, residing on the South African side of Tele Bridge said:

I do not need to speak any particular language to connect with my ancestors or to exercise my spirituality, be it African or not. Spirituality for me focuses on the inner person, the soul, the spirit, instead of what language the flesh speaks. I do not know how everyone interprets this, but for me, I can connect with my ancestors using any language, they recognise my soul, not the language I speak.

In another interview, Mrs Mdebele, aged 34, who resides on the Lesotho's side of the border, was also of the same opinion that any language one is comfortable with can yield desired results, irrespective of whether it is their mother tongue or not.

On the notion of the sentimental value attached to IsiXhosa, some respondents suggested that speaking IsiXhosa boosts their confidence, something they do not usually get from speaking other languages. The ability to express oneself without being judged contributed a lot to their confidence and worth, and aids in the learning of other languages. Mr Theo (2022) from Sikroxweni, in an interview, indicated:

Some of us received Bantu education, we still struggle a lot with English language as we cannot express ourselves adequately. This injures our self-esteem and confidence. We shy away from engaging in conversations that have a potential to build us. We shy away from participating in work forums where employees are expected to exchange ideas because we avoid the risk of embarrassing ourselves. But Xhosa gives us the confidence to express ourselves, as a result, I feel good when I speak IsiXhosa because I know my worth does not get tainted by lack of fluency.

From interacting with the Tele Bridge community on both sides of the border, it has been deduced, from both discussions and observation, that IsiXhosa has a far more reaching function than just people talking to and with each other. It has been established from these interactions that Tele Bridge residents in South Africa and Lesotho have several uses of the language. IsiXhosa touches on multiple elements of their identity. As Amberg and Vause, (2010:3) suggested, “language is integrally intertwined with our notions of who we are on both the personal and the broader societal levels. When we use language, we communicate our individual thoughts, as well as the cultural beliefs and practices of the communities of which we are a part, our families, social groups, and other associations.” Similar to identity, language is a very broad concept that cannot be encompassed in one definition. An English phonetician and language scholar, Henry Sweet defined language as “the expression of ideas by speech-sounds combined into word”, while the American linguists Bloch and Trager (1941:36) defined language “as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group operates.” This study revealed that the Xhosa speaking people of the Tele bridge borderlands in South Africa and Lesotho use language for several reasons beyond just communication.

6.4 CULTURE IN THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY FOR THE XHOSA SPEAKING PEOPLE OF TELE BRIDGE

6.4.1 IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

Culture is one of the most important attributes of the Tele Bridge community. The community spread across the border shares the same culture. It contributed much to determining how community members conduct themselves. In a way, culture was a clear reflection of who they are as a people. Non-participant observation and in-depth discussions revealed how culture played a pivotal role in the formation of their identity, their perspective of life, and their values in general. Their relationship with and to one another, and their view of the world was also mainly influenced by culture. Many respondents expressed how culture has always been an

invisible bond that has tied them together for centuries, and that their values and beliefs are evident in how they live their lives, the choices they make, their way of thinking, behaviour, and development of their attitude. In an interview, Mr Thembinkosi (2022), an elderly man who resides on the South African side of the border, recalled a time when the Tele Bridge used to function as a bridge not as a border, how as a community spread across the river they would celebrate and practice their culture as a form of entertainment and recreation, how they would always look forward to the next event to interact with a large group of people as this strengthened solidarity and brotherhood across the river.

Mr Thembinkosi transmits the same energy to the younger generation in the community by encouraging frequent cultural events. He organises and facilitates these events. He believes there is much to learn from cultural events apart from entertainment. He asserted, it is through these events that people acquire the spirit of oneness (in games that require team effort) character building, belief systems, values, and norms. Mr Thembinkosi's assertions are like those of Mrs Nambithi (2022), a widowed elderly woman from Tele who indicated that culture and its practice are essential for community and peace building in the Tele region, and most importantly for shaping the value and belief systems of the people they would want to have as leaders of the Tele community in future. She argued that, if a person is not grounded in their culture, there is a high chance they might be influenced by the outside world, which might risk the survival of the Xhosa culture. In their study, Stolp and Smith (1995) reiterated that aside from its inherent value, culture offers significant social benefits and chances for interaction, improves quality of life, and boosts overall wellbeing for both individuals and communities. Another way to express creativity, create one's own identity, and improve or maintain a sense of place in a community is through culture.

Respondents' perceptions about the world are primarily influenced by their judgement skills, preconceptions, and frame of mind. These elements are firmly associated with their culture. In an interview with Mrs Themba (2022), when asked about the importance of culture, she indicated that culture has shaped her way of thinking. For her to establish whether something is good or bad, her predispositions and her way of thinking come into play. To make any form of judgement, her point of view influences the outcome. In this regard, culture had a key role in shaping her perceptions and feelings. This was equally true for most respondents, especially the elderly. They were of the perception that without culture there is no society. A society that is detached from its culture is a lost society. For these border residents, the beginning of

knowledge and wisdom is culture. In their argument, for one to fully understand who they truly are and where they are headed to, they first need to understand their culture and appreciate all forms of knowledge it provides, and their sense of humanity as a point of departure into the entire world. One of the community leaders indicated that he was part of the army in his earlier days. He was based in Cape Town for decades before he came back home for his retirement. His appreciation of culture was undeniable. He stipulated how culture kept him grounded in a metropolitan city where globalization and urbanization have eradicated all traces of humanity. His perceptions about life and how he interacted with people was still largely influenced by culture. The way he raised his children, the values and beliefs he instilled in them, the constant use of IsiXhosa, and the type of entertainment he exposed them to, were all a product of culture.

Generally, community members' response to situations and life was largely influenced by culture. When asked who they were, they gave out their names, which was no surprise. Thandi (2002) was one such example. Thandi is a Xhosa woman residing in Qhoboshane, who was born and raised in this village. When asked to narrate who she was beyond the name, in an interview, she explained that she is a single mother of two children. Thandi explained her love for children and has taken it upon herself to gather children in the village on weekends to teach them indigenous games including *skununu*, *kho-kho*, *ugqaphu*, *upaca*, *ncuvu* and *intonga*. These games are played in Qhoboshane at her house or in the streets. Thandi indicated that during the hot season, children from both sides of the border gather at the river to play and swim together. She capitalises on this and brings other children around the Tele River to join the ones who were already swimming, and it becomes an entire day of entertainment, with several indigenous games and activities. Thandi's story was collaborated by other respondents from both sides of the border who were equally invested in cultural activities. For example, Mr Thabisile (2002) from Dilidili village, was one of the instructors in the initiation schools, and explained that he lived in the Gauteng Province, South Africa, for years as a mine worker but has since retired. He declared that living in Gauteng afforded him the opportunity to send his children to school and feed his family. But it stopped him from fully participating in the training of *amakhwenkwe* (boys or men in the process of initiation). He mentioned that he would come home occasionally for such events, sometimes at the launch of the training or when the boys come out because both occasions become big events where cows are slaughtered, and the community celebrates the boys.

The two respondents above demonstrated the importance of culture. Thandi takes it upon herself to teach children native games, which promoted solidarity amongst children in the border region. Mr Thabisile had a life in the Gauteng Province that guaranteed him financial well-being, but that tampered with the practice of his culture. Both these examples, children being taught indigenous games and initiation school take place in the Tele Bridge borderlands and they involve people from both sides of the border. This is similar to the view of William (2020) of the effects of geography on the practice of culture. In his study, he contends that geography is one of the prominent factors influencing culture, negatively or positively. He makes an example of Japan's geographical location. Japan is surrounded by water, and water plays an influential role in their cultural practices, like *bonsai*, which is a cultural practice of growing a beautiful tree in a tiny pot because of limited space in Japan. He further illustrates cultural practices like hunting, that require a geographical layout that permits such. In this study, Gauteng Province, for Mr Thabisile did not create a fertile environment for him to practice his culture. In the same vein, Tele Bridge borderlands, allowed Thandi to practice her culture and transfer it to the children in the community. The Tele River for example, was a point of convergence for the children and this is where cultural practices were performed.

Culture, just like IsiXhosa, reflects the identity of the Tele Bridge border communities. A large part of who they are relied heavily on culture. Their way of life stemmed from their culture. That is, culture is the epicentre of their institutions and other products of human interaction. From their responses, it was inferred that being a member of the Xhosa culture gave them a rich sense of identity and solidarity. Mr Phakathi (2002), one of the community leaders in Palmietfontein, in an interview, stated that cultural practices like initiation school, heritage and traditional ceremonies promote the spirit of oneness, teamwork, and camaraderie amongst community members. He indicated that it is during these times of entertainment that people come together and collectively engage in activities that strengthen the bond between the two communities across the border.

In essence, culture is a framework for social interaction that emerges from shared experiences among groups. The importance of culture also surfaced when respondents revealed how happy they become when they engage in their cultural activities as these nurtures a feeling of connection to other community members. It is a source of entertainment and enjoyment, as it often includes a range of cultural activities and events that bring people together and provide opportunities for socialization and celebration. In the same vein, one respondent indicated that

while culture boosts elements of happiness, it also encourages inclusion in that people get together during cultural practices, and this helps prevent isolation. In addition, culture is an important source of pride and self-esteem for the people in Tele Bridge borderlands, and it is closely tied to their sense of identity and sense of place. Overall, culture is a central and vital part of the life and identity of the Tele Bridge border communities, and plays an important role in shaping the way that these communities function and interact with each other and the wider world.

Mrs Vilakazi (2022), an elderly woman who has been residing in this community since birth, has taken part in promoting culture through several channels in this community and neighbouring ones within and across the border. She revealed that her determination to keep their culture alive is not only fuelled by the need to preserve it, but also by the benefits it has on the general wellbeing of a society. She indicated that culture provides stability, which in return provides people with a feeling of security and protection. In her view, culture evokes the same type of emotional feeling one has for family. She made an example of how easy it is for her to have an immediate attachment to a total stranger if they belong to the same culture. When she visits areas far away from her hometown, or other provinces, it is easier for her to make connections with other Xhosa speaking people than it is with people from different cultures. According to her, speaking the same language and being part of the same culture somewhat makes the relationship smoother and instant. She also believed that culture yields cohesion in societies.

The general feeling amongst community members was that culture can also nurture. In their argument, when people are a part of a progressive culture, they feel nurtured and appreciated. They have a common history and set of beliefs with members of their community, which unifies everything. It connects them to their ancestors and gives them a sense of longevity.

6.4.2 TRADITIONS

The importance of culture to the Tele Bridge residents was revealed through their commitment to practice it and life changing decisions they took in order to be able to practice their culture; with traditions being one of those activities. There were traditions in this community, on both sides of the border, that have been practised by the inhabitants for many centuries. There were prominent traditions that respondents talked about and reiterated several times. For example,

initiation rites. The Tele Bridge Xhosa speaking people have a long history of initiation rites, which are ceremonies that mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. Respondents revealed that these rites often involve circumcision and other physical challenges, and they are considered an important part of Xhosa culture and identity.

In the Xhosa culture which pertains to the people residing in the Tele Bridge borderlands, initiation schools, also known as *abakwetha* or *amakrwala*, are a traditional practice in which young Xhosa men undergo circumcision and are initiated into adulthood. The initiation process is a significant rite of passage in Xhosa culture, and it is an important part of Xhosa identity. Van Rooyen *et al.* (2006:13) define initiation school as “a type of school that was initially established as a secret rite, which, in a symbolic sense, serves as the teenager's transit education or passport to adulthood.”

Initiation schools in this border region are typically held in the summer and winter months, and the initiation process can last several weeks. During this time, initiates are taught about Xhosa history, culture, and traditions, and about their responsibilities as adult men in Xhosa society. The initiates are expected to undergo circumcision, which is seen as a symbol of their commitment to Xhosa culture and their readiness to take on adult responsibilities in their community.

Initiation schools in the Tele borderlands have a long history in Xhosa culture and are an important part of Xhosa identity. Despite the importance of initiation schools in Xhosa culture, they have also been the subject of controversy, with some people arguing that the initiation process can be dangerous and that it can lead to injury or death. The BBC News (December, 2019) reported on the alarming number of initiates who died and the hundreds taken to hospital to receive treatment for penile amputations, infections, and other hygiene related issues in the Eastern Cape Province. They further reported on the dangers of initiation schools linked to the violation of human rights. Sometimes, initiation ceremonies do not go as planned and can result in serious injury or death for the initiates. These complications can be severe and can have long-term effects on the individuals involved. However, supporters of initiation schools on both sides of Tele Bridge argue that they are a valuable part of Xhosa culture and that they provide young men with important life skills and a sense of cultural identity.

Oral tradition is another tradition that border inhabitants talked about. Respondents indicated how they have a rich oral tradition, and storytelling that are important aspects of their culture. Mr Velaphi (2022) in an interview said:

In our households, we narrate stories to our children and family members, not only as a form of entertainment, but to pass important information and lessons necessary for personal growth and development.

Many Xhosa stories and traditions are passed down from generation to generation through oral storytelling, and these stories often contain important cultural and moral lessons.

Ancestor veneration was another tradition that respondents talked about. Tele Bridge inhabitants from both sides of the border have a strong belief in the importance of ancestors, and they often honour and venerate their ancestors through various rituals and ceremonies. These rituals involve offering prayers, making sacrifices, or participating in other activities that are intended to honour and respect the ancestors. Respondents engaged in healing practices that have been practiced in this community for a long time. They declared that they have a long history of traditional healing practices, which are often based on the use of herbal remedies and spiritual practices. These practices are considered an important part of Xhosa culture and are often passed down through the generations.

These traditions were handed down to generations consciously and oftentimes, unconsciously on both sides of the border. Community members would engage in cultural activities for leisure, without consciously thinking or aiming to pass down the knowledge. Some of these traditions, especially the ones done as a form of entertainment were not intentionally meant to be transferred but ended up being learned in the process. Respondents exhibited a strong connection between their traditions and identity. In their argument, disconnecting with their traditions would be synonymous to disconnection with self.

When respondents were asked about their traditions, how much they know of them and their significance thereof, Ms Zenzi (2022) said:

It is important for us to know and practise our traditions because this way, our children will not lose grip of what defines us as *AmaXhosa*. We teach young people the ways of our elders and ancestors, who we are and where we come from as a society, with the hope that they will hold on to these traditions and pass them over to their children. One of the things

that define us as the Xhosa people is our culture, which is different from that of other people outside our ethnicity.

In support of this statement, Mrs Hlukanani who resides in Qhoboshane, revealed that practicing their traditions and being in touch with them has similar benefits with knowing who they are as Xhosa people as opposed to people from other ethnic groups. For the Tele Bridge community, practising their traditions helped them maintain their identity and history. They acknowledged that things have changed drastically due to technology and exposure to the Western world, and that practising their traditions is one of the ways through which they can preserve them. Sonnenberg (2015:1) emphasises the importance of keeping traditions alive, in his argument, “traditions remind us that we are part of a history that defines our past, shapes who we are today and who we are likely to become. Once we ignore the meaning of our traditions, we are in danger of damaging the underpinning of our identity.” For these community members, tradition creates a sense of comfort and belonging, it enables people to connect with each other and enables families to come together. Families and society are shaped and founded by traditions, which are an integral part of their culture.

In terms of practicing traditions and people’s familiarity with such traditions, respondents above the age of 35, and mostly the ones who were born from both Xhosa parents and from households occupied by Xhosa spouses, demonstrated more knowledge compared to the younger generation who were keen in so far as passive engagement was involved. Community leaders, who happened to be people above 40 years of age on both sides of Tele bridge, also demonstrated outstanding knowledge of the traditions, their practice and importance. Of all the respondents, they were keener to talk about how important tradition is, and narrated how they used to do things when they were younger and in the recent past before the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents above the age of 50, who had grandchildren specifically, also emphasised the importance of keeping traditions alive through frequent practice. In their argument, they realised the mistakes they made with their children for not being resolute in making sure they grasp as much information as possible. In a discussion with one of the respondents, Mrs Themba (2022) said:

I lost my husband at a very early stage in our marriage. He left me unemployed with three young children. There was no time for me to sit and mourn the loss, I had three mouths to feed. I therefore opened a small business in the community that quickly grew and became time consuming. My main focus was to provide for my children and give them the best

education I could at the time. Because my job was so time-consuming, I sent them all to a boarding school. They left home at a very young age and grew up with people from all walks of life. When they came home for holidays, we would spend all the time trying to catch up and knowing each other better. There was no time to teach them our traditions, no time to participate in traditional activities or exposure thereof. They grew up knowing close to nothing in as far as traditions are concerned. Now they have children of their own and I realise how much I have failed them, and I do not want a repeat with my grandchildren. It is disappointing that I have Xhosa children who know nothing about who they are as Xhosa people, because they lack context for meaningful pause and reflection, they are not in touch with the principles of our forefathers, and this hinders them to fully incorporate in our community.

As a result of losing her husband at a young age, Mrs Themba was left to raise her children on her own, and this meant sending them to boarding school so that she can find ways to provide for them. As a result, her children did not have the opportunity to learn about their traditions or participate in traditional activities, and now, as adults with children of their own, they lack a sense of cultural identity and connection to their community. The respondent feels regretful about this and does not want her grandchildren to have the same experience. She now understands the importance of preserving cultural traditions and passing them on to future generations, which includes being able to participate in communal activities and to have a clear sense of self. Scholars like Thompson (2011) and Graburn (2006) have also elaborated on the importance of keeping traditions alive and progressive. They alluded that traditions help to define a group of people and provide a sense of belonging and connection to a larger community. They can be a way for people to feel connected to their ancestors and their cultural history. Additionally, traditions can be a source of pride and identity for individuals and communities and can help people to feel a sense of identity and purpose.

Traditions are vibrant and continuous. The fact that their passage has to be ongoing between generations is evidence that traditions are not static. To ensure sustainability and relevance, older generations have to continuously teach upcoming ones about ways of life that they and their predecessors have been living by. Thompson (2011:36) asserts that “traditions can be thought of as links to the past, including pieces of the historic culture”. Throughout the world, from time immemorial, societies have always had traditional practices, values, and beliefs that have guided their lives from one generation to another.

6.4.2.1 Customs, norms, and values

The study found that the residents of Tele Bridge, on both sides of the border, highly valued their culture and demonstrated this through their adherence to certain norms and values. These included respect for ancestors and the elderly, which was deeply ingrained in the cultural beliefs and practices of the community. These cultural values were evident in the way the respondents lived their daily lives and were an important part of their identity and sense of community. The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge have a strong tradition of ancestor veneration and believe that the spirits of their ancestors can continue to influence their lives. They also place a high value on respecting and caring for the elderly. This makes sense, however, and is not unique to the Tele borderlands. Ancestral veneration among various traditional Africans and ethnic groups like the Xhosa and Zulu in South Africa is known to be central to the spirituality and unity of the groups (Molobi 2005). As mentioned earlier in this study, there were incidences where respondents indicated that if they do not follow norms and traditions, their ancestors get angry and punish them.

Respondents in this border region talked about the importance of family and had respect for authority. Tele Bridge residents have respect for authority and hierarchy and expect those in positions of leadership to act with integrity and to serve the community. For example, as indicated earlier, Mrs Nambithi (2022), a widowed elderly woman from Tele indicated that culture and its practice are essential for community and peace building in Tele region, and most important for shaping the value and belief systems of the future leaders they would want to have in the Tele community. She argued that, if a person is not grounded in their culture, there is a high chance they might be influenced by the outside world, which might risk the survival of the Xhosa culture. Community leaders from both sides of the border were called *isibonda* (civic leader) as a way to show respect instead of calling them by their names, which in their interpretation, did not seem respectful enough.

The Xhosa speaking people in the Tele Bridge borderlands were clear about the importance of traditional gender roles. In an interview Mr Qondanisa (2022) from Tele village stated, “as Xhosa people, we have clear traditional gender roles, with men typically responsible for providing for the family and women responsible for household tasks and child-rearing. Any deviation from these roles disrupts who we are as a people”. Mr Theo (2022) from Sikroxweni emphasised on the importance of gender roles when he said, “In this community, both men and women have a clear understanding of their roles and positions within their households. As a

result, men often work as farmers or farm workers and miners, while women often take on the role of stay-at-home mothers”.

The importance of community is a key value among the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge on both sides of the border. Interviewees placed a strong emphasis on the importance of community and cooperation, and often work together in groups to achieve common goals. This is exemplified through the attendance of cultural events from both sides of the border, such as initiation schools. Mr Sam (2022) explained that by hosting these events on one side of the border at a time, it allows people from both sides to participate and helps foster a sense of community and inclusivity. This demonstrates the significance of community among the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge and the importance they place on collaboration and cooperation to achieve common goals.

Respondents further elaborated on the importance of practicing their customs in this community, by showing how failure to do so impacts on people’s public standing and perception. Initiation school was one of the customs that had a huge influence on people’s identity. In an interview, Mr Dlanga (2022) from Mjanyani said:

Initiation school is the foundation of our culture. It is where we learn the values and beliefs that guide our lives, and it is where we develop the strength and character to become leaders in our community. Without initiation school, we would not be able to understand or appreciate the depth and richness of our culture, and we would not be able to contribute to the betterment of our community in a meaningful way. Initiation school is not just a tradition, it is a necessity. It is where we learn what it means to be a man in our culture and how to fulfil our duties and responsibilities as members of the community. It is a time of great learning and personal growth, and it is something that every Xhosa man should experience.

Similarly, Mrs Shongwe (2022), an elderly woman who resides in Qhoboshane explained in an interview:

It is expected of every Xhosa man to go for initiation. It is part and parcel of being a man. We, as women, prefer to be with a man who has been to initiation because they have been taught the values of manhood, that include protecting and taking care of their families. A man who has not gone for initiation is looked down upon by the entire community, and we do not want to be associated with them.

Van Rooyen *et al.* (2006) conducted a study on initiation schools among the southern Ndebele people of South Africa. The researchers found that while initiation schools hold cultural significance for some ethnic groups, there have been concerns about their impact on young boys transitioning to manhood. These concerns include the frequency of fatalities at initiation schools and the disruption to young boys' schooling due to the time required to attend initiation. In response to these concerns, the South African government passed a bill to monitor initiation schools. Their study revealed that initiation practices among the southern Ndebele Tribe align with the values of the community and largely serve as a way to educate young people. These practices also help parents discipline their children and teach them important values such as respect for others, adherence to traditions, appreciation of cultural identity, and maintaining cultural traditions.

For the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, on both sides of the border, initiation school was one of the significant pieces of their traditions, norms, and customs, to an extent that a man who is not initiated was not considered man enough by the community. This was also evident in community leadership. Men who had never been to the mountain, as they call it, could never be allowed to hold leadership positions in the community. This extended to the selection of ward councillors, the mayor, and the chief. For anyone to possess power or have influence in this community, they first had to go to the mountain (initiation school). Young boys would be eager to finish school and go to the initiation school before they venture into other avenues of life. Initiation school and other customs, norms and practices strengthened social harmony and played a huge role in encouraging unity amongst community members. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 resulted in the governments of South Africa and Lesotho issuing restrictions on social gatherings in an effort to control the spread of the virus. These measures had a significant impact on cultural practices, including initiation schools. According to research participants, the inability to engage in these traditions resulted in a sense of cultural loss and caused grief. It was also challenging to uphold the restrictions on these practices.

In the Tele Bridge borderlands, initiation school was commonly practiced by men. However, women also went to initiation though it was not common. Unlike men who go to the mountains for this process, women's initiation took place in homesteads. Respondents revealed that initiations for Xhosa women of Tele Bridge, or *intonjane*, involve a series of rituals and ceremonies that are intended to teach young women about their cultural heritage, social responsibilities, and role in the community. These ceremonies include teachings about Xhosa

history, customs, and beliefs, as well as physical challenges, and tests of endurance. The teachings and events that take place in initiation schools were kept a secret, for both men and women. Khumalo (1996:26) enlightens that “for centuries, girls have been warned that they will become insane if they tell others about the secret of initiation.”

Respondents indicated that it is important to note that initiation schools for Xhosa women in Tele Bridge region are not universally practiced, and participation is a personal choice. It is also worth noting that initiation practices may vary significantly from one community to another. Nonetheless, respondents on both sides of the border participated in this custom.

Initiation schools for Xhosa women are a controversial practice, and there have been instances of abuse and mistreatment of initiates (Mogapi 2009). In some cases, initiates have suffered serious injuries or even died because of the physical challenges they are required to undergo (Mkhize 2005). There have also been concerns about the spread of HIV and other diseases as a result of the sharing of unsterilized instruments during initiation ceremonies (Gunn 2003). Despite the challenges and controversies surrounding initiation schools for Xhosa women, they remain an important aspect of Xhosa culture and a significant rite of passage for many young women (Mkhize 2005).

6.4.2.2 Cuisine and drinks

The cuisine and drinks of the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, is diverse and reflects the cultural influences of the border region. Through interactions with the respondents, the study discovered that border residents’ cuisine is characterized by the use of staple grains such as corn, sorghum, and millet, as well as a variety of vegetables and meats. In an interview with Mrs Makhaya (2022) from Tele, she stated:

One of our most iconic dishes in this area is *umngqusho*, a porridge made from dried corn and beans that is often served with meat or vegetables. Other popular dishes include *umvubo*, a stew made with cornmeal and vegetables, and *umthombo*, a soup made with fish and vegetables. Meat is an important component of Xhosa cuisine, and dishes such as *umleqwa*, roast chicken, and *umfino*, a type of wild spinach.

In addition to these dishes, Mrs Nambithi (2022) added:

We also enjoy a variety of drinks, including *intelezi*, a traditional beer made from corn, and *umqombothi*, a type of fermented beer made from sorghum or cornmeal. We also

consume a variety of herbal teas made from indigenous plants, as well as commercially produced tea and coffee.

Overall, Xhosa cuisine is diverse and reflects the cultural influences of the region, with a strong emphasis on grains, vegetables, and meats. Traditional drinks such as *intelezi* and *umqombothi* are also an important part of Xhosa culture and are enjoyed by people of all ages.

Respondents from both sides of the border revealed that they love their traditional dishes because they are flavourful and filling, and they remind them of their childhood. They attested that their cuisine and drinks are a great way to celebrate with friends and family and emphasised that it is important to preserve their traditional cuisine and drinks because they are a part of their cultural identity and a way to connect with their ancestors. Community members prepared certain types of food for festivities, funerals, and gatherings specific to the event. For instance, Miss Thobekile (2022) revealed that:

When there is a funeral in this area, the deceased family has to slaughter a cow that has the same gender as the deceased because the same gender spirits, of the deceased and the animal will ensure a smooth transition to the other realm, while the opposite gender might cause transition problems which will eventually necessitate the slaughtering of another animal so that the deceased can rest. They also have to prepare traditional beer (*umqombothi*) which will be consumed from the eve of the funeral until a couple of days after. This beer signals a connection between the living and the dead. In fact, it is prepared so as to acknowledge the ancestors. When the body arrives home the day before the funeral, the family of the deceased pours beer around the yard to let the ancestors know that their child has arrived and that they should welcome them in heaven. This is also done to ask for blessings and guidance going forward with the proceedings.

Similarly, respondents from Mdeni and Qhoboshane revealed that cultural activities like funerals and festivities call for the preparation of traditional cuisine and drinks as these are linked to their culture. Traditional cuisine and drinks were similar on both sides of the border and their preparation was also similar.

The importance of preparing traditional cuisine in cultural events was also emphasised by Chau (2017) when he attested that food is a significant aspect of culture and plays a role in the transmission of traditional cuisine from one generation to the next. It also serves as a means of expressing cultural identity. When immigrants move to new locations, they often bring the food of their home countries with them and cook traditional dishes as a way of preserving their

culture. In this way, food serves as an important cultural marker and can be used to express and maintain cultural traditions and identity.

Similar to other societies or groups of people, Tele Bridge community members also had food preferences and choices and methods of preparation. The way their food is prepared, the ingredients and all that concerns meals and the times at which they are consumed was similar on both sides of the border. Respondents stated that they eat both self-produced food from subsistence farming and store bought. There were people who relied heavily on subsistence for food supply, and these were mostly the elderly. Store bought food was the most favoured by youth. Respondents who preferred food from farming revealed that store bought food does not taste as good as the fresh produce from subsistence. For them, home grown food is healthier. Their main concern with store bought food was their shelf life and affordability. However, there were respondents in this age group who preferred store bought over locally produced. Their reasons varied according to the ability to engage in farming, the availability of land and the feasibility of agriculture in uncertain climatic conditions.

Mr Sonja (2022), 62, a retired mine worker from Qhoboshane, used to engage in subsistence farming when he was younger. He was one of the few elderly people who preferred store bought food over own produced. In an interview, he said:

I grew up in a household where subsistence farming was the main source of food supply, I carried this tradition into my own household when I got married. I continued farming for many years spent as a mine worker. Towards the end of my tenure in the mines, I stopped farming and ventured into small scale business enterprise. It became costly for me to farm and decided to invest my savings elsewhere. Farming required more funds and resources, which I could not afford. Uncertain climatic conditions for example, meant that I would have to invest in irrigation equipment and soil enhancement inputs, which are expensive and there is no guarantee of meaningful produce. Farming also requires extensive labouring, and my health is unstable. Store bought food is more practical to me than farming.

Across cultures, people consume different foods. Preparation, preservation methods and ingredients also vary according to different cultures. It is through similar food patterns that people also feel connected to their cultural or ethnic group. For example, it is common for immigrants to use food as a way of maintaining their cultural identity. Additionally, place of residence has a role in food preference, and this ultimately leads to common choices within an

ethnic or cultural group. Societies are often linked to specific foods carrying with them specific meanings. For instance, people from the north of South Africa are associated with mopane worms, which is a different case altogether for the people from the south. This is because mopane trees are found in the northern part of the country, something people from the other parts of the country are not familiar with. Indian people are associated with curries, and biryani. Basotho people from Lesotho are associated with eating horses. The point is, countries, societies, and ethnic groups are associated with certain foods that have ultimately become the group's staple.

6.4.2.3 Attire

Community members spread across the Tele Bridge wore ordinary clothes that are worn across the country on ordinary days. However, respondents revealed that they had traditional clothes that they wear to cultural events such as ceremonies and funerals. Like food and drinks, there were traditional clothes specific to ceremonies and bereavement gatherings. These clothes were sorted according to age, marital status, and gender. For example, there were clothes for married women that anyone who has never been married would not be allowed to wear. Married women were also expected to always cover their heads, so it was easy to identify them from single women. This was a well-known fact in the community. Similar to how a distinction could be made with food in terms of the type of the ceremony, people were also identified with the type of clothes they wore to these ceremonies. Men who have been to the initiation school dressed differently from those who have not. Thus, on a day-to-day basis community members would wear ordinary clothes, and on special occasions wear traditional clothes.

In an interview, Mrs Makhaya (2022) explained their traditional attire according to gender:

For men, traditional clothing consists of a blanket, called *imvula*, worn over the shoulder and *izincwe* headband. On special occasions, men may also wear *aizickorho*, a type of animal skin worn around the waist, and *igqokolo*, a type of headdress made from feathers or animal skin. For women, traditional clothing includes a *umqhele* headdress, made from beads and cloth, and *isigqabo*, a skirt made from animal skin or cloth. On special occasions, women may also wear *ikheshi* skirt made from woven grass. Both men and women may also wear traditional beaded jewellery, including necklaces, bracelets, and earrings.

Clothing and its gender disparities was similar on both sides of the border. Respondents conveyed who they are and what makes them unique via the clothes they wear. Style is therefore, how people present themselves to others. The use of appearance style, which encompasses personal interpretations of and resistances to fashion, serves as a means through which individuals communicate their identity and aspirations. Additionally, this allows for the expression of individuals' disavowal of certain identities or aspirations (Freitas *et al.* 1997).

People are believed to use their clothing to define and communicate their social identities to others. If this is the case, then individuals should be able to recognize and exhibit consensus regarding the social information contained in clothing indications, and there should be a strong correlation between the observed meaning of the indications and the actual social identities of those wearing them. However, this is only true if those individuals have specifically chosen the clothing to represent their identities.

6.4.2.4 Religion

For the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, language and culture contributed significantly to their definition of identity. There were two main types of religion in this border community that respondents ascribed to, traditional African religion and Christianity. As mentioned previously, the latter had two categories, traditional and charismatic churches. Traditional African religion based its emphasis on the ancestors. There were respondents in this border community on both sides who practiced both religions at the same time. Mr Velaphi (2022), in an interview, declared:

I go to the Roman Catholic church, and I also believe in my ancestors. I adopted this practice from my parents, but I do not only follow the same path because it was laid out for me, I do it because it works for me. At no point do the two clash. I seek two different things from each. My ancestors have a strong influence in my life and the lives of my family members in another spiritual realm. I seek guidance and assistance from them through divination and communication with the spirit world. At the same time, I seek purification and deliverance from the Roman Catholic church.

Mrs Vilakazi (2022) practices both traditional African religion and Christianity, but she expresses a stronger inclination towards traditional African religion. This preference is reflected in her cultural practices, such as the use of traditional medicines and the importance of rituals and ceremonies in her daily life. Mrs Vilakazi notes that it is difficult to give equal

attention to both religions, as traditional African religion consistently influences her life on a regular basis, whereas Christianity does not.

There is a significant amount of literature that discusses the incorporation of traditional African religions and Christianity, particularly in the context of African diaspora religions such as Vodou, Santeria, and Candomble. For example, in *African Diaspora Religions: Sacred Traditions and Cultural Change* (Olupona and Rey 2004), the authors explore the ways in which traditional African religions have been incorporated into various African diaspora religions and have evolved in response to cultural change. Similarly, in *Santeria from Africa to the New World: The Dead Sell Memories* (Murphy 2010), the author discusses the syncretism of traditional African religions and Catholicism in the development of the Afro-Caribbean religion of Santeria. Vodou in *Haitian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers* (Michel and Bellegarde-Smith 2006), also examines the syncretism of traditional African religions and Catholicism in the development of Haitian Vodou. Finally, in *African Roots, Brazilian Rites: Cultural and National Identity in Brazil* (Houk 2007), the author discusses the incorporation of traditional African religions and Catholicism in the development of Candomble, a religion practiced in Brazil. These works suggest that the incorporation of traditional African religions and Christianity can be a way for individuals to connect with their cultural heritage and to reconcile their African identity with their Christian faith. They also highlight the ways in which these religions can coexist and influence each other in the context of the African diaspora.

6.4.5 SHARED CULTURE

As we have seen, culture plays a significant role in how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border conceive themselves. They could not put into words who they were as a community or individuals without making major reference to their culture. This was witnessed from both sides of the border. Having established this strong bond between the people and their culture, the next step was to establish if these border communities are familiar with each other's culture across the border. Respondents on both sides of Tele Bridge exhibited full knowledge of the culture of other Xhosa speaking people across the border. As Mr Sonto (2022) stated in an interview,

We are the same people across this river, those people over there are our brothers and sisters. How can we not know of their culture when it is the same with ours? Their culture

is ours. We have family across the border. That rondavel over there, behind that white building is my aunt's house, my father's younger sister. How can I not know about her culture when it is mine too? It would be impossible for me not to know about my culture, regardless of which side of the river we may be on. We go to the same cultural events with the people across, we are one.

Similar to Mr Sonto (2022) was Mrs Nomvula (2022) elaboration on having family across the border. She indicated in an interview:

I was born and raised in Palmietfontein. My family still lives in Palmietfontein. I moved to Tele after getting married because my husband is from this village. I go home to my family whenever possible. I do not miss any cultural activities of my family, friends and neighbours from across unless circumstances do not allow. Their culture is mine. We are family. There is no way I would not know my parents' culture. My husband is Xhosa too. His culture is the same as mine. I met him at a cultural event 37 years ago that we had both attended in Qhoboshane. There is no difference in our cultural practices with the people across the border.

Respondents on both sides of the Tele Bridge demonstrated knowledge of and familiarity with the culture of the people living across the border. Tele Bridge border communities are linked by the same culture and share cultural traditions and practices, even though they are located in different countries. Respondents participate in cultural activities such as traditional music and dance, storytelling, ancestral festivities, initiation school and religious ceremonies, and speak the same language and follow the same religious beliefs on both sides of the Tele Bridge.

Tele Bridge communities also share a sense of identity and belonging that is connected to their shared culture. This was evident in how respondents constantly stated that they are one people with those across the border. This sense of identity and belonging is an important source of pride and unity for these communities and helps to strengthen their connection to one another.

The reality of the Tele Bridge inhabitants linked by a shared culture is not unique to this border region. The border region between Kenya and Uganda is home to many communities with shared culture, including language, customs, and traditions. Many people in this region have close ties to both countries and participate in cultural activities on both sides of the border. The border region between Senegal and Mali is another example of a place where communities have a shared culture. The two countries have a shared history and many people in this region have close ties to both countries (Sana, 2019).

The *AmaHlubi*, *AbaThembu*, and *AmaJola* are three groups of people who are part of the Xhosa-speaking community in South Africa. They are traditional African clans or tribes with a shared history and cultural traditions. Each of these groups has its own unique customs, traditions, and cultural practices that have been passed down through the generations.

It was revealed that there were three groups of Xhosa people within the Xhosa speaking people at Tele Bridge on both sides of the border. These were *AmaHlubi*, *AbaThembu*, and *AmaJola*. They are traditional African clans with a shared history and cultural traditions. One of the community elders, Mr Sonja (2022), provided a brief history of these clans:

AmaHlubi, for example, are a clan that descends from the Hlubi tribe that relocated to what is now the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *AbaThembu* are another Xhosa-speaking clan with a long history in the same region. The *AmaJola* are a sub-group of *AbaThembu*. Their culture was for the major part similar, with slight differences in practice and application. This was true for both communities across the border. There were some cultural practices that were exclusive to each group. It is worth noting that there were not many of these practices, but hard to ignore nonetheless. For example, *AmaHlubi* people had their pinkies cut. One of the quickest ways to identify if one was *umhlubi* or *umthembu* was to look at their little fingers.

Mr Sonja (2022) further clarified the story behind *AmaHlubi* cutting their pinkies. He elaborated:

AmaHlubi migrated from elsewhere to join *AbaThembu* in the Eastern Cape and Quthing district in Lesotho. Their choice to settle here was motivated by the language they spoke. They figured it would be easy to relocate to a place where the people speak the same language as theirs. Then the community demanded that they be marked so as to make it easy to identify them from *AbaThembu* and *AmaJola* who have always been in the Eastern Cape Province. To arrive at a decision to cut their little fingers, *AmaHlubi* were asked which animal signified their clan's name, and they pointed at a rabbit. It was not clear how the then community and the traditional leaders associated a rabbit with pinkies, but a conclusion was made to cut their little fingers as a sign that they were immigrants. Centuries later, this practice is still effective, born and raised in the region but their pinkies still get cut.

To collaborate the stipulations of Mr Sonja (2022), one of the community leaders (Anonymous, 2022g) iterated that:

AmaHlubi are a traditional African clan that descended from the Hlubi tribe, which was originally based in what is now the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. *AmaHlubi* migrated to the region from the north sometime in the 16th or 17th century. They were part of a larger group of clans and tribes known as *AmaFengu*, who moved into the area during this time to escape the wars and conflicts that were taking place in other parts of the country. *AmaHlubi* settled in the eastern part of the province and over time, their descendants became known as the *AmaHlubi*. Today, *AmaHlubi* continue to live in the Eastern Cape and other parts of South Africa, and they maintain many of their traditional cultural practices and traditions.

There are similarities with the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge where one ethnic group consists of several clans that have their own way of practicing culture and applying values. The Basotho ethnic group are a typical example of this. There are several clans within the Basotho ethnic group, each with its own unique history, traditions, and cultural practices. There are multiple clans, some of which are *Bakuena*, *Bataung*, *Bafokeng*, and *Basia*. Each clan is associated with a specific geographic area, and members of a particular clan often trace their ancestry back to a common ancestor (Pauls, 2012).

There were also some cultural practices exclusive to *AmaJola*, a sub-group of *AbaThembu* that took place on both sides of the Tele Bridge. Mrs Vilakazi (2022) explained:

When a child is born, in the first year of a child's life, a huge snake, called *Majola* comes to visit such a household to accept the child and introduce it to the ancestors. So, on the day of the visit, which is known to the elders of the family, family members brew traditional beer and store it in different containers or buckets, the one container meant for the snake to consume. The mother of a new baby is ordered to sit still as the snake crawls in to caress, lick, and flip the baby around. This is done so as to introduce the baby to the ancestors, and to also ask for protection. There had never been incidences where *Majola* (the snake) hurts the baby unless the mother does not obey the orders or certain protocols are not observed. As the snake performs these rituals, women sit around the hut and sing traditional songs and praises to the snake until it is done and leaves.

This practice was exclusive to the *AmaJola* people of the *AbaThembu*, and it was practiced on both sides of the border. The ritual usually involved a small group of people, especially family

members or people from the same *Majola* clan that are close to the household hosting the event. It takes a form of an intimate celebration, with women ululating and singing in the house as the snake performs its duty.

Apart from these distinct practices, that were found amongst different ethnicities of the Xhosa people from both sides of the border, the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge generally had the same culture. Cultural events from either side were attended by people from both sides of the border. There were no incidences where people from the one side of the border would be found attending a cultural event without the presence of people from the other side. As seen earlier, families were spread across the border and relations have been built over the years, and this meant that whenever there was a gathering, ritual or tradition to be performed, people from across the border would be invited. In a conversation with one respondent on the issue of traditional events and whether they do them together with the people living across the border, she looked startled by the question, almost as if it was a given that they do cultural events together. Another respondent showed that they are basically one community with the people across the border and there is no way either of them would have an event and not invite the other. Respondents' astonishment towards this question indicated that they literally could not imagine hosting cultural events of any sort without involving people from the other side. For example, there were people from South Africa who went for initiation in Lesotho and vice versa. This was common practice amongst community members. It is important to note that during these times, when people cross the border to handle cultural commitments, border or migration regulations were not followed.

Tele Bridge community members on both sides of the border practiced their culture irrespective of the existence of the border and potential effects on their mobilities. Mr Qondanisa (2022), who resides in Tele and has siblings in Palmietfontein crosses the border every time his family on the South African side hosts cultural activities regardless of whether the border is crossable or not. He clarified:

In my opinion, the people who created this border wanted to control and limit our movement, but in practice, when we need to cross the border, we do so with little to no regard of its existence. We actually see it as a river that runs through two communities and treat it as such. When I was younger, the bridge that they have turned into a border was crossed freely as and when people wished without the need to produce travel documents. Actually, we have several bridges up the village, there was no difference between Tele

bridge at the time with other bridges we have in the community. It was until the late 1960s beginning of 1970s when we were told the bridge has now been converted to a border. This came as a shock to us and made it difficult to adjust to the new setting. As we struggled with this new reality, we found ways to manoeuvre the system and cross without documentation. This has been a repeated practice over the years as laws kept changing.

Respondents demonstrated through their mobilities across the Tele River that the border did not have any significant effect on the practice of their culture within and across the it. Respondents compared the Covid-19 pandemic border restrictions with the apartheid system that attempted to limit their movement across the border. During these two periods, people from both sides of the border still found ways to cross to the other side when necessary.

The Covid-19 pandemic border restrictions were meant to limit movement in an attempt to curb the spread of the virus. This coincided with heavy rainfalls along the South Africa-Lesotho periphery at Tele Bridge. Neither the authorities (the law) nor the adverse climatic conditions could stop people from crossing the river. Ordinarily, people would simply walk across without any hiccups or required assistance. But with the heavy rains, locals improvised and used mattresses as modes of transport to cross the river. What resulted from these illegal crossings was an increased death rate. South Africa-Lesotho border posts in general made headlines during that time as more and more people died from drowning. Social ills also took a hike. Women were getting raped and harassed by the mattress drivers. People's belongings were taken against their will. However, amid all these turbulences, community members were still willing to cross the border to participate in the cultural events of their friends and family on the other side.

Residing along the border is not the same as living further away from it. There are certain aspects of life that can only be experienced by border communities due to their proximity to the border. As ports of entry and the presence of people from different societies, there is a lot of diversity and other things going on in these regions. Equally important is the fact that people further away from the border experience life differently. This was also true for people who resided further up the border along the same periphery. Tele Bridge community members were aware of the culture of other Xhosa speaking people who live further away from the border. They had family and friends who were not border citizens, as Moyo termed them. They revealed that their culture was almost the same as that of people living further away. However,

what stood out from the culture of the people living further away from the border was their strict adherence to primitive practices. In a conversation with Thobekile (2022), she said:

Whether further away or closer to the border, Xhosa people's culture is the same. It sometimes differs in how we practice it, and that is not a result of the border. *AmaHlubi* and *AbaThembu* have different practices around the same border region. So, the difference in how we practice our culture depends on the clan, not the border. However, the Xhosa speaking people living further away from the Tele Bridge still believe in primitive ways of practicing their culture, whereas us here, we have relaxed our terms a little bit.

Respondents on both sides of the Tele River showed that being close to the border did not affect their culture as Xhosa people, but rather, the way they practice it, as Xhosa people further away from the border still believe in primitive ways of life. Respondents further revealed that not only being close to another country facilitated the dilution of culture, but also sharing space with people from different parts of the world.

6.5 CROSS-BORDER COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN TELE BRIDGE BORDERLANDS

6.5.1 KINSHIP

As was witnessed from the interaction of community members with each other on a regular basis, shared culture was conceived of as part of the unifying factor between these border communities. Community members crossed the border whenever they needed to, irrespective of the regulations put in place. Respondents were involved in unauthorized crossings despite stipulated regulations in the Migration Act and Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on travelling. For instance, 29 community members had crossed the border without the necessary travel documents. Some did not want to disclose their involvement with unauthorized border crossings. Some had crossed during the Covid-19 pandemic travel restrictions, others had taken part in assisting or liaising illegal border movements, and some were financially benefiting from these crossings. For the latter, it had become their source of income. It has not been easy for government officials to enforce adherence to border regulations in this community, and unauthorized crossings continued to take place. This finding is confirmed by the arguments made in the Conceptual Framework chapter, where borders were viewed as processes, because bordering, as a process is in the hands of border communities, as dictated by convenience. The

conclusion in this chapter was that Tele Bridge inclined more to the definition of a border as a process than as a geographical entity or an institution.

Tele Bridge inhabitants share culture, language, and history with the communities on the other side of the border. Respondents had close ties with one another due to their shared cultural and linguistic traditions. Mr Sebenzile, who resides in Qhoboshane, indicated that they have a long history of interaction and exchange with the people on the other side of the border, which leads to a strong sense of solidarity and mutual understanding. There have been other border communities with similar experiences to the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. Flynn (1997) conducted a study on the Yoruba-speaking people of Shabe between Nigeria and Benin. Similar to the border inhabitants of Tele Bridge, the Yoruba-speaking people had a strong sense of solidarity and brotherhood nurtured by shared cultural and linguistic traditions. The Shabe border communities further drew their solidarity from the Okpara River that divides the two countries. For them, drinking water from the same river inevitably makes them brothers. The river that was used to divide the two countries is perceived by these border communities as a uniting device and a place of convergence for them.

Community members in this border region enjoyed reasonably unrestrained movement across the border. They would treat the border as though it was just a river and totally disregarded stipulations that borders have regulations that govern them, and that there are repercussions for failure to adhere to such rules. Community members in this area would interact with each other across the border as and when they wanted to. This background provides a foundation on the relationship between the two communities across the Tele Bridge, or river, as they see it. Mr Phakathi (2002), who was born and raised in Palmietfontein recalled a time before the Tele Bridge became a border and said:

When we were young boys growing up in this community, that bridge over was not operating as a border, but as a bridge to cross safely to the other side. Until the late 1980s, children from Lesotho side of the border attended school this side. There were no immigration documents needed for them to do that, no study visas were required, and no travel documents. The apartheid government later banned free movement across Tele Bridge and toughened migration regulations. The number of children attending school this side declined. Regular movement across the border also lessened. As time went by, people found ways to manipulate the system and found their way back to free movement across.

Long forged relations between the two border communities were the reason the inhabitants of this border region managed to find ways around the system. This is similar to how the Beitbridge border citizens' long forged relations across the Limpopo River afforded them the reason to find ways to negotiate the border and adopt strategies that help them to overcome the rigidity of state apparatus (Moyo, 2016). The South African government particularly, was the one against free movement across the Tele River. However, border inhabitants' good relations with each other across the river facilitated ease of movement even if it was illegal.

There were countless indicators of harmony between the Tele Bridge border communities. For example, Mrs Vilakazi (2022), an elderly woman who resides in Qhoboshane, reminisced about the challenges they went through during the apartheid regime. She attested in an interview:

At the time when politically active people were being attacked and killed in South Africa, they would seek refuge in Lesotho. Some later came back to the Eastern Cape when things started to stabilise, while others settled for good. This is one of the many ways how families got to be spread across the border. It would not make sense to treat the people from across as strangers or enemies because some are our blood relatives who fled the country in times of political upheavals. Some are friends who provided shelter and protection to those who came back to South Africa later on in life.

Seipei (2003) explains how the Xhosa people of South Africa ended up seeking refuge from Lesotho. She alludes, during the apartheid regime in South Africa (1948-1994), many South Africans sought refuge in Lesotho to escape persecution and discrimination. Lesotho was seen as a haven for political refugees and activists who were fleeing from the then oppressive South African government. Many of these refugees were involved in the liberation struggle and were seeking a place where they could continue their fight for freedom and equality. Kinship between the two communities was therefore strengthened by a long history of solidarity and compassion for each other that took place in times of need and desperation. Respondents on both sides of the border interpret their relationship across the border as that of brotherhood than neighbourhood.

One Saturday morning, I took a walk along the river. Children from both sides of the border met at the river to play sports together. As they were swimming from one side of the river to the other, they were screaming joyfully at each other talking about how they will meet up again later to continue their games on the other side of the border, at one of the children's homes. During this time, they would take turns and take little breaks from swimming. They had the

liberty to either lie down on the South African side or Lesotho side of the border. This was completely normal for them. Surprisingly, border patrols also did not have a problem with this activity. For these children, their perception of the Tele River was not that of a border, but a place of convergence where they get to meet up with their friends and have fun. The same attitude was seen amongst elders. Adults would go to the river to do their laundry or to fetch water. Interactions between those who went to do laundry were similar to the ones between the children. The adults would sit on the one side of the river to wash and rinse their clothes, regardless of where each of them came from, and then use the other side to dry or semi-dry their clothes. While doing this, they would chat and laugh about everything, talk about things that they go through as a community. They also regarded each other as one. There were no incidences where others would be treated differently because of occupying separate territories according to their governments.

There were no records of hostility against each other at this border region. People lived in harmony. On the emphasis of harmony between the two communities, Mrs Vundle (2022), who lives in Mdeni revealed in an interview:

When Basotho people further away from the border host cultural events, the King, who is also the Head of State invites the us, the Xhosa people of Tele Bridge to go and perform our cultural ceremonial practices. The King, Moshoeshoe 111, would ask me to make him and his family Xhosa attires in honour of our solidarity.

There are strong cultural and historical connections between the Tele Bridge inhabitants of South Africa and Lesotho. The two communities share a common language and culture and have a long history of interaction. Many people in this community as shown in the findings, have family ties that stretch across the border, and there is a high degree of cultural exchange that ripen the kinship between the people in this community.

6.5.2 UNIFORMITY OR DIVERSITY? PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL TRAITS

Tele Bridge residents on both sides of the border had similar physical features. There was no distinction between how the people on either side of the border looked. Through interactions with these border peoples, this study discovered that it is generally true that people who live in the same region or come from the same ethnic group tend to have similar physical features.

This is because physical characteristics are often passed down from one generation to the next through genetics. For example, people who come from Africa tend to have dark skin, while people who come from Asia tend to have yellow or brown skin. Similarly, people who come from certain regions of Europe tend to have lighter skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes.

Respondents were asked if they see themselves as the same with the people living across in terms of physical and social traits. Miss Thobekile (2022) replied:

Yes, we do look the same. There is no way we would not look the same when we even have blood relatives across the border.

This did not take away the fact that they share the same location. The river runs between them, they experience the same climatic conditions, they get the same ecological services from the environment, therefore, their physical features were a product of one geographical setting. In terms of social traits, they confirmed what I deduced from observation. They behaved the same. The atmosphere was the same while conducting interviews on both sides of the border, in as far as social behaviour was concerned. I did not observe any differences; they portrayed the same behaviour. However, the one thing that was not the same was their economic realities. Their social traits were also the same.

Neighbourhoods, cities and states are where people live, these locations' physical and social structures can influence the behaviours, thoughts and emotions (Rentfrow 2013). Geographical locations also have an undeniable effect on people physical features. A novel method of comprehending interactions, behaviours and psychical traits of human beings is made possible by the geographic perspective. Tele Bridge's physical location played a big role in how the border inhabitants look, ranging from the texture of their skin, the skin colour, body size, hair texture, and so forth. This is evident in how Africans look different for example. It is easy to guess where a person's is from judging by the way they look, their behaviour, and their general conduct. For instance, people from West Africa have different physical features from those in East, North or southern Africa. An example is the Bantu people from Central Africa, who generally have big bodies, are very tall, and usually have darker skin tones.

6.5.3 ECONOMIC AND LIVING CONDITIONS

The two countries at Tele Bridge, South Africa and Lesotho, have differing economic statuses, with South Africa being more advanced and wealthier. Economic status and important economic indicators like gross domestic product (GDP), unemployment rate, employment growth and GPP per capita are used to describe countries. Low levels of education, inadequate infrastructure, poor sanitation, restricted access to health care, and reduced cost of living are frequently found in developing countries together with low output rates and trade difficulties. At the time of this study, South Africa was ranked the third richest country in Africa and Lesotho was not in the top 10. Consequently, people from these two countries do not experience similar economic challenges.

South Africa and Lesotho were both British colonies that gained independence at different times. Lesotho is entirely landlocked within South Africa but received independence before South Africa. When colonialism ended, South Africa was faced with another oppressive rule, apartheid. In the early 1990s South Africa was freed from the apartheid rule and the new government put in place policies to improve black people's lives. A lot of these policies prioritized basic human needs including housing, free health care services, grants, and development. This is where Lesotho was left behind because post colonialism, the then government did not implement policies to address the basic human needs of the people.

When respondents were asked if they ever need people from across the border to participate in their livelihood activities, there were sharp contrasts in this area of their lives. People who reside in South Africa had different answers from the ones who reside in Lesotho. Figures 6.2 and 6.3 indicate the percentage of people who admitted they need people from across the border in their livelihood activities. Figure 6.2 indicates the percentage of respondents who reside in South Africa who need people from across the border to participate in their livelihood activities. Figure 6.3 indicates the percentage of respondents who reside in Lesotho who need people from across the border to participate in their livelihood activities.

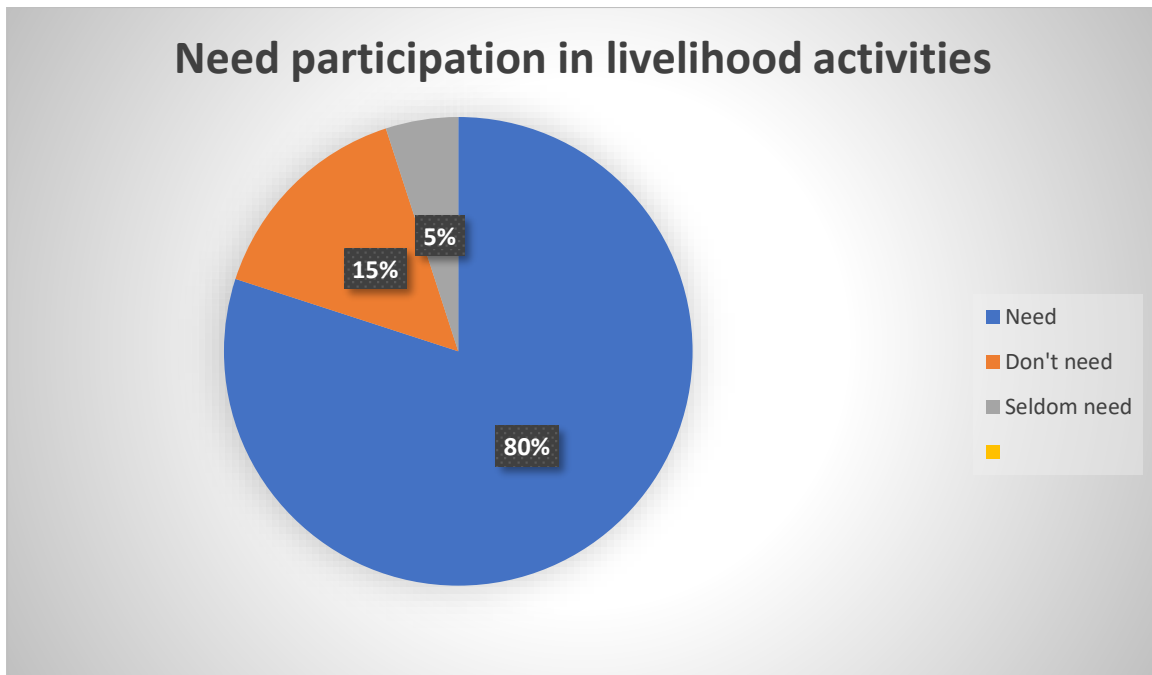


Figure 6.2 People who reside in South Africa that require cross-border livelihood participation

Source: Fieldwork data

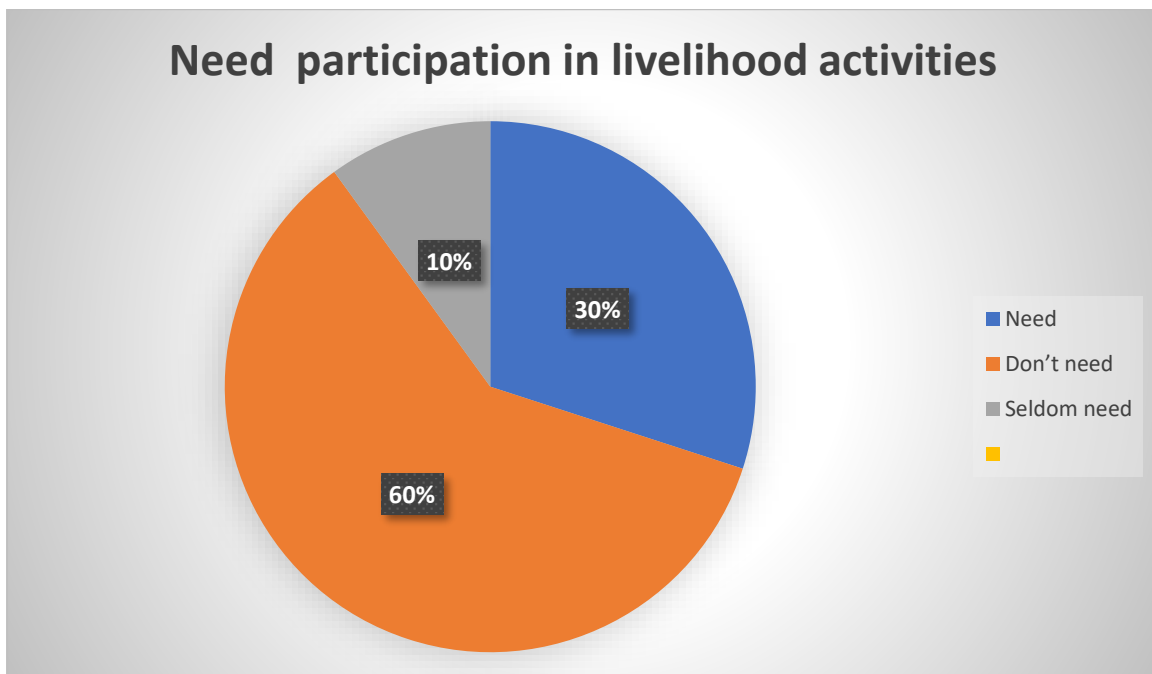


Figure 6.3 People who reside in Lesotho that require cross-border livelihood participation

Source: Fieldwork data

Most people (80%) who reside on the South African side of the border, indicated that they need people from the Lesotho side of the border to participate in their livelihood activities. They revealed that this was for housekeeping services, help in agricultural activities (cultivating, hoeing, and harvesting). Housekeeping services are normally provided by women, who do it concurrently with becoming child minders in such households with young children. Women also work at the hair salons and supermarkets owned by their Xhosa speaking counterparts across the border. Men and boys from Lesotho herd livestock on the South African side of the border and become gardeners. When it comes to farming services, all genders participate depending on the role being performed at the time. The majority of respondents in this category had large tracts of land and small businesses or were employed and could not therefore look after their children. The high labour supply from Lesotho to South Africa at Tele Bridge is a reflection of the two countries' economic statuses. Many people from Lesotho offer labour to the Xhosa speaking people of Tele on the South African side because households' economies are not the same.

Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that they do not need people from Lesotho to participate in their livelihood activities because there is not much to be done. These were mostly people who were not employed, who did not have young children, and had a few manageable fields for farming. They also revealed that seeking assistance in livelihood activities meant having to pay for such services, and it would be difficult to do so since many people no longer accept the barter system as a form of payment. Five percent admitted they seldom need people from across the border to participate in their livelihood activities, except on rare occasions where they borrow farming equipment from them.

Many people (60%) who reside in Lesotho, revealed that they do not need people from the South African side of the border in their livelihood activities. In their argument, they have always depended on themselves for such engagements. A lack of money has taught them to make use of what they have and ensure it is sufficient. With the little money they get from having one member of the household as a migrant worker, they did not need assistance from people across the border. Thirty percent disclosed that they do need people from across the border in their livelihood activities. Some divulged that they can no longer seek for employment in the mines, in the farms in Cape Town where most of the Xhosa speaking people from Lesotho go, and other places further away from home, as they have a lot of commitments. Working across the border provides them with stability and convenience to know they can

always go home and see their children, their parents, and their spouses with ease. They revealed that they earn low wages for menial jobs that they do from across the border, but it gives them mental stability, and they can feed their families, so it counts for something. Ten percent of the respondents showed that they seldom need the people from the South African side of the border to participate in their livelihood activities. However, in incidences where they need to borrow money from informal institutions, like loan sharks, they need people from across the border. Loan sharks are not common in Lesotho, while on the South African side of the border borrowing money in that manner is common practice. When faced with financial challenges, they then need the people from across the border to borrow money. Otherwise, they hardly ever engage with them in that manner.

Respondents were also asked if they see themselves as the same with the people across the border in terms of living conditions, and if there are perhaps any opportunities that the other Xhosa speaking people across the border have that they do not. Place of residence once again came into play on this question. People who reside in South Africa alluded that their living conditions are better than those of their counterparts in Lesotho. The South African government provides free housing services to disadvantaged groups. Children, the elderly and disabled people receive grants. Citizens have access to free health care services. In a conversation with Mrs Vilakazi (2022), she said:

No, we are not the same with the people from Lesotho in terms of living conditions. We have access to a number of services which they do not have. For example, our old age grant starts at the age of 60, but I think for them it is later than that. The amount of the money is also not the same, theirs is less. We also have grants for young children, which they also do not have.

Respondents from the South African side of the Tele Bridge reported that their living conditions were better compared to people on the Lesotho side of the border. They noted differences in housing, infrastructure, and access to health care. South African infrastructure was described as more advanced, and health facilities were easier to access and better developed. Some individuals from Lesotho sought medical care in South Africa due to the proximity and cost-free services, while in Lesotho they would have to pay for both transportation and treatment. This is a further reflection of the two countries' different economic statuses and the economic disparities between the two countries. Tele Bridge

residents of South African had access to government-provided basic necessities, while those on the Lesotho side did not.

Respondents from the Lesotho side of the border revealed that their living conditions were not the same as those of border residents on the South African side, because the government does not make provision for free health care services and the type of financial aid that the South African government provides to its citizens. Xhosa speaking people of Lesotho demonstrated that their government is not so active in ensuring the wellbeing of its citizens. In Lesotho, disadvantaged groups are not given free housing and people, rich or poor, build their own houses. Thus, in a country where the unemployment rate is alarmingly high, people have to also pay for health care services. Furthermore, although the South African government offers free housing to the disadvantaged, when it comes to South Africans living along the Tele Bridge border, the South African government has not provided a single house to any of the residents. Another take home message was that a lot of elderly people from Lesotho receive grants from SASSA in South Africa. This was possible as people had identity documents from both countries, especially those who had family on the South African side of the border. It then becomes difficult for the officials to differentiate between the Xhosa speaking people of Lesotho and South Africa because they share names, surnames, family members, and so on. There were thus inequalities between the two communities at Tele Bridge that includes the provision of grants. In order to bridge the economic inequality along the border, people have found ways to benefit from both countries. Gashaw (2017:1) purported that “the improper design of African borders and use of these designs as political instruments have increased instability and underdevelopment for borderland communities across the continent.” He went on to show that widespread poverty, a lack of infrastructure, inadequate education, and limited upward mobility are just a few of the human security issues that the borderland populations are exposed to due to the lack of economic, social, and political development. Tele Bridge borderlands are similar to this analogy, except that there is no conflict between border communities in this area.

6.5.4 PERCEPTIONS OF THE BORDER

Tele Bridge inhabitants on both sides of the border had their perceptions of the border influenced by different factors of their history. Some border communities may see the border as a source of conflict and division, while others may view it as a source of economic

opportunity or cultural exchange. Still others may see the border as a neutral or insignificant divide. African borders, Tele Bridge border included, were drawn with inadequate knowledge of the ethnic configuration of the area. On how respondents viewed the Tele Bridge, Mrs Vaphi (2022), aged 76, elaborated in an interview:

I have fond memories of how peaceful growing up in Tele area was before the bridge became a border. We used to cross the bridge to visit my uncle on the other side of the river and walk back to my house in the late afternoon. I lost my mother at a very young age, my uncle's wife then became my guardian and raised me and all my siblings on the now Lesotho's side of the border. When I became of age, my uncle decided to build me a house across the river on a piece of land he owned. The intention was to give me and my siblings a place to call home since our mother did not have a house of her own. This was also to avoid conflict with his children should he die before we are able to stand on our own feet. I would cross the river at the bridge to visit family without any hassles. I later had a child and my uncle's wife would cross the river every single day for three months to come help with the new baby. The distance from her house to here was short, and in any case, most people in this community were crossing to the other side as frequently as needed. Our interactions were easier without the border. Our movement was not controlled, but things are not the same now, we cannot even be allowed to cross and bury family members across without issuance of a passport, which I do not have.

The elderly experienced life at Tele Bridge under two different systems, before and after the border. They were still struggling with the new system of two states at lock ahead on who belongs where. The same happened at the Italian-Australian border where the elderly had experienced life in more than one state with different practices in their lifetimes. As Wastl-Walter (2009) put it, they became accustomed to possessing many passports, picking up new languages to speak, finding themselves in various areas, and learning new languages. Similar to residents of the Vojvodina, these people and their descendants may have a distinct sense of territorial belonging and national identity, as opposed to belonging and identity. As a result, they frequently have normative knowledge of both sides.

Generally, respondents were not fond of the border, particularly those above the age of 50. Having experienced life at Tele Bridge before it became a border and after, they preferred the old system and admitted that it was more peaceful and habitable then, than it is now. Another community elder exhibited extreme dissatisfaction with border officials and said he would

rather have the old way where people would just cross the river instead of being harassed by the officials at the border. In his words Mr Velaphi (2022) said:

We used to cross this bridge as young boys without any hiccups. We used to play with other boys from across the river (Lesotho). This was a daily practice. Then the Boers came and restricted free movement across the river. We were told then that the two villages across the river belonged to two states and we had to ask for permission to cross. This brought discomfort in our community, but even then, the bridge was still somewhat accessible to us. There was no border and there were no buildings by the bridge. The police would come on certain days to patrol at the bridge. We would then ask for permission to cross which no one was ever denied. We would even sleep over on the other side and on our way back, meet the police and go home. It was after building a couple of offices when we were then asked to produce passports to go on the other side. This is where all our problems started.

In addition to concerns about freedom of movement and the quality of education, community members also mentioned negative social impacts that accompanied the creation of the border. One of the main issues was the theft of livestock, particularly cattle, sheep, and goats. These crimes were often committed by individuals from Lesotho and reported to the police on both sides of the border, but the authorities frequently failed to act. Frustrated by the ineffectiveness of the legal system, South African residents eventually took matters into their own hands and used mob justice to deter future theft. There were also reports of rape and fatalities in the area, which were attributed to the pent-up frustration and lack of proper channels for expression due to restricted movement. The border also contributed to increased fatalities as people continued to cross the river, even in dangerous weather conditions, in order to bypass the regulations governing the bridge. Prior to the creation of the border, the bridge had been used freely by individuals on both sides.

If given the choice, the Tele Bridge community on both sides of the border would prefer that the bridge be used solely as a bridge, rather than as a border. They do not deny that social issues may have occurred regardless, but they believe that the border has exacerbated the frequency and severity of these issues. Many of Africa's current problems can be traced back to the arbitrary division of the continent with little consideration for pre-existing cultural, economic, and political patterns and networks. The creation of artificial boundaries in Africa has disrupted integrated natural planning zones and ecosystems, as well as divided unified cultural areas (Asiwaju 1999).

Although the Tele Bridge community faced challenges believed to be caused by the border, their long-standing relationships and shared culture helped prevent these issues from escalating into more severe problems, such as the genocides and wars witnessed in other border regions. For example, Algeria and Morocco went to war over border disputes, and Somalia claims sovereignty over Ethiopia and Kenya. The Ewe tribes' native country, Togo, has demanded that Ghana return the territory it annexed from the Ewe nation. These types of border disputes can take different forms and shapes depending on the culture of the communities involved.

6.5.4.1 People's relationship with the border

As shown previously on people's perception of the border, Tele Bridge residents controlled their movement across the border regardless of the laws and regulations that govern border crossings. Community members' lives revolved around the border area and this meant crossing the border frequently. Individuals between the ages of 18 and 50 visited the border more frequently than those over 51. They crossed the border for a variety of reasons, including visiting friends and family, attending cultural events, and purchasing goods. South African residents at Tele Bridge frequently crossed the border to buy fuel in Lesotho, as there were no petrol stations within proximity on the South African side. The nearest petrol station on the South African side was about 40 km from the border, while on the Lesotho side it was 10 km away. Everyday items such as bread, salt, and oil were also purchased from either side of the border depending on supply and demand. If a shop on one side of the border was out of a particular item, community members would cross the border to obtain it from the other side. Lesotho residents frequently crossed the border to purchase clothes, household supplies, and groceries in bulk from the neighbouring town of Sterkspruit. Some individuals even crossed the border daily to go to work in South Africa. Respondents reported that these mobilities took place in conventional and unconventional ways as and when the need arises. For example, in an interview with Miss Thobekile (2022), she revealed:

The border opens at 6 am and closes at 10 pm every day, but if we need to cross before 6 am in the morning, we do, if we want to cross after 10 pm, we do so. We obviously do not cross by the offices, but we are not affected by the time slots that the border operates on. Sometimes the border closes completely, like the recent occasion of the Covid-19 movement restrictions. Yes, we were not allowed to cross to the other side officially, but that did not stop us from going to Sterkspruit to buy groceries and winter clothes for our

children. I would send my children to the shops in Qhoboshane for small supplies like bread for example. My cousin in Mdeni lost her husband during this time too, there is no way we were going to miss the funeral because cross-border movements were not allowed. My family and I went to Mdeni a couple of times during funeral preparations and on the day of the funeral. So yes, we cross to the other side when there is a need to do so even if the authorities do not allow.

Despite being a physical structure governed by rules and regulations, the Tele Bridge border was regularly crossed by residents for reasons of convenience and necessity. During the Covid-19 pandemic, both South Africa and Lesotho implemented restrictions on movement across the border, but this did not prevent border residents from continuing to cross. Respondents reported that their lives straddle both sides of the border and that any restrictions on their movement would have negative impacts. Some individuals were employed on the South African side of the border and had to commute daily, including those who needed to start work at 6 am, such as cleaners. Since the border only opens at 6 am, these individuals resorted to finding ways to cross the border before it officially opened in order to avoid jeopardizing their employment. Thus, Tele Bridge residents recognised the border as a structure, but how they related with that structure was entirely up to them. According Paasi (1999:670) “borders are understood as manifestations of social practices and discourses that may be simultaneous and overlapping.” A similar scenario to the Tele Bridge residents was demonstrated by Flynn (1997:313):

Shabe border residents have embraced their interstitial position because they can control their own movement, as well as the movement of others, in their border region. Unlike U.S.-Mexico border residents, who are subject to intensifying, dangerous, and life-threatening state controls on their border crossings, Shabe have been able to appropriate the Benin-Nigeria border and emphasize their deep placement within the borderland. Rather than standing as a stark, guarded barrier to wealth and opportunity, as the U.S. border does to many Mexicans, Shabe on both sides of the boundary can profit by moving easily from one side to the other and by exploiting state inconsistencies and controls.

Residents of the Tele Bridge border crossed for a variety of reasons, including visiting family and friends, attending ceremonies and funerals, and seeking medical treatment, both traditional and pharmaceutical. Many individuals from Lesotho crossed the border to South Africa monthly for medical check-ups at the hospital, while there were also cases of South Africans seeking medical help in Lesotho. Elderly individuals from both sides of the border reported

crossing the border frequently when they were younger but cited age and health issues as barriers to doing so now. They also complained about the tedious process of crossing the border, both at the official crossing points and at the river. In addition, some elderly residents of Lesotho crossed the border to collect their monthly grants, often in combination with hospital visits to minimize trips. Thus, Tele Bridge residents interact with the border in a way that best suits their lives. It has little significance in their daily lives, particularly their mobility.

African borders have long been characterized by high levels of mobility as people have migrated within the continent for various reasons, including in pursuit of peace, stability, and improved livelihoods. In recent times, this mobility has been driven by labour, seasonal, and forced migration. For example, there has been an increase in migration from Zimbabwe to South Africa due to the economic regression in Zimbabwe, leading many citizens to seek employment elsewhere. This phenomenon is not unique to Africa, as Europe has also experienced high levels of migration or mobility at its borders, such as during the Russia-Ukraine war when many Ukrainian people fled the country to seek refuge in neighbouring countries like Poland.

6.5.4.2 Border regulations

Institutions run on regulations that govern them and borders are no exception. For any institution to function efficiently, there has to be transparency, accountability, and good governance amongst other things. Below are the border regulations for each country:

Aliens Control Act 1996, Notification of Ports of Entry and Departure for Lesotho:

1. The Act regulates entry into, stay in, and departure from Lesotho. It provides for fees and procedures for issuance of Visas and residence permits.
2. It gives the Minister the power to appoint ports of entry and departures.
3. The law further gives Immigration Officers the power to deny persons who violate this law permission to enter Lesotho; to detain any person whom they have suspicion and the power to expel any unwanted person in Lesotho.
4. It requires persons to be in possession of a valid passport

According to the Aliens Control Act 1996, Notification of Ports of Entry and Departure for Lesotho, the Minister of Lesotho has the authority to designate certain places as ports of entry

and departure through which aliens must enter and leave the country. Aliens must obtain permission from an authorized officer to enter or leave Lesotho and may be subject to certain conditions. Aliens are not allowed to enter or leave the country at any place other than a designated port of entry or departure, unless specifically allowed by the Minister. Any alien who enters or leaves the country at an unauthorized location will be considered to have committed an offense. Authorized officers have the power to examine and interrogate aliens and may require them to produce a passport and proof of their right to enter or leave the country. Aliens may also be required to undergo medical examination. It is an offense for an alien to refuse to comply with these requirements or to provide false or misleading information to an authorized officer.

The Immigration Act 13 of 2002 (South Africa) intends:

1. To provide for the regulation of admission of persons to, their residence in, and their departure from the Republic:
2. And for matters connected therewith.

The White Paper on International Migration and Border Management (2017) amended stipulations of the Immigration Act and argues, that the management of South Africa's borders has historically been fragmented, leading to compromised integrity. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) plays a leading role in managing the border environment, including regulating and facilitating the movement of people through points of entry (POEs) and issuing passports and visas. The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) is responsible for securing the borders, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) regulates the movement of goods and money, the South African Police Service (SAPS) combats crime, and other government departments such as Transport, Health, and Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries regulate entry and exit according to their respective mandates. The DHA follows a layered approach to manage risk and uses a risk-based method to build a complete history of the visits of all those who come to South Africa, linked with effective screening of visitors before they leave their home country or report to a POE. The goal is to prevent undesirable people from traveling to South Africa from the source countries through screening for visa issuance at missions abroad, followed by document inspection at foreign airports by airline liaison officers and advance passenger processing clearance.

Community members at Tele Bridge knew about the requirement to produce passports at the border. They knew that failure to do that had implications. They did not know the details and

the depth of the laws, but they were aware of basic crossing regulations and the consequences of non-obedience. When asked if they knew and obeyed border regulations, they admitted they knew the basics of issuing passports and crossing time slots, but they did not obey them. As demonstrated in an interview with Mr Bonke (2022) from Mjanyani:

We were used to crossing the bridge without issuance of documents. We have not gotten used to these new requirements. A lot of us in this community do not even have passports. We hardly cross by the authorities anyway, because we are closer to the river than we are to the border. We have to take taxis for us to get to Tele Bridge. Why would I get into so much trouble to go further away to see my family across the river if I can simply cross the river and get to their homesteads? If I go to Tele Bridge, I will have to take a taxi from here to the border, then take another taxi from the border to Sitoromo. This is going to cost me money and time. That is why I choose to cross the river and do what I have to do and come back home.

Mr Bonke's assertions were confirmed by Mr Phakathi (2002) from Palmietfontein. When asked if he is familiar with border regulations and if he obeys them, he declared in an interview:

Yes, I know we are supposed to use passports to go to Lesotho. I do not own one, but I do go to Lesotho when I have to. A lot of those boys at the border who are police officers and work for immigration are the children of this community. We raised them. They know me too well. I do not cross at the river like a lot of people do. I talk to the officials, and they let me pass. I have seen and heard of people getting detained or having their passports destroyed or confiscated because their period to stay in South Africa had expired. This happens a lot during Easter and Christmas holidays.

Although respondents knew about border regulations and the consequences of non-obedience, they continued to cross the border from both sides, on their own, and sometimes with the assistance of the officials. Crossings were happening at the actual border or at the river. Most of these movements across the border were happening because people from either side of the border wanted to attend cultural events on the other side. As indicated earlier, culture is one of the key elements of identity for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. They undermined the border and its rigidity to continue practicing their culture. The reality at Tele Bridge is well presented by Brunet-Jailly (2011) in a nuanced analysis of the various perspectives from which the border can be considered, particularly with regard to the role of culture in shaping relationships in border communities. He posits that cultural differences at the border exacerbate

and ripen the divisive nature of the border, but shared culture fosters a sense of permeability and interconnectedness.

The reality at Tele Bridge regarding people's interaction with the border was inconsistent with border regulations. Regulations from both countries stated that people are expected to possess travel documents (passports) whenever they need to cross the border. People are expected to cross at the actual border, where immigration officers are located, at specific times that the border operates. However, the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border would use any means at their disposal to cross the border. Some did not have passports but would still cross to the other side. The border was not the only place used to travel to the other side. The two states involved had clear stipulations on migration and border operations, the people along the periphery however, adopted their own ways of manoeuvring across the border.

6.6 THE CONCEPT OF BELONGING AT THE TELE BRIDGE BORDERLANDS

6.6.1 CITIZENSHIP

The introduction of the Tele Bridge border? caused respondents to be both placed and displaced. As a result, citizenship was not as straightforward as expected. There were individuals on the South African side of the border who were born in Lesotho, and there were also individuals born in South Africa who were found in Lesotho as citizens. In contrast to identity, citizenship is typically not fluid, but it was a different story for these border communities. Many people, particularly from Lesotho, had dual citizenship. For example, people born in South Africa who were married to individuals from Lesotho retained their primary citizenship (South African) and acquired spousal citizenship from Lesotho. While these two countries do not permit dual citizenship, the respondents were unwilling to relinquish their rights in either country to comply with the law. Below are figures indicating the number of people at Tele Bridge, from each country and their place of birth.

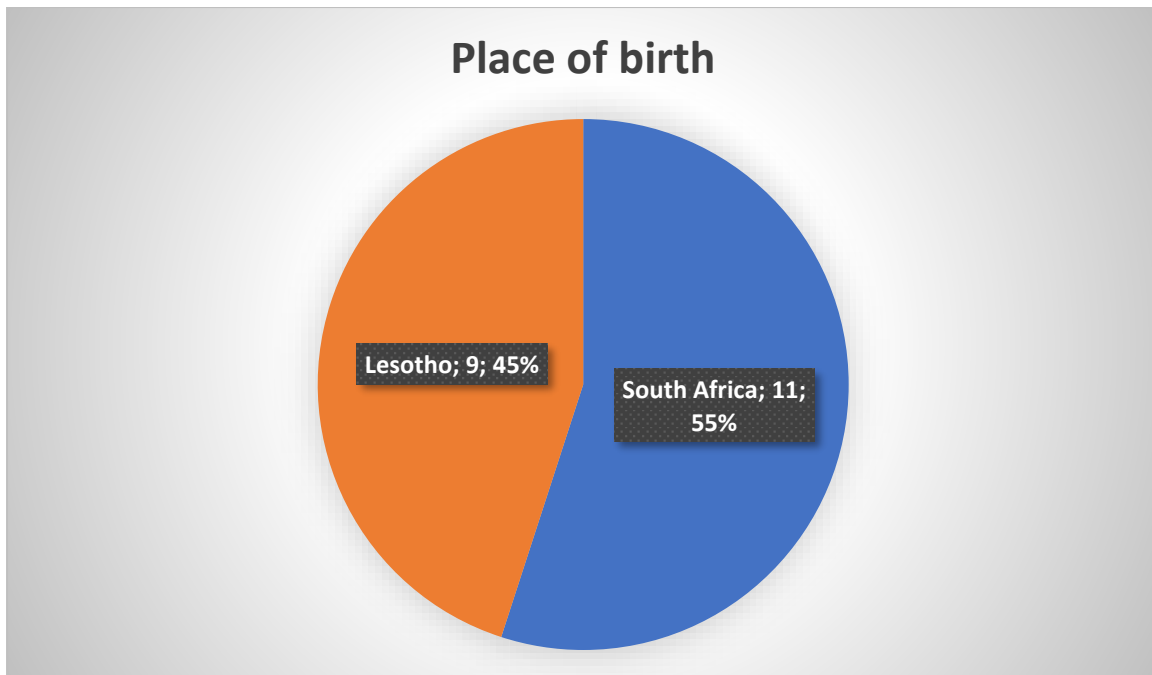


Figure 6.4 Place of birth for the people on the South African side of Tele Bridge
Source: Fieldwork data



Figure 6.5 Place of birth for the people on the Lesotho side of Tele Bridge
Source: Fieldwork data

Seventy percent of the people in Lesotho along the Tele Bridge border were born in Lesotho and 30% were born in South Africa. A greater number of the 30% category possessed both

citizenships. These were mostly women married to the Xhosa speaking people of Lesotho. They kept their South African citizenship because they did not want to forfeit their benefits in their home country simply because they decided to marry outside South Africa. Of the 70%, only a few had dual citizenship. These were people who had close family on the other side of the border who once lived together as one before the enactment of the border.

On the South African side, 55% of respondents were born in South Africa, and 45% in Lesotho. A significant majority of the 45% had dropped their Lesotho citizenship and became South Africans. These were people, particularly women, who married South African men. There were also men born in Lesotho who forfeited their Lesotho citizenship upon marrying South African women. Some of the 45% acquired South African citizenship through naturalization. People whose parents fled South Africa during the apartheid regime came back, some without their parents, but requested that they be given their rightful citizenship. For them, being born in Lesotho did not automatically make them Basotho because their parents were forced to leave South Africa, and that did not take away their rights as South Africans. They, therefore, were reinstated through naturalization.

6.6.2 RESIDENCE

The period of land occupation for the residents of Tele Bridge border differed according to several factors, including age. Older people who were born in this area had more years of land occupation (residence) than younger people. On both sides of the border, the elderly who were born in this area, had been living along the Tele Bridge border their whole lives, from the time they were born until the time this study was conducted. The youth and young adults who were born in this area had been living along the border their entire lives. The only difference was the number of years depending on an individual's age. Those who were born in a different country from their one of residence also had varying years of land occupation in the country of residence.

The Tele community is composed of individuals who have either been born in the Tele Bridge borderlands or who have chosen to relocate to the area for various reasons. Some members of the community moved to the region due to marriage or to be closer to family, while others have settled in the area after spending a significant amount of time on the other side of the border. Additionally, there are elderly members of the community who have chosen to reside in either

Lesotho or South Africa at a later stage in their lives in order to be near their families and avoid any potential difficulties that might arise from crossing the border on a regular basis. The respondents of this study are either native to the Tele Bridge borderlands or have formed unions with individuals who reside in the region.

Tele Bridge residents were asked if they would be willing to relocate at some point in their lives. Mrs. Nambithi (2022) in an interview explained:

Living here for me is not just about this house that I built and stay in. My ancestors lived here too, I cannot leave and go somewhere else where they will be able to locate and protect me. Their remains are in this village too. If I relocate, I will lose connection with them. I do regular visits to the graveyard to talk to them, to ask for protection and blessings, to clean their graves and take new members of our family to meet them. So, if I relocate, how will I maintain these practices? Do you see that I will be compromising the relationship I have with my ancestors? I cannot move to another place. My remains have to be buried in this village too, otherwise my spirit will never find peace.

The significance of living in Tele borderlands was corroborated by Mrs Vaphi (2022) when in an interview she expressed that:

I have family in this area and have established networks that I am not willing to leave behind. It took me time to build and nurture the relationships I have with fellow community members. I have everyone I love (family and friends) in this area. My people live here, and being close to family gives me a sense of belonging. I am not willing to start a new life elsewhere, I love my community and the peace we have all built together. This is the land of my ancestors too, my forefathers lived in this area their whole lives, and I am not going to be an exception.

Border communities at Tele Bridge, on both sides of the border, had strong emotional ties to their ancestral land, including spiritual, ethnic, and lineage connections. Many elderly individuals did not see relocation as an option, as it would mean severing their connections to their ancestors. They did not see themselves living anywhere else, where they would have to start new relations and risk disconnecting from their ancestors. Younger people also had difficulties with the prospect of moving, although their motivations were more practical, such as being unemployed. Despite this, they still considered Tele to be their home, where they felt a sense of belonging and where they would return for cultural ceremonies and rituals. Ultimately, they recognized that while other places may offer better living conditions, Tele

would always hold a special place in their hearts as the place where they could find certain things that couldn't be found anywhere else.

6.6.3 SOCIOECONOMIC BENEFITS

The Tele Bridge community is situated along the Tele River. Water is a valuable resource to human existence. The community benefited immensely from the river as it supplied them with water for irrigation, laundry, and consumption. Relying heavily on subsistence for livelihoods, the Tele community had access to water they did not have to pay for, and this helped in ensuring they did not go to bed hungry. The river also provided sand to community members, and they would use it to build their own houses, while others would sell it. There were not many who would sell sand in exchange for money, but those who did said it was a lucrative business, especially to people living far away from the river. The river also provided food to community members through fishing. This was initially done as a hobby but later proved to be a legitimate source of food. Along the riverbanks were stones used for building houses. Business minded community members would also sell these stones to communities further away from the border for building, decoration, or erecting pavements. There were trees in the area that supplied residents with firewood used to make fire for cooking and also heating in winter.

Social cohesion in this community was remarkable. Community members worked together for the betterment of their village. During the time when livestock theft was rife, they organised community policing structures where men would take turns or shifts in patrolling the village. This culture did not stop with the decrease in livestock theft. It afforded them security and stability. One respondent who had studied in the Gauteng Province for a few years confirmed that there was more security and cohesion in the Tele region compared to where he used to stay. A number of people who had been outside the village for quite some time acknowledged that life was nicer in the cities, and though they had access to a lot of services that were not found in the Tele region, they never felt at home. There were people who had recently come back to Tele after living abroad for about 15 years. What would have seemed like a dream for many people was a nightmare for that household. Different cultures, for one, made life abroad difficult for them. Ways of life that they were not used to came as a shock almost all the time. Access to resources and everything that makes life enjoyable cannot compare to being at home, around their people, where they belong. Their biggest concern was dying in a foreign land, away from family, and the possibility of being buried there, which they could not bear.

Community members' attachment to their place of residence stemmed from a number of factors that were all important to them. Tele village was home to them, and above all, home to their ancestors. Poverty at this border region was the rule of the day. However, despite unemployment, poor infrastructure, and other problems, they would not trade it for the world. In a conversation with Mrs Vundle (2022), a 72-year-old, I detected her undying appreciation of Tele village:

I was born here and lived here my whole life. My parents lived at this place until their last day on earth. My children were born here too. I have a lot of memories in this place, that I am very fond of. This is my home and I am not going anywhere. No. I would not want to relocate. Who will I leave my parents (deceased) with? How will my ancestors be able to locate me if I am at a different place? I am part of this community. I am too old to start a new life elsewhere. I have my people here. I also do not want to miss out on raising my grandchildren by relocating. I am not going anywhere; this is my home.

For the elderly respondents in the study, the possibility of relocating was not an option. Many of them expressed a desire to remain in the Tele Bridge community for the rest of their lives and to be buried alongside their ancestors on the same land. Even among those in the 39-49 age range, a significant number indicated that they also saw themselves staying in the community permanently, citing the strong networks and relationships they had built there and their belief that starting over in a new location would be difficult and disruptive. Respondents acknowledged that relocating might help them achieve financial stability, but they also emphasized the value of mental and social stability, which they felt would be compromised by a move.

In contrast, young people aged 18-45, were open to the possibility of relocating for the purpose of improving their opportunities and standard of living. They were dissatisfied with the inadequate education, poor living conditions, and feeling marginalized by the government in their current location, and desired exposure to better opportunities. While they were willing to leave Tele in search of these improvements, they still considered it to be their home and expressed a desire to maintain their cultural ties and traditions by returning for important ceremonies and rituals. Through interactions with people of different ages, it was clear that for these community members, a sense of belonging encompassed a wide range of factors, including residence, family ties, relationships, religion, and culture. They felt a strong connection to the place, the people, and their heritage. As Yuval-Davis (2006:2) indicated,

“belonging can be an act of self-identification or identification by others, in a stable, contested, or transient way.” Belonging has to do with being part of a group of people and actually feeling comfortable and happy being part of them.

After it became apparent that the community had a strong attachment to their ancestral land, a question was posed: how do Xhosa-speaking individuals living along the border differ from those living further away from the border? The majority of respondents stated that they were not the same and pointed to their place of residence as a contributing factor. Living along the border had influenced how they conducted themselves, practiced their culture, and viewed the world. In contrast, Xhosa-speaking individuals living further from the border had not been exposed to the same level of diversity as those living near the Tele Bridge border, who were exposed to people from both the neighbouring country and various other countries who pass through the border. As a result, residents of Tele were more open-minded about their cultural practices and less strict in adhering to ancient traditions, while those living farther from the border were more likely to follow them rigorously. The blending and dilution of culture that had occurred in the border area was attributed to this greater exposure to different societies.

6.7 IDENTITY FORMATION AT TELE BRIDGE:ITS CONTENTS

Identity formation, which is characterised by continuity and internal unity, has to do with the intricate process by which people create a distinctive sense of who they are. According to Pasupathi (2014) there are three primary factors that have been identified as components of identity formation: uniqueness (perceiving oneself as different from others and distinct from others), coherence (perceiving oneself as comparable across domains), and continuity (perceiving oneself as the same person across time). This study set out to establish how and why it is important for the people living along the periphery of South Africa and Lesotho at Tele Bridge to construct their identities. As previously mentioned, identity formation is a continuous process that human beings are faced with on a regular basis. The process becomes more complex when it occurs at a place that is neither here nor there. Border regions are points of convergence or divergence, and are predominantly areas of physical and cultural diversity. An already complex process (identity formation) happening at a region that is highly dynamic, altering over time, cannot be easy. Borderlands are frequently areas of cultural overlap where people's national identities or self-concepts get muddled, with different peoples residing close to one another. These factors contribute to the identity confusion (Wastl-Walter 2009). There

is a lot of identity crisis in border regions, in that people get confused with who they are because of their land occupation which is not in conjunction with who they perceive themselves as.

Be that as it may, this study unearthed four elements that contribute to the formation of identity among individuals residing along the Tele Bridge border: language, culture, cross-border relations, and ethnic belonging. IsiXhosa played a significant role in shaping individuals' self-perception, group identity, and differentiation from others. They were more drawn towards individuals who spoke IsiXhosa since they could relate better to them, and they identified themselves as distinct from those who did not speak the language.

Another key component of identity formation at the Tele Bridge border was culture. Factors that played an important role in how Tele Bridge community members made sense of self were highly complex concepts. Like identity, culture is also dynamic and no one definition would be sufficient to define it. The study discovered that the culture of the Xhosa speaking people at Tele Bridge helped the people define their identity. It contributed greatly to how they saw themselves and the entire community with which they identified with. In trying to define who they were as individuals and as a community, major emphasis was put on culture. The relationship between these border communities was another component of their group identity or social identity. Their relationship across the border and how they perceived each other had a remarkable impact on their sense of self as people belonging to the same territory. The degree of cohesion amongst community members painted a clear picture of how belonging to the same region has an impact on how people see their fellow counterparts. Regional belonging encouraged the spirit of oneness, brotherhood, and harmony. They disregarded the border in terms of how it operates, but mostly, in that it is a dividing tool between people of the same ethnicity. Their relationship with each other thrived across and through the border, because they could identify with each other and saw themselves as one community separated by a river, not a border.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an analysis of the Tele Bridge community situated in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa, and the Quthing district, Lesotho. The analysis took the reader on a journey through this rural community of Xhosa speaking people to understand the dynamics of identity formation and people's perceptions and understanding of the Tele Bridge border. Four

key insights emerged from the analysis. Firstly, language was identified as a crucial aspect of identity for community members. Although most community members could speak both IsiXhosa and Sesotho, the former was the most dominant language, even amongst Sotho people who resided along the periphery. It was established that language formed the basis of existence, as all aspects of human life revolved around language, including communication, expression, and human interaction.

Secondly, the findings of the study highlight the pivotal influence of culture on the formation of community members' identities within the Tele Bridge community. This community places significant emphasis on their cultural heritage, which encompasses a wide range of norms, traditions, rituals, and practices. Despite the presence of a border, the community remained steadfast in preserving its cultural practices, albeit through unconventional means. The cultural framework serves as a fundamental aspect of the community's identity, serving as a mirror of their unique identity and way of life.

Thirdly, the study found that the way people in Tele Bridge think about who they are has a lot to do with their relationship with other communities along the border. The communities along the Tele Bridge border had a long history of harmonious relations with one another and treated those on the other side of the border as part of their own community. People on both sides of the border had a brotherly connection that ultimately made them see each other as one, as they kept referring to everyone along the borderline as 'us'. This tradition of mutual respect and cooperation influenced the overall atmosphere at the border. The strong bond between these community members made it difficult for the two states to forcefully impose separation, as the longstanding relationships that had been formed could not easily be disrupted by the border. Rather, it was the border itself that was vulnerable to being shaken by these community bonds.

Finally, the analysis showed that belonging to a family, a community, a church, a political party, or a location has a critical influence on how people see themselves. Belonging to a certain place influences how people conduct themselves, bringing them together as a group that identifies with each other. The analysis revealed that ethnic belonging and identity go hand in hand. Belonging to the same ethnic group nurtures brotherhood and oneness. The study also revealed that living along Tele Bridge had a spiritual meaning to community members, and all community members had a connection to the area. People also associated it with their ancestors who once lived there and still had their remains on the same piece of land.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The current state system is based on the Westphalian system and Lesotho and South Africa are examples of this system. They are two states in the international system that are neighbours and share borders. People dwell in this region. Border placement is subjective and people create borders as dictated by convenience. The justification for the placement of borders is extensive and has implications for the people living along it. This study examined the relationship between the border and identity. The study posits that borders are complex and multi-dimensional processes that may have contrasting impacts on identity, and which can be understood across space and time (Tevera 2020). Hence, borders must be cross-examined for their delicate and sometimes not-so-delicate alterations in meaning and form depending on the setting as they create new states where members of the same cultural identity are spread across two states separated by international boundaries. Moyo (2016) argues that borders are a process in whose essence people partake by sometimes ignoring the very rigidity of its nature and creating an environment suitable for them. With that being said, the study investigated how cultural identity is constructed along the border. It analysed the relationship between community members linked by a common cultural identity but living across two countries. To understand the effect of borders on identity construction, this study examined the case of Xhosa speaking people of Sterkspruit, South Africa, and Quthing, Lesotho, living at the Tele Bridge border that separates South Africa and Lesotho. The study examined how people with similar cultural identities conceive their 'sameness'. Do they maintain their shared cultural identity as the basis of their sameness, even when spread across two nations? Chapter one introduced the subject and relevant concepts. A brief overview of the literature indicated that Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge and their identity formation have not previously been explored. The topic selection, justification, and applicability, as well as the study goals, methods, and conceptual framework, were all described in the first chapter. This chapter also introduced the study topic. The relationship between borders and identity with a specific focus on African borders and those between Lesotho and South Africa was examined and probed throughout the study.

Chapter Two reviewed the relevant literature on borders and their implications for identity construction for people living at the periphery of states. This analysis was guided by the idea that identity formation is significant for borderlands people due to a great deal of identity confusion in such communities. This chapter reviewed key ideas and arguments from previous scholarship and identified gaps in our knowledge as well as areas of agreement and disagreement among scholars. Additionally, the thesis compared and contrasted the work of other authors in order to develop a unique approach to the topic, thereby forming an original argument and presenting a unique perspective on the topic, further demonstrating the study's uniqueness. The chapter set out to review the relevant literature on borders and identity. This provided the basis for the subject. It was important to review the literature to avoid duplication, properly acknowledge other researchers, and identify areas for further research. This chapter helped the researcher determine the connections between works in light of their impact on the subject and other works, as well as put findings in the context of the current literature and argue why further studies are necessary. The literature review included, among others, books, journal articles, and peer-reviewed articles. The study adopted a thematic approach to the literature review.

There are two main concepts of interest in this study: borders and identity. These were discussed in Chapter Three. The chapter aimed to provide definitions that speak to the purpose of the study and attempt to explain how the concepts interact with each other in the manifested reality at the study site. Relevant elements that make up these concepts were also brought forward to better explain this relationship. Issues of ethnic belonging and culture, among others, were discussed for their role and relevance in border regions and to the border and identity. The researcher achieved this by developing a conceptual framework that borrowed insights from Moyo (2016) and Nshimbi (2019). Social identity theory, as it relates to identity formation, was also used to better explain the manner in which Tele Bridge residents construct their identities despite the existence of the border.

The research procedure was described in Chapter Four before the empirical analysis. It described the methods used to conduct the multi-sited fieldwork across two countries, South Africa and Lesotho, at Tele Bridge. Purposive and convenience sampling were used to ensure that participants met the needs of the study, that is, they were selected based on their knowledge in order to extract essential information from. These were individuals whose relations and livelihood activities spread across the border. Ethical considerations were also addressed in this

chapter. The selection of the appropriate research methods for this study was guided by the field of inquiry, with the aim of addressing the research questions. The methodology described how the research was conducted. This research was guided by the methodology which set the direction for the entire process. Chapter Four provided details the research methods used for data collection, data analysis, research design, limitations of the study, and adherence to research ethics. The methods adopted in this study are suitable for understanding the relationship between borders and identity formation at the Tele Bridge border. This chapter mainly provided details on how the research was carried out to arrive at the findings.

Chapter five described the study area. It gave a contextual overview of the Tele area's socio-economic and geographic landscape. This was achieved through the use of primary and secondary data on the area. The chapter described, among other things, the topography of the Tele area, the geographical layout, and the demographic profile of the people living in this region, also touching on aspects of ethnicity, race, and language. The aim was to paint a picture of the study population and their environment, to better understand how their identity construction is influenced by their environment. People's environment plays a big role in how they interpret the world and their reality, hence the significance of understanding the Tele area. This study adopted a worldview that sees people's behaviour or reality as a product of their interactions. It was, therefore, essential to understand the subjects' area of residence, their daily interactions with other people, and the border.

Chapter six presented the findings from fieldwork and offered an analysis of how the Tele Bridge residents construct their identities along the border. It laid out an empirically grounded analysis of people's views and realities of identity at Tele Bridge, focusing mainly on the border and its effect on the people living along it. Colonial powers had divided many closely related ethnic groups into diverse regions. They lacked knowledge of the continent and its inhabitants, they disregarded cultural and ethnic ties, their interest was in the land, and the question this chapter addressed was not whether colonial powers knew the continent they wanted to control or not. Instead, it was the effects of partitioning on ethnic groups and the present implications on identity. To answer this, the chapter used data gathered from the Tele community in South Africa and Lesotho. The conclusion was that the border inhabitants of Tele Bridge construct their identities based on their ethnic group membership. The social identity theory which was used in Chapter Three to explain identity formation, which posits that people formulate their identities based on group membership, was a clear reflection of how the Xhosa speaking people

of Tele Bridge relied on their ethnic membership to make sense of who they are despite the existence of the border.

7.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study aimed to examine the relationship between borders and identity formation with a focus on the Xhosa speaking people of the Tele Bridge border between South Africa and Lesotho. The overarching goal was to make a significant contribution to the field of International Relations and Border Studies literature while furnishing policymakers with practical insights that could be used to resolve the multifarious issues associated with borders and identity on a more comprehensive scale. Generally, borders have an impact on identity formation of the people living along the periphery of international states (Agnew 2008). However, this study has shown that Tele Bridge did not have an impact on how border communities formulate their identities, instead, shared culture dismantled the effectiveness of the border and undermined its colonial essence, that is, shared culture decolonised Tele Bridge. The study was guided by specific objectives, which have been addressed and are discussed below.

7.2.1 LANGUAGE

Research on the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge along the South Africa-Lesotho border revealed that language is a pivotal factor in the formation of their identity. By exploring the role of IsiXhosa in the self-conception of the research subjects, it became apparent that IsiXhosa was seen as almost synonymous with their identity. They had difficulty distinguishing between their identity and the language they spoke. The findings suggest that IsiXhosa was a major component in their conception of themselves, as it was used as a vehicle for expressing their thoughts and understanding the world, while also informing their sense of sameness and their difference from others along the border. Moreover, language was seen by the research subjects in Tele Bridge as a primary factor in distinguishing themselves from other groups and was key in defining who they were as a people. Thus, it can be concluded that language is a major determinant of how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge perceive their identity. The study showed that IsiXhosa in Tele Bridge had a major influence in shaping residents' personalities, their thoughts, and their development in general. The people expressed that, without language, they have little to base their identity on, insinuating that Xhosa is basically

their identity. Who they are as a people can be better articulated in the language they use to define themselves and what makes them the people they are. For the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, language helped shape and express their identity through their choice of words and the way the language was used. IsiXhosa revealed people's values, attitudes, interests, and social backgrounds. It also helped to create a sense of belonging and connection between community members along the border. Furthermore, IsiXhosa enabled community members in Tele Bridge to express emotions and show solidarity within themselves, express individual thoughts and feelings, strengthen relationships with others, and increase their self-confidence.

The contribution of IsiXhosa to identity formation was also heavily influenced by the channel through which the language was learned. People for whom IsiXhosa was their mother tongue did not have alternative means of identification apart from the language and all that it entailed. For others, who learned the language through other channels, IsiXhosa played a big role in their identity formation, however, the influence of their mother tongue also played a significant role in how they perceived themselves. In the case of the Tele Bridge region, language has significantly contributed to how border communities formulate their identities. Its role goes beyond its primary usage as a communication tool. They used the language to preserve their culture, to communicate with their ancestors, to praise and worship, and for imaginative expression and emotional release. All these aspects speak to issues of identity. The use of IsiXhosa in these border communities demonstrated how it would be virtually impossible for them to know who they are without the language. Through language, they were able to transmit and express their culture and its values. The participants regarded language as a focal point for all human interaction and activity. It was evident that one could only understand certain aspects of being Xhosa through language. There was an undeniable sentimental value attached to the language.

This study has shown that there were three main ways for people in this community to learn IsiXhosa. The most common way was through mother tongue, followed by interactions with people in the community, with formal education as the last way to learn the language. In terms of significance, no technique was more important than the other. The important part was that community members were able to understand each other clearly and efficiently. The Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge used the language to transfer culture, values, traditions, and all that concerns the preservation of the Xhosa culture through the effective use of the language. This brings the discussion to the question, what role does IsiXhosa play in the formulation of

identity of the Xhosa speaking people along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele Bridge? IsiXhosa proved to be the critical component of community members' identity. That is, there was a thin line between IsiXhosa and the Xhosa speaking people's definition of identity. Language played a pivotal role in facilitating how the subjects perceived themselves. Their definition of who they are was expressed through IsiXhosa. It allowed the subjects to convey their identities from one generation to another. It proved to have the power to express and model human experience.

Undeniably, IsiXhosa significantly connected community members, families, and friends across the border. Strangers would instantly connect upon realising that they spoke the same language. Family ties were kept intact through the use of language. Friends and associates expressed their emotions through IsiXhosa. It was key to the subjects' existence and interactions (socially, spiritually, economically, politically, and otherwise). IsiXhosa played a crucial role in how the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge formulated their identities despite the existence of the border. Tele Bridge did not temper the significant role IsiXhosa had in how they made sense of who they were as individuals and as members of the same ethnic group. Common language in border regions proved to be a unifying factor among border residents. Like the Venda-speaking people of Beitbridge, whose language enabled them to identify with each other (Moyo 2016), the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge were unified by a common language and ethnicity. IsiXhosa, one of the components of identity formation in this border region, viewed from social identity theory, which explains an individual's sense of self in relation to group membership, holds true in this instance. Coming from the same linguistic group, border inhabitants formulated their identities based on their ethnic membership, which also touched on culture.

7.2.2 CULTURE

This study sought to examine the effect of the Tele Bridge border on the culture of the Xhosa speaking people. Specifically, it aimed to address the question of whether the border had weakened or strengthened the shared culture across the river. Through an analysis of the literature, interviews, and surveys, it was discovered that the Tele Bridge border had in fact enhanced the shared culture of the Xhosa speaking people. Notably, it had enabled movement, citizenship, and belonging to be more accessible. In many instances worldwide, borders have posed threats to the local culture. The culture of people living along the periphery of states has

gone through rounds of alterations and amendments, sometimes leading to complete extinguishment. However, this study discovered that, instead of having a detrimental effect on the local culture, shared culture altered the effect of the border, and the Tele Bridge border rather served to strengthen the bonds of kinship, relationships, and community among the Xhosa speaking people. This is underscored by Brunet-Jailly's (2011) contention that culture plays a pivotal role in shaping relationships in border regions. Border regions with diverse cultures amplify the impact of the border, whereas homogeneity leads to border porosity.

Similar to Beitbridge, shared culture paved the road to several practices that make sense to those who reside along the border (Moyo 2016). Despite laws and regulations pertaining to such matters, these practices included people taking on multiple identities and crossing the border for convenience. During the 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic national lockdown, the South African and Lesotho governments agreed to close the border to curb the spread of the virus. Even though the border was closed, the Xhosa-speaking people of the area continued to cross to either side to attend cultural events, demonstrating the strength of their shared culture over the authority of the state. This case study is illustrative of the power of shared culture across the border and the ineffectiveness of post-colonial boundaries and restrictions in preventing its practice. Tele Bridge residents disregarded the border and its intended functions. For these people, "boundary lines never proved much of a physical obstacle" (Bach, 1997:103). If anything, the Tele Bridge border strengthened the culture of the people living along it.

As indicated in Chapter Three, scholars like Nshimbi (2019) demonstrated how shared culture can break barriers between members of border regions who have been coerced to follow a post-colonial border that serves to divide or terminate their culture. After years of adhering to the system, the Chewa people revived their cultural practices. The Venda-speaking people of Beitbridge found ways to negotiate the system despite the tight regulations put in place to reduce the flux of Zimbabweans coming to South Africa. At the centre of these occurrences, shared culture facilitated permeability and won. As different as their circumstances are, the two cases have one thing in common, shared culture assisted in sustaining their relations. Tele Bridge residents went through both instances at different times. The apartheid government tried to ban free movement across the border, which was not the case with the preceding government. Post-independence South Africa tightened immigration rules, making it difficult for Lesotho nationals to cross the border into South Africa. All these attempts were in vain because of shared culture across the river. Tele Bridge residents, like the Venda-speaking people of

Beitbridge, found ways to beat the system and maintained their culture through adverse conditions. They continued to cross the border in unconventional ways to participate in cultural activities across the river. They maintained and nurtured their relations and blood ties with the people across the border by disobeying border regulations. Some adopted double citizenship to make things easier for themselves. This study examined how people with similar cultural identities conceive their 'sameness'. Do they maintain their shared cultural identity as the basis of their sameness, even when spread across two different states? The answer is yes. Shared culture across the Tele River made it difficult for the border to influence local culture.

Culture is one of the essential attributes of the Tele Bridge community. It contributed greatly to determining how community members conduct themselves. In a way, culture reflects who they are as a people. It shaped their perspective on life and their values in general. Their relationship with one another and their view of the world were also heavily influenced by culture. Many respondents expressed how culture has always been an invisible bond that has tied them together for centuries and that their values and beliefs are evident in how they live their lives, the choices they make, their way of thinking, behaviour, and the development of their attitude. In other words, culture greatly influences who they are as human beings, as it covers all aspects of human activity. Their perceptions about the world were primarily influenced by their judgement skills, preconceptions, and frame of mind. These elements are firmly associated with culture. Now, something as dear to their hearts and fundamental to their existence as culture would be expected to have a firm influence on how people receive news of restrictions that threaten the practice of their culture. It was almost as though their existence was being challenged. They share something fundamental and sentimental; it is no surprise that instead of the border altering culture one way or another, culture alters people's perceptions of the border and its functions. People's behaviour towards the border was influenced by culture, as culture inspires conduct, perceptions and interactions.

In a nutshell, shared culture among individuals residing in the Tele Bridge borderlands has emerged as a significant aspect in the formation of their identities. This is attributable to the cultural similarities that unite them under one cultural category, thereby enhancing the process of identity construction through collective membership. As per the principles of social identity theory, individuals tend to develop collective identities grounded in their association with particular groups, encompassing aspects such as racial, ethnic, or gender identities. In the case of the Xhosa speaking community of Tele Bridge, their process of identity construction aligns

with the principles of social identity theory. Specifically, the inhabitants of the borderlands rely on their ethnic identity as a tool to build collective identities.

7.2.3 CROSS-BORDER RELATIONS

Another objective was to analyse how the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border relate to one another and the border. It touched on issues around kinship, family ties, border regulations, and the potential effects on their relationship across the border. The inhabitants of the Tele Bridge border had a solid sense of community, notwithstanding the border. They had a long-standing relationship that was nurtured over the years. The study discovered that the inhabitants of the Tele Bridge border have rock-solid relations that have been strengthened by shared culture and language, as mentioned earlier in the study. These relations extended beyond day-to-day interactions among community members to lineage relations. Border inhabitants had family on the other side, this strengthened the bonds resulting from their shared culture and language. Family ties strengthened the already existing relationship between these two border communities. There were instances where nuclear or extended family members were spread across the border, and furthermore, marriage between these two communities was a common practice.

The strong bond among community members was also witnessed through their collaborations to bend border regulations. Community members worked together during the Covid-19 travel restrictions to facilitate unauthorised crossings to the other side. Long-forged relations between the two border communities were the reason the inhabitants of this border region managed to find ways around the system. Children from both sides of the border regularly convened to play on either side. The border was almost non-existent for them. This was unearthed during non-participant observation, where playing on either side of the border had no implications for the participants. Children went about their daily routine, which was not interrupted by the border in any form or shape. Adults knew about the border but paid little attention to it. There were cases where some would acknowledge its presence by following migration regulations simply because they had the necessary documentation to cross. However, that did not mean if they needed to cross and had no documents, they would be stopped from crossing. Some people did not have travel documents but would still cross to the other side when needed. It has been challenging for government officials to enforce adherence to border regulations in this community because their intimate relationships challenge anything that attempts to come between their kinship. For children, however, there was no such thing as a border where they

needed to produce documents to cross to the other side to play with their friends. Law enforcement and border patrol authorities did not attempt to stop the children from playing with others on either side.

The inhabitants of Tele Bridge were not only living peacefully across the border but were similar in more ways than one. Due to these similarities across a wide range of attributes, it was easy for community members to treat each other as brothers. Most of the time, people can tell each other apart because they have different traits. This has resulted in acts of hostility in other parts of South Africa. For the people of Tele Bridge, because of their shared culture and many other things, there have not been cases of xenophobic attacks. It would be almost impossible to know which one belongs where because they are the same people. Often, human beings gravitate towards familiarity; people usually associate with what appears to be one or more of what they are. Thus, the relationship between these border communities was peaceful and mutually beneficial because they saw each other as one.

Community members would participate in each other's livelihood and economic activities across the border. People from each side of the border would from time to time take part in enhancing or assisting in livelihood endeavours. Labour migration was mostly recorded from the Lesotho side of the border. Most of these residents worked on the South African side of the border as housekeepers, childminders, herd boys or men, hairdressers, and farm workers. They provided cheap labour in return for wages that they would usually send for their families' upkeep. This practice, however, was not one-sided. A small number of people from the South African side of the border also provided labour to some households on the other side of the border. Community members from both sides admitted they need people from across the river to participate in their economic activities. Statistics differed greatly because of the different economic statuses of each country, but whether minute or major, people needed each other in economic activities. The Xhosa speaking people from Lesotho mostly needed money, whereas the ones on the South African side required labour. Both labour and wages are necessary agents of economic growth. Thus, regardless of the type of participation, people needed each other for prosperity.

The study findings established that the inhabitants of the Tele Bridge relate well with each other across the border and have a strong sense of unity. It was evident from the regular interactions that they had a great sense of oneness; their interactions and relations were largely unaffected by the presence of a border. This indicates that the community members do not view

the border as an obstacle to their relationships, nor do they perceive it as something that could impede the unity of the community. Rather, the inhabitants of Tele Bridge demonstrate a reluctance to be divided by the border and have a disregard for its implications. This is indicative of the strong sense of oneness that has been formed between the community members, irrespective of their geographical locations. Generally, people saw the border as an imposed tool aimed at making their lives difficult, and in response, they disregarded its rigidity and crossed as they desired. As mentioned earlier, families were spread across the border, which never used to be a problem before the bridge became a border. Now, because of each country's border regulations and territorial laws, people can no longer cross as they wish. Inhabitants did not interpret this as sovereign states in the international system guarding their borders and the people within them but as a problem brought about by the border itself, hence, every attempt to undermine its sovereignty. When movement was completely obliterated during the COVID-19 pandemic border restrictions, residents did not see this as a problem because border crossings were still occurring irrespective of states' decisions to prohibit this. The way Tele Bridge residents treated the border clearly demonstrated how the border was simply a bridge that brought them together, and not a barrier that limited their freedom.

During the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, there were heavy rainfalls in South Africa and Lesotho. People continued to cross the Tele River nonetheless. This resulted in high fatalities around the South Africa-Lesotho border regions, including Tele Bridge. Residents blamed the border for those casualties. They argued that if the bridge was not operating as a border, people would use it to cross to the other side safely, but because it operates under restrictive laws that do not allow movement, people are dying. The border was also blamed for livestock theft that used to happen in the community. Community members blamed other social ills like rape on the border. Community members from both sides indicated that the border has separated people of the same ethnic group and brought with it social ills. As clear as the regulations were, people still found ways to undermine the border and its inflexibility. However, these regulations did not affect their relationship with one another. It could be concluded that according to community members, the border was meant to be a place of divergence, but they have decided to make it a point of convergence because they have come a long way with each other and would not want to arouse the wrath of their ancestors for turning their backs on their own people. Cross-border relations revealed that the border was less of a physical embodiment and institution, and more of a process, as it was not affected by either regulations or its physicality that necessitated obedience.

7.2.4 BELONGING

Lastly, the research study aimed to establish why it is necessary for the Xhosa speaking people who belong to the Tele Bridge borderlands to formulate their identities. Generally, border regions have multiple cases of identity confusion. Border communities tend to have fluid meanings of identity and belonging, depending on the angle they are viewed from. The information gathered from this study revealed that citizenship, for example, is not determined by a person's place of residence, that is, territorial belonging. There were people staying on the South African side of the border who were citizens of Lesotho and those on Lesotho's side who were South Africans. This study revealed that some were citizens of South Africa but were born in Lesotho. Identity could, therefore, not be determined by place of birth or citizenship. There were a lot of overlapping occurrences that clearly demonstrated that identity is a rather fluid term for these border communities. Citizenship usually determines national identity, not ethnic identity, which is a part of ethnic belonging.

Nonetheless, for the Tele Bridge inhabitants, citizenship did little to explain the national identity of the people. There were cases where citizens of Lesotho had South African national identities. Some Lesotho citizens had both Lesotho and South African national identities. Thus, citizenship in this area was not a clear-cut indication of national identity. The study, therefore, set out to establish the necessity for identity formation at this zone where identities, cultures, relations merge and clash. Admittedly, identity formation is a continuous process that takes place for as long as human beings are alive. Understandably, where two or more states meet or separate, with families spread across the border, identity formation may be challenging. In this case, citizenship proved to be of little help in identity formation. Occupying this area meant much more than what citizenship did.

Tele Bridge inhabitants were attached to their place of residence, but most importantly, they valued their ethnic belonging over territoriality. Most of them, especially the elderly, were not eager to move to another location or even willing to entertain the thought of it. Some people were born in this area and had never lived anywhere else. Others who were born in Tele but had a taste of other places, would like to relocate for a better standard of living, but still felt Tele has to be their final resting place. For these residents, Tele included both sides of the border. Their attachment to the place was not only the side they were occupying but the entire Tele area, which was home to them. A place that is a habitat for their people, their ancestors

and for their families and friends. This is where they felt a sense of belonging, to the people, as opposed to other places they have been to before. When they spoke of home, they referred to the whole Xhosa ethnic group that was in the area, not just where their houses were stationed. Subjects demonstrated that living in the Tele area meant much more than having a place to call home. It was their ancestral land, and this meant keeping and maintaining ties with their forefathers. Community members stressed the importance of living in this area. They demonstrated that they have family in the area and have established their networks in this border region. Building and nurturing relationships took a lot of their time, and they are now one community with similar interests in life.

In conclusion, identity formation among the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, viewed from the social identity theory in this study, is consistent with the stipulations of the theory. The social identity approach examines group dynamics, relationships between groups, and self-concept from a social psychological standpoint. The inceptions of this theory were true for the border inhabitants of Tele Bridge. Their social identity was examined through their group dynamics, relationships, and interactions. It was evident from the findings that the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge derive their self-concept from the ethnic and cultural groups they belong to. Their knowledge that they are part of a bigger picture, in this case, their ethnic group, promoted their self-worth and self-concept. The realities at the Tele Bridge, as they relate to identity construction, are reconcilable with social identity theory. Border inhabitants construct their identities exactly as the theory stipulates, irrespective of the existence of the border.

In Chapter Three, the study analysed borders through three categories, physical entities, institutions, and processes. Their meanings were discussed as it pertains to the objectives of this study. The findings revealed that Tele Bridge inclines more towards the definition and analysis of a border as a process, than an institution or a physical entity. The definition of a border as a process entails the most primal function of a border, which is bordering. Going by the arguments made by various scholars such as Kolossov and Scott (2013) and Simmel (1992), who support the view that people are central to processes of bordering (see Chapter Six of this thesis), this study has established that the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge are key to processes of bordering in this area. The findings revealed that the physicality of the border and its functions require human interaction for them to survive. In any case, people are the ones responsible for diluting or solidifying the existence of a border. According to the above

arguments, Tele Bridge inhabitants, as seen in the findings, were at the centre of border crossings. Border inhabitants took control of the bordering process. They would cross the border at any time as desired, not even the COVID-19 pandemic border restrictions stopped them from crossing the border. The Tele Bridge remains relevant because of the border crossing that takes place on a daily basis, otherwise, its relevance as a border would be immaterial. Its physicality and institutional nature are kept applicable and effective by it being a process. Scholars (Benjamin 1991; Simmel 1992) argue that it is not states and cities that effect the impact of the border, but border inhabitants themselves through bordering and cross-border relations, they refer to border inhabitants as thresholds that keep the border alive and pertinent. Subsequently, the findings of this study led to the conclusion that Tele Bridge is consistent with the definition and analysis of a border as a process.

Borders serve as a physical and legal barrier that separates one political entity from another. In this study, the analysis of borders was approached through three distinct lenses, namely physical entities, institutions, and processes. The analysis revealed that Tele Bridge inclined more to the contextualization of borders as processes. Border regions are predominantly known as regions where local culture is altered, reproduced or sometimes completely extinguished. Contrary to popular belief, in the case of Tele Bridge, the border failed to alter or change the local culture, but instead, shared culture influenced the daily operations of the border.

Furthermore, humans establish borders at different scales in order to establish a sense of belonging within the world. Borders function as territorial markers, with state actors employing processes to determine who belongs and where they belong within the boundaries set. In the case of the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, the border did not serve as a territorial demarcation that defines who belongs where and in defining the boundaries between two different states, controlling movement and reinforcing a sense of national identity, because residents' sense of belonging was not tied to being on either side of the border, but by ethnicity. They considered the entire border region as their home, irrespective of how states defined or demarcated their territories.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

a) Strengthen cross-border relations

Governments at Tele Bridge should work to strengthen cross-border cooperation to promote dialogue and understanding between the countries involved in the border region. This could include encouraging cultural exchanges, developing joint infrastructure projects, and fostering joint initiatives to promote the development of the region. The two governments should also work to increase public awareness and education about the issues facing the border region and the consequences of illegal cross-border movement. This could include providing information on the dangers of illegal movement and providing resources to help border residents make informed decisions. While raising awareness and education, governments could also establish cross-cultural education initiatives that aim to raise awareness of shared cultural values and practices on both sides of the border, by utilizing existing cultural networks to facilitate people-to-people exchanges and collaboration. This could be achieved through creating a shared cultural heritage site, such as a museum or memorial, that celebrates the shared culture of the two sides of the border. Common language will work to the community's advantage in raising awareness and educating community members, considering that the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge region held their language in high regard as it formed a major part of their identity.

b) Government regulations

The two governments at Tele Bridge, South Africa and Lesotho, do not recognise the existence of 'border citizens' as coined by Moyo (2016). The two states have failed to acknowledge the fact that citizens living in border areas constitute a distinct community within a state, hence, they are still treated as two communities from different societies by the concerned governments. However, because Tele Bridge residents already have good relations across the border and live as one community, the two governments at the border can capitalise on this relationship and collaborate to deal with problems while facilitating the coexistence of Tele Bridge residents. There were incidences of livestock theft by the people from Lesotho, one of the causes being economic inequality. Tele Bridge residents on the South African side indicated that the authorities were not helping in such situations. Joint law enforcement efforts from both parties can remedy this situation. Governments can work together to address security concerns and combat crime along the border. This can help improve safety and security for border communities and promote trust and cooperation between law enforcement agencies on both sides of the border. Furthermore, to eliminate the occurrence of theft due to economic inequalities, governments can initiate joint development projects. They can collaborate on development projects that benefit both sides of the border, such as shared infrastructure projects, water management systems, or energy facilities. This can help promote economic

growth and cooperation, and reduce the potential for conflict, as witnessed in the mob justice that people on the South African side of the border resorted to. Joint solutions can further involve coordinated efforts to improve infrastructure, such as roads and bridges, or joint initiatives to provide social services and support to border communities. Once the two governments have collaborated to facilitate coexistence and solve challenges simultaneously, local communities must be involved. It is essential to involve local communities in the development and implementation of joint solutions. Local input and expertise can provide valuable insights into the unique challenges and opportunities in each community and help ensure that initiatives are culturally appropriate and effective. To further ensure the success of these initiatives, governments at the Tele Bridge border should establish communication channels to share information about the problems faced by their respective communities. This can involve regular meetings, joint workshops, and other forms of collaboration to share data and expertise. Once joint solutions are implemented, it is important to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. This will help identify any areas that require further attention or refinement and ensure that the initiatives are meeting the needs of border communities.

Moyo (2016) argued that improper recognition of border citizens can lead to illegal practices such as double identities. He used the case of Beitbridge and recommended that South Africa and Zimbabwe could learn from progressive examples in Asia, such as the Nepal-Tibetan Autonomous Region of China, where border citizens are recognized and provided with border cards that permit them to cross the border without passports. South Africa and Lesotho at Tele Bridge can benefit from adopting such initiatives for ease of legal movement by border residents. Another alternative is the Enhanced Driver's License (EDL) program used in the borderlands between Canada and the USA which is a successful initiative that caters to borderland communities by issuing residents a single card that serves as both a driver's license and proof of identity, citizenship, and belonging. This program could be a model for the governments of South Africa and Lesotho to improve the lives and mobility of border residents at Tele Bridge.

c) Ease border crossings for border communities

Governments should work to loosen border regulations to allow for easier travel between border communities in Tele Bridge, by establishing legal channels of movement to enable movement across the border. This can be achieved through developing legal channels of crossings and movement within and between countries to enable those who are crossing the

border illegally to do so safely and legally. This could include providing legal visas, temporary work permits, and other mechanisms to facilitate safe and legal migration. This would enable people to move more freely between countries, while also providing more security and protection for those crossing the border. Additionally, governments should work to provide resources and support services to those crossing the border, such as access to healthcare, education, and job training. This would ensure that those crossing the border are able to live and work legally in their new country, and contribute to their local economy. Furthermore, governments should ensure that those crossing borders have access to the rights and protections that other citizens enjoy, such as the right to freedom of movement and expression, and the right to participate in the democratic process.

7.3.1 FUTURE RESEARCH

1. The study set out to explore how identity is formulated along the Tele Bridge border. The study revealed that four main components speak to the idea of identity for the Xhosa speaking people of this border region: language, culture, relations and belonging. People identified themselves and identified with others based on these four aspects. Other aspects that also played a significant role in identity formulation were geography and topography. Community members had formed a strong connection to their geography and topography, so much so that they would often spontaneously engage in environmental conservation practices. Taking care of the environment had become instinctive to them. Future studies can delve deeper into the role played by geography in identity construction and how it helps explain issues of belonging that appeared to have nothing to do with which side of the border community members were on.

2. This study aimed to examine the relationship between borders and identity in the context of the Xhosa speaking people of the Tele Bridge border between South Africa and Lesotho. A qualitative approach and methods guided the inquiry. Data collection methods and techniques were appropriate to extract the nature of information required to make a conclusive analysis and to better understand the phenomena under study. Using a case study further facilitated probing, which provided useful insights for the study. Nonetheless, the study could have done better with a larger sample size and better representation for inference of the effect of the border on identity construction and to ease the assessment of the sample's representativeness. Further research studies can focus on a similar inquiry with a larger sample size and venture into a

comparative study. A comparative study will establish if other border communities exhibit the same behaviour, conduct and approach towards the border and their identity formation even if they speak a different language. This would be helpful to rule out the possibility that the findings of this study can only be applicable or exclusive to the Xhosa ethnic group. A comparative study will further enable researchers to make generalisations based on findings from different societies. Based on the findings, it could be from two African borders to conclude that the situation at African peripheries is similar or different. Alternatively, it can compare borders from other regions to make similar inferences.

3. Alternatively, the same study can be conducted in a different setting. This study was conducted in a region where two communities across the border share culture and relate well.

a) The same study can be carried out where people spread across the border share culture but are not on good terms, where there is turmoil between border communities. A prime example of border communities sharing culture yet being on strained terms is the situation in Kashmir. India and Pakistan have long disputed the region, and both countries claim Kashmir as their own. Although the people of Kashmir share a common culture, with a largely Muslim population, the two countries are in a state of ongoing conflict. As a result, the border between India and Pakistan is heavily guarded, and the people on either side of the border have experienced tension and unrest for many years. Similarly, in the Middle East, the Kurdish people inhabit parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Turkey, and are members of a distinct ethnic group with its own language and culture. Despite this shared identity, the Kurdish people have faced discrimination, violence, and political turmoil due to ongoing conflicts between the governments of the countries in which they live.

b) Where people on both sides of the border do not share culture but live in peace and harmony. One example of people on either side of a border who do not share a culture, but are led by peace and harmony, is the border between Canada and the United States. Despite the two countries having different languages, political systems and national identities, the border between them has been largely peaceful and cooperative. This will be useful to establish if shared culture always brings peace between border communities or whether peace is a product of proximity or other factors, and vice versa with border regions subjugated by war. This can help validate the findings of this study and test them for reliability.

4. This study was guided by a conceptual framework that was tested during the fieldwork. The conceptual framework focused mainly on the Tele Bridge border region. It was the first of its

kind in this location and in this part of the world. Current research has explored the dynamics of inter-ethnic relations in South African and Lesotho border regions, where the same language is spoken among all ethnic groups. However, future studies could delve more deeply into the impact of language and geographical boundaries on inter-ethnic relations by focusing on a different region. For instance, a study of the border between Guinea Conakry and Mali, where different languages are spoken (Pular, Malinke and Sousou in Guinea Conakry, and Bambara in Mali), could provide a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which language and geography shape inter-ethnic relations. Similarly, the particular circumstances of Lesotho as an entirely landlocked nation within South Africa could be further investigated to see how this affects the relationships between ethnic groups in the region. By testing the same conceptual framework in different contexts, it may be possible to validate or even extend the findings of this study.

7.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study set out to examine the relationship between borders and identity formation. It was guided by the notion that borders are a complex and multi-dimensional process that may have contrasting impacts on identity and can be understood across space and time. The study aimed to examine the relationship between borders and identity in the context of the Xhosa speaking people of the Tele Bridge between South Africa and Lesotho. Defining identity has been problematic because it has been a heavily contested subject. Another challenge impeding the establishment of a precise definition of the concept is that identity is continuously in a state of flux. How identity is formulated in border regions makes the process more complicated because borders are also complex. Ordinarily, identity formation takes multiple, repeated, and sometimes not repeated attempts for one to have a sense of who they are. This involves several factors depending on what identity looks like to different people. As a result, this study aimed to uncover essential elements of identity construction for the people of Tele Bridge. The purpose was to contribute to the literature and provide helpful information for policy formulation that practically seeks to address issues related to borders and identity in a broader context. A considerable body of literature on borders and border studies exists, addressing various debates and politics on borders, their meaning, and how they affect people's lives. However, there is limited literature on the Lesotho-South Africa borders. No study has been conducted on the Tele Bridge border and its influence on identity construction for the Xhosa speaking people who live along the border. This study was the first attempt to understand the

relationship between this border and identity. The following specific objectives guided the inquiry:

- a) To determine the role played by the Xhosa language in the formulation of identity of the Xhosa speaking people along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele Bridge.
- b) To examine the effects of the border on the culture of the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border.
- c) To analyse how the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border relate with one another and the border.
- d) To establish why it is necessary for the Xhosa speaking people who belong to the Tele Bridge borderlands to formulate their identities.

The research conducted for the Tele Bridge community uncovered four crucial elements that play a significant role in the identity formation of community members. These elements are language, shared culture, ethnic belonging, and cross-border relations. It was discovered that language and culture are tightly connected with identity and are frequently mentioned when addressing an individual's sense of self. Culture holds a great deal of importance for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge, as those who do not adhere to cultural practices may be ostracized and considered outsiders of the community. This is exemplified by the initiation school for men, which was considered a prerequisite for full membership in the Xhosa community.

Men who have not gone for initiation may be ineligible for some positions even in professional environments, regardless of their qualifications. Its cultural significance extends to personal relationships, with women preferring males who have experienced initiation because they are deemed stronger and more capable of protecting and leading their families. Any deviation from cultural practices may result in exclusion from certain events or activities within the community. Culture was a central aspect of identity for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge. Culture encompasses a wide range of practices and traditions, including rituals, customs, beliefs, and values that are passed down from generation to generation. These cultural elements shaped the way that community members saw themselves and their place in the world. For these border residents, adherence to cultural practices was essential for being considered a fully-fledged member of the community and for being able to hold certain positions or participate in certain events.

The study carried out in the Tele Bridge community found that language played a crucial role in shaping the community members' sense of identity. Specifically, the use of IsiXhosa held significant importance, as it served various functions that were all interconnected with identity formation. These functions encompassed communication, cultural preservation, and the expression of identity. The Tele Bridge community displayed a strong correlation between language and culture, as language served as a tool to practice and safeguard cultural traditions and rituals. Furthermore, IsiXhosa held a spiritual and sentimental value for the community members, as it facilitated communication with their ancestors and was considered an integral component of their cultural practices. According to the findings, IsiXhosa had a profound effect on the thoughts, personalities, and overall development of community members. Evidently, language was a central aspect of identity for the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge and played a crucial role in their self-conception and sense of belonging. The findings of the study revealed the influential role of cross-border relations in shaping the Tele Bridge community's collective self-conception. The community members' perceptions of themselves and their place in the larger global context were strongly influenced by their interactions with neighbouring countries and communities. Evidently, language, culture, ethnic belonging, and cross-border relations were all found to be essential components in the construction of the Tele Bridge community's sense of self. The study illuminated the profound significance of language in defining and expressing their identity, as it provided a medium for articulating the nuanced aspects of their self-concept. Notably, the study did not discount the significant role of cross-border relations and belonging in shaping the community members' identity.

The Tele Bridge community's identity formation was markedly influenced by their ethnic belonging, which played an integral role in their sense of community and oneness. Irrespective of residing on either side of the border, community members viewed the border region as their collective abode. The shared ethnicity and cultural traits acted as a unifying force, fostering communication and collaboration between individuals from both sides of the border. The Tele Bridge community's ethnic belonging was closely intertwined with their language, culture, shared history, and lineage. This shared sense of belonging profoundly impacted their self-perception and worldview, providing a sense of community and affinity to others who shared similar cultural characteristics. Ethnic belonging was a potent catalyst in shaping their identity and forging a sense of communal belonging and interconnectedness.

The findings of this research revealed that individuals in this region have adopted double identities to navigate the strict post-colonial border between South Africa and Lesotho. This is similar to the situation observed by Moyo (2016) in the Beitbridge border region between South Africa and Zimbabwe. Unlike the Beitbridge border communities, who claim to be both South African and Zimbabwean due to their long history with both countries, the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge identified with each other and belonged together as a shared ethnic group, rather than as citizens of different countries separated by a border. Citizenship was not a significant factor in the formulation of their identities, which were instead based on their membership in the larger Xhosa ethnic group. The adoption of double identities was mainly a response to the territoriality imposed upon them by state borders rather than a means of defining their identity or sense of belonging. These findings demonstrate the importance of ethnic belonging in identity formation for the Tele Bridge community, as individuals' identities are closely tied to their membership in the larger Xhosa group.

In conclusion, the study alluded that borders serve as a physical and legal barrier that separates one political entity from another. In this study, the analysis of borders was approached through three distinct lenses, namely physical entities, institutions, and processes. The analysis revealed that Tele Bridge inclined more to the contextualization of borders as processes. Border regions are predominantly known as regions where local culture is altered, reproduced, or sometimes completely extinguished. Contrary to popular belief, in the case of Tele Bridge, the border failed to alter or change the local culture, but instead, shared culture influenced the daily operations of the border. Communities along the Tele Bridge crossed the border as dictated by convenience and necessity to handle cultural activities across the border.

The study further indicated that humans establish borders at different scales in order to establish a sense of belonging within the world. Borders function as territorial markers, with state actors employing processes to determine who belongs and where they belong within the boundaries set. In the case of the Xhosa-speaking people of Tele Bridge, the border did not serve as a territorial demarcation that defines who belongs where and in defining the boundaries between two different states, controlling movement and reinforcing a sense of national identity, because residents' sense of belonging was not tied to being on either side of the border, but by ethnicity. They considered the entire border region as their home, irrespective of how states defined or demarcated their territories. In light of the above discussion and the findings of this study, it

can be said that shared culture in Tele borderlands dismantled the effectiveness of the colonial border, in which case, proved to have a decolonising factor.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



Faculty of Humanities

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho



15 October 2021

Dear Mrs LE Kokome

Project Title:	Borders and identity: identity construction among the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho at Tele Bridge
Researcher:	Mrs LE Kokome
Supervisor(s):	Dr CC Nshimbi
Department:	Political Sciences
Reference number:	14448506 (HUM061/0821)
Degree:	Doctoral

I have pleasure in informing you that the above application was **approved** by the Research Ethics Committee on 30 September 2021. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karen Harris'.

Prof Karen Harris
Chair: Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Please tick to indicate you consent to the following *(Add or delete as appropriate)*

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand the Participant Information Sheet.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have been given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate in this study.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I have had the opportunity to use a legal representative, whanau/ family support or a friend to help me ask questions and understand the study.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I am satisfied with the answers I have been given regarding the study and I have a copy of this consent form and information sheet.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without this affecting me.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I consent to the research staff collecting and processing my information, including information about my ownership of the land	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
If I decide to withdraw from the study, I agree that the information collected about me up to the point when I withdraw may continue to be processed.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
I opt to participate in this study because I understand that it is designed to gather information about academic work of faculty on campus.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

I understand that the researcher is in no way trying to harm respondents and that there are no compensation provisions in case of injury during the study. Yes No

I know who to contact if I have any questions about the study in general. Yes No

I understand my responsibilities as a study participant. Yes No

I wish to receive a summary of the results from the study. Yes No

Declaration by participant:

I hereby consent to take part in this study.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Date:

Declaration by member of research team:

I have given a verbal explanation of the research project to the participant and have answered the participant's questions about it.

I believe that the participant understands the study and has given informed consent to participate.

Researcher's name:

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX C: INFORMATION SHEET



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

BORDERS AND IDENTITY: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AMONG THE XHOSA SPEAKING PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA AND LESOTHO AT TELE BRIDGE

INFORMATION SHEET

I would like to invite you to participate in the study. You are advised to read the following information carefully, and then decide whether you want to participate or not. If you need more information or clarification on the contents of the form, you are free to ask.

My name is Limpho Kokome. I am a student at the University of Pretoria. This study is conducted entirely for academic purposes. It is about borders and identity construction among the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho at the Tele Bridge. The central aim of this study is to explore the relationship between borders and identity in the context of the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border between South Africa and Lesotho.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and involves no remuneration. You are free to withdraw during the interview without any negative implications. You have a right to refuse participation as well. I will require your views and opinions on borders and identity related issues that I am going to discuss with you. I plan to record and take notes of our discussions, but recordings can only be made with your consent. I selected you to participate because your contribution will add value to my study.

I will ensure anonymity and confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. This way, not even the researcher will be able to link responses to participants. The information I will gather from you will be protected and stored at the university for a period of fifteen years. Your participation in the study will not, in any way harm you or members of your households. This study's results will be used for academic purposes or further research.

Cell number:+27 81 445 1525

Email:deekokome@gmail.com

Thank you!

APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Border and Identity Questionnaire

As part of my PhD research at the University of Pretoria, I am investigating the impact of a border on identity construction at the Tele bridge border. This interview is conducted solely for academic research, and I will exclusively use the information for educational purposes. Your responses will be treated confidential, and your identity will remain anonymous. I would like to record the discussion with your consent. If you do not permit me to record the conversation, I will take some notes to remember the essential comments you will make during the interview. Your participation is entirely voluntary; this means you do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you agree to participate, you have the right only to answer questions you choose to respond to. The discussion will take an hour to two of your time.

1. Demographic data

a) Age

0-17	18-35	36-50	51+

b) Gender

Female	Male

c) Language

Xhosa	Sotho	Other (specify)

d) Marital Status

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed

e) Ethnicity

	Xhosa	Sotho	Other (specify)
Respondent			
Spouse			
Parents/ guardian			

f) Level of education

No formal education	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary

g) Place of residence

South Africa	Lesotho

h) Employment

Employed	Self-employed	Unemployed

2. The role played by language in the formation of identity along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele Bridge

1. What language do you speak in this area?
2. What language do you speak with your family, relatives and the community?
3. Which language do you prefer to use when crossing the border?

4. Which language do the officials use at the border?
5. Which language is your name in?
6. Which language do you speak in your household?
7. What language do you speak with the people across the border?
8. Does the language you use with the people across the border unify or separate you?
9. Do you use language to share values that define your culture?
10. Do you speak any other native language?
11. What does speaking Xhosa mean to you? – is it important for you to speak Xhosa? Why?
12. Do your children speak Xhosa?
13. Which other languages do the children speak?
14. What language do the children normally speak?
15. How do you pass important cultural values to your children?
16. What language do you use to communicate cultural values to the children?

3. How the border affects the culture of the Xhosa speaking people at Tele Bridge

17. Do you practice any norms, customs and traditions in this area?
18. Is it important for you as a Xhosa-speaking person to practise these traditions? Why?
19. How far away or closer to the border do you practice these traditions?
20. What type of clothes do you wear around this border area?
21. What type of food and drinks do you consume in this place?
22. Which sports do you play in this border community?
23. Do you know the culture of the people living across the border?

24. Is your culture similar to theirs?

25. How do you go about practising your culture with people on the other side when a border exists between you?

26. How does the existence of a border help or prohibit the practice your culture?

27. Do you participate in cultural traditions across the border (e.g., festivities, rituals, practices)

28. Are your cultural practices the same as the other Xhosa speaking people living further away from the border?

4. The relationship between the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho at the Tele Bridge border.

29. Do you know people across the border?

30. Do you have family on the other side of the border?

31. What kind of a relationship do you have with the people across the border?

32. Do you share culture with people living on the other side of the border?

33. Are there any traditional events that you do together with the people living across the border?

34. How far from the border do these events take place?

35. Who organises the events?

36. What are they all about?

37. Do you ever need people from across the border to participate in your livelihood activities?

38. What do people across the border have that you do not, in terms of opportunities?

39. Do you see yourself as the same with the people across the border in terms of living conditions? (Explain)

40. Do you see yourself as the same with the people living across the border in terms of social behaviour?
41. Do you see yourself as the same with the people living across in terms of physical traits?
42. The border (bridge) connects you to or separates you from the people across, or do you think it is irrelevant to your relationship with those across the border?
43. How often do you cross the border? For what?
44. How does the border affect your life as a Xhosa-speaking person?
45. What kind of challenges do you face because of the existence of the border?
46. This border operates under some laws. Are you familiar with them?
47. Do you obey those laws?
48. What happens to people who violate border regulations?
49. Since you have been here, has anything changed regarding cross-border movement, in terms of the flow of people and border regulations?

5. The significance of belonging among the Xhosa speaking people of Tele Bridge border.

50. Which country were you born in?
51. Do you have family in this area?
52. How long have you been living in this area?
53. How did you come to live here?
54. Is living in this area important to you? Why?
55. Why do you choose to live here?
56. What environmental benefits do you get from this place?
57. What social benefits do you get from living in this area?

58. Are there any economic benefits that you get from this place?
59. Does living in this place have any risks you can name?
60. Do you see yourself living in this area forever or you would want to relocate? Why?
61. Given a chance to relocate, would you take it? Why?
62. As a Xhosa speaking person living along the border, how are you different from other Xhosa speaking people living further away from the border?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Borders and Identity: Identity Construction Among the Xhosa Speaking People of South Africa and Lesotho at Tele Bridge

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interviews will take the form of extended discussions, where the researcher will be guided by research questions. The study is designed to allow the researcher to cover as much information as possible without being constrained by close ended kind of schedule. From the discussions, emerging themes and follow-up questions will be noted and followed-up through follow-up questions. The discussion will hinge along these themes:

1. How do Xhosa-speaking people construct their identity along the Tele Bridge border?
2. What role does the Xhosa language play in the formation of identity of the Xhosa speaking people along the South Africa-Lesotho border at Tele bridge?
3. How does the border affect the construction of identity among the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border?
4. How do the Xhosa speaking people at the Tele Bridge border relate with each other and the border? What is their relationship with the border?
5. Why is identity formation at the Tele Bridge border significant for the Xhosa speaking people of South Africa and Lesotho?
6. How do the Xhosa speaking people at Tele Bridge treat the border? What is their attitude towards the border?
7. What impact does the Tele Bridge border have on the Xhosa speaking people from both sides in terms of identity formation?
8. How do the Xhosa speaking people view themselves on both sides of the Tele Bridge border?

9. What are the factors (internal and external) that influence movement across the border? And what are the reasons for cross-border movement?
10. Knowledge of cross-border or migration policies (are they being practiced or not?) and their implications for non-conformity. What laws are the locals familiar with?
11. The history of cross-border movement.
12. What is the known/common cultural history across the border? (Were they brought together or were they divided by the border?)
13. How different is culture close to the border as compared to the culture of the same people further away from the border?
14. Comparison of cultures in Lesotho and South Africa (for the Xhosa speaking people)
15. Do they get the same environmental and ecological benefits as people across the border from the land they occupy?
16. The influence of the country's economy on identity (how and why)
17. Livelihood activities (are they mutually related, co-dependent or independent)

APPENDIX F: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE CHIEF (LESOTHO)

MORENA OA PABALLONG
PABALLONG, MASETISE LE
TELE
2021-06-23
QUTHING - LESOTHO

Paballong
P.O. Askot
Quthing

Mongheli

Kea u lumelisa ke
Lempolo leme ke Pkerote
hore limpho kokome
ke motse o ikeraballa
tse Puso ee ke, ke
hore ke amohetse hore
a tse etse (RESEARCH)
Lipetlisiso Sebeking Se
ka. Mone ke botki ba
nete

Khotso

Na Molomo & Nkuebe

APPENDIX G: LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM THE CHIEF (SOUTH AFRICA)

Lower Telle A/A
P O Box 14
Palmietfontein
9767
01/09/2021

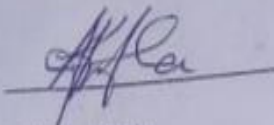
Dear Sir

This letter serves to confirm that I Khethephi Aaron Nombula grant Limpho Kokome permission to conduct her research on borders and identity in my area of jurisdiction.

She explained that the research is for academic purposes.

Kindly assist her accordingly

Thank you



AK Nombula

Headmam

**HEADMAN A.K. NOMBULA
LOWER TELLE A/A
P.O. BOX 14
PALMIETFONTEIN 9767**