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Transnational Mothering in South Africa
A Contemporary Approach

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Transnational Mothering in South Africa
A Contemporary Approach

University of Cape Town
Masters Dissertation - International Relations
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Abstract

Literature on migration has been largely saturated by Global North and Asian narratives which as a result has led to an umbrella approach to migration experiences - such an approach negates the reality that experiences and knowledge of migration are relational and contextual. This dissertation, through the use of the contemporary approach to migration and qualitative interviews, will attempt to mitigate the above universalism by focusing on contextual specificities in a migration pattern that has so far been sidelined. This migration pattern is South-South and hones in on the lived realities of poor black undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa from the SADC region. Macro-level factors such as documentation, access to services and the labour market will be reviewed in the analysis, as well as micro-level factors such as mothering practices and relational definitions of motherhood. After which, this dissertation calls for the conceptual renegotiation of transnational mothering and the meaning of motherhood. By investigating diverging experiences and understandings to what have thus far been global hegemonies, this dissertation achieves its aim of recentering theory on migration and shifting knowledge on gender ideologies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The increasing interdependence of the world can be best seen when we review the movement of people. Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, either permanently, temporarily or seasonally. Migration can be within a country or between countries and is driven by various economic, social and political push and pull factors. In this webbed world order, all states become more vulnerable (although at varying degrees) to global push and pulls. Conflict and instability are two of the main drivers of migration as either people are forced to leave their homes or seek better employment opportunities elsewhere (Vickers & Alexander, 2019).

Currently, at the beginning of 2023, the word ‘crisis’ can be used to explain the current state of affairs - a conflict crisis, refugee crisis, economic crisis, inflation crisis and migration crisis. Furthermore, all these crises are connected to one another. For example, in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, this has led to a protracted war affecting most of the world. Millions of Ukrainian citizens have since been displaced. The long lasting conflict, off the back of the Covid-19 pandemic, has seen a rise in global fuel and food costs resulting in an overall hike in inflation. As such, the economic situation in many countries has worsened leading to more spouts of civil unrest. An overall rise in national conflict and instability spurred by global events is likely to see greater volumes of migration as it has done in the past (Vickers & Alexander, 2019). It is estimated that the number of international migrants has increased over the past five decades, with 281 million people living in a country other than their birth country in 2020, which is 128 million more people than was reported in 1990 (IOM, 2022). Therefore, as the world becomes more connected, global shocks become more far reaching, and migration increases at a parallel rate.

In response to the rising levels of migration, countries all over the globe began enforcing restrictive policies. However, these imperfectly implemented laws do not decrease migration but only increase illegal migration (Casarico & Facchini, 2015, p.674). Illegal migration is when a person moves to another country in violation of that country’s immigration policies (Casarico &

Facchini, 2015, p.674). Over the past decade, irregular immigration has been the fastest rising single form of migration and the one with the most negative connotations attached to it (Casarico & Facchini, 2015, p.674). There are a few common false narratives about irregular migrants; immigrants are entering countries at an unmanageable rate, immigrants threaten a state's national and personal security, and immigrants steal jobs and harm the economy (McCorkle & Cole, 2018, p.348). These hegemonies are indicative of the tension that exists between cultural pluralism and nationalistic nativism (McCorkle & Cole, 2018, p.348). Cultural pluralism is when smaller groups living within a bigger society keep their own cultural identities and values, which are also then accepted by the dominant culture. Whereas nationalistic nativism is the term used for when the interests, culture and values of the native-born are protected over that of immigrants. Nativism can also include the support for anti-immigration policies (McCorkle & Cole, 2018, p.348). Ultimately, these xenophobic arguments not only lack valid proof but also result in the ill-treatment and vilifying of/towards immigrant populations. Through the exploration of the experiences of black undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa we discuss the prevalence and effect of xenophobia on their migrations. In addition, how the perception nation states have on migration, can heavily influence the experience of a migrant.

Since the end of apartheid in 1994, immigration to South Africa has steadily increased. There are about 2.9 million immigrants living in South Africa according to official reports. However, this is thought to be an underrepresentation due to the high volumes of unauthorised migrants (Moyo, 2021). In total, three quarters of South Africa's immigrants come from other African countries. Of these countries, 68 percent of migrants are from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Moyo, 2021). Within SADC countries, Zimbabweans account for the largest number of migrants in South Africa (Moyo, 2021).

Zimbabwe and South Africa share a border of 225 kilometres long, along which there is only one official border crossing, Beitbridge (Bhardwaj, 2022). On average, 15,000 people cross into South Africa from Zimbabwe and other countries every day, either through the legal crossing posts or at illegal points (Bhardwaj, 2022). Mirroring the global trend, illegal immigration in and out of South Africa is also increasing. Illegal immigration into South Africa refers to the migration of foreign nations into South Africa without the correct authorization by South African

authorities (Bhardwaj, 2022). The uptick in illegal immigration is due to unfavourable immigration policies and loose border control. Despite South Africa's porous borders with its neighbouring countries, there are still risks involved to migrating illegally such as deportation, sexual harassment, health concerns and exploitation.

Moreover, when migrating illegally, you are not protected by the legal structures in the country and thereby do not have the same rights as citizens do (Bhardwaj, 2022). Therefore, migrants biggest risk when migrating illegally is vulnerability. This becomes especially of concern when the country is going through times of economic and political stress. For example, the International Office for Migration reported that between 2020 and 2021 over 200,000 Zimbabwean migrants returned to Zimbabwe mostly due to the lack of economic opportunities and ill-treatment in South Africa during the Covid-19 pandemic (Bhardwaj, 2022). Most migrants depend on day-day-work and so the closing of the economic sector led to their source of income drying up (AFP, 2020). Furthermore, migrants that were residing illegally in South Africa at the time of the pandemic and national lockdown did not receive the government's emergency plan aid which included a monthly monetary stipend and food parcel (AFP, 2020). This unfair distribution of resources is representative of the institutional xenophobia in the country. In addition, in privately funded drives such as food drops, donations given to irregular migrants were often forcibly taken away by local residents (AFP, 2020). Here we see societal xenophobia at play. Therefore, the sufferings of irregular migrants were exacerbated greatly during this time of crisis in the country. Although there has been an easing of pandemic containment policies and economic reactivation, xenophobia in the country has been rising since the pandemic. In 2021, nearly three times as many foreigners were killed in xenophobic violence than the previous year (Diseko, 2022).

However, migrants are forced to take these risks as South Africa poses as the regional migration hub and core of the SADC region. This is especially prominent when we review the flows of remittances in SADC, of which the majority is outbound from South Africa to countries such as Malawi and Zimbabwe (Jeoffreys-Leach, 2023). The country boasts the greatest economy, relatively stable institutions and work opportunities (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). For example, the economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe and Malawi, that have resulted in a lack of jobs and

poor resource/service availability and delivery, have forced families to make decisions to send one of their members to South Africa to earn an income (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). By earning an income, risks at home such as poverty, starvation, poor healthcare and dropping out of school, are mitigated (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). Through the migration of certain members of a family while the rest remain in their home country, transnationalism is born.

Transnationalism can be seen as the 'from below' perspective of globalisation, as it concerns individuals and civil society's movement across borders and how the interdependence of the world impacts those movements (Tedeschi, 2020, p.604). Schiller (1992, p.2) defines transnationalism as, "the processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement". Shiller (1992) goes on to say that, "transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, organisational, religious, and political, that span borders. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously". What Shriller has so aptly described here as transnationalism is also exactly what national nativism is trying to counter. Nevertheless, by adopting a transnational perspective we can identify the behaviours that are meaningful, affect the identity and sense of belonging of people, and are exercised on a frequent basis (Tedeschi, 2020, p.604). From these common points, practices begin to emerge that can constitute as transnational. The transnational framework therefore allows one to investigate in-depth the ground level experiences of migrants which are used in this dissertation to demonstrate the weight of structural factors on migration and therefore why migration cannot be universalized. In this dissertation, we investigate the trends and patterns in which transmigrant mothers foster relationships with their children. This is known as transnational mothering.

Transnational mothers are people who migrate to a host country, whilst their children remain in their home country, in order to work and provide for their families (Pineros-Leano & Yao, 2021, p.3). The majority of transnational mothers move for two reasons, political instability in their country and a lack of employment opportunities (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.59). In addition, when mothers migrate and their children remain in their home countries, not only do mothers become transnational but they become a part of a transnational family. Transnational families are

families whose members are separated physically between two or more nation states but maintain close ties and relationships (Shih, 2016, p.2). Transnational families are similar to immigrant families in that upon migration to the host country both must learn a new language, try to find adequate housing, look for a job and embrace new social and educational systems. However, where transnational families and immigrant families differ, is that the former must also navigate and deal with family separation and attached difficulties (Shih, 2016, p.2). This dissertation will focus on how black undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa cope with family separation, the methods they use to mitigate this distance, including mothering from afar and relational definitions of motherhood they adopt once they have migrated. As mentioned, all of the latter however are affected by differing macro level factors.

The investigation will include a deeper look into how macro and micro level factors shape the lives of irregular transnational mothers. Evidence of this investigation will be based on interviews conducted with irregular transnational mothers in South Africa from the SADC region and through a comparative study between the experiences of these women and irregular transnational mothers in South-North migrations. Through the comparison of experiences of irregular transnational mothers in South-South migrations with those in South-North migrations we entrench why contextual theories of migration should be employed.

First, the individual experiences of precarious transnational mothers will be examined drawing on several structural issues these women face such as precarity, xenophobia, institutional failure, access to services, crossing the border and gender norms. By reviewing the structural factors that affect the lives of transnational mothers we can better contextualise their transnational behaviours. Thus, the analysis moves to the mothering practises transnational mothers employ to mitigate family separation, specifically with their children. Through the application of a transnational lens to mothering we see four main mothering practices emerge; communication, visits, gift giving and remittances, which we can then investigate further by applying different intersectionalities such as irregularity and migration pattern. By incorporating externalities and intersectionalities we see how the mothering experiences of transnational mothers diverge around the globe, as well as uncover stories that have previously been sidelined.

Problem Statement & Research Aim

The field of migration has remained an under theorised field of social enquiry (de Haas, 2008, p.1). This has been reiterated in several works on migration such as Segatti's *Reforming South African immigration policy in the post apartheid* period (2011) assessment on the exclusion of migrant workers in Africa and particularly southern African, in migration literature. Moreover, in the book *Migration in South Africa* by Pragna Rugunanan and Nomkhosi Xulu-Gama (2022), which contends that there is a decisive need for migration research from a southern perspective.
In addition, the social enquiries that have taken place have largely a male and Eurocentric focus. This becomes an issue in the ever globalising world as the discourse and literature on migration then largely speaks solely to the Western experience. This creates an over simplified understanding of migration patterns or sidelining of experiences. We see this especially becoming a problem when the most vulnerable in the country, poor undocumented black transnational mothers, are being overlooked by institutions, bureaucracy, government and media, in times of global crises. This macro level issue of hegemony in literature then filters down into micro level issues in the lives of irregular transitional mothers. Problems such as documentation, access to services, xenophobia and migrations patterns, which are not traditionally the spotlight of traditional migration studies, cause issues on the ground level for migrants. These issues then affect migrants' standard of living and realities. In the case of this study we focus on the experiences of black poor irregular transnational mothers living realities of motherhood and mothering impacted by the above mentioned larger factors. Globalisation is ever increasing and the plight of transnational migration is one of the world's and South Africa's most pressing issues, thus, authentic narratives of transnational migrants are both necessary and urgent.

This is where our aim comes in - to help fix this problem, this dissertation through a contemporary and transnational approach to women and mothers' migration from countries in the SADC region to South Africa, aims to pull focus to traditionally sidelined narratives in migration. In doing so, concepts such as mothering and motherhood are expanded to incorporate more truths and realities. Moreover, understandings and knowledge of migration become relational. Platforming diverging narratives to eurocentric ideals (migration, gender, motherhood, family structures, labour) is essential in decolonising the literary space, another aim this dissertation hopes to contribute to. Migration, when we study it beyond the universal male

Western-centric lens, can be a major tool in poverty reduction and empowerment for irregular female migrants (Farley, 2019, p.2). As we will explore throughout the dissertation, the aims of a relational migration study, decolonial literature and empowerment of migrants are all achieved.

Significance

This dissertation adds to the growing literature which advocates for a shift in how we view migration. In order to contribute to this theory, this dissertation asks who is migrating, what are the causes, what are the different migration patterns, what are the structural factors that affect migration and how do different contextualities of migration affect the realities of migrants? As we have seen, in times of political turmoil, it is the most vulnerable in the country that suffers the most. Black poor irregular transnational mothers are one of the most vulnerable groups in a country, and the world order is in flux (Shih, 2016, p.3). Therefore, the precarity of this focus group is likely to increase, of which the South African government is doing little to obstruct. Yet, by addressing the needs of the most marginalised in a country, a state can improve its economy, health risks and overall well-being (Shih, 2016, p.5). One of the ways which the world can better prepare is for countries to reconsider their immigration policies and border control (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.59). Due to the xenophobic sentiments and classist admission rates, institutions in South Africa regularly fail transnational mothers, and their irregular status then can induce feelings of moral failure, guilt and depression. The staunch migration policies in South Africa and around most of the globe have made transnational practices harder to achieve such as communication or upward mobility. Therefore, unfair immigration policies restrict the basic rights South Africa claims to deliver to all people in the country - especially the freedom of movement. Moreover, xenophobic sentiments endanger irregular transnational mothers daily and there is a lack of safety mechanisms in place to protect them. The current global and national orders create a system which promotes migration, yet where irregular mothers in South Africa and around the globe can also be subject to physical threats, restraints on personal freedoms and psychological distress. We discuss these experiences in both South-South and South-North migration patterns and diversifying contextualities, which then present as evidence for the need for change in policies concerning migration. Migration is only increasing and it is high time country's take accountability and put measures in place that allow rights, freedoms and safety for

all who reside in their country. These can range from public awareness campaigns to government budget adjustments.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation are feminist scholarship including transnational feminism and matricentric feminism, transnational migration models, and dependency theory.

Over the years different models and understandings of migration have emerged. One of the first is the Neoclassical model of migration which believes that men are more likely to migrate than women and the decision to migrate is made based on individual assessment (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). The New Economics of migration views the phenomenon as a decision being made by groups or families (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). For example, a family will send one of its members to work in another country in order to send remittances for the wellbeing of the rest of the family at home. However, this model still views migration as a rational choice made by families (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). The third approach is the Structural Approach to understanding migration. This approach considers the structural factors that create conditions for migration to take place such as core-periphery country dynamics (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). Core vs periphery dynamics are a tenet of dependency theory, which is the notion that resources flow from periphery to core countries, including labour (de Haas, 2008, p.8). Dual labour markets refer to the two types of jobs that are present in a capitalist economy (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). The first are stable, well paid, permanent high-skilled jobs. Whilst the second are temporary, poorly paid, unstable low-skilled jobs. Therefore, core countries create a demand for migrants as they more commonly fill these low-skilled jobs that citizens do not want. Lastly, the Contemporary Approach to migration, focuses on the migrant and their decision making process on a micro level whilst still understanding and contextualising how these decisions are influenced by macro-level factors such as political, economic and social structures (Anitha & Pearson, 2013).

This dissertation adopts a Contemporary Approach to migration by focusing on irregular transnational mothers in South Africa, in particular, their stories, how they interact with their environment, how they manage restrictive state policies and the differences and similarities between them and other transnational mothers depending on various intersections. In line with the Contemporary Approach, this dissertation will first contextualise the current world order in which the migration we are looking at takes place, this includes core vs periphery dynamics and imperialism. Furthermore, the exploration will discuss the history of migration and structural issues such as gender, xenophobia, documentation and immigration policies. Thereafter, we will investigate how the latter macro-level factors affect poor black undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa and the mothering practices they employ.

As migration is gendered, it is necessary to adopt a feminist framework, which seeks to study the roles and place of women in social and political life - and in this case migration (Nadkarni & Gooptu, 2021). Through this approach we differentiate the experiences of women in migration from men. However, it is often so that the use of only a feminist framework creates umbrella understandings of the experiences of women thereby excluding the importance of intersectional identities such as race, class, education, sexuality and religion (Nadkarni & Gooptu, 2021). This would lead to unitary discourse on migration which typically silences the many other experiences of women, and is the opposite of what this dissertation is trying to achieve (Nadkarni & Gooptu, 2021). Thus, a transnational feminist perspective must be introduced. This framework investigates how perspectives of women excluded from the above hegemonic feminist literature can positively reshape feminist politics by referring to the flow of ideas, issues and strategies that women employ across borders (Desai, 2007, p.9). However, earlier transnational feminist work has also fallen short in several ways as its literature has been limited to suffrage, education and workers' rights, with the flow of ideas and strategies being mainly from North to South - which has not only led to an imposition of thought but also silencing of thought (Desai, 2007, p.9). As the academic field of transnationalism is still deeply divided, this dissertation aims to bridge this gap by employing a transnational approach from a different and more relevant angle, South-South (Desai, 2007, p.9). By viewing the ideas and strategies employed by women in South-South migrations attention is shifted from North-South literature and consequently diverging results are presented. Which contributes to the aim of prioritising context and reality in

migration studies. Women, who are lower class, irregular, black and moving between SADC countries will have different ideas, issues and strategies that they use to manage the distance from their families - all of which needs to be given their own platform and cannot be explained by general transnational trends but need transnational specificity.

As this dissertation is reviewing mothers, a matricentric feminist perspective also needs to be used to further ensure transnational specificity. Matricentric feminism positions mothers' needs and worries as the beginning for theory and politic on women's empowerment (O'Reilly, 2019, p.52). It is important to employ such a framework so as to critique maternity as a basis to female identity (O'Reilly, 2019, p.52). We make the distinction in this dissertation by first understanding the experience of transnational mothers as women, by looking at the history of women in migration, elements of their lived realities such as mobility, and how structural issues impact their experience. Thereafter, we investigate the experience of transnational mothers as mothers by seeing how they define motherhood, which mothering practices they choose to employ, and how the above mentioned structural issues influence both.

By combining a Contemporary Approach with feminist and matricentric frameworks we are able to best understand our research participants, irregular transnational mothers in South Africa, from the SADC region. Moreover, in this way the ideas, strategies and issues that these transnational mothers use to mother from afar are centred. This is achieved by giving space to maternal authenticity. Which is allowing transnational mothers to tell their unfiltered experiences of migration (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.659). It is through these expressions we see narratives shift in transnational and matricentric feminisms from eurocentric conceptions of both. For example, gender ideologies such as the mother as household keeper and primary caregiver, and the father as breadwinner are redirected which lends to our argument; motherhood and mothering as relational and malleable concepts (Oyewumi, 2000, p.1095).

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Western Cape Province, South Africa, through the tertiary institution; the University of Cape Town. This dissertation was guided by the principles of

respect for the dignity, rights, welfare and safety of the participants. Informed consent and voluntary participation were ensured, thereby creating an environment of anonymity, confidentiality and avoiding harm to the women. This research was executed along the ethical guidelines of UCT's Human Research Ethics Committee and approved by the same forum. Approval is given once the student submits their questionnaire, along with answers to a set of questions about ethical considerations including mitigation of any post-traumatic stress from the interview and ensuring anonymity.

This dissertation relies on one primary data source and multiple secondary data sources, namely interviews and peer-reviewed case studies. The primary data was collected through qualitative interviews. A qualitative exploratory approach with purposive sampling was used in this study. The majority of transnationalism relies on qualitative data as it allows for a review of individual understandings and experiences (Tedeschi, 2002, p.619). Purposive sampling is almost synonymous with qualitative data collection and signifies that a series of intentional choices were made about with whom, where and what the research will contain (Palys, 2008, p.697). For this study, I chose to focus on transnational mothers, in South Africa, and how their lived realities are impacted by macro-factors that dictate their transnational experience such as mothering from afar. Within purposive sampling, I chose a set of criteria that potential research candidates needed to meet in order to qualify for the study. This is called criterion sampling (Palys, 2008, p.697). The criterion for participation was women who self-identified as mothers, and can be classified as transnational mothers. As well as women who either held documentation or not, and worked as domestic workers in South Africa. These women were recruited via a word document invitation that was distributed along various social media channels. The document outlined the purpose of the study as well as the parameters of the required research participants. People that then saw the social media advert reached out to me passing on contacts of people that could potentially meet the criteria of the study. In all of the cases, the contacts that were passed onto me were women working as domestic workers in households of mutual connections. I then confirmed with the person passing on the contact that the person they had suggested would be comfortable with an interview. If the answer was yes, I then asked them to share the partcicpant's contact and I reached out to the participants directly. I provided a brief outline of the study and asked again if they would be interested in participating and open to/have time (this was said as a

potentially exit strategy for the participant) to be interviewed. The purpose of a double check in was to try and mitigate the possibility that participants were agreeing to the study as they felt they had to because their employers had suggested it. If the participants said yes to me via text, I set up one-on-one interviews at times that would be convenient to the participants. In this dissertation I have drawn specifically on the in-depth interviews with four women. The interviews typically lasted about 40 to 45 minutes and with the women's consent were digitally recorded and transcribed. All participants gave verbal and written informed consent as well as received a blurb outlining the aim of the study. All the interviews, except one, took place inside the participant's employer's house. This is likely to have had limitations on the study which I will discuss below.

As mentioned, the primary data for this dissertation was collected through interviews. These interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they were guided by a set of predetermined questions but these questions were not strict in order or phrasing (George, 2022). This allows for the flow of the interview to be more conversational and therefore encourages mothers to express their stories and experiences more authentically (George, 2022). I had a list of roughly 44 questions which I would ask at different times depending on the nature of the interview. These questions were decided on after a thorough literary review and were thereafter sent to an advisor and ethics committee for review. The semi-structured interview approach was chosen as I wanted to ensure that as much as possible, the true and unfiltered truths of these women were coming out as they had more leeway to guide the narrative. The interviews were recorded on my cellular device which ensured that I could easily relisten to them. In addition, the interviews were saved under the pseudonyms of the participants to further protect the anonymity of the participants.

This research is premised upon the belief that it is through narrativity that we are able to understand the world around us and the social identities people assume (Lockwood & Smith, 2019, p.4). Therefore, narrative approaches are not being used to generalise but to rather shine light on "difference and diversity" (Lockwood & Smith, 2019, p.4). Which fits into the aim of this paper's divergence from mainstream migration theories. Narrative approaches typically employ small sample sizes to facilitate in depth interviewing and analysis to foster results with a richness of depth not usually seen in samples with larger sizes (Lockwood & Smith, 2019, p.4).

This is why this study chose to interview four women and tell their stories in full, both on a macro-and micro level. In addition, when different intersectionalities such as race, class, migration status and gender are being discussed, as someone who occupies a different intersectionality to the research participants, in order to avoid making the mistake of imposing one's own ideas, narrativity ensures validity and authenticity is maintained (Lockwood & Smith, 2019, p.5). Furthermore, by employing this approach, it allows the people in the study to tell their stories using the frameworks that are relevant at the time. Narratives are not objective but instead either present or enable certain stories at particular times (Lockwood & Smith, 2019, p.5). Therefore, by using a narrative approach, although accounts of motherhood may vary over time, what is being expressed is authentically what is in operation. For example, we see the Covid-19 pandemic being brought up in the stories of transnational mothers as it influenced their lives as well as their mothering practices.

Data analysis involved the ongoing examination of the digital recordings and transcripts of the interviews throughout the writing process. Similarities and trends were then highlighted between the women's stories and were used as points to expand on in longer chapter style writing pieces.
Lastly, in order to draw differences between South to South migrations and South to North migrations the trends emerging from this research were contrasted with multiple case studies focusing on South to North migrations. This comparative approach was necessary for the dissertation as few studies on transnational mothering have conducted a cross-country comparison (Mazzucato, 2015, p.215). Therefore this approach was important as it fills a gap in the literature. Moreover, the case studies also represented several different migrations in order to increase the validity of the findings and contribution of the overall research aim which is to aid in contextual and relational theories of migration. These case studies were sourced via Google Scholar, which ensures that they are reputable and peer reviewed.

Participants

Four women participated in the study, three of whom were from Zimbabwe and one from Malawi. The women's ages ranged from 30 to 46 years old. All participants had been in South Africa for over three years. All names of the women in the study have also been changed to

ensure their anonymity. I also chose to keep the sample size small as this is a Masters level thesis - the word count as well as due date does not allow for big sets of qualitative data to be reviewed. In addition, by keeping the sample size small it ensured the experiences of these women were told wholly and could be a centrepiece of the study, instead of having to be told through graphics or charts.

The women in the study are; Angela, Tanya, Gertrude and Rosalina.

Angela is 34 years old from Zimbabwe and spent two years apart from her daughter when she first migrated to South Africa. Angela is the only woman in the group that has acquired a working permit, although it is now expired and she is struggling to acquire a new one. Furthermore, Angela is the only woman who has a male partner that provides support for their children. However, for a time she was the sole income for the family. Lastly, Angela managed to bring her daughter to South Africa after two years of being a transnational mother and has since had a son in South Africa. Her son does not have a birth certificate or any documentation.

Tanya is 43 years old, from Zimbabwe, and migrated to South Africa in 2012. Tanya has two daughters, one is 22 and now lives in South Africa, and the other is 11 and lives in Zimbabwe with Tanya's parents. Tanya's eldest daughter was 12 when she migrated. The youngest daughter was born in South Africa and then Tanya took her back to Zimbabwe. Tanya does not have a work permit, when she first migrated she was granted asylum. However, her asylum has been taken away and she has since been in a precarious situation. Tanya is the sole breadwinner for her family.

Gertrude is 30 years old and from Malawi. She migrated in 2011 and two years after migrating she fell pregnant. After giving birth, Gertrude took her daughter, who is now nine, back to Malawi to live with her parents. Gertrude receives no financial help from her daughter's father and she is the primary provider for her family in Malawi. She does not have a working permit and upon her first entry into the country overstayed. She tries to visit her family every two to three years.

Rosalina, 46 years old, came from Zimbabwe to South Africa in 2019. She is a widow and trying to provide for her family in Zimbabwe became unachievable. Rosalina has three children, a 26 year old son, and two daughters of 23 and 12. She said that she sends money to her eldest two children and pays for the youngest's school fees and food. Rosalina also mentioned that she remits money to her sister to help support her nieces and nephews. On top of this, when she can she sends money to her parents who are taking care of her youngest child in Zimbabwe. Due to all her many dependents, Rosalina is the only woman in the study that, above domestic work, receives a second income through selling chips to people in her area. Rosalina does not have a work permit or visa.

It is important when centering an issue on subordinated groups that participants in the groups are able to have the opportunity to give their own authentic standpoint (Collins, 1994, p. 371). Therefore, the use of primary interviews in this dissertation was necessary for its validity and meaningfulness to the field of transnational feminisms. When investigating the experiences of black undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa, their personal narratives must guide the conversation. Which is why the research participants' interviews are placed at the centre of the dissertation and then are supplemented with statistics, secondary case studies and other materials.

Ethical considerations

An important element within transnational feminism is the practice of self-reflexivity (Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2021, p.13). Thus, I must examine my own positionality in reference to my research dissertation topic. My social location is vastly different from that of the irregular transnational mothers who are the focal point of this dissertation. I am a 24 year old, white, academic, privileged, non-mother, documented woman living in her birth country. Thus, Euro-centric notions such as good/bad mothering, traditional gender roles and the nuclear family are likely to be produced in some of the spaces I occupy. In addition, I am aware that there was a language barrier between myself and the participants. I tried to mitigate this by using casual language and putting equal focus on what questions were being asked as well as how they were being asked. In some cases I had to rephrase questions to ensure the participants understood what they were being asked, in turn, in some cases the participants had to work harder to recall the word in English. Maria Lugones coined the term "world travelling" to show how frame-shifting,

flexibility and appreciation for a variety of cultural views can be navigated (Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2021, p.14). The first step in 'world travelling' is being aware of one's positionality and how the different oppressive or privileged identities one assumes can either be in contrast or correlation to the experience of women in transnational contexts (Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2021, p.14). The second step is to investigate "what it is to be ourselves in their eyes" (Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2021, p.14). Thus, I must be reflexive about how neocolonialism, white privilege, class and academia will influence perceptions about who I am. The third step is that I must make an effort to see "women in transnational contexts as they see themselves and to accept their expertise about themselves" (Enns, Díaz & Bryant-Davis, 2021, p.14). Thus as to avoid the dangerous practice of speaking for others and reducing people to only the experiences of their pain (hooks, 1989, p.17). Therefore, after climbing each step, I hope the 'world travelling' I am about to embark on will be of value to transnational feminism. However, I am aware, and as Walton and Kenndeny (2022) pointed out, participants usually feel safer and a high level of trust when their interviewer reflects one of their intersectionalities (Walton & Kennedy, 2022, p.3). My positionality and intersectionality as the interviewer is likely to have created an unbalanced power dynamic, although I do reflect one of the same intersectionalities which is my gender. To mitigate the differences in sectionalities, in the pre-interview and off record I established a friendly rapport with the participant by engaging in casual chitchat. Furthermore, this is why I chose semi-structured interviews as by letting the participants dictate the pace of the interview, it ensures they are moving at their own speed, builds confidence and participants then become more comfortable to reveal personal information (Walton & Kennedy, 2022, p.3).

Lastly, several practices were used to increase the validity and trustworthiness of the dissertation including; memo-writing, reflexive practice, peer debriefing and in depth description. Furthermore, an advisor with relevant expertise was consulted in the writing process.

Limitations

The families that the participants worked for were uniform in demographics; white, upper class and affluent. The families were frequently cited in the interviews as having 'taken care of' the mothers and appeasing many of the woes that women in their position face such as fair pay, leave allowance and additional benefits. It would be of value to investigate the experiences of

undocumented transnational mothers working for families with differing demographics and thereafter pull complimenting or contradicting themes.

In addition, the dissertation highlights the story of four women, whilst using comparative case studies and supporting literature to draw arguments and conclusions. However, the interviews represent a narrow snapshot of the experience of undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa from other SADC regions and therefore this dissertation should not be used to generalise but instead as a guideline for further research and understanding. In addition, three of the interviews were conducted in the participant's employer's house. Although the employer's were not present at the time of the interview it is possible that the setting may have complicated the participants ability to speak freely. For example, Rosalina, whose interview was conducted in a neutral space, spoke more freely on how she crosses the border between Zimbabwe and South Africa, including the documentation and transportation method she uses. However, Gertrude, whose interview was held in the house of her employer, declined to answer the question about the means in which she crosses to and from between Malawi and South Africa. Participants may have felt due to my prior relationship with their employers that I was not fully trustworthy, or that because they had a working relationship with their employers for many years, it may be that participants held back truths as they did not want to come across as disloyal or unappreciative. Post interview with Angela, she texted me to say that she "forgot to mention that her employer is her number one supporter and has been amazing and supportive in her journey". Although, I do not think this skewed the results, if this study had to be replicated, I would suggest a neutral space. However, with conflicting work schedules the settings in which these interviews were conducted was the most convenient for the participants and myself.

We will now take a dive into understanding the context of where our research is set by assessing South Africa's history and position in the global order and its consequent effects of migration. In addition, the gendered and racial aspect of migration in South Africa. As well as why transnational mothers migrate. All of the above will ensure that we are well prepared for when engaging in Chapters Three and Four.

Chapter Two: Contextualising the issue

In order to contextualise this transnational issue, it is necessary that the current economic and political order be reviewed. Contemporary neoliberal economics and economic development have increasingly widened divisions between the Global North and South (Millman, 2013, p.76). The latter are both macro-level factors that have significant weight on the trends and movement of migration. Here, Global North stands for countries that have historically had larger dominance in the global arena in terms of power, money and military. This dominance was created as a result of these countries being former colonies. Coloniser and settler countries were the starting point of core-periphery dynamics as the colonisers, through oppressive means, retracted the resources that they wanted at a low price (Millman, 2013, p.76). These primary resources were then manufactured into secondary and tertiary resources and sold back to settler countries at a higher price (Millman, 2013, p.76). Therefore, a linear line of production was established in which settler colonies were exploited for the gain of colonising countries. As a result of the Global North industrial boom, capital and employment opportunities became concentrated in many European countries, America and the United Kingdom (Nasir, 2020). Along with the manufacturing developments, a rigid division of labour was formed wherein the periphery countries (African, Latin American or South East Asian countries) would supply human resources, such as cheap labour, to core countries (America, Europe, Australia). These core countries then took on the role of "depositories of surplus capital" (Nasir, 2020). Through such systems, the flow of goods, money, services and people only went one way - it is out of this, linear oppressive relationship, that dependency theory was born (Nasir, 2020).

Dependency theory advocates for the alternative use of resources instead of obeying the actions imposed by core states (Nasir, 2020). These extractive actions further implant the underdevelopment of periphery countries, which is why we see former colonising countries still hold the monopoly on capital and employment opportunities (Nasir, 2020). Underdevelopment, and the economic and social instability that is attached to it, are a push factor as to why people in less developed countries migrate to more developed countries (Nasir, 2020). Therefore, dependency theory exposes the contradiction of core countries which is that they create

relationships of dependence, thus causing migration, but then adopt anti-migrant stances. These stances are supported by national nativism views and the false hegemony that migration is only one way, South-North.

In its essence, dependency theory seeks to counter this Western perspective on the international system (Nasir, 2020). Which is similar to the work that is being done in this dissertation, unlike the Western view that the greatest influx of migrants is from the Global South to the Global North, in fact, the largest migration in the world is South-South (Nasir, 2020). Moreover, there is a substantial amount of North-South migration, which in some cases, such as in the biomedical field or mining sector, is representative of colonial pillaging. Such a dynamic is accounted for in the neoclassical economic model of migration. The theory states that high-skilled workers move from capital rich to capital poor countries to reap higher returns on their skills (de Haas, 2008, p.19). By investigating more prolific migrations such as South-South, this work not only exposes core countries anti-immigrant sentiments for what they are, prejudice and racist, but also supports one of the key tenets of dependency theory which is that national interest can only be reached once the needs of the poor and marginalised are addressed (Shih, 2016, p.5). The cases above once viewed through a dependency theory lens also demonstrate how migration can cause inequality. Poor irregular migrants are frequently exploited, while rich migrants can exploit the labour of people in the countries they move to (Reidy, 2021).

As mentioned, South to South migrations are the most prevalent migrations in the world, yet, they are understudied. What these migrations are, are the movement of people between and among developing countries, including South America, Asia and Africa (Reidy, 2021). More people migrate within the Global South (around 37 percent of all migrants) than from the Global South to the Global North (around 35 percent) (Reidy, 2021). For example, 64 percent of migrants in West Africa are moving to another destination in West Africa. Furthermore, in the case of refugees, around 85 percent are hosted in the Global South (Reidy, 2021). Why then are South-South migrations understudied? Narratives about migration are saturated by media, politicians and researchers in the Global North who have had the most funding and opportunity to write about migration (Reidy, 2021). This domination of the literary space fits the agenda of the North which is that, if there is this perception that there is a mass exodus of migrants coming from the South to the North, then the tight border policing and anti-migrant policies are justified

(Reidy, 2021). We can contextualise this through an American case study; ex-President Donald Trump used the story that irregular Latin American migrants were ‘flooding’ into the United States as a reason why the infamous ‘wall’ along the border should be built (Reidy, 2021). However, if we look more broadly, we see that this narrative is highly pointed and only one side to a very large story. Similar to the South-South migration patterns within Africa, intraregional migration in South America is massive - in October 2022, Colombia hosted nearly 2.9 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants (Migration Data Portal, 2023). Moreover, between 2010 and 2020, immigrants from Africa to South America increased by 90%, another South-South Migration pattern (Migration Data Portal, 2023). In addition to the warped migration narratives, research has shown that tighter border control does not stop migration but only increases precarious migration (Reidy, 2021). Thus, a more obvious solution to irregular migration, if one was being genuine, would be to change and improve immigration policy. However, Global North countries are not being genuine as they do not want cultural pluralism, meaning, migrants to come into their countries in regular ways and therefore be able to participate meaningfully in the country’s social and political realm. Being irregular, migrants can still contribute economically. However, being regular means they can contribute politically and socially as well, and it is this assimilation that Global North countries want to avoid (Reidy, 2021). As then they ensure they are maintaining their core status and beneficial linear relationships with periphery countries. Therefore, migration to Global North countries is taking place in an economic context where there is a demand for low-skilled jobs and migrant workers, yet the political context is becoming increasingly restrictive towards migration. This juxtaposition is then taking place in an unstable world order that is promoting the migration of people. Moreover, due to the field of migration being led by scholars that only see people coming and do not see the mass of people that are circulating, a shift in knowledge production towards the Global South is imperative to decolonise the study of migration. Through this shift, we counter universalistic approaches to migration realities, such as the comparative experiences of irregular vs regular migrants.

Decolonising the literature surrounding migration is becoming progressively key, because, as discussed, due to the increasing globalisation of the world all countries are becoming more sensitive to geopolitical shocks. Countries typically react to geopolitical shocks by adopting protectionist policies. For example, during both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, countries restricted global aid to provide additional national subsidies. However, an

increase in such state centric policies often leads to an exclusion of irregular migrants (Reidy, 2021). With a rise in humanitarian crises on the African continent, namely in Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Mali and Ethiopia, South-South migrations are increasingly and likely to also spur protectionist measures from states (Reidy, 2021). As the world heads into an unstable future, filled with high levels of inflation, food scarcity, energy insecurity and rising living costs, it is precarious migrant workers, especially women, that are likely to suffer the most. Moreover, within African countries, the focus on South-North migration means that when governments draw up policies to reap the benefits of migration - such as remittances - they only focus on the diasporas in the North such as the UK, US and Europe (Reidy, 2021). By doing so, governments lose out on their biggest potential benefactors, migrants from other African countries, as well as disadvantage these migrants.

Therefore, by exploring the experiences and contextual specificity of those who participate in South-South migrations, this dissertation aims to ensure that the stories of these precarious migrants are not overshadowed by those in the North, especially during times of global political turmoil, during which migrants are for the most part left behind. It is the responsibility of the South African government to ensure that each person in their country has the right to life, equality and dignity. As we will see below, the current position of South Africa does not provide the means for irregular transnational mothers in South Africa to enjoy all the above basic rights, which are only likely to slip further away as the world becomes more unstable. Which is why, in the current world context, holistic migration studies are necessary as migration can also reduce inequality. If people who are poverty-stricken have the chance to migrate and find work in a meaningful way, the inequality gap is likely to grow smaller and state services and infrastructure can use the added tax in an impactful way (Reidy, 2021). Furthermore, some people can only financially prosper if they migrate - this is the case in many SADC countries due to a lack of employment opportunities and market failure (Reidy, 2021).

Why South Africa? A micro-core

South Africa is the regional migration hub in Southern Africa, including for women, due to its relatively stable democratic institutions, its industrialised economy in comparison to its

neighbours and middle income status (Moyo, 2021). South Africa has one of the strongest economies in the region and thus is attractive for people in neighbouring countries whose economies are worse off. In a regional comparison, South Africa's GDP per capita in 2021 was USD 6,994, Zimbabwe's was USD 1,737 and Malawi's was USD 6,994 (World Bank, 2021). South Africa functions as a core country within the SADC bloc. However, the inception of this status is rooted in colonial suppression.

The proliferation of migration within and to South Africa can be linked to the gold and diamond mining boom in the 1860s (Moyo, 2021). These developments created a demand for black low skilled labour that required workers from neighbouring countries to work on mines and farms as cheap labour (Moyo, 2021). Subsequently, the South African government implemented bilateral agreements related to contractual labour migration for countries such as Mozambique, Malawi and Lesotho. This linear labour system mirrored that between the Global North (colonisers) and Global South (colonised) and is important for understanding the regional and circular migration patterns that we see today in SADC.

As, although migrant labour was needed during that time period, much like today, the system of racial segregation made it so these workers did not have the right to permanently settle (Moyo, 2021). Being granted permanent residence in South Africa was reserved for white settlers. Black immigrants could only stay in the country as long as their working permits were valid, once they expired, they were deported back to their origin countries (Moyo, 2021). The migration of black migrants to South Africa was highly regulated and contractual. Thus, just as those who migrated to the North, these migrants from SADC in South Africa became expendable human resources, needed to fill a greater capitalist purpose. Moreover, the manual labour required was largely restricted to men which engendered the way migration was discussed and viewed.

At the formal end of apartheid South Africa, because of its proliferation as a core country, tried to reintegrate with the SADC region as a member of the newly liberated periphery (Raghvan, 1995, p.2). Moreover, the government was reluctant to offend its neighbouring countries who sheltered many people fleeing from the apartheid regime (Raghvan, 1995, p.2). One of the ways it tried to do so was through an African Renaissance. This was a term mostly emphasised during the Thabo Mbeki era and was an anti-colonial stance that encouraged greater cohesion and unity between African continents (Raghvan, 1995, p.2). Whilst this concept worked well for social

cohesion between South Africa and other African countries, it did not work on an economic level. As the cheap labour that was needed in the country could only remain cheap if the workers remained illegal (Raghvan, 1995, p.2). Moreover, in reality, the South African government was initially against calls for visa liberalisation within SADC and in the early 1990s opposed the establishment of visa-free zones which would have granted the free cross-border movement of people (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gam, 2022, p.59). Here we see South Africa struggling to marry cultural pluralism and national nativism (McCorkle & Cole, 2018, p.348). In the end, national nativism won the bigger settlement in the divorce and the government advocated for limited opportunities for unskilled and low skilled immigrants (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gam, 2022, p.59). For example, the Aliens Control Act of 1991 remained in place several years after the formal end of apartheid, the law instated harsh penalties for illegal immigration and granted search and arrest powers to police (Moyo, 2021). This led to roughly 2.9 million deportations in the country between 1994 and 2009. In addition, employers were encouraged to reduce their formal foreign workforce, and state officials placed low caps on the number of work permits that could be issued (Rugunanan & Xulu-Gam, 2022, p.59). The bilateral labour agreements between South Africa and its neighbours also remained in place. These agreements endorsed a "two-door policy" for immigration, meaning temporary migration for black migrant workers and a more permanent and open migration for white workers (Moyo, 2021).

Only in 2002 was the above Aliens Control Act replaced by the Immigration Act. However, this policy too preferences highly skilled labour over low skilled labour, even after amendments were made in 2007 and 2011 (Moyo, 2021). In fact, the Immigration Act does not provide any avenue for the permanent legal migration of low skilled workers (Moyo, 2021). Within this act was a critical skills list that identified which skills were important to the economy and needed to be imported. Off this list, jobs in the private sector such as care work and domestic work were not included. Similarly, when reviewing South Africa's August 2022 Critical Skills List, through which one can apply for a visa, work typically reserved for the private sector was not on the list (Department of Home Affairs South Africa, 2022). Ignoring the migration of low skilled labourers in legal terms caused what we see today, large volumes of low skilled workers in irregular situations. Thus, the prejudiced immigration laws in the country, and throughout much of South Africa's history, has contributed to migrants in precarious situations. Therefore, the theory of core vs periphery can hide that despite the fact that South Africa is a periphery country

on a global level, on a more micro level - within its region and due to its colonial history- it is a core and represents similar dynamics to core countries in terms of labour exploitation.

High-skilled migrant labour is preferred in host countries and home countries alike, as it is believed to improve the development in both (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). High-skilled labourers are said to send remittances, transfer skills and build up networks, all which impact development in their home country (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). Moreover, highly skilled labourers are said to contribute to GDP, innovation, consumerism and as taxpayers (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). Low-skilled migrants contribute in all the same ways, except tax (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). This leads to the argument that some irregular low-skilled migrants choose to remain in their precarious positions so as to avoid paying tax, however, as we will see all the irregular transnational mothers in the study stated that they want to have a visa or work permit, meaning they would pay tax. Thus there is this perception that skilled migrants contribute a dramatic amount more to their home and host countries than their unskilled counterparts. This is a misconception rooted in construction of the private sphere and public sphere, driven by traditional gender ideologies that devalue ‘women’s work’ which has been situated historically in the private sphere (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 29).

Whilst we will talk more about xenophobia in the chapter below, it is important to note that although the South African government has in more recent years condemned xenophobia, dangerous anti-migrant statements have been made by state actors and in state publications. For example, in a 2017 government White Paper on International Migration to South Africa it says that irregular migration leads to “unacceptable levels of corruption, human-rights abuse, and national security risks" (Moyo, 2021). The report also highlighted the concern of precarious low-skilled or unskilled migrants from the SADC region, pointing that it harmed the country’s economic stability and national sovereignty (Moyo, 2021). The above beliefs resulted in the government implementing policies to crackdown on irregular migration such as the Border Management Authority Bill of 2020 which tightened border control. The government also moved the Department of Home Affairs from the Governance and Administrative Cluster to the Justice, Crime Prevention, and Security Cluster. This represented the government’s shift in thinking surrounding migration and defining it as a national security issue. As seen, most policy interventions have strived to restrict unskilled labour in the country (Carciotto, 2022). This

includes attempts to obstruct foreigners from working for informal businesses. For example, the Business Licensing Bill of 2013, now withdrawn, aimed at ostracising foreigners from the informal economy by trying to register all businesses and ensure that companies require operating licences from local municipalities (Carciotto, 2022). As we know, for undocumented migrants this would be greatly difficult, and may open them up to xenophobia. These immigration policies that aim to tighten irregular migration, make it more difficult for migrants in South Africa to find employment opportunities which actually leads migrant families to send more than one member so as to increase the likelihood of remittances (Davies, 1995, p.439). Therefore, harsher immigration policies can have adverse effects to their intention and aid in high volumes of illegal immigration (Davies, 1995, p.439).

However, the South African government has made some strides in aiding irregular migrants. In 2010 the government introduced the Documentation of Zimbabweans Project which regularised the status of thousands of precarious Zimbabweans in the country and granted them the right to work, study and run a business. The program was extended in 2014 and 2017. However, it was a once off sign up, meaning after the year 2010 no new migrants were allowed to apply and the permits only granted temporary stay, not indefinite residence. Here we see how the government contributes to the expendability of low skilled migrants, as the government can choose to retract their permits or not renew them which would plunge thousands of people back into precarious situations. Therefore, South Africa is missing a substantial regional framework for labour migration. The few efforts to eliminate precarity, such as above, have been lacking, poorly implemented and prefer high-skilled labour over low-skill labour. South Africa will continue to be SADC's migration hub and so would benefit from efforts to regularise migrants - as would the migrants themselves and their children. Yet, as we can see, the government's inability to choose a firm stance on low-skilled migration, both promoting it in some legislatures and preventing it in others, has led to a confused migrant population and large volumes of illegal migration (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 36).

Gender and migration in South Africa

Previously, migration in South Africa was for the most part carried out by male labourers, and literature surrounding migration took on a neoclassical approach. However, as we have explored, this dynamic shifted post formal apartheid. Yet, the literature surrounding migration has been slow to mirror this shift. Understanding gender is critical to migration and showing it to be contextual. Traditional migration theories have always emphasised the causes of migration over the question of 'who' migrates (Millman, 2013, p.78). Thereby often failing to consider gender-specific migration processes. Without an encompassing theoretical perspective it becomes difficult to explain the conditions in which women migrate or their predominance in certain labour flows (Millman, 2013, p.78). Moreover, traditional theories on migration are unable to help us understand the circumstances that push women to become transnational migrants (Millman, 2013, p.78). To answer these questions a contemporary migration approach must be adopted as it allows for more gender-sensitive analysis through the incorporation of both the who and the why of migration. Above we have reviewed the 'why' of migration to South Africa, below we will look at the who. To do so, contemporary literature on migration must look beyond the public sector (highly skilled and traditionally male) and focus on migration within the private sector (low-skilled and traditionally female) (Millman, 2013, p.79). It is here that we uncover the stories and experiences of irregular transnational mothers, which have largely been untold. Thus, in this way, a seemingly gender-neutral process of movement is revealed to be highly gender-specific.

Currently, the majority of South African migration policies are orientated towards male migrants or are gender neutral. Yet, women's migrant labour cannot be joined with male's migrant labour as the drivers of migration impact women and men differently (Millman, 2013, p.79). They do not take into account the different experiences and vulnerabilities of women, which only exposes these women to further risks. The migration of women is changing and they are beginning to assume more autonomy over their migration choices. Women are migrating more often for the economic well being of their families revealing the increasing role that women are taking on as economic beings, especially in sub-Saharan Africa (Millman, 2013, p.79). Migration for women

presents various risks, opportunities, freedoms, capabilities and vulnerabilities, all dictated by multiple factors. To understand migration and construct a useful theory, first the different types of migration must be taken into account.

As mentioned, in the neoclassical model of migration the decision to migrate was viewed as an individual decision. According to this model, it was the role and responsibility of women as wives and mothers that influenced their decision to migrate (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.3). Therefore, as women were traditionally the caretakers, this became the premise as to why men migrate more than women. This neoclassical approach adopts the Western construction of gender ideologies by making women synonymous with identities of mother and wife - thereby leaving no space for agency of women in their migrations (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.3). Moreover, in such an adoption to migration, the roles of women were sidelined and homogenised.

The new economic model of migration which views migration as a decision made by a family also then overlooks the differential relationships of power within traditional families (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.3). For example, on the basis of the eurocentric nuclear family, the man will have more decision making power over the women and therefore dictate who migrates, where they migrate and when. This model too strips away the autonomy of women in migration, and so the focus on migration continues to remain with men.

However, the contemporary approach allows us to review macro-level factors of migration such as the gendered demand for labour in receiving countries, typically in care or domestic work (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.4). Whilst then being able to go on to investigate how this gendered differential affects the lives of transnational women on a micro-scale, for example their experience of working in the private sector.

By exploring gender through migration and different macro and micro level factors, this dissertation is reinforcing gender as a social construct (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.5). The women in this dissertation depart from eurocentric gender ideologies which shows that gender is not fixed but can change over time and depending on context, the same can be said for motherhood and mothering - and so by investigating contextual specificities within migration, both top down and bottom up - the knowledge of this field shifts.

Looking at female migration through different sectionalities is central to transnational literature. Historically, work on female migration in South Africa was mainly focused on the lives of European women (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). These women worked alongside men and took on higher skilled jobs as teachers, shopkeepers and seamstresses (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). This is an example of a North-South migration. Which is wholly different from the migration of women South-South and South-North. Women from Europe that migrated were seen as being motivated by nationalism and therefore were lauded the title 'imperial mothers' (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). At the same time as European women were migrating to South Africa, so were women from India and women in the SADC region. However, being in a South-South migration and mostly women of colour, the journey's, jobs and positions they assumed on arrival were separate from that of their white, European and regular counterparts, who took on higher skilled jobs due to the latter sectionalities they assumed (Hiralal, 64). Therefore, just as migration is gendered, it is also relational in other aspects such as flow of movement, skill level, race, class and precarity.

The culture and context of the origin country also determines the likelihood that women will migrate. Transnational mothers from the SADC region usually migrate alone, driven by the need to ensure their families survival (Ajiambo, 2019). In both Malawi and Zimbabwe poverty and unemployment are rampant. As a result, migration from these countries to South Africa increases each year. In 2017, the number of female migrants in South Africa was 1.8 million, more than quadruple of that in 2001 (Ajiambo, 2019). In terms of culture, we will explore below how separate to Western migrations, more specific cultural values typical of African countries aided in the ease and decision making of migration. In addition the history of the region plays a vital role in migration narratives we see today.

As we have seen, gender is highly influential in dictating who moves, how they will move, and what their lives will look like once they move. If contemporary migration theory is to include gender in a meaningful way it must acknowledge the subtle and obvious ways it creates differences in migration, for example in labour divisions and in access to services (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p.8). By understanding these larger and smaller forces we grow the field of migration and highlight the individual experiences of transnational women globally.

Why do transnational mothers migrate?

The process of migration and thereafter remaining in a country undocumented, if they are unable to attain citizenship, is highly risky for women as they can face persecution, deportation or prison. So why do women do it?

The women who partake in the feminisation of labour do so because of political or economic disaster and familial or socio economic strain (Millman, 2013, p.77). For poor transnational mothers, migration is a survival strategy for them and their families as the income earned is sent back to home countries to support their dependents (Sternberg, 2010, p.3). For the participants in this study, economic opportunities and personal freedoms were the key pull factors in migrating to South Africa. Additionally, in both South to North and South to South migration case studies, women take these risks to secure better futures for their children. This can be termed as upward social mobility and was present as a motivating factor in almost all of the cases I reviewed.

There is a large caveat between the push and pull factors of migrants depending on whether they are skilled or unskilled. For the skilled migrants (according to the South African governments list) people will migrate for benefits and remuneration, bureaucratic efficiency, financial facilities and nature and conditions at work (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 26). These factors are wholly different from those of low-skilled migrants, the premise of which is survival (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). Moreover, these factors are even further from the common reasons of migration in the Global North which is a choice and for lifestyle. A difference in push and pull factors will inevitably affect the outcome of one's experience of migration (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27).

Women in the study all revealed that they left their home countries due to unemployment, financial challenges and food insecurity. Despite the tenuous political situation in Zimbabwe and Malawi none of the participants cited political related factors as a reason for leaving their home countries. Whereas, in a separate study on Somali transnational mothers living in South Africa, all women pointed to political instability and personal safety as the reason they had to flee Somalia (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.659). In such cases, the women reported high levels of stress and anxiety due to an inability to plan and mentally adjust to their migration (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.659).

Once women migrate it is often that they are unable to find work in their field due to their irregular status (Owusu-Sekyere, 2019, p. 27). Thus, despite their skill set and ambitions, irregular migrant women are forced to take up low skilled jobs as this is what is available and in demand. These jobs are commonly in the care or domestic sectors. In a 2009 case study on undocumented transnational Filipino mothers living in France, the majority of women knew that once they migrated, they would certainly be entering the domestic sphere, however, women migrating from SADC countries to South Africa have had different aspirations (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 255). These women often do not intend to or want to take on work in the private sector, where the pay is poor and there is little room for upward mobility (Castro, 2019).

We can turn to the sentiments expressed by the participants in this study to understand the above and the realities of irregular transnational mothers. Angela said in her interview that she migrated to South Africa after losing her “good job” in Zimbabwe. Previously, she was working an office job as a photo editor. She went on to say that she was not keen on migrating to South Africa but the country offered more opportunities than her own. Tanya shared this sentiment expressing that it is a “hard situation in Zimbabwe " and she came to South Africa for work opportunities to look after her family. Tanya said that in Zimbabwe her family used to “sleep with no food” because they did not have the money to buy any. She went on to say, “that situation really forced me” and “I really had to come”. Rosalina too said that things grew “very tough in Zimbabwe” being a widow and so she came to South Africa looking for work to support her children and extended family dependents. Similarly, Gertrude said that in her home country, Malawi, there was nothing for her to do to make enough money to provide for her family.

Most women maintain strong connections with their source countries. Angela for instance says there is a better lifestyle in Zimbabwe and maintains that “home is best”. If the situation improved in Zimbabwe she would return with her family. Gertrude reiterated this point and said that she does not want to live in South Africa permanently, she too wishes to go back to Malawi, but first must make enough money. Additionally, for Angela, most expectations before coming to South Africa are “false” as people think it will bring “greener pastures” than their home countries. However, for Angela, this is not the case. Rosalina also said that given the option she would rather go to Zimbabwe to join her children than her children join her in South Africa. Therefore, although these women chose to migrate, it was for the well-being and survival of their

families, not for their personal aspirations or comfort as we see in many North- South migrations, regular migrations and women occupying different sectionalities such as race, class and nationality.

Being in domestic work, these women sometimes can unwillingly become a part of a global care chain. Transnational mothers in such situations are being taken out of the confines of their home and into the confines of another. Migrant mothers working in domestic or caring roles allow the women employers in host countries more free time to pursue their own goals/wants outside of the home (Castro, 2019). Similarly, female family relations in origin countries allow migrant mothers the same freedom. Thus, women at the top of the chain are the most beneficial, migrant mothers in the middle have to endure raising their children from afar, yet can maintain some agency, and the women at the end of the chain (mostly female family members) are overworked with little freedom to personal development (Castro, 2019). Here we see a smaller scale representation of the dependency theory at play, with white affluent women in South Africa often at the core whilst poorer black undocumented migrant women feed into the upkeep of this dynamic. Women can have different intentions for their migration experiences, however, due to structural factors these intentions are often let down and thus their lived experience changes.

Although, the participants in this study did show agency in their migrations. These women chose to make further journeys to Cape Town instead of the close and larger economic hub, Johannesburg. In terms of travelling back and forth from their home countries, living in Johannesburg would mean these women would be closer to the border and have to make less of a journey to see their children and loved ones. However, the participants all stated that living in Cape Town was a purposeful decision as they said jobs were better paid in Cape Town and were easier to find than in a major centre such as Johannesburg. Moreover, the women stated that the cost of living in Cape Town was lower than in Johannesburg and police were less of a threat. Gertrude mentioned that she had heard about how in Johannesburg the police will “catch you” without papers or expired ones. However, she was not aware of anyone in Cape Town, either a friend or friend of friend, who had been deported. Rosalina too was unaware of any friends in Cape Town that had been deported. Similarly, Angela said that she has friends and family who have been deported in Johannesburg but not Cape Town and spoke to the heavier police presence in the province that patrol asking for documentation. Although deportation is less common in

Cape Town, Tanya still expressed that it is a constant worry of hers. This is an issue of proximity, and is integral in migration. Johannesburg is closer to Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique than Cape Town is, thus it receives a greater number of immigrants. In response, the city has employed more strict policing policies. We see similar dynamics occurring on a global level. For example, Italy has introduced several measures to try and curb illegal immigration including penalising charities that try to rescue migrants arriving by sea (Guiffrida, 2022). This is likely due to its proximity to Morocco and the country being the first point of entry for many immigrants. Whereas the UK, which is farther away, has not seen the introduction of such extreme policies. Therefore, the proximity between one's home and host country can also distort the migration process and introduce more challenges.

As we have seen through these women's experiences, in circumstances wherein one migrates from economic necessity their journeys are riddled with little choice and control. This is often attached with a more negative migration experience as transnational mothers do not want to migrate but need to migrate. Due to their desperation, transnational mothers in this situation often take up undesirable work below their skill level. Most transnational mothers work in care or domestic work which typically do come with high levels of exploitation (Castro, 2019). Undocumented Filipino transnational mothers in France, the majority of whom worked for wealthy upper class white families, reported receiving prejudicial comments from employers and ill treatment. However, for the women in this study, when asked if they had ever felt discriminated against in the workplace or that they had been treated unfairly, they answered no. Except, one participant whose previous employer she felt had purposefully given her small bonuses due to her irregularity and that she did not have formal channels to defend herself. However, the overarching good relationships and treatment between the participants of this study and their employers is not likely to be the case in all South-South migrations or South-North migrations but may instead be due to the uniformity of demographics that each women's employer occupied in this study. The mothers in this study all worked for upper class, wealthy, white families. However, in South Africa, due to the recent abolition of the Apartheid system, there is a heightened sensitivity around racial issues (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 256). Families such as above feel the need to emotionally and financially compensate for their privilege which was gained through the oppression of black people in the country (Olasoji, 2022). Especially in the domestic sphere which under apartheid fostered disturbing relationships between white

employers and domestic workers as these women were often racially and sexually abused as well as overworked for poor pay (Olasoji, 2022). This is not to say that this is the experience of all black irregular transnational mothers in South Africa, quite the contrary. The racial dynamics in South Africa do not reflect the above. Isolated to this case, can we draw on the above explanation to understand the relationships between the participants and their employers - which is likely to influence the comparatively good treatment that women in the study reported compared to women in the other case studies - namely Filipino women in France, Zimbabwean women in the UK and Latina American women in the US. Here again we see context negating universalism.

Chapter Three: Macro-level issues affecting the migration of transnational mothers

The meaning of documentation and how it affects the experience of transnational mothers

All participants stated that they believed their lives would be significantly better if they had documentation allowing them the legal right to reside and work in South Africa. This is likely due to the discourse attached to illegality and legality. As we will see below, legality is connoted with freedom and better lifestyles (Schrover & van der Leun, 2008, p.18). Whereas, illegality has been connoted with crime and poverty (Schrover & van der Leun, 2008, p.18). Due to the entry and exiting of migrants done illegally, a false belief is fostered that one illegal activity will lead to another (Schrover & van der Leun, 2008, p.18). Such beliefs result in the negative labelling and stereotyping of irregular migrants (Schrover & van der Leun, 2008, p.18). Subsequently, irregular migrants are often mistreated. Therefore, the negative discourse surrounding illegality likely contributes to why having the correct documents means so much to the irregular transnational mothers in the study as well as migrants all over the globe.

A common trend throughout the interviews was the possession of documentation being conflated with freedom. The research participants expressed that for them, documentation means having freedom from xenophobic attacks, freedom to access services, freedom to mother in the way they want to and not have to, and freedom to upskill themselves.

For Gertrude, she wants to be documented because it “sets you free”. She associates “nicer” things in life with papers and that if she was documented her life would have greater “comfortability”. Tanya reiterated this point and said that getting your papers in South Africa is the most important thing as it “makes you free” and allows you to “better yourself”. Angela, the only woman in the group who has had a work permit, although it is now expired, stated that her

experience differs greatly from that of undocumented transnational mothers due to their inability to access services. Furthermore, when asked what advice Angela would give to transnational mothers immigrating to South Africa from other Southern African countries, she said that she wished the women knew about the importance of having documents and securing papers, as for her, documents symbolise freedom. In Rosalina's opinion, documents meant the freedom to report crimes and abuse. Without documents, Rosalina said transnational mothers, including herself, feel trapped when they are mistreated as they feel there are no trustworthy legal avenues they can go to to protect themselves. This sentiment was shared by women outside of this study. After heightened xenophobic tensions Amnesty International conducted interviews in South Africa in 2022 to assess the situation of migrants, one Zimbabwean woman was quoted saying this after her working permit had expired, "I am no longer free to live here. We no longer work well because we live in fear of what will happen to us next" (Amnesty International, 2022). Here we see a piece of paper acting as a shield to vulnerability, and therefore what being regular means to transnational mothers in South Africa. As well as how such a contextual specificity can impact the experience of migration. Below we will explore how being irregular shapes their experiences.

As you can see, migrants conflate freedom with documentation, permits and visas, because the latter grants one ultimate mobility, and the freedom of movement creates the manifestation of individual agency (Howard & Davidson, 2015). This was mirrored in the case reviewing the experience of Filipino transnational mothers in France. The freedom of mobility, for transnational mothers that had the correct papers, decreased the emotional difficulties that were felt, and, as compared to their irregular counterparts, these regular mothers had more autonomy over their mothering practices due increased access to services, movement and personal agency (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 257). Thus, being documented represents security and hope for irregular transnational mothers as well as affects the ways they can live and exercise their care.

Xenophobia

Xenophobia is the fear or dislike of anything 'other' which usually manifests in negative feelings towards the 'other' (Harris, 2002, p.167). Through xenophobia, foreigners feel excluded and

ostracised. In South Africa, xenophobia alienates and endangers foreigners in society (Harris, 2002, p.167). Xenophobia is ever present; in interpersonal relationships, institutions, legislature, schools, media and the workplace - all based on the premise that precarious migrants are 'threats to society' (Madziva & Zontini, 2021, p.433).

When asked about the nature of integrating with South Africans, Angela said that, "most locals do not want us here but if you have documents you can stand on your own" and "it is easier to be attacked if you do not have your documents but if you are documented it is your right to be here". Therefore, having legal citizenship or a work permit acts as a shield as the government has granted you the 'right' to reside in the country. Similarly, Rosalina said that she has experienced "a lot" of xenophobia stemming from her not having a work visa. She went on to say that people with work visas are treated differently as they are considered as "legal". Angela also stated that she herself has felt animosity from South Africans. Yet, when asked if she attempted to blend in as to avoid being targeted, Angela responded, "I am who I am and I am proud of who I am". Although, given the opportunity Angela said she would "love to" apply for a South African passport and consequently give up her Zimbabwean citizenship.

Gertrude said that she felt she has been taken advantage of due to her foreigner status and has felt "jealousy" from residents. However, unlike Angela, Gertrude said she tries to ignore xenophobic comments and live a quieter life in fear of provoking violence. Contrastingly, to the other participants Tanya says she has made friends with South Africans and has integrated well - adding that South Africa is a "lovely country". However, Tanya did say that before leaving home she was scared of the unknown and the xenophobia, continuing that she felt it was a big risk to her life migrating to South Africa. However, due to her financial situation she had no choice. It is important to note that obtaining documentation might not decrease xenophobia as such or as much as the transnational mothers believe because their illegality is not necessarily the issue but South Africans' own fears. However, to these irregular transnational mothers, we see once again documentation acting as a passage to freedom and mobility, and as a tangible shield to xenophobia.

The xenophobia in the country has also deterred mothers from bringing their children over. Gertrude revealed that, “people say go and take your daughter for her to stay with you here, but here is complicated and there is violence. Home is safer than bringing her here”. Whilst mothers in the Latin America/US study and Filipino/France study were desperate for their children to join them in their host country, more often than not this was unable to happen due to either the dangerous journeys to get to the host country or strict immigration laws. As we will see below, it would be easy for the children of the research participants to come over to South Africa however due to the security situation these mothers have chosen to remain transnational mothers, despite the heartbreak, as they feel it is the safest decision for their children. For example, in a 2020 Human Rights Watch study on xenophobia in South Africa, a story was shared of a young girl named Nathalie who is from the Democratic of Congo. Natahlie came to South Africa with her family in 2009. In Grade 10 she was elected class monitor, several days later on the 27th of August 2019 she was severely beaten by fellow students who believed a non-national should not have been given the position. Natahlie spent nine days in hospital and her attackers never faced any consequences (Ueda, 2020). Therefore, xenophobia is not restricted to job competition and between adults but has filtered down to the school level and between children. Such cases instil fear into the lives of transnational mothers and contribute to some making the choice for their children to remain in their home countries.

Building on the experiences of the participants, xenophobia is a phenomena that is experienced in both South to North and South to South migrations and is a universal suffering faced by transnational mothers. However, the roots of the xenophobia can be categorised differently in the separate migrations. Xenophobia experienced by transnational mothers participating in South to North migrations largely stems from anti-assimilation attitudes (Harris, 2002, p.169). With what many European countries are calling an ‘asylum influx’, the treatment of immigrants has decreased as mainstream media spreads falsehoods and prejudices that frame immigrants as threats to ‘national sovereignty’ (Madziva & Zontini, 2021, p.440). The hypocrisy in this is that although core countries need the menial labour, they do not want those that perform it to be incorporated in the country in a meaningful way. Whereas, in most South to South migrations the root cause of xenophobic attacks is over economic competition, specifically job security (Harris, 2002, p.169). This is understandable considering the sending/receiving country and

core-periphery economy discussion we had above. In such instances, residents of a country will accuse irregular migrants of ‘stealing’ jobs from them and causing high rates of unemployment. This is a dominant narrative within South Africa, and in this way, migrants often become the scapegoat for all things ‘bad’ in the country and face more violent forms of xenophobia such as physical attacks. Above we see how xenophobia does not manifest in the same way for all migrations, instead it is context specific and can greatly alter the experience of the migrant.

If one zooms out here, from a macro perspective we can identify a core versus periphery dynamic at play. In periphery countries - which as mentioned are in the resource trap and demand low-skilled labour - the competition for jobs and levels of unemployment are higher than that of most developing countries. For example, in France the unemployment rate in 2021 was 8.06 percent, in the UK it was 4.53 percent in 2021 and in the United States it was 5.46 percent in the same year (O’Neill, 2023). Whereas in South Africa in the same year it was 33.56 percent (O’Neill, 2023). Therefore, South Africa, a periphery and resource driven country will have high rates of competition for low-skilled jobs. Which is exacerbated by the large national unemployment levels, global instability, and micro-core status. Such circumstances place transnational mothers in developing countries, especially those that are undocumented, at higher risk of xenophobic attacks as they are perceived as ‘taking’ valuable employment opportunities. As you can see, when South Africa takes on the role as a ‘developed’ country - whilst still dealing with a myriad of developing issues - it results in negative implications for migration and migrants (O’Neill, 2023).

In the Filipino/France transnational mothering case study the women reported prejudice comments being directed their way and ill treatment based on their race and ethnicity; however, none ever reported physical altercations or fearing for their lives (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 260). In South Africa however, xenophobia towards migrants is rife and often violent. The fear of xenophobic attacks are based on stories of violent attacks relayed by other migrants or detailed in the newspaper.

As discussed above, migration in South Africa has been largely viewed through a male lens, which resulted in the many lived experiences of migrant women such as sexual assault and

gender based violence being overlooked (Collins, 1994, p. 373). Moreover, cases of sexual assault and gender based violence were proved to increase during xenophobic attacks (Ajiambo, 2019). One migrant woman in South Africa said that during a xenophobic attack on her shop she was sexually assaulted, and that "they (local men) think we are prostitutes, and [that] sleeping with us forcefully is not a crime. They (local men) think they have a right to rape us" (Ajiambo, 2019). However, there are no official figures on sexual assault or gender based violence against migrant women, which is likely due to underreporting. Migrant women generally do not feel comfortable to report crimes due to their irregular status and low trust in authorities, fostered by an overriding culture of authoritative impunity (Ajiambo, 2019). This sentiment was mirrored by Rosalina and Angela in their interviews as we saw above. Therefore, migrant women in South Africa undergo a triple threat of discrimination, namely xenophobia, racism and misogyny (Mbiyozo, 2018, p.3). The latter discriminatory practices shape the lived experiences of undocumented transnational mothers. For example, in the study of Salvadoran women in the US, women reported keeping a low profile in order to avoid xenophobic targeting (Horton, 2009, p.39).

Unfortunately, the police in South Africa cannot be relied on to protect migrant women. Although, in the eyes of the irregular transnational mothers in this study, having documentation can safeguard them from xenophobia and to a degree mitigate targeted violence against them. Although, xenophobic attacks are also largely dependent on where one lives, with higher volumes of incidences being recorded in townships and informal settlements (Ajiambo, 2019). The majority of irregular transnational mothers, if they are not living with their employer, live in informal settlements and are thus at higher risk (Ajiambo, 2019). None of the participants in this study lived with their employer and therefore are at a higher risk of being exposed to xenophobia.

The drivers of xenophobia are also at their roots, falsehoods. According to a report released by the Institute for Security Studies in 2022 called S*capegoating in South Africa Busting the myths about immigrants* the socio economic problems that plague South Africa are not caused by irregular migrants but by poor governance and corruption (Chifamba, 2022). Corruption and other illicit activities draw from funding that is available for necessary areas such as housing,

social grants and health (Chifamba, 2022). In addition, the hegemony that South Africa is flooded with immigrants is a gross misconception. In 2021, an estimated 6.5 percent of the South African population were immigrants. Despite the reality of the low number of immigrants in the country, it is ever more important that we investigate such issues. According to Akinola (2014) “individual vulnerability to economic and political deprivations that breed unemployment, low income and declining standards of living can generate xenophobia”. Due to the turmoil facing the global arena which we discussed above, people in South Africa are going to become more vulnerable and so we can expect xenophobic sentiments to increase, just as they did after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Crossing the border

Border types and immigration policies are key factors affecting the experiences of migration. Below we will see how they differ depending on the context of this study.

There are two types of borders for migrants and each has a pertinent effect on not only transnational mothers but also the ways in which they will engage in mothering. ‘Blurred borders’ refer to migrants' low risk border crossings and little regulation regarding their visits (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.61). This allows for a degree of fluidity and openness to migrants documentation status. Whereas, ‘brittle borders’ refer to physically and legally dangerous crossings with enforcement of harsh restrictions on entry, exit and permanent residence (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.61). This makes the possibility of the migrant gaining citizenship or seeking family reunification much more difficult (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.61). It is common for women engaging in South-South migrations to cross blurred borders (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.61). Whereas, women in South-North migrations have to cross brittle borders (Christou & Kofman, 2022, p.61). The type of border crossing, as we will see below, heavily influences the mothering practices of undocumented transnational mothers as well as the stress and anxieties they feel. Moreover, we can in most cases link the border type to the core-periphery model. Core countries typically have brittle borders whereas periphery countries typically have blurred borders. Above we discussed contributing factors to this divide such as national nativism, anti assimilation attitudes, wealth differentiations and geographical proximity.

Border posts in South Africa can be defined as blurred borders and are known to have slow processing times due to ‘overburdened’ infrastructure and staff, and inadequate technological systems (van Lennep, 2019). In addition, a lack of coordination between domestic border agencies and failure to separate offices for the inflows and outflows of migrants are two of the many issues that result in South Africa’s mismanaged borders (van Lennep, 2019). The outcome of which is high volumes of people entering and exiting the country precariously (van Lennep, 2019). South Africa does not have the finances or resources to ‘safeguard’ their borders like the United States or many European countries do. Especially when the argument could be made that there are pressing domestic issues which require the majority of the state's attention and funding such as education and housing.

People cross the border illegally by foot or by car. By foot can sometimes be a laborious journey and often involves crossing harsh terrains including encountering wildlife and fast flowing rivers (Chingono, 2022). Yet, it can also be as simple as crossing through a broken fence. Journeys are made easier by hiring a ‘border escort’ (BusinessTech, 2019). This is someone who will take you across the border and pick out the most suitable route, for a fee (BusinessTech, 2019). There are many escorts who wait along the borders for potential clients. By car, people often pay bribes to border control authorities ranging between R20 and R50 per officer at each checkpoint. In total the cost of crossing the border one way is roughly R600 - R1000 according to taxi drivers who are the main source of transport for people crossing illegally (Chingono, 2022). People crossing the border have also been known to experience harassment and sexual assault at the hands of guards. Therefore, the risks of crossing the border to South Africa are high and on average 100 Zimbabweans are deported every day (Chingono, 2022).

For women engaging in South-North migrations and brittle borders, their journeys to their host countries are often spoiled with verbal and physical abuse, sexual violence, and financial exploitation, especially in the case of women from Latin America migrating to the United States (Heffron & Wacheter, 2022, p.12). In the Heffron & Wacheter (2022) study, women migrating from Latin America stated that they would never bring their children to the United States unless through legal means, as doing it illegally poses too many risks for the children. The dangers and

costs associated with these South-North journeys mean that once the undocumented transnational mother has made it to the host country, it is unlikely that she will return to her home country. This presents a vastly different situation to irregular transnational mothers in South Africa who due to blurred borders, geographic proximity and low travel costs can frequently return home.

On top of border control, immigration policies shape the capacity of mothers to visit their children and bring their children to visit them. These policies often result in unexpected periods of long separation. In a study conducted in the United Kingdom focusing on undocumented Zimbabwean transnational mothers, the participants did not anticipate being away from their children for long periods of time. Restrictive legislature led to mothers feeling increasing guilt and moral failure as they could not reunite with their children, often letting down their children's aspirations (Madziva & Zontini, 2021, p.433). This added a heavy veil of stress to the lives of undocumented transnational mothers. Similarly, in the Salvadorian case, undocumented transnational mothers expected to reunite with their children after a few months of departure, however due to tightening border control and economic hardships their separations turned from prolonged to indefinite. This led to the women feeling a "profound sense of moral failure" and heartbreak (Horton, 2009, p.27). However, in the South African case, immigration policies play less of a dictator factor in the lives of undocumented transnational mothers, especially in terms of the frequency in which they can visit their children. Which is likely why the transnational mothers interviewed did not express the same anxieties and stress around seeing their children as the women reviewed in the other case studies, and further contributed to their decision for their children to remain in home countries. For undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa, their main stress was economical, meaning, ensuring that they are making enough money to support their dependents. Thus, whilst restrictive policies do affect transnational mothers and their children in terms of ultimate freedom of movement, these deterrent measures do not reduce migration volumes on a whole, and certainly not to the extent seen in separate migrations. Instead, they encourage people to pursue irregular migration paths.

Undervalued work

The positioning of women in the labour market is usually defined by an over-representation in low paid jobs (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.24). As such the work of transnational mothers has been historically undervalued and unprotected (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.24). Moreover, it is typical for these women to undergo a 'deskilling' when they migrate, meaning they are forced, due to their documentation status, to find work that is misaligned with their skills and qualifications (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.25). Such was the case with several of the participants in the study, all of whom were educated at a matric level and had previous jobs in other fields in their origin countries. In addition, although all the women stated that they were content in their job, there was a general consensus that having the correct documentation would allow for better job opportunities.

In developed countries there are fewer people that are willing to take on the menial work that undocumented transnational mothers assume (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.27). Therefore, these women are filling a much needed gap. However, in South-South migrations, which are usually to developing countries, there are more people looking for lower skilled jobs. This means there is higher competition for the work that undocumented transnational mothers are looking for and can take on, as well as renders these women somewhat expendable (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.27). Meaning they can be easily replaced by people equally in need of the job. This adds to the precarity of transnational mothers in the low-skilled sector. As there are no policy interventions to protect them, and due to their irregular status, undocumented transnational mothers continue to fight for basic rights such as minimum wage, equal pay for equal work and greater living and work conditions (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.27). However, their fight cannot be too loud or too disruptive to the point it would threaten their job security. Therefore, the position of the work you do on the private vs public sector scale, can differentiate your experience of migration.

Whilst irregular transnational mothers are valued for their material contributions in their home countries through remittances and striving for upward mobility, it is the undervaluing of their work in their host countries that contributes to their precarity (Oelz & Rani, 2015, p.29). Despite, as we have seen above, they contribute to countries in the same ways as their highly skilled

counterparts. In 2020, diaspora remittances to Zimbabwe was USD 1 billion, this increased to USD 1.4 billion in 2021, making a large contribution to national development and providing for thousands of families in the country (Sitemere, 2022). In addition, in 2021, Malawi received USD 258 million in personal remittances (Knoema, 2022). Furthermore, in 2022 formal outbound remittances, through authorised channels from South Africa amounted to roughly 991 million USD. The value of informal remittances is approximated to match this amount (Jeoffreys-Leach, 2023). The volume of formal remittance transactions exiting from South Africa since January 2016 has steadily risen by 3% month-on-month. Cross border remittances provide people in the SADC region access to services and support micro-economies in origin countries. Despite these impactful contributions, neither host or home country are making any policy changes to help migrants remit money better and in a way that they can become more empowered. Currently, irregular migrants incur large financial losses because of inefficient online remitting channels. All the participants in this study used the same online banking service to remit money to Malawi and Zimbabwe. The rates of this service are between 7 and 8 %, whereas the global average is 6% to transfer money (Jeoffreys-Leach, 2023). The SADC region is categorised as having high transfer fees which ultimately is affecting the lives of the most vulnerable. By having better fiscal policies, undocumented transnational mothers would likely be able to save more money, as they are spending less on transfer fees. This would enable them to upskill themselves and break the cycles of powerlessness in undervalued work such as undocumented domestic work, or put more money back into the economies of their host or origin countries. The undervaluing of migrant work is not universal, but comes down to a few structural factors; country dependency dynamics, traditional gender roles, documentation status and labour sector (which can also be linked to gender roles).

Access to services

One of the biggest areas where contextual specificities make a difference to the lives of transnational mothers is either through the granting or denying access to services. As we will see below, having access to services can either greatly advance or hinder a transnational mothers experience as well as impact the ways in which they can mother.

Undocumented transnational mothers do not have access to key social programmes such as banking, health care, education and justice. Angela, the only transnational mother in the group to experience working with a permit, said that her experience differs greatly from that of irregular transnational mothers. According to Angela, her undocumented counterparts have difficulty opening bank accounts, travelling, going to hospital, booking a plane and getting loans.

Moreover, in case studies of South to North migrations, one's documentation status dictates how much your salary is (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 261). Undocumented mothers on average can be paid less than their documented counterparts and this takes a toll on mothering practices (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 261). For example, documented mothers earning more are able to send greater remittances, more gift packages and afford more data therefore communicate more. In the Filipino/France South to North case study it was found that undocumented migrant mothers earned less than documented migrant mothers because their illegal status limited the bargaining power they had with employers (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.257). For undocumented migrant mothers the average monthly wage for a full time job was €1000 without health insurance (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.257). Contrastingly, for documented migrant mothers, the wage for the same job would be €1400 including all the social security benefits (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.257). Due to the lower rates undocumented migrant mothers earn, most try to subsidise their wage by performing other tasks such as sewing or selling sim cards for cell phones. As mentioned, the women in this study, in their current employment contracts, did not feel that they were paid less than their documented counterparts and did not show any qualms about their paycheck. Only one mother in this study, Rosalina, participated in small money tasks such as selling chips to subsidise her wage. Rosalina also had the most dependents out of all of the mothers.

Here we see documentation not only representing freedom and greater access to services but also, for the transnational mothers in the study, it represents a chance to fulfil their aspirations and upskill themselves. Angela said that she wishes to study further in the field of beauty therapy and may want to take online courses. Gertrude too said she would like to study further but ultimately hopes to one day open her own business. Tanya believes having papers will make a big difference to her life and allow her to do more things she is unable to do without them. For example, Tanya wishes to have a driver's licence, buy a car and look for a better area to stay in.

But ultimately, when asked about her hopes and dreams, Tanya said, “I don’t need more than I have” and that she wishes for her family to stay together and have food on the table. Differential access to services not only alters the experiences of transnational mothers at present, but also guides the future outcomes of their migrations.

Within the ability or inability to access services, we see once again the meaning of documentation being conflated with mobility and freedom. When asked at the end of the interview if the participants would like to add any final comments, Gertrude responded by saying this, “to live here (South Africa) comfortably you need papers, I would love to have papers. It would allow me to open an account (banking) and go to the hospital”. If you are undocumented in South Africa, you are not allowed to open a banking account. Therefore, most irregular immigrants are paid through online banking apps, which they also then use to remit money. However, these online banking apps usually have higher rates than banks and often have limits on the amount of money you can send. Yet, undocumented transnational mothers do not have other options as women in the interview said that sending money back via taxi services or post is highly unreliable and the money often ends up getting stolen, or drivers charge large service amounts. The women also told stories of drivers extorting them for more money once reaching their home countries and holding the remittances hostage if they do not comply. Angela stated that she sometimes sends money back with friends but never with drivers as you often get “scammed and rates are also high”. She gave the example that if you are looking to send back R100, a driver will charge you R150.

In addition to facing restricted access to financial institutions, as mentioned, Angela said that without documentation one can struggle to access adequate healthcare services. In September 2022, Operation Dudula, an anti-migrant organisation, targeted sick and vulnerable migrant patients outside a hospital in Tshwane, blocking people from seeking medical treatment based on the colour of their skin or language (Chinsamy & Waterhouse, 2022). The government released a delayed statement in response to the protests, “the right to access basic health services is a basic human right that is guaranteed by the Constitution … which makes provision for every person in the country, regardless of their nationality or documentation status, to access healthcare” (Chinsamy & Waterhouse, 2022). However, despite stating that everyone has a right to

healthcare, this does not play out in reality. Doctors Without Borders, released findings that hospitals throughout South Africa have been found to use policies that directly contradict the above right stated in the National Health Act, specifically in the case of migrants, pregnant migrants and migrant children under six (Chinsamy & Waterhouse, 2022). The latter groups are frequently denied access to care if they lack the correct documentation or are unable to pay required service fees. The rejection of migrant patients is based on the "Circular 27 of 2020" document implemented by the Gauteng Health Department which includes ambiguous terms such as "scheduling of fees for hospital services" - when medical services at public hospitals should be free (Chinsamy & Waterhouse, 2022). Therefore, much like South Africa's poorly run Home Affairs Department (which will be expanded on below), hospitals have often been cited not servicing undocumented transnational mothers. Which is especially worrying due to the high rates of sexual violence in the country and xenophobic attacks. As well as the strong correlation between transnational motherhood and depressive symptoms (Pineros-Leano, 2021). Hence, in these cases we see another South African institution failing undocumented transnational mothers, and documentation status continuing to seriously impede the health and safety of transnational mothers. Thus, further cementing why these women continue to mother from afar and make active choices not to bring their children to South Africa.

Whereas, in the South-North migration case of Filipino women in France the situation with healthcare is very different. In the Filipino case study, undocumented transnational mothers and migrants can apply for free medical care and often those with chronic health problems choose France as their host country specifically, so as to take advantage of the healthcare system (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 265). Having access to adequate healthcare reduces the anxieties of undocumented transnational mothers, as being the sole provider for their families the guarantee of their health is vital (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 265). Therefore, non-citizenship in South Africa for transnational mothers can cause immobility in multiple facets of their lives.

Moreover, irregularity can also cause immobility in the lives of transnational mothers' children. South Africa's laws on access to education for children of immigrants are also ambiguous. It states in the Bill of Rights that everyone has the right to basic education in the country. In addition, the South African Schools Act of 1996 has made it mandatory for every child to attend

school from the ages of seven to 15 (Mutandiro, 2023). However, according to the Immigration Act, it is illegal for a learning institution to accept an illegal foreigner (Mutandiro, 2023). Such exclusionary policies make it difficult for irregular transnational mothers to reunite with their children. The group Zimbabwe Isolated Women in South Africa has collated a database of children in Johannesburg who are undocumented and therefore cannot attend school. The number is close to 1,000 children from Zimbabwe, Malawi, Mozambique, Congo and Lesotho (Mutandiro, 2023). However, there is a slight loophole which is that most private schools will accept undocumented migrant children. Yet, the tuition fees of these schools are out of reach for most single-parent irregular-migrant households. Therefore, the placement of high-skilled jobs over low-skilled jobs in immigration policies not only affects precarity of migrant workers but then has a second-tier effect on their children, the precarity of their children, and subsequently their children's education and access to services as well. This top-down effect is one of the many reasons why the prevalence of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa is growing - as their children are remaining in their home countries in order to receive an education - and another reason why it is important to investigate migration contextually, as it can then bring forth its generational consequences.

We have seen above how in the South Africa case, irregularity can mean an inability to access services such as healthcare, banking, migrant's upward mobility, children's education and even telecommunication. Below we will see how this access affects the lives and mothering practices of undocumented transnational mothers in a few case studies and in South Africa.

Institutionalism in South Africa

Irregular migration occurs primarily in South Africa as the country does not provide work permits to low-skilled and unskilled workers. Several of the participants commented on the ineffectual nature of institutions in South Africa and how this aids in their ongoing irregular status and therefore lack of safety, healthcare, mobility and agency.

Amongst the participants, Angela is the only one who has had a work visa in the past. However, her work visa expired and she has since had great difficulty renewing it. She expressed that the government backlog of issuing work permits causes her severe anxiety as in her opinion being

without a work visa is like “standing without one leg”. Angela expressed that she feels she is treated unfairly at Home Affairs and often given misdirected guidance on purpose. Gertrude also has had a negative experience with South African institutions, she speaks of the many times she has been to Home Affairs to apply for papers like being “held hostage” due to the excessive queues and officials purposely delaying certain processes. This is another representation of the institutionalised xenophobia in South Africa. Although, unlike Angela, being undocumented is not something that Gertrude is scared about as she says she is in the majority. Gertrude also alluded that it is easier to forge papers than to attempt to deal with South Africa’s deadlock bureaucracy. It is common in South Africa for fake working permits to be made as it helps migrants not only secure jobs but jobs that they are qualified for. In some cases, migrants bribe Home Affairs officials to issue them legal documents. In July 2022, it was uncovered that the institution had issued over 45,000 fraudulent visas of varying types (Ensor, 2022). Within the system of fake South African Identity Documents or passports, we see again an exploitative chain and service that easily caters to the wealthy but excludes the poor. In early 2022, a syndicate, working with Home Affair officials was discovered selling fake documents (Khumalo, 2022). The group would recruit South Africans to sell their identities for R500, the Home Affairs officials would pocket between R5000 and R10 000 per passport while the kingpins charged from R40 000 per passport for any foreign national who wanted a passport but did not qualify (Khumalo, 2022). Much like above we see that wealthy migrants are able to buy a very different experience to that of poor migrants in South Africa (Khumalo, 2022).

Tanya also does not have a work permit and has said that living without one is “very difficult”. She has tried several times to get one but has never been successful. Tanya worries that without a work permit she is putting herself and her employers at risk. In South Africa, as with most countries, it is illegal to employ someone who does not possess a work permit. Penalties for breaking such laws can include jail time or heavy fines. When Tanya first came to South Africa from Zimbabwe in 2012 she was granted asylum. However, this has since been retracted and at the time of taking away her asylum, Tanya did not have access to lawyers who could have helped her. Unlike the others, Rosalina, who came to South Africa in 2019, has not tried obtaining a work visa, although stated she would like one.

As seen above, and in several of the cases studied, immigration policies and issues of status not only bring mothers hardship and anxiety but also negatively affect their families back home who are relying on them (Schiller, 1995, p.60). The stringent policies of receiving countries in South to North migrations and weak institutions in South to South migrations, result in poor transnational mothers being denied many basic rights, including the right to successful transnational parenting as their illegal status presents obstacles to work opportunities, reunification and social and political rights. The associated hindrances disturb the planning of migrant mothers and their families, i.e. the work they are able to do, the salary they earn, the frequency they are allowed to visit their children and their participation in the host country (Schiller, 1995, p.61). Additionally, it is more difficult for undocumented migrant mothers to integrate, assimilate and feel like they belong in their host countries than their documented counterparts (Schiller, 1995, p.61).

Absorbing into the culture and social ways of a country are necessary requirements for transnational mothers' acceptance into society (McCorkle & Cole, 2018, p.348). This is most receiving states assert and forms part of the anti-cultural pluralism rhetoric. In South-North migrations it is not ‘acceptable’ for migrants to permanently settle in host countries **and** maintain/bring through strong ties from their origin countries (Schiller, 1995, p.61). It has been found that migrants not fully accepting their ‘new culture’ are the targets of xenophobic treatments (Schiller, 1995, p.62). As fears of ‘cultural dilution’ spread through receiving countries (Schiller, 1995, p.62). Thus, increasing negative perceptions of undocumented migrants begin to emerge. In the United States, undocumented migrants have become the scapegoats for the ‘deterioration of infrastructure and lack of public services’ (Schiller, 1995, p.62). In response, the US has withdrawn the right to health, education and peace of mind for illegal immigration, which includes daily raids of neighbourhoods, immediate deportation and family separation. Consequently, transnational poor undocumented mothers in the US suffer, and have expressed that they are constantly worrying and living in fear that they will be deported by immigration authorities (Sternberg, 2010, p.4). They stated that this fear obstructs them from being able to meet new people and integrate fully in the community. One Latin American mother, Patricia, stated that “we try to be invisible” (Sternberg, 2010, p.4). Dolores and Margarita, also undocumented Latin America migrant mothers, shared Patricia’s sentiments and stated that their

migration status has led them to experiencing encounters of exclusion, discrimination and humiliation (Sternberg, 2010, p.4). All of the above make the situation for undocumented migrant mothers more precarious. Thus, immobility and irregularity caused by anti-migrant institutionalism result in deep suffering in the transnational space for undocumented migrant mothers. Although xenophobia treatment towards undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa is largely spurred by economic competition and less so by cultural dilution, it nonetheless has had a similar effect on the participants to that mentioned in the above studies.

As seen above, by not having papers in this South-South migration one is more vulnerable to xenophobic attacks, has access to fewer services, and less freedom of movement. It has also been noted that discrimination against foreign nationals has been institutionalised in South Africa, evident through the mistreatment of migrants in Home Affairs, public hospitals and unfair immigration legislation (Achiume, 2022). This induces risk into the lives of transnational mothers by; stirring the already dangerous anti-immigrant sentiment, denying them access to adequate healthcare and preventing them from upskilling which would mean making more money, leading a better lifestyle and providing more for their children. As seen, by contextualising migration through the above structural specificities, we have developed an understanding of a migration pattern - irregular transnational mothers - that is separate to what has been universalised in migration theory.

Chapter Four: Micro-level understanding of the lived experiences of transnational mothers

Following a contemporary approach, this dissertation has investigated the larger macro level factors at play in the migration decisions and experiences of irregular transnational mothers. Namely, core-periphery dynamics between the Global North and South, low-skilled versus high-skilled labour, unfavourable immigration policies, xenophobia, gender dynamics and weak institutionalism. The next investigation, inline with this model of migration, is to investigate migrants on a more micro-level. This dissertation thus focuses on transnational mothers' decision making processes relating to mothering practices and motherhood. Again, a contextualisation of what motherhood and mothering are will first need to be explored, as throughout the assessment of the transnational mothers' experiences, we see their conceptions of motherhood and mothering diverge from eurocentric constructions. It is in this chapter that we see the contextual specificities of migration play out on the ground level and in turn render hegemonic ideals as relational.

Good/Bad mothering dichotomy

Alison Diduck (1998) argues that motherhood has been “equated with being the essence of a woman” which is why mothering practices are heavily scrutinised. Here we must pause to break down motherhood versus mothering. Motherhood is viewed as an institution that is governed by a set of rules and regulations that are forced upon mothers (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.12). In this sense, motherhood dictates who is a ‘good’ mother and who is a ‘bad’ mother. Whereas, mothering refers to women's own conceptions and construction which can be empowering and part of what this dissertation aims to prove (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.12). Mothering is the process of providing care and can involve multiple practices. Although, similar to motherhood, there are traits of mothering that have been singled out as ‘best practice’ according to Western ideals. Therefore, the maternal issue that feminist scholarship, including this one, tries to understand and deconstruct can be both a point of oppression and strength for female identity.

The weaponization of motherhood takes place in the formulation and execution of the good/bad mother narrative. A part of this narrative is that mothers are not only regulated as women but as ‘producers of society as well’ (Diduck, 1998, p.131). The basis of this regulation is that as children are the ‘future of our society,’ society is vulnerable to the influence of good/bad mothers (Diduck, 1998, p.131). Therefore, mothers remain subject to close social regulation.

The ‘good mother’ is a social construct which puts pressure on women to meet certain standards, to which they are then judged and judge themselves. According to Arendell (2000, p.1193), a ‘good mother’ is “heterosexual, married and monogamous”, “white and dependent on her husband” and “is not employed”. Almost the antithesis of the poor undocumented black transnational mothers interviewed in this study. Arendell’s description fits into the Western conceptualisation of the nuclear family wherein there is a father as the head of the unit and is the provider for the family, the mother is underneath the father and cares for everyone in the family, and then there are the children.

The caring methods mothers employ within their family unit has been categorised too. One of the above mentioned ‘best practice’ traits of mothering, rooted in Western conceptualisation, is intensive mothering. Intensive mothering is a relatively new model of parenting which advocates for the excessive expenditure of time, money and energy on children by their mothers (Balta & Olcay, 2017, 1205). Intensive mothering is not a universal experience yet it has been placed under the umbrella of being a ‘good mother’. This is because white middle-class functioning is the norm of good mothering (Balta & Olcay, 2017, 1205). The above practice of mothering is riddled with privilege as we know not all mothers are able to or wish to care in this way. Park (2018) demonstrates the effect of intensive parenting in his study on South Korean students in top American colleges. Mothers in the study intensively managed their children's school activities, mostly in their early school years. Whilst fathers engaged in guiding their children's tertiary education. However, when reviewing the children’s narratives, the mothers’ lifelong care for and management of their private life was undervalued and criticised whereas the father’s late involvement was praised (Park, 2018, p.566). After conducting interviews, Park concludes that gender, through intensive parenting, reinforces and reproduces class disparity between upper

class heterosexual couples and their families. We can define the latter as ‘public fathering’ and ‘private mothering’ which reinforces the undervaluing and silencing of the work of mothers (Park, 2018, p.567). This is just one example of a diverging narrative from Western homogeneity of care and women.

A term that also is born out of this privilege and categorisation of care is ‘mamaprenueralism’. Which refers to the individual responsibility that mothers have and are held to, in risk management and planning for their children’s futures (Balta & Olcay, 2017, 1206). As such, the notion that mothers and their children live together in the same home is central to the above understanding of ‘good mothering’. Mamaprenueralism, which is linked to intensive mothering, similarly does not take into account contextualities or intersectionalities such as class, race, education or cultural aspects. The lack of an intersectional framework induces major anxiety into the lives of precarious transnational mothers as ‘bad planning’ has become synonymous with bad mothering (Balta & Olcay, 2017, 1206). Moreover, irregular transnational mothers do not have access to the same amount of time, resources and proximity as other mothers, especially those living in the Global North. As mentioned, the breakdown of the nuclear family has been taught to be understood as undermining society (Diduck, 1998, p.134). Therefore, when transnational mothers deviate from the above constructions, they are blamed for ‘ruining the foundation of society’ (Diduck, 1998, p.134).

We see this blame being portrayed in mainstream media, internalised by the mothers themselves and expressed by their children. For example, below are a few headlines of transnational mothers that have migrated from the South to the North; *"Overseas Job vs Family Stability', 'Sleeping Beauty' Gets Raped While Her Mom Works as DH [Domestic Helper] in Hong Kong"* and *"Education of OFWs [Overseas Filipino Workers'] Children Being Sacrificed"* (Parrenas, 2010, 1827). These headlines not only incorrectly blame migrant mothers and vilify them, but also present migrant mothers with a binary choice that fathers are not subject to - family or a job, you cannot have both. Therefore, it is common to see the media and religious institutions point to motherless families for a hoard of moral and family pathologies (Horton, 2009, p.30).

Moreover, due to the proliferation of the nuclear family and 'patriarchal father' in Western societies, transnational children often accuse their mothers of abandoning them. This was seen in a case study of Salvadoran transnational mothers living in the United States and Filipino transnational mothers living in France. In both cases this eurocentric ideological stranglehold influences how the children see their mothers - which is that the family as an institution triumphs over the family as an experience. This was a passage from the Philippine curriculum taught in high schools, "each family goes to mass together, prays together, eats together...The father works for the family. The mother takes care of the children. The parents help the children with their studies. They have enough time to talk to their children on their problems...Children consult their parents before doing anything. Because of this they are not pressured by bad influences" (Parrenas, 2010, 1852). What this passage suggests is that non-nuclear households, such as transnational households, are unable to provide their children with the fibre they need to withstand negative influences. One can see that through these teachings, resentment would begin to fester among children towards their transnational mothers for any of their own wrongdoings. Despite children of migrant mothers and fathers spending equal time apart from their parents, only the children of migrant mothers recorded feelings of being deserted (Parrenas, 2010, 1852). Similarly, in the Salvadorian case, children become resentful and angry towards their mothers. Resorting to bargaining with their mothers not to leave and cutting them off if they did. Here we see how Western concepts of gender roles and family units insert guilt and anxiety into the lives of transnational mothers who diverge from these patterns and make being transnational more difficult.

However, for the transnational mothers in this study, hegemonic concepts of motherhood and mothering have historically been different to those of the traditional eurocentric notions discussed above - although through years of colonial oppression and neocolonialism, these Western ideals have worked their way into the global consciousness. Yet, having a separate basis of understanding of mothering and motherhood, the experiences of transnational mothers in this study differ to those migrating in South-North patterns.

It is common and traditional in African communities for mothering practices to follow more communal patterns, children often grow up with multiple father and mother figures (Lockwood

and Smith, 2019, p.14). This is what is known as collectivist families. Scores of interdisciplinary work on black motherhood have underlined that race makes a significant difference in the conceptions and experiences of motherhood (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.14). Furthermore, it has been found that female migrants in the majority of African cultures have different social network characteristics leading to different propensities to migrate and in different ways. In contrast to the above intensive mothering practices, 'collective mothering' is an age-old integral element of black motherhood, where 'other mothers' in the community share the responsibility of child rearing. Patricia Hill Collins (1994), an American academic specialising in race, gender and class, explains the term 'othermother' as a woman who holds the family unit together by their virtues of caring, teaching, community service and morals. For all the mothers in the study, their children in their home countries are being taken care of by family members and mainly othermothers.

In Zimbabwe, 'family' traditionally refers to a vast kinship network (Evason, 2017). In such networks, one will have a deep connection and responsibility to other relatives, especially in times of need. Thus, it is common that extended family and even the community will play a large role in the raising and caring of children. In 2016, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education sought to address the contradiction of Western familial ideals taught in textbooks and the cultural reality by changing the curriculum (Mashaire, 2016). The Ministry replaced the Religious Education module with Family Values, Religious and Moral Education in schools. The new curriculum put the African setting and history at the front of the learning. The Deputy Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Professor Paul Mavima, said that what had previously been in school texts was not representative of Zimbabwean society, and that there was a need for indigenous content (Mashaire, 2016). The Professor went on to say that, "...in the true African sense, we do not have an extended family. If you have an uncle, he is your father. You can be raised by your uncle and aunt" (Mashaire, 2016). Here we see a de-colonisation of literature and thus a halt in the perpetuation of Western ideals that have permeated through generations and in this context show face in the way motherhood, mothering and the family unit are perceived - we saw how this filtration came negatively into being in the above example on the Philippine's curriculum.

By marrying what is being taught in schools and what actually is present in society, Zimbabwe is also undercutting what is known as development idealism in the country. Developmental idealism is a "set of beliefs and values about development and the relationships between development and family structures and behaviour" (Thornton & Pierotti, 2014, p.695). At the forefront of the ideology is that characteristics of societies and families that are seen as modern are 'better' than attributes defined as traditional, that modern societies foster modern families and that modern families in turn are crucial to the goal of modern societies and change (Thornton & Pierotti, 2014, p.695). A 2014 study concluded that many developmental idealism beliefs had been spread throughout Malawi with education being the strongest disseminator as its purpose is to spread information and ideas (Thornton & Pierotti, 2014, p.695). Thus with the efforts we see above in Zimbabwe, and work such as this, through education we can counteract developmental idealism concerning motherhood, mothering and families. The study did have a separation in results between urban and rural societies in Malawi with high levels of developmental idealism found in urban areas and vice versa. Traditionally and similarly to South Africa and Zimbabwe, the disposition in Malawi is towards a collectivist society. The strong relationships fostered within the society lead to an obligation to take care of members of your family and extended family. Loyalty is valued above all societal rules and regulations (Hofstede Insights, 2022). Here we can make a distinction between traditionally Western individualistic cultures and traditionally collectivist African cultures. Below we will see how this distinction plays out in the lives of transnational mothers, namely in the support they are given and judgement they receive.

Similar to the discourse on developmental idealism is neocolonialism. Although multiple studies have shown that mothering in different societies is separate from the normative narratives of intensive mothering in Western societies, women all over the globe are largely still held to this standard which we can attribute to the longstanding and ongoing proliferation of neocolonialism. Neocolonialism is the continuation of imperialist rule of one state over another seemingly sovereign state (Williams, 2022). Such is the dynamic between South Africa, a previously colonised state, and Global North countries such as America, the United Kingdom and Australia (Williams, 2022). We see this dynamic playing out in the core vs periphery relationship which is enforced through skewed migration narratives, resource dumping, unequal trade negotiations and primary resource extraction (Williams, 2022). Moreover, the monopolisation of social media,

film, news, music and art by the Global North all contribute to their ability to exert power and influence to spread and impose their social ideals such as gender roles (Williams, 2022). This is how Western ideals of gender are still imposed today and therefore still actively other transnational mothering practices (Williams, 2022).

Moreover, we can see neocolonialism still influences migration not just in the conceptualisation of thought and ideals, but in more traditional patterns too.. For example, in November 2021, South African scientists identified a new strain of Covid-19 called Omicron. As a result, the EU, US, UK and other big economies targeted southern African countries, most of whom had not recorded new cases of this strain, whilst Western states that had detected the Omicron variant did not face travel restrictions (Williams, 2022). Here we see the Global North using any basis, whether justified or not, to prevent the migration of people from the Global South to their countries. The pandemic demonstrated how significant imperialism is in shaping global politics - a system where those at the bottom of the hierarchy suffer the most. As a result of these unfair travel prohibitions, South Africa's tourism sector suffered, jobs were lost and overall the economic situation worsened. As we know, during times of economic turmoil it is the most vulnerable in the country that suffer the most, and irregular transnational mothers fall into this substrate. Therefore, these macro-level factors - imperialism and economics - filter down and become micro-level sufferings in the lives of irregular transnational mothers, namely by rising food costs and restrictions on mobility. In this way the actions of the Global North become 'determinators' of the livelihoods of people in the Global South, and why on a certain level transnational mothers in the South do feel the pressure of eurocentric gender and mothering norms (Williams, 2022).

As we have seen, the above three Sub-Saharan African countries are traditionally collectivist cultures. However, through the imposition of Western ideals, developmental idealism beliefs fester in society. Here, this would be the nuclear family unit with tight gender roles and heavy criticism on mothering methods. But there is a catch, whilst these beliefs are set to be internalised, Western influenced or white run institutions, as we have seen, make them unachievable for black, lower class, uneducated, undocumented, transnational migrants. We can view this again as a core-periphery dynamic wherein core values are pushed, yet are made unattainable to ensure that division remains. In South Africa, this is explained through the impact

of colonialism and apartheid on the institution of family, specifically the migrant labour system. The male migrant labour system in South Africa contributed substantially to the breakdown of Western traditional family structures and gender power relations (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.3). During apartheid, the government instituted Bantustans, which were homelands that the government forced black people to settle in so that they were far from urban areas (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.3). As a result, black people in the country had no choice but to become migrants as employment opportunities were all centred in urban areas. Men during this time migrated more than women. However, post apartheid, the migration patterns of black women in the country followed that of men; between rural towns, semi-rural employment hubs, informal settlements and cities (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.4). In addition, female migrations increased in size. Reasons for why included a change between male-female partnership arrangements, economic hardship, reductions in fertility and education. The 1996 Census shows that women made up for an estimated 47 percent of migration across district council boundaries, while the figure in 2011 was 46 percent (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.6). This sustained presence of black female migration in South Africa can be explained by the new economics of migration model. Which states that economically strained households are likely to engage in risk diversification strategies by sending working-aged household members to other regions (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). Moreover, working-age women are more likely to migrate from households where there are old-age women present (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.7). As we have explored above, South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe all have core collectivist cultures which according to this theory aids in the decision making of migration.

The bulk of female population flows in South Africa occur interregional, however, migration studies have largely understated this within regional migration and thus the mobility of black women within the country has also been overlooked. Which is crucial to understanding the experiences of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa as in both home and host countries, contrary to Western beliefs, female migration and collectivist families are hegemonies (Fintel and Moses, 2017, p.7). Subsequently, the transnational mothers in this study did not report feeling the same levels of judgement and blame as transnational mothers participating in separate migrations. None of the participants reported receiving resentful or negative treatment from their children as the above studies did. Instead, traditional collectivist conceptions in

Malawi and Zimbabwe and a history of migrant labour in South Africa made the process of migration for transnational mothers more accustomed and less anxiety-inducing. Only one mother reported being accused of "choosing money over her daughter", however this was by a South African citizen and likely meant as a zenophobic jab. This is where one of the biggest challenges for the feminist movement lies according to Veronica Gago, in "thinking about motherhood from a community and interdependency perspective, as the solution to care cannot be resolved privately or monetarily" (Castro, 2019). Meaning, collective care is the solution to breaking down the unattainable standard of being a mother according to Western ideals. Furthermore, this 'solution' is integral in the values of family in South Africa, Malawi and Zimbabwe. This can be termed 'de-individualising motherhood', a notion that could mitigate the majority of the stresses and anxieties felt in the transnational mothering scholarship on South-North migrations (Castro, 2019). Parrenas (2005) also points to the patriarchal family as the culprit of distress in transnational mothers' lives. Here we see a Western ideal, originally premised upon being 'modern', being rendered outdated and harmful in a world that is moving forward and evolving in concepts such as migration. Whereas collectivism, which was deemed 'not modern' is proving more applicable, true and needed in a globalised world. This is why context is necessary in migration studies, as knowledge that may have been previously sidelined is proved to be authentic and helpful in positioning many realities.

The focus on the good/bad mother narrative to judge transnational mothers, erases other important factors such as realities of class, race, history, culture or migration status (Diduck, 1998, p.134). As we have seen above, whilst the women in the Latin American and Filipino study felt judged according to this standard, the women in this study did not. The reasons being, diverging conceptions of motherhood and mothering based on cultural and historical differences. By only judging transnational mothers according to the Western ideologies, these mothers become "abstracted individual subjects" whose external situations are rendered irrelevant (Diduck, 1998, p.134). But, by considering the macro and micro externalities of the transnational mothers in the study, we will have a greater understanding of why they employ the mothering practices they do.

Another contextual factor to consider is that the above collectivist family dynamics feed into a care chain. As we will see below, through absent fathers and willing grandparents, the process of transnational mothering has formed a care chain. The irregular transnational mothers in this study all are in domestic work and are employed by white families. The undocumented transnational mothers take on the majority of the traditional women's work such as domestic acts and child rearing, which then allows the white women they are employed by, to pursue other aspirations and potential step into the public sphere. All whilst the relatives of the undocumented transnational mothers assume the child rearing responsibilities for their children. Thus, the white women at the top of this chain are reaping the most rewards from this structure, on top of the structural positions of advantage that they are already born into in South Africa. Whilst, the irregular black women in the middle and bottom remain in invisible, undervalued and private spaces, with little space for personal upward mobility. Global care chains that mirror this care chain in South Africa can play a contributing factor to the delay of a universal ideological traditional gender shift, as whilst migrant women are taken out of the confines of their home and private space, they are supplanted in the homes and private space of another (Castro, 2019). The women in this study are taken out of the confines of their homes and into that of white affluent families, where they have to raise white children at the expense of raising their own. This was also seen in the case studies of Latin American and Filipino undocumented transnational mothers in the US and France and presented a point where both migration patterns converged. On a macro-level, the global care chain of irregular transnational mothers upholds the dominance of wealthier receiving countries, however, on a micro-level, in South Africa, the same care chain upholds the structural advantage of white people in the country. So, the forces of developmental idealism, neocolonialism and global care chains, combined with core-periphery dynamics, collectivist values and a history of racial segregation, create a situation wherein the mothering practices and migration of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa is very unique. Whilst in many South-North migrations the good/bad mothering dichotomy introduced through the above mentioned systems plays a heavy role in the feelings and mothering practices of irregular transnational mothers, in this South-South case study, after assessing several contextual factors we see it plays less of a role in the lives of the undocumented transnational mothers.

Gender roles in migration

As we have seen above, through structures such as colonialism and apartheid, migration in Southern Africa became a male dominated phenomena. As both oppressive systems demanded male migrant labour either women stayed at home in their origin countries/regions and looked after children whilst sustaining the family's livelihood or women migrated to/with men as part of/to form a nuclear family unit (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). In these cases, women are treated as an adjunct to men because they become invisible within the family migration (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). This is why we see in historical and some mainstream literature on migration phrases such as, “migrants and their families” or “male migrants and their wives and children” (Hiralal, 2013, p.64).

However, in more current migrations, beginning in the post-apartheid era, transnational mothers make the decision to migrate and take the journey largely on their own. Although, in most cases they are motivated by the needs of their families. Nevertheless, the increase in autonomy in female migration has seen a divergence in gender roles from that of Western conceptions (Hiralal, 2013, p.64). Transnational mothers in the study who migrated took on the role of breadwinner and caregiver. This dual role is not conceptualised in traditional eurocentric ideologies. Yet, we see from the interviews that when viewing the way that they mother, these undocumented transnational mothers are speaking from a standing of strength and pride. The roles of these transnational mothers highlights a shift from the traditional double parent household and the mothering role as solely caregiving, to a single parent household and the mothering role as the caregiver and provider.

One of the above mentioned aims of this dissertation was that through a diversion from the Western-centric lens of migration studies, migration can be a major tool in poverty reduction and empowerment for irregular female migrants (Farley, 2019, p.2). We will see below how the participants in this study displayed higher levels of empowerment due to their reconstruction of their identities and roles.

Gertrude's ex-husband does not contribute any financial support to the upbringing of their child. In the beginning she said that she felt "bad" about being the sole support for her daughter and hurt by her husband. However, Gertrude said that these feelings passed and now she is okay with doing it herself. Tanya said that she is proud of herself for being the caregiver and breadwinner for her family and stated, "I am doing the best I can do so I am very proud of being me and helping at home". Furthermore, Tanya said that her journey to South Africa and providing for her family has made her feel "brave". However, she said that bearing the responsibility is very hard and leaves her sometimes thinking "why me" to which she answered her own question by saying "because I can". For some transnational mothers by engaging in strategies that include 'breadwinning' in their definition of motherhood, they decrease feelings of guilt and justify the separation from their children (Shih, 2016). Above we see the women in this research paper asserting power and resilience by affirming their decision to migrate. This can be termed 'maternal authenticity' and refers to migrant mothers dispelling negative interpretations and patriarchal conditions of motherhood and instead advocating for relational definitions of mothering such as, "the breadwinner who takes risks and makes sacrifices for her children" (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.659). The strong sense of maternal authenticity expressed in the interviews is likely to do with the history of migration in the SADC region and traditionally African values such as collectivism and matriarchy in many groups (Shih, 2016).

However, despite the positive steps made above in negotiating the meaning of motherhood, female autonomy and family structures - which all push the boundaries of Western traditional gender ideologies - the roles in society that women assume once in their host countries, work to pull these boundaries back in place and are part and parcel of the above discussed care chains. The general position of undocumented transnational mothers in low-skilled jobs and private spaces is beneficial to global capital conglomerates and therefore reinforced through above mentioned neocolonial structures. Thus, unwillingly, the work that irregular transnational mothers do leads to the maintenance of low wages, poor working conditions and the undervaluing of women's work (Millman, 2013, p.80).

Whilst the fiscal gains made by the poor undocumented migrant mothers may lead to the construction of new gender roles and feelings of empowerment, there are evident contradictions rooted within the work migrant mothers do. Such as, the above mentioned feminisation of global

care work that results in the majority of migrant mothers still working in the domestic/private sphere (Millman, 2013, p.80). This contradicts the suggestion that the feminisation of migration is leading to a gender ideology transformation. However, a transformation is not what this dissertation is trying to achieve, nor is what is needed. Diverging forms of gender ideologies have always existed, just not in the centre of literature or Western functioning. Therefore, a shift in focus, rather than a transformation is more apt. A shift in focus demonstrates that many truths can exist at once. For example, although irregular transnational mothers are not dismantling female domesticity, they can still be empowered in their new roles as sole providers for their families and increase their agency (Parrenas, 2010, p.1826). Moreover, in origin societies, in the absence of the mothers, it is not the fathers who step in to assume the reproductive work. Instead, most commonly, female family members such as aunts or grandmothers will move into the home and take on the responsibility of domestic work and child rearing (Parrenas, 2010, p.1829). Whilst this results in the proliferation of global care chains, othermothers are seen in these communities as powerful figures as they ensure the 'well-being' of the community's young members (Collins, 1994, p.383).

As mentioned, the participants in the study all migrated on their own and continue to support their children and family on their own as well. The women in the study are all proud of their undertakings as breadwinner and caregiver. Although on a macro level, these women are not moving out of a traditionally female space, on a more micro level the discourse of these women does diverge from Western perceptions of gender such as the 'provider patriarchal father' and 'nurturing soft mother'. (Diduck, 1998, p.134). As well as, women are no longer dependents of men in migration. Therefore, even within the same context, for example the SADC region, patterns of migration can change over time - which is why a contemporary approach when viewing contextual specificity is necessary as then we can see what is happening in migration at at the current time and how it has evolved, thus proving its relativity.

Absent Fathers

Although migration has largely been viewed through a male lens, it has not focused on the fathering aspect of men and migration. Why? Because men are not defined by their role as fathers the same way women have been with being mothers (Parrenas, 2010, p.1827). Thus,

research on transnational fathers is limited, and when investigating transnational mothers, absentee fathers are common.

Gertrude's nine-year-old daughter lives in Malawi with her grandparents. Gertrude was married and then got a divorce. Her ex-husband has not provided for their daughter, in both fiscal or moral support, since the divorce in 2015. Gertrude explained that "has another wife and another kid". Gertrude's mother encouraged her to move on from trying to get her ex-husband to contribute financially and offered to take care of Gertrude's daughter whilst Gertrude looked for work in South Africa. As mentioned earlier, Gertrude took time adjusting to her role as the breadwinner however, is now comfortable assuming a dual child rearing role. Similarly, Tanya's parents look after her daughters in Zimbabwe. Moreover, Tanya and her daughter's father are separated and he does not help her financially with the child rearing of their daughter. In Rosalina's case, she was widowed and it became difficult for her to be the sole provider for her family in Zimbabwe. Therefore, she migrated to South Africa for better work opportunities. Rosalina's parents and sister look after her children in Zimbabwe. Angela differs from the other women in that she has a husband, however he is also undocumented and struggled to find a job. For the period of time that Angela's husband did not have a job, Angela describes how he stepped in with the child rearing responsibilities as she assumed the role as the breadwinner. In addition, Angela's case also differs from what is seen in other case studies focusing on South-North migrations. In the Filipino study, husbands/fathers did not take over the caregiving role once their wife/mother had assumed the bread winning role (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 267). Instead, female family members in the home country took over this position and the child rearing responsibilities. This was mirrored in transnational families and migrant women in Sri Lanka and Mexico (Parrenas, 2010, p.1827). Therefore, the theme of the absent father and lack of paternal support in transnational mothering is present in most South-South and South-North migrations. Although, where Angela's case is similar to the rest, is that during her time apart from her daughter, a female relative, her husband's mother, took care of their child.

Why have fathers not stepped in? In some cases it may be that due to eurocentric constructions of gender men have more freedom to separate themselves from fatherhood (Parrenas, 2010, p.1828). They are first men and second fathers, and this is if they choose to be. Meaning, if they

are not fulfilling their role as the breadwinner (their predescribed role), they have the power to choose not to take on the caregiving role. The lack of accountability directed at fathers in traditional Western roles makes them free of any responsibilities of care work (Parrenas, 2010, p.1827). Absentee fathers are prevalent in many SADC communities; however, this is likely due to what we touched on above, a history of discriminatory migration and labour practices than Western ideals of fatherhood (Mabula, 2020). In Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe, the system of male migrant labour under colonialism and apartheid caused the separation of husbands from their wives and families (Mabula, 2020). In such situations women became the heads of the households at home and exercised greater agency in family decisions (Mabula, 2020). As well as maintained their caregiving role, and typically also took on a provider role as well through smaller jobs or subsistence farming (Mabula, 2020). However, male migrant labour also often caused the dissolution of many families resulting in an increase in single parent, female headed households (Mabula, 2020).

The history of male migrant labour in South Africa has had long lasting effects. South Africa as a result is reported to have the highest prevalence of absent fathers (Mabula, 2020). High levels of father absenteeism explains why transnational mothers in the study experienced less judgement and prejudice from locals over their single-parent situations than women in other case studies, namely migrations to the North, reported. As well as why transnational mothers in the study experienced greater maternal authenticity than their South-North counterparts. However, because of the culture of collectivist families, children with absent biological fathers still do have father figures in their lives through ‘social fathers’ (Mabula, 2020). Much like othermothers, social fathers are common in African culture and can be uncles, older/younger brothers of the mother/father or grandfathers. This is what the Zimbabwean education system is hoping to instil institutionally. Here we see biological and non biological fathers stepping in and out of the fathering role. This greater fluidity in their role that fathers in SADC demonstrate is due various factors namely; male migrant labour and the subsequent breadwinner phenomenon, and to a lesser degree the colonial and neocolonial imposition of Western constructions of fatherhood which are less tied to maleness than motherhood.

The breadwinner phenomenon accounts for the nearly 38 percent of households in South Africa that are headed by women (Parry, 2020). This represents a positive rising economic agency of women in South Africa. However, this phenomenon has not been so positive for the men in the country who are struggling to adjust to an evolving male identity - we could put this struggle down to developmental idealism as well (Parry, 2020). This leads many men to exit their fathering roles (Parry, 2020). Here we see Western ideals of gender infiltrating and disrupting society in a negative way. In a study on female headed households in South Africa, 80 percent of the women were single or divorced and attributed their relationship status to their breadwinning role (Parry, 2020). In addition, the majority of participants also reported receiving no financial help from their partners (Parry, 2020).

Although, the undocumented transnational mothers in the study have renegotiated their views on motherhood and as such pointed out various diversions from Western traditional mothering patterns, gender divisions, inequalities and hierarchies - besides Angela, all the other fathers in the study resisted the redistribution of roles and responsibilities which left the women or their relatives (most of the time female) to bear all the responsibilities of child rearing. Whilst this does contribute to women in the private sphere, it also upholds a norm in many African cultures which are collectivist families.

When a family member migrates, it causes disruptions and changes to the existing family unit whatever that might be (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.20). In the case of transnational mothering, when women are living apart from their children, family support is imperative in the outcome of their stories (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.21). As seen, each woman at some stage or another in their migration process had to rely on and include other people into their children's care. This support is core to the role of a collectivist family. For transnational mothers whose children go into the care of their family when they migrate, there is less stress surrounding arranging care across the border and therefore less stress to migrate (Lockwood & Smith, p.23). Extended family structures have become malleable institutions that are used to dissolve some of the maternal stresses transnational mothers endure (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.23). It is common for grandmothers in communities in Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa to take on the role as primary caregiver of their daughter’s and daughter in law’s children, as we have seen with

all the participants in this paper (Masiyiwa, 2018). Moreover, grandparents are increasingly becoming the primary caregivers of their grandchildren in the SADC region due to worsening economic conditions which push mothers to migrate for work opportunities, also true in the context of this work (Masiyiwa, 2018). In this way, a community based power is fostered. Here again we see how a collectivist over an individualist culture has a diverging effect on transnational mothering, and in the case of the women in this study, a positive effect too.

However, not all undocumented transnational mothers have collectivist families to rely on. Although such systems are largely cultural, they can be impacted by external factors such as migration push and pull factors. Women who migrate due to violence in their home countries are more likely to have strained family relationships and anxiety related to the care taking of their children. In the Heffron & Wachter (2002, p.11) study, women from Latin American countries such as Honduras and Guatemala, fled the country, migrating to the US, either on their own or with one or two of their children. It was common that not all children were able to make the journey. However, because these women were leaving an unsafe situation the family members that remained at home often became resentful. This led to a loss of support and trust from family members and consequently an increase in stress and anxiety for the mothers as it was common for family members to hinder communication between mother and child in spite or provide less for the child. In such motivated migrations, leaving a child and other family members behind resulted in family disintegration.

This was not seen in the South African case as economic opportunity was the main motivating factor for their migration. Thus, family members were not left in a violent situation, in fact in most cases the caregivers benefitted from the remittances as the mothers stated they paid for the grandparents medication and phone bills. Moreover, as the women were not leaving their children in a dangerous situation, less feelings of guilt, stress and anxiety were expressed in the interviews. Therefore, push factors in migration can have an influential effect on the ability of migrants to be transnational. Moreover, the role of the caregiver is critical in supporting the migration process for mothers and is one of the reasons why the undocumented transnational mothers in the study expressed less trauma surrounding their migrations (Heffron & Wacheter, 2022, p.12). In the interviews, expressing these networks of support that the women have in their

home countries granted the mothers the opportunity to shed positive light on their separation from their children and affirm themselves and the listener that their children are in a supportive environment.

As we have seen, gender shows up differently depending on the micro and macro level factors of migration. In this study, the undocumented transnational mothers renegotiated their gender roles after migrating to a conception different from Western tradition. Furthermore, the role of fathers in this case also diverged from the global hegemony.

Mothering Practices

Whilst above we have discussed Western traditional conceptualizations of motherhood and gender ideologies, below we will turn to the lived realities of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa and through their stories examine the mothering practices they employ to mother from afar. In this way we will see how these women negotiate mothering and where they diverge from and conform to eurocentric practices. By conducting such an investigation and adopting a contemporary approach, mothering through migration is found to be relational. Thus, disproving that a one size approach can be applied when exploring transnational mothering and broader migration.

In order to navigate their absence from the home and their children, migrant mothers have reconstructed and adopted various mothering practices. Migrant mothers use multiple strategies to fulfil normative gender expectations from their origin countries. As mentioned, even when they are away from home, mothers are expected to carry out the care work and nurture close relationships with family and children (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 257). They do so through four main practices; transnational communication, remittances, gift giving and visits. These nurturing methods will be explored below.

Transnational communication

Transnational communication refers to the ways in which transnational mothers communicate with their children and families back home (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 263). The new technological

age has made it much easier for transnational mothers to maintain a continuous dialogue with their children and families (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 263). Some of the mechanisms used are cell phones for calls, video calls, texts or various social media interactions. Gertrude said she communicates with her daughter in Malawi through voice notes and Whatsapp calls approximately two to three times a week. Tanya said that she calls her daughter everyday and Whatsapps her family every morning and evening. However, the majority of their contact is through texting as she cannot afford to buy enough data to video call because she also pays for her family's data usage in Zimbabwe. Similarly, Rosalina also communicates with her children and family in Zimbabwe through Whatsapp. For Rosalina calling is too expensive as she also pays for her airtime and data as well as her dependent's in Zimbabwe.

The importance of communication through cell phones and the costs attached was mirrored in the South-North migration of Filipino women in France. In the Filipino case study, all of the migrants not only preferred cell phones as their main avenue of communication but all owned cell phones as well (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 263) Additionally, many of the documented migrant mothers owned landlines. However, undocumented Filipino transnational mothers recorded calling home more frequently than documented mothers because they are unable to visit their countries of origin and therefore feel a greater need to reinforce family connections (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 263). Undocumented transnational mothers used seven airtime cards whereas their regular counterparts used four (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p. 263). However, calls will decrease if financial pressures at home increase as international calls are costly. Similarly, the transnational mothers not only pay for their phones but ensure that their children and family members all have access to the internet and cellphones. This cost is included in the remittances transnational mothers send home. In the Latina/America case, irregular transnational mothers expressed that modern technology enabled them 'assert their motherhood' as they were able to participate in everyday realities such as homework, behavioural issues, family events and crises and financial needs (Sternberg, 2010, p.3). Furthermore, in a Zimbabwean/UK case, Skype Mothering was a new phenomena created by undocumented transnational mothers in order to participate in their family lives back home (Madziva & Zontini, 2021, p.439). This virtual engagement of mothering can be defined as 'co-presence' because the internet has enabled people to feel "both here and there" (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.660). Therefore, by showing

how transnational mothers respond to their contextual specificities diverging mothering practices are displayed.

We investigated virtual care and the idea of 'co-presence' further by asking the undocumented transnational mothers in the study how they performed child rearing responsibilities through these communication channels. Gertrude's daughter is nine years old and lives with her grandparents in Malawi. Although her and her daughter are regularly in contact, Gertrude feels as though she is too young to discipline her over the phone but said that when her daughter is older she will talk to her about "good and bad things" and teach her "how this world is going". Yet, in the meantime Gertrude said she gave her daughter words of affirmation, encouraging her to go to school, perform well and listen to her teachers. When seeking comfort, Gertrude describes a transactional relationship with her daughter which is common in transnational mothering situations. Gertrude describes that she comforts her daughter over the phone by saying "I can buy you something or I can send you some money". Gertrude said that she sends gifts back to Malawi with drivers and pays them a small fee.

Tanya explained that she fulfilled her mothering duties through prayers and praying for her family back home in Zimbabwe, this included fasting for them. However, she also remits money every month which accounts for the majority of her salary. In line with scholarship on South to North migrations, Tanya said that at first her children did not understand and were angry with her when she had to leave. However, once she began sending money back, the children were "happier". Yet, she said the children are the most happy when she visits. Tanya's daughters live with her mom whom she says does "most of the disciplining". Tanya said that she herself has not set any rules for her children and leaves that up to her mother. When talking to her daughters on the phone she asks about school, homework and if they look presentable for class, as well as checks if they are doing the chores their grandmother has set for them. Tanya said that she finds it difficult to advise her mother on child rearing as "everyone has their own style of caring for children and when your children are being raised by someone else you have to trust that person will raise your children in a good way". Here we see Tanya demonstrating a collectivist style of care over an individual one. When her children are sad and missing her, Tanya says that she

reminds them what they do have because she is away from them; “school, food, clothes, and other people do not have this”.

Rosalina’s parents also look after her children in Zimbabwe. She expressed that she is not highly involved in the discipline of her children and “trusts” her parents to take care of and steer her children in the right direction. However, when her children are sad, Rosalina said that she will call them and give them positive words of affirmation such as “ i love you” and “see you soon”. Whilst the participant’s lack of discipline over their children from afar may represent a loss of mothering autonomy, we can now understand that with the backdrop of othermothers and collectivist cultures, a strong sense of ‘co-presence’ is likely not necessary in this case (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.14). Here, the irregular transnational mothers assert their mothering role through respect, appreciation and reliance on their family members' commitment to their children. Nevertheless, technology has minimised the distance between transnational families.

Remittances

Remittances are another practice of mothering that transnational migrant mothers employ. This is the practice of sending home a portion of their earnings in either cash or other goods in order to support their families and children (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.662). The growth of remittances have rapidly increased over the past few years and now accounts for the largest source of foreign income in many developing countries (Ratha, 2021). The total remittances from South Africa to other SADC countries is estimated at R11.2 billion - of which 68 percent is remitted through informal channels (Truen & Ketley, 2005, p.3). Both figures are likely to have increased as the number of migrants and informal migrants have increased since this time. Remittances make a substantial contribution to source economies and the livelihoods of migrant families.

Gender plays an important role in remittance patterns, dictating the amounts, frequency and means (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.662). Evidence shows that migrant women are estimated to send the same amount of remittances as their male counterparts; however, the amount is a larger proportion of their income (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.662). This can be explained by the undervalued and underpaid work that undocumented migrant women have to enter. In

addition, female migrants remit more frequently and for longer periods of time than men (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.663). Despite the remittances of irregular transnational mothers being overlooked on a macro-level, on a micro-level they are invaluable. When the participants in the study were asked what the money they send to their dependent's is spent on, it included groceries, school fees and medication. Therefore, the work of irregular transnational mothers in this study keeps their family back home from being vulnerable to market failures being experienced in Malawi and Zimbabwe. Thus, in a way, these irregular transnational mothers are trading their own vulnerability for their families.

The eagerness of migrant mothers to send remittances reveals their hopes to maintain close family relationships (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.663). Despite taking on the role of the breadwinner, women are still expected to carry out care work. Therefore, remittances become a form of care work when mothers migrate. Thus, remittances form part of a new gendered and emotionally fraught practice of mothering. However, the sum of which migrant mothers are able to remit has in several other studies differed depending on one's migration status (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.663). Undocumented migrant mothers were found to typically remit less than their documented counterparts. Yet, participants in this study were unaware of any pay discrepancies between being regular and irregular. Moreover, amongst the women that were interviewed for this dissertation, none had grievances over their salaries. This is likely to do with the uniformity in demographics of the employers of the women. Although Gertrude did mention that whilst working for a previous employer when it came to giving out year end bonuses, she herself and a few of her friends have been given less than the norm. She said that it is due to the fact that the employers know undocumented women have no avenues to go through to protest this slight. This is in line with mainstream literature, and what is stated above in the undervalued work section, on how undocumented transnational mothers continue to struggle for fair labour rights. Gertrude also brought up that although papers may not make a difference in salary in domestic jobs, they do give you an advantage for a better job or job outside of domestic work. Therefore, structural dynamics such as irregularity, labour sector and employer demographics can all influence the migration as well as remittances of irregular translational mothers.

For precarious transnational mothers sending money home is one of the ways in which they justify to their children their being away from home. Therefore, a great importance is placed on

the earnings of these women, which leads to feelings of failure if they are unable to provide for the needs of their children, this is often seen in cases of South-North migrations. However, in the case of South Africa, undocumented transnational mothers' lack of remittances can be compensated by additional visits and communication.

Gift giving

Another well known mothering practice in South to North migrations is gift giving. Gift giving can be the "exchange of objects, words or gestures of goodwill" (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.265). Transnational mothers use gifts to show their appreciation, upward social mobility, motherly love and to cement their place and presence in their families (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.265). However, as mentioned above, the avenues of sending remittances and gifts back to source countries from South Africa are not wholly reliable and packages are often stolen. Which is why the study found less emphasis being placed on this practice amongst the participants. Moreover, as we will see below, all money that undocumented transnational mothers earned either went to education, living expenses, data, transport, hospital bills or medicine. There was a general consensus in the study that it is very difficult to save money due to having many dependents and no formal institution to keep your money safe. Therefore, gift giving was not a practice that was prioritised by the research participants. Moreover, gifts serve as substitutes for parental presence, which is why we see them heavily prioritised in South-North migrations such as in the case of irregular Salvadorian mothers in the US (Horton, 2009, p.40). Yet, the transnational mothers in this study maintain a more frequent and larger physical presence in their children's lives which mitigates the need for gift giving.

However, in studies on South to North migration, gift giving has been cited as a common mothering practice. Women in a study on undocumented Latin American transnational mothers living in the United States said that they felt "proud" to send gifts home and that doing so they were being "good mothers" (Sternberg, 2010, p.3). Here we see transnational mothers reconstructing a new definition of 'good mothering' based on their experiences, which mirrors a transactional relationship. Moreover, it is separate to what irregular transnational mothers in this study would define as 'good mothering'. Thus again, such definitions, even though they are diverging from traditional Western conceptions of mothering, cannot be transferable to other

migratory patterns. As then irregular transnational mothers in South Africa, who are unable to provide in material terms to the same extent as the women in the above case studies, are seen to be missing these 'new' ideal notions of motherhood. This is a notion that Millman (2013, p.80) calls motherhood 'falling victim' to being limited to certain good or bad traits and it happens repeatedly at different times and in different contexts. Yet, as we see through this research, motherhood is contingent on social, cultural and personal ideals as well as economic circumstances (Millman, 2013, p.80). This is why studying different migrations through a contemporary approach is important as it reveals that within the ways that undocumented transnational mothers mother, there are even further differences and no blanket mechanism can be attributed to the field as each substrate will present contrasting ideas.

Visits

Such differences in mothering practices become evident in one of the final mechanisms that transnational mothers employ, which are visits. Reciprocal visits are the fourth mothering practice that transnational mothers adopt to maintain ties with their family (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.266). However, in the inverse to above, this is a practice that is mainly reserved for documented mothers in South-North and North-South migrations (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.266). Whereas, undocumented transnational mothers in these migrations, for example the Philippines-France, often go decades without seeing their children as they know when they leave the country they will firstly not be allowed back in but also, their journeys to arrive in the countries are a lot longer, costly and often more dangerous (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.266). Many mothers in the Latin America/US case, Salvadorian/US case and Zimbabwean/UK case expressed the horrible experiences they had to go through to get to their destinations; terrible experiences of rape, hard journeys with no food or water, trekking over mountains for days, fights breaking out amongst traveling groups, theft and even murder. Therefore, for the reasons of strict deportation policies and dangerous migration journeys, women migrating from South-North, through precarious means, cannot visit their home countries, nor do they elect for their children to make these arduous journeys to visit them (Horton, 2009, p.39). This leads to heightened feelings of failure amongst mothers in the South-North migrations which we can contextualise as the greater imposition of the nuclear family concept and Western ideals of good/bad mothering which were explored above (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.266).

In addition, transnational mothers participating in South-North migrations do not anticipate the long periods of time away from their children (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.24). Due to strict immigration policies, the children of these transnational mothers are often denied visas leading to extending periods of separation and anxiety for both mothers and children (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009, p.266). Moreover, countries such as the United States budget heavily each year to ensure tight border enforcement and policing - further stunting the reunification of children and mothers (DeWaard, 2018, p.4). Therefore, America's immigration policies can directly contribute to and manufacture family separation, which is mirrored in many core countries (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.24).

This is different to the experience of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa. Gertrude came to South Africa in 2011 and said that for the first few years she lived in the country she would frequently go back and forth between her home country, Malawi. She described this process as not always "being easy" as upon her first entry she "over stayed" meaning that thereafter she had to cross the border through illegal means. When asked how Getrude crossed the border and the methods of transports she uses, she declined to answer the question. As mentioned in the methodology section, this may be due to my positionality as interviewer as well as in fear of implicating herself. Yet, she did say that she still manages to visit her family and daughter every two or three years with her last visit being in February 2020. Gertrude says that she typically stays in Malawi for two months during each visit.

In addition, for Tanya, the frequency in which she visits her family and children in Zimbabwe is dependent on how much she is able to save during the year/over several months. Usually she is able to visit every year or two however she was last in Zimbabwe in 2019 due to Covid-19 restrictive policies. Whereas, Rosalina goes to and fro between South Africa and Zimbabwe using her passport only. She last visited Zimbabwe in December 2021 via bus and had plans to return in December 2022. Rosalina describes crossing between the two countries as "easy" in her experience stating she buys a bus ticket and at the border the bus does not get stopped, "it just drives through". Therefore, due to South Africa's blurred border and geographic position, these issues are largely reduced. Here we see a macro-level factor at play, border control type and

country geographics, having an impact on the micro-level lived realities of transnational mothers such as the frequency of visitations. Both documented and undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa can visit their children in neighbouring countries quite smoothly, thereby decreasing the strain on mothers and mother-child relationships, and easing the migration process overall.

The mothers in the study stated that due to violence in South Africa they would rather their children remain in their origin countries than migrate with them or visit them. A choice which is not always afforded to the undocumented transnational mothers in the South-North case studies. Therefore, whilst crime and violence are less prevalent in core countries such as England and France, harsh anti-migrant policies work against the reunion of transnational mother and child. However, in South Africa, crime and violence prevent the coming together of mother and child. Here we see contextual specificities - immigration policies and security environment - shaping the migration of irregular transnational mothers in different ways. The mothers in the dissertation used the unsafe environment in South Africa to justify their decision to not be physically with their children, appeasing feelings of guilt and anxiety.

The porous South African borders, culture of bribery and corruption, and geographic proximity allows the irregular transnational mothers in the study to place less emphasis on remittances and gift giving. The latter practices are prioritised in South-North migrations due to the normally large distance between developed and developing countries. However, the transnational mothers in this study are closer to their origin countries and are therefore able to see their children annually or bi-annually, and so more money is put towards these journeys

Therefore, despite the Western traditional good/bad mother dichotomy which equates mothering with physical closeness. What an analysis of the above case studies revealed was that proximity is not a prerequisite for transnational mothers to feel they are mothering successfully. Proximity instead dictated which mothering practises irregular and regular transnational mothers could employ more often or focus less on. Undocumented transnational mothers will continue to find diverging ways to navigate motherhood according to their situations influenced by macro and micro-level factors. The above practices of transnational mothering can be termed migrant

mothers ‘currency of love’, as they are too all relative and differ depending on the country you are in (Meyers & Rugunanan, 2020, p.664). The ease with which transnational mothers are able to engage in these practices differs depending on whether they are documented or undocumented, poor or wealthy and which migration pattern they are involved in. Which is why focusing on South-South migrations is important as it avoids the potential for South-North literature to dominate the transnational mothering space and normalise alternative ‘good mothering’ practices based on specific migration patterns.

In the study we identified transnational communication, specifically words of affirmation, as the main mothering practice undocumented women engage in. Second was remittances, third was visits and last was gift giving. Whereas in South to North migrations, transnational communication was first, second was remittances, third was gift giving and forth was visits. The swapping of visits and gift giving can be explained by broader core periphery country dynamics, namely loose border control and trust in national service delivery, as well as geographic positioning. Therefore, transnational mothers do not follow scripts, but instead represent shifts in the stories of migration.

Upward mobility

For the research participants in this study long term prosperity and social mobility were the primary motivations for migration. Upward mobility is when a person moves from a lower position in society to a higher one (Schneider & Crul, 2019, p.2). Whilst upward mobility is seen as a positive thing, it does come at a cost for some individuals. Parental financial support is one of the key factors in intergenerational social mobility (Schneider & Crul, 2019, p.2). However, as the mothers in the study are the breadwinners in the family, this cost falls solely on them. Throughout the interviews, each mother placed a large emphasis on the importance of education for their children. The mothers stated that having a good education would open more doors for their children. Therefore, upward mobility has become a core element of “good mothering” according to the research participants. The irregular transnational mothers achieve this aim by funding their children's educations through their salaries. However, education is also one of the

reasons why these mothers are transnational, as accessibility to education in South Africa is hindered by precarity and immigration policies.

One of Angela's children has a study permit and is in school. However, she said that obtaining and renewing these permits is a very difficult process that can include several trips and day long waits outside Home Affairs. Moreover, due to a Home Affairs backlog, Angela's second child who is two, does not have a birth certificate or passport, which one needs to apply to schools in the country. This is of great concern to Angela who places big emphasis on her children obtaining an education as she believes that then "they will have all the resources open to them". Similarly, the majority of Gertrude's wage goes towards her daughter's schooling. Gertrude's motivation to work hard is that she hopes one day she can send her daughter to a private school in Malawi as well as pay for tertiary education. Along the same lines, Tanya said that it is "very important" for her that her daughters finish school and that she would like to see them getting degrees at university. Rosalina not only pays for school fees for her own children but also sends money to contribute towards the education of her youngest sister's children. Her biggest dream is that her daughter will finish school. For these mothers, their work represents efforts to break the cycle of poverty.

In line with existing transnational mothering narratives, the goal of migration for these women was for the betterment of their families and as a strategy for social mobility. Emphasising the long term benefits of migration, such as education for their children, is a narrative strategy that transnational mothers often use in telling their story so as to manage the living apart from their children and their perception of what a "good mother" is (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.17).

It is common for women in SADC countries to place upward mobility above all else. This is one of the long lasting, neocolonial, effects of being ruled by the British, as well as outcomes of developmental idealism. It is a characteristic of the Global North to prioritise education over everything else; however, this characteristic was imposed on SADC countries through the influence of Christian missionaries (Mart & Toker, 2010, p.365). Missionaries were sent by the Christian Church to teach English, religion and Western culture. So in schools in Africa that were under colonial rule, if you were caught speaking any native language you were beaten (Mart &

Toker, 2010, p.365). Moreover, as English was the language of administration, those who could speak English well were rewarded with higher ranking positions which meant more money, greater success and therefore upward mobility for their family (Mart & Toker, 2010, p.365). As such, education became synonymous with quality of life and thus the penultimate goal.

Which is why the irregular transnational mothers have the same wishes, hopes and dreams for their children - success, prosperity, wellbeing, safety - as any other mother. Although, due to their contexts, they care and provide for their children in ways that diverge from the Western norm. Just as mothering practices have proved to be relational and diverse, so should the overarching concept of motherhood.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This dissertation applied a contemporary approach to migration along with the employment of feminist, matricentric and dependency theory frameworks, in order to achieve its aim of forefronting the relational experiences of migration. It did not seek to find rules or principles that can be applied to every migration, as such a concept is impossible and exclusionary (Anitha & Pearson, 2013). Instead, it highlighted the complexity of migration on a macro and micro level through focusing on contextual specificities and lived experiences of irregular transnational mothers in South Africa.

First the dissertation contextualised the issue by discussing South Africa's position in the world order, the history of migration in the country including colonial and gendered substrates, and the reason for current high volumes of migration. The dissertation then went on to discuss the macro-level factors that affect migration and then honed in on South African examples. Macro-level factors generally represent a broader framework of social, political and economic conditions that have reproduced powerlessness and disadvantage for irregular transnational mothers in South Africa. Namely, the conflation of documentation with freedom, staunch xenophobia, border control, the private vs public labour sector and thereby value of care work, access to services and weak institutionalism. Thereafter, we discussed micro-level factors, which are the lived realities and decision making processes made by undocumented transnational mothers but dictated by these larger externalities. This included good/bad definitions of motherhood, where they come from and how they affect irregular mothers all over the globe and then in South Africa. Gender roles were also discussed in which we found that despite traditional Western conceptions, undocumented transnational mothers in South Africa have produced more authentic understandings which makes them feel proud. We also looked at mothering practices that are used in different migrations and found that these are relational depending on many factors such as collectivist cultural attitudes, border control, proximity, migration status and of course the overseeing macro-level factors.

Yet, despite the structural disadvantages that are injected into the lives of participants through migration, they exhibit much maternal authenticity. The irregular transnational mothers represented diverging constructions of motherhood from the Western norm and mothering practices that they felt were best practice. In this way, by telling the stories of a less popularised migration pattern, otherwise universal conceptions are proven relational. More so when we compare them to experiences reported in case studies of irregular transnational mothers in France or Latin America. By applying a comparative framework within the contemporary approach, context within migration is further emphasised.

A few things were learnt on a macro-level;

Global dynamics - An unstable global political arena, driven mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia-Ukraine conflict, has enhanced the already existing inequalities in countries across the world (Vickers & Alexander, 2019). In such situations, the people that suffer the most are those that are already the most vulnerable. In the case of this paper, and in the South African context, one of the most marginalised groups in the country are poor black irregular transnational mothers - whose circumstances have now become more precarious due to the national political and economic degradation. Yet, the South African government has made little effort to address these dire situations, despite stating in its Bill of Rights that everyone should have the freedom to equality, dignity and movement (Moyo, 2021). Part of this issue is that in South Africa, along with most countries, undervalued and invisible migrant work is often reproduced in the private sector - which has been traditionally reserved for women. Thus, irregular transnational mothers are not considered in government planning. Yet, the remittances of irregular migrants contribute greatly to the wellbeing and development of their families in their home countries as well as the economy and consumerism of their host countries. Here we see how the global can affect migrants in diverging ways dependent on contextual specificities such as precarity.

National dynamics - The world order is becoming more unstable and countries around the world face increasing food scarcity, energy shortages and rising costs of living - this ultimately leads to unemployment increasing as the economy downsizes (Vickers & Alexander, 2019). Therefore, people look to migrate to more stable countries in search of job opportunities. As a result, there

has been an increasing flow of people from the SADC region to South Africa. In response, South Africa has attempted to increase border control (Moyo, 2021). However, tighter border policing and immigration policies do not decrease migration, they only increase illegal migration. Irregularity in South Africa prevents transnational mothers from migrating with dignity and safety, and therefore contributes to their vulnerability. Irregular transnational mothers experience higher levels of xenophobia, dangerous border crossings, restricted access to necessary services and institutional racism. This can be better contextualised through a historical perspective - being a micro-core but a macro-periphery has led to higher competition for low-skilled labour in the country and thus more violent levels of xenophobia. Consequently, irregular transnational mothers have elected for their children to remain in their home countries.

Gender dynamics - Migration can no longer be seen as male centred and the diverse and diverging experiences of migrant women must be recognised. History on female migration has been limited to the 'passenger women', however, as we have seen the feminisation of migration is increasing (Millman, 2013, p.79). More women are making autonomous decisions to migrate. Included in this are transnational mothers who make the decision to migrate on their own but for their family's well being. Global North vs South dynamics still reproduce the demand for low skilled labour, mostly in care and domestic work in core countries. Therefore, women from the Global South migrate to the Global North to fulfil these positions and provide for their families (Castro, 2019). This is mirrored in the SADC region as South Africa presents as a micro-core. When irregular transnational mothers migrate and fulfil lower-skilled jobs, they participate in a global care chain dynamic. Within this global care chain, irregular transnational mothers are left little space for personal upward mobility.

A few things were learnt on a micro-level;

The precarious transnational mothers in this study have demonstrated diverging notions of motherhood and mothering to that of traditional Western ideals (Lockwood and Smith, 2019, p.12). Shifting from concepts such as intensive mothering and the 'good mother', are more true concepts to their experience such as; collectivist families, other mothers, maternal autonomy, global care chains and duality child rearing. Such concepts provide context as to why the

situations, experiences and feelings of irregular transnational mothers reviewed in this dissertation differ from that of South-North and North-South case studies.

In addition, the above macro dynamics such as migration status, borders, immigration policies, access to services and institutionalism, all influence the way that transnational mothers engage with mothering practices and the practices that they prioritise - which too diverges from trends drawn in South-North migration case studies. In this dissertation, the most common mothering practices were ranked as; transnational communication, remittances, visits and gift giving. Yet, ultimately where all transnational mothers converge is their aim of upward mobility for their families.

Transnational mothers, especially those that are irregular, are more numerous now than ever before. These mothers, irrespective of their migration status, represent a form of human interdependence that caters to material and emotional needs in the current globalised world order. However, differing macro and micro level factors do affect how these mothers are able to cater to the fiscal and caring needs of their families. In each of the irregular transnational mothers stories, the lived realities and experience of mothering are different, proving mothering and motherhood to be relational concepts. In addition, it proves the necessity to study migration in its specificities and not as an umbrella term - a mistake previous literature has made and which silenced the very important narratives, lives, contributions and trajectories of female migrants, transnational mothers, and irregular transnational mothers.

The findings in this dissertation contribute to a decolonial effort as they negate universal theories of migration. Moreover, this dissertation's main conceptual contribution is driven by realities that have been traditionally suppressed by hegemonic narratives surrounding the Global North. Therefore, by giving space in this scholarship to greater freedom of expression and truths, it fulfils its aim of adding to an under theorised field of social enquiry.

Recommendations

More women are migrating alone and this is a trend that is likely to continue. Despite the difficult circumstances, the women revealed that they have little choice but to stay in South Africa as they assume the roles of both caregiver and breadwinner. In addition, the political and economic situations in their country are unlikely to change in the foreseeable future. Moreover, if you contextualise their source countries within the global world order, for example the far reaching impacts of the Russia Ukraine conflict, it is expected that the situation in origin countries will worsen. Also, as with momentum based pathways, the more women that are coming, the more will follow. South Africa should recognise this and better adjust policies to protect undocumented transnational mothers from abuse and to mutually benefit from their labour. Specifically, there should be an implementation of gender mainstreaming in immigration decisions, more legal pathways for migration and better asylum mechanisms - all of these changes would decrease illegal immigration and protect vulnerable transnational mothers and subsequently, their families

To further this dissertation and delve deeper into trends, additional interviews must be conducted. This will allow more stories to become tellable, readable and hearble, thereby supporting transnational mothers of varying sectionalities. Having a greater diversity of these mothers' stories will ensure that mothers all over the globe, including undocumented transnational mothers, will less and less occupy the margins and periphery of the overall discourse and literature of motherhood.

In addition, if this dissertation had to be taken further, it would go on to examine the standpoint of not only the undocumented transnational mothers, but also the experiences of their children and the othermothers who remain in the origin country. This would highlight the differences in experiences of the two groups.

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