Running Ahead - Understanding the possibilities and Challenges of Belonging and Identity through the Nimble-Footed Joburg Runner in Times of Precarity

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late mother, late grandfather, and grandmother whose irreplaceable support in my academics, prayers, wisdom, and advice have guided me this far.

I also dedicate this work to my siblings and cousins Trish Nyarhi, Terrence Mudavanhu, Florence Mudavanhu, Leroy Nyarhi, Corrine Monga and Debney Nyarhi for their continued moral support and random check-in calls that kept me afloat.

Moreover, I dedicate this piece to all Zimbabwean migrants residing in South Africa who are trying to make ends meet in their own capacities. Qinisela mntakaBaba kuzolunga.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Women have continued to establish themselves as active economic participants in the modern capitalist economy. Despite the loss of employment in some cases, women continue to have access to other forms of employment. This may include informalized work and 'salaried work' (Moghadam, 2005:111) This has caught the attention of economists. Not only have they caught economists' interests, given how they are spun in multiple sociocultural, socio-political, and socioeconomic institutions, but also other thinkers from various fields and disciplines, including Anthropology. While the economic justifications or defences (Kone, Ruiz and Vargas-Silva 2021; Kerr and Kerr 2017; Vandor and Franke 2016) have frequently been the emphasis of the migration narrative, this study sought to go further. This was not meant to minimize modern literature and research, which had also widened its scope and included the socio-political implications of feminine migration. It celebrates the observable shift from "labour migration and refugees to independent 'economic' migrants" by Owen Sichone (2020:1). African mobilities are classified into those rendered visible (insiders) and invisible (marginalised outsiders). Following the COVID-19 lockdown, the idea of getting back to business-as-usual entails a repetition of ills, misconceived ideas as well as policed and sometimes restrictive movement of both documented and undocumented migrants (Sichone, 2022: 74-75).

This research therefore hopes to expand on literatures on 'frontier Africans' (Nyamnjoh, 2017) which focus on identity formations post-migration. Furthermore, it contributes to the deepened debates around the contours of citizenship, belonging, and what it means to move freely. It reviews how despite the challenges of belonging and identity faced by Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa, through processes of 'trying', their livelihoods emerge. By centering on the lived experiences of Zimbabwean female migrants it can help provide understandings of the realities they possess. Despite being in a place of marginality, I seek to demonstrate that strangers find ways to exist in space, resist misfortune consequently assisting their families. Furthermore, this dissertation also aimed to add to discourses that deviate from depicting women as weak actors in abusive situations or as victims or participants in prostitution, human trafficking, or other forms of exploitative labour, as well as to magnify the voices of immigrant women. (See Mbiyozo, 2018; Piper, 2003: Chammartin, 2001). I hope to paint a different picture and highlight the woman as a key player in both family and societal dynamics. A woman transforms a house into a home, and

in the setting of a *runner*, her ability and concern extend to other families inside or across boundaries. It is this nimbleness of being that centre her in the heart of mobility debates. Although this research is feminine focused it is worth noting children too 'commit running' alongside their parents in search of greener pastures.

'Running', in this research holds many meanings. In the immediate sense, it may allude to moving to, for or from social beings or spaces in fast-paced movements. This all depends on the surfaces. These surfaces are often textured by politics or socioeconomic dynamics therefore informing the processes of navigation. Sometimes this might mean running away, running around, or running ahead of adversities all in the quest of survival. This is the reality of most Zimbabwean migrants who are branded as strangers and outsiders in South Africa. With the failing economy of Zimbabwe, they are engaged in 'trying to make ends meet' (Iacovetta, 1987). Although South Africa had also experienced effects from the 2007/2008 global financial crisis, it had been partly sheltered by the policies put prior the crisis which regulated the South African banks. In this study my primary respondent, Mai Chenai, my best friend's mother, a wife, and mother of two relocated in 2016 to Benoni a town in Johannesburg, South Africa after the Zimbabwean 2008 economic crisis. Her husband, an engineer and permanent resident of South Africa relocated first and scouted for work in preparation for his family's relocation. The eldest daughter followed a few years after and sought better opportunities by enrolling at the University of the Witwatersrand for a degree in Accounting. Mai Chenai followed years later after acquiring her travel documentation as well as her work permit as a primary grade teacher. The son was the last to relocate after finishing his high school education. They were financially stable for a while. However, with the recurring financial obligations, COVID pandemic and resulting alarming inflation rates, they were forced into seeking financial alternatives. This invited *kuzamazama*[1] – efforts to get by.

Kuzamazama surfaces as a response to incompleteness[2] (Nyamnjoh, 2015) of being which challenges the idea of boundedness and fixity in being, becoming and belonging in contexts where multiple encounters generate myriad interconnections and interdependencies. These

[1] Kuzamazama – is a Shona word which also means 'making do with what is available at hand'. It has iterations in other African languages, such as IsiNdebele, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa - *ukuzamazama*, holding the same meanings.

[2] Herein this section, I will revert to 'incompleteness' as a conceptual framework in my grappling with the main premise of the dissertation, as a device with which to think and examine the experiences of migrant women.

are vastly echoed in this research. By tracking their dexterity and the various personas they adopted on a daily basis – (migrant, friend, mother, elder, sister, and wife) it was evident r*unners* had adopted or were adorned different personas in different instances all of which enabled them to navigate space and place. This compelled me to look into their social interactions in more detail, as well as the various manoeuvres and positioning techniques they employed. Bearing in mind their incompleteness of being, the migrants' quests in trying to get by involved the practices of *kungwara*[3] (calculated cleverness), convenience and conviviality as currencies of navigation. Their mobilities were calculated for the purposes of ensuring accessibility into spaces. At times cleverness meant, not doing anything at all. As a *runner* the nimble footedness - how they crisscross, recross, and cross the border in a fast way or navigate from one retailer or wholesaler to another at their client's quest, invokes discussion around multiple identities, tensions, (im)mobility, and fluidity of spaces. This piques interests around feminized migration and how ideas of attempting to survive through difficult times arise in those circumstances.

"Dota[4] I had to come to Joni. Zimbabwe inopedza simba"[5]

According to Mai Chenai, her decision to migrate and join her husband had proved to be financially beneficial to her family as it enabled the sharing of the financial burden between them. This had resulted in reduced travelling expenses as well as an increased renumeration on her part. As a non-citizen, Mai Chenai's experience like most migrants proved difficult. Without stable employment due to lockdown enforcements, it put excessive pressure on the family's finances. Bearing in mind her legality depended on procured and maintained employment in order to obtain a work VISA, her chances of legal residence were slim. Without luck in the work industry efforts towards new possibilities emerged. Mbembe (2017) argues how the mobilities of non-citizens particularly in crossing boarders to enter a host country has become procedural and at any point ruse can be revoked. Despite South Africa's recent history of enabled cross border movement, the administrations of control have become stricter thus making borders less permeable this however has not impeded emigration. There is this permeability and porousness of borders making them quite flexible. Although the

[3] *Kungwara* – a Shona word which is a practice of tactical cleverness.
[4] Shona slang word equivalent to daughter.
[5] "Daughter I had to come to Johannesburg. Zimbabwe is draining" Conversation between myself and Mai Chenai about the reasons of migration.

reality of being unemployed risked financial futility, Mai Chenai's decision to become a *runner* – one who runs around doing shopping errands for others, became her saving grace.

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks's research examines the uncertainty engulfing the futures of the young Beti women in Cameroon. She writes how, "effective social action is based not on the fulfilment of prior intentions but on a judicious opportunism" whereby "the actor seizes promising chances." Johnson-Hanks (2005). Here social action, rests not on the utilitarian or Weberian understanding that is based on rational choices (Johnson-Hanks, 2005). The rational choice theory draws on the elementary individual actions. Johnson-Hanks defies this understanding of methodological individualism which posits that, "the elementary unit of social life is the individual human action. To explain social institutions and social change is to show how they arise as the result of the action and interaction of individuals" (Elster 1989:13). Her argument however stresses the need to, "respond effectively to the contingent, sudden, and surprising offers that life can make" (Johnson-Hanks 2005:376). This is a notion of responsiveness. In mainstream development literature, *trying* is called entrepreneurship however, I borrow from Patience Mususa's (2021) understanding of *trying* in times of precarity which she argues is the adoption of "one's conscious and unconscious abilities" of survival, this research aims to examine migrant women's experiences and vulnerabilities in their navigational tactfulness of survival. I will continue drawing from Mai Chenai's story as an entry point to exploring the stories of other migrant women. The research further explores the nimble footedness and the permeability of borders. As having been already alluded to in this section, it is paramount in the following subsection to discuss migration patterns and relations between Zimbabwe and South Africa.

1.2 Migration in Zimbabwe

Most rural households have for the longest time relied on labor migrancy for their livelihood (Francis, 2002: 167). Migration as a social phenomenon like any other finds itself caught up in the emergent in the contingency of flexible movement. Although not new to literature and having stood the test of time it is constantly reviewed to reveal something new. We can walk in the same footsteps as other researchers, but perhaps there is something new in the individual expression and experience of the everyday. As the concept of migration is constantly unfolding, in the phenomenological or embodied sense of the unfinished or incomplete, when embraced it offers different understandings of society. When one is aware of being a migrant their incompleteness of being is aroused. In the past both incompleteness

and mobility served various purposes (Nyamnjoh, 2022:3). Mlambo (2000) also emphasizes the mobility of people as need based. Amongst Zimbabweans this meant seeking potential livelihood. Prior to colonialism, boundaries were a nebulous concept. Precolonial mobility from Zimbabwe to South Africa was evident thus serving the current and longstanding labour migratory trends (Muzondidya, 2010: 38). These patterns formed interconnections within Southern Africa (Mlambo, 2000). In the colonial era, Zimbabweans were pushed in overcrowded reserves (Francis, 2010). Although some households were engaged in commodity production, others were heavily reliant on labour migrancy in European farms (ibid.) Migrants provided domestic labour in private residences (Van Onselen, 1976 and Crush, Jeeves and Yuldeman, 1991) a trend still apparent even today. Some moved in search of tertiary enrichment (ibid.).

In Zimbabwe post-independence, migration continued to increase (Zinyama, 1990) due to the outflow migration of white settlers (Selby, 2006:117-118 and Simon 1988:1) and Matabeleland and Midlands dwellers during the Gukurahundi killings that had claimed many lives (Hanlon, 1986: 181-183). Most Zimbabweans migrated to go work in the South African mines and farms (Maphosa, 2008). Overtime these numbers decreased as majority of the migrants including women branching out into cross border trading's (Crush and Tevera, 2010). With the continued grim reality of living standards, in 2008 Zimbabwe recorded the highest levels of inflation peaking at seven sextillion percent resulting in poor living conditions and a falling life expectancy (Robertson, 2011:83). As the draught persisted over the years, it forced Zimbabweans into a 'crisis-driven' (Crush and Tevera, 2010: 1) migration in search of work in the neighbouring country as well as abroad[6]. Most settled, blended into the local South African societies (Muzondidya, 2010) and sought citizenship papers be it legally through naturalization or illegally (Sisulu, Moyo and Tshuma, 2007: 554), positing strategies of belonging, existence and identity formation. Despite the excessive brain drain impacting Zimbabwe, the remittance system benefited the country through the forex exchange amongst others (Makina, 2012). It also "provided a safety net in sustaining the livelihoods of families and relatives left in the county" (Makina, 2012). According to Jonathan Crush and Daniel Tevera (2010), 'every Zimbabwean working in South Africa supports an average of five people at home'. Although the number may differ case by case,

[6] United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia

one thing is for certain, cross border migration remains a pathway to sourcing greener pastures.

Despite "a long history of cross border migration and associated flows or remittances" (Dodson et al., 2008:1) between host country, South Africa and the receiving country, Zimbabwe, conflict remains deeply entrenched in the everyday life of African immigrants (ibid: 11). In spite of their efforts of seeking an escape, South Africa failed to live up to the desired expectations and relief. Francis Nyamnjoh (2010) discusses the struggles many Zimbabwean migrants – *Makwerekwere*[7] (those failing to articulate themselves in the local languages which present opportunities of belonging and relation to space). He elaborates how they suffer maltreatment and are impuissant to "excessive criminalization" (ibid: 65-68). As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) professes, languages have dual characters where they are both a 'means of communication' and a 'carrier of culture'. This is no exception to either male or female migrant.

1.3 Gendered Migration

Literature stretching back to the 1960s, focused mostly on male migrants (Kihato, 2007). The household model that saw the male as the breadwinner and the wife as the dependent was one believed to be true when looking into social responsibilities (Francis, 2010). The causes of migration were frequently explored in terms of the effects of economic inequalities and frequently concentrated on the male productive labour (Kihato, 2007). Within the migration narrative, women were frequently portrayed as the inaudible voices and passive actors; they frequently appeared as accompanying social actors who moved to join their spouses or merely remained at home and awaited remittances. (Gugler and Ludwar-Ene, 1995; Adepoju, 1995). This put them in vulnerable positions. This however was not always the case. As cited in one of Dominic Pasura's interlocutors were some women, "are now the main breadwinners for their families" (2010: 209). One of her interlocutors shares how within a family, if the wife has a visa which allows her to work, she automatically becomes the breadwinner and the husband without papers stays home and takes care of the house chores (Pasura, 2010: 209). There is an alternative form to the traditional man, the 'new man'. Morrell (1998:7) discusses how "although a caricature, it is helpful to identify some of his features:

[7] According to Nyamnjoh, some of these migrants originate from countries that played a crucial role during apartheid (2010a: 65). They are seen as "undeserving outsiders" (Mpe, 2011) who have suffered devastating, dehumanizing, and lethal xenophobic attacks of 2008, 2009, 2010, and the most recent ones a few years ago, that claimed a manifold lives.

introspective, caring, anxious, outspoken on women's rights, domestically responsible. The new man also turned his back on competitive sport, sexist jokes, violent outdoor pursuits." This alludes to an 'alternative masculinity' one that according to feminist scholarship is an emergent form and counter to the 'problematic masculinity' (Kimmel, 1987; Barker, Ricardo, and Nascimento, 2007).

Feminized migration has always been there as professed by Daniel Makina, Hungwe, (2013) and Muzvidziwa, (1997). Makina (2010) draws attention to the evidence from SAMP (Southern African Migration Programme), which observed that of the Zimbabwean migration behaviour into Johannesburg, South Africa in 1998, female migrants had made up to one third of the immigrants. This however proves that feminized migration is no new phenomenon but one in the emergent. Over the years circumstances and socio-political climate continues to change affecting the existence of immigrants in host countries. Although conflict remains a constant social reality, it is not the only narrative. This invokes the need of knowing a people through their stories and histories (Nyamnjoh, 2018). This dissertation therefore emphasizes the importance of these multiple stories and employs an attempt of *trying*, experimentation in unveiling of the deeper truths of sociality amongst migrants and locals.

1.4 Conceptual framework: Incompleteness and Trying

Migration can produce either of these two extremes: conflict or conviviality (Isike, 2022). Either extreme reflects realities that surface between the citizen and migrant. Flowing from these extremes, incompleteness can be argued. The notion of incompleteness has gained popularity over the years. While deeply embedded within Sociological and Anthropological disciplines the concept finds itself existing within multidisciplinary works. Francis Nyamnjoh (2015) discusses conviviality as a state of "incompleteness". His conceptualization sees incompleteness as an inevitable universal feature. Incompleteness subscribes to the works that take into consideration the ideas of 'being' and 'becoming' which is an idea of "living within difference" (Gilroy, 2004). Heil (2020: 323) argues for a type of sociality that builds on difference rather than hegemonize it. Similarly, Nyamnjoh argues the need to embrace and accept the 'other'. By so doing it allows for one to accommodate those different from us (Nyamnjoh, 2015). This rests on the constant negotiation and renegotiation of being. The conscious action of opening up allows for the enrichment of self by others and vis-à-vis. One constantly channels and re-channels their energies towards the ideals of being and becoming

which are necessitated through encounters (ibid.). These daily encounters often have positive effects towards the self and the other. By adopting the framework of incompleteness, one realizes the constant making, unmaking, and remaking of identity. This challenges the idea of identity being bounded (Isike, 2022). These social encounters which are possible through exercising mobility thus act as activation processes that facilitate the cultivation of self. It must be noted however that the intent of these encounters does not simply result in the homogeneity of the group (Fincher & Iveson, 2008:154) rather they reduce exclusion and prejudice of diverse urban settlers (Valentine & Sadgrove, 2013). They are therefore a means to an end. These encounters contribute to long term relationships and convivial connections (Wiesel & Bigby, 2016) brought about by the mutual interdependence (Brudvig, 2013). The mutual interdependence suggests notions of 'entanglement of relationships' (Nuttall, 2009:1, 11) which may be complicated and yet imply a 'human foldedness'.

For Nyamnjoh, (2017) conviviality encourages us to acknowledge our 'incompleteness'. It also challenges us to be more open-minded and contributes to our positive articulations of being, identity and belonging (ibid). By constantly seeking ways to complement and enhance us, it does not necessarily position us on a road of completeness but rather makes us more "effective in our subjectivities, socialities and relationships" (Nyamnjoh, 2017: 262). Additionally, convivial encounters necessitate the manipulation of opportunities (De Certeau, 1998). This may give rise to convenient partnering. Having established that incompleteness begets conviviality, it is imperative to also examine the second migration extreme, conflict. "In Anthropology both conflict and violence are understood as being shaped in response to culturally specific norms" (Kyrou & Rubinstein, 2008: 517). Counter to mutual interdependence, social encounters can also be zones of conflict. Here we see how conflict exists everywhere. Marcel Paret and Shannon Gleeson discuss how migrant experiences reflect the understandings of precarity as well as the realities of the native-born communities (2016). According to Ettlinger (2007) precarity is comparable to uncertainty and unpredictability. This calls for an exploration of realities.

The concept of incompleteness has benefited from the convergences with other concepts. Although often expressed in terms such as mobility and citizenship it is worth noting it too can be coupled with other concepts. In Tutuola's cosmos, reality and logic of sensory perception are continuously being tested (Nyamnjoh, 2015). Life becomes bigger than logic, what feeds into normalcy is contested. What may be considered as 'real' is not only the observable or what makes sense, the invisible, sentimental, and inexplicable is also equally

relevant (Okri, 1991). Humans often focus on the apparent (that which our senses bring home to us) as if this were the whole (complete) picture, without factoring in the hidden/underlying or invisible dimensions of things. Our science of ethnography is partly victim of this as it overly dramatizes the senses as sources of knowledge. This may take attention away from that which doesn't immediately lend itself to the senses yet is a complement of reality. Sometimes these invisible realities embed themselves as trauma and internal pain and often surface as violence, hate crime, protest action, and anger. The framework therefore allows for the potency of these realities in better understanding the next person.

In the world we live in, one full of mysteries and a constantly exercised yearn for understanding, humans frequently attempt to make sense of it. It is this inherent curiosity that pushes one into, one or both processes that is – *know-that* and *know-how*. It is one thing to know and recognise information and another to know and understand information. By doing the latter it invites the processes of creating or adopting concepts. To do this however, there is need to consider both temporalities, past and present. According to Fitzi, Mackert and Turner (2018), the consideration of theoretical concepts rests on locating them within temporality and factual history. Temporality in this sense would reveal how, as well as the pace in which the concept changes over time. This is essential as it reveals the circumstances shaping the concept. By so doing it positions the concept within the emergent, incomplete in nature, constantly evolving and capturing composite realities. It is with this I discuss concepts of precarity and violence as concepts to be traced through time. It is also worth noting social life or experiences exist in 'time', 'flow', or 'flux' (Hodges, 2008: 399). This has been taken for granted in the past. To counter this, Pierre Bourdieu (1977:8) invited the reintroduction of time within the 'theoretical representation of a practice'. This attracts an awareness and alertness to time and action on experience. Thus, I employ incompleteness analytically to reveal the multiplicities and inconsistencies that surface within the migrant experiences. Incompleteness is also a socially gendered process, that is caught up in the constant socio-political and socioeconomic processes that the migrant *runner* experiences in their running, to survive, to get by. This I pick up more substantially in Chapter 3. How does the migrant 'get by' in an exclusionary and dystopic space?. This calls for a motivation for 'trying', or *kuzamazama* in capturing and revealing these experiences and strategies. Through these social encounters aforementioned, potentials and opportunities emerge. Borrowing from Patience Mususa's (2021) work on "trying" we see how incompleteness merges with the processes of trying. Both 'incompleteness' and 'trying' advocate for open mindedness and

the ability to open up to new possibilities or chance encounters amidst impossibilities. Trying rests on the idea of attempting to 'get on with life' or 'get by' despite experiencing unpredictability or social difficulties (Mususa, 2021). It encourages efforts of survival and draws on tendencies to endure, resist, and exist amidst precarity (ibid.). This is paramount as it nudges incompleteness away from its mere description within society. I articulate its entangled notions with analytical seriousness to better understand the frictions and strategies of survival the migrant applies.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 details the essential elements for accessibility within the *runner* network as well as the ethical dilemmas she faces as a female *runner.* In this chapter, I further detail the rationale towards the study, as well as the politics, then borrow Greco's proactive and reactive approach to accessibility in embodying the *runner*. I further zoom into the methodologies I used during the course of the fieldwork, focusing primarily on structured and semi-structured interviews, paying particular attention to what they allowed me to achieve, and what they did not. In Chapter 3, I explore the (im)mobilities that Zimbabwean migrant women encounter while working as *runners* in Johannesburg.

I attempted to do this by tracking the nimble footedness as well as the overlapping identities *runners* assumed on a daily basis. By focusing on the women's lived experience, the research exhumed their vulnerabilities in spaces where they are marginalized. Drawing from this, Chapter 4 then examines the various adaptive and resilient strategies employed by migrants within their navigation of borders and boundaries[8]. The way they were treated or related often relied on which spaces they were in. Attitudes and textures of space often required strategic maneuvering. Tracing these strategies for survival, I want to argue how Joburg migrant *runners* have alleviated the constraints of their incompleteness despite their (im)mobilities. At times these survival strategies overlapped with the ideas of morality, temporality, and agency.

Despite deploying calculated efforts in navigating spatiotemporalities within South Africa, the Zimbabwean migrant still faces social traps and conflicts year after year. How then does she navigate what she cannot see, particularly when it is deeply embedded in history? This

[8] Borders in this thesis refer to the external geographic frontiers whereas boundaries are socially constructed categories (Fasin, 2011).

raises questions of the underlying truths and tales fueling these social conflicts with their neighbors, in this case South African locals. Chapter 5 therefore reflects on the histories of space stretching back to colonialism and apartheid in a bid to better understand the attitudes of locals fueled by their historical trauma. My research goes into conversation with the ongoing social conflicts and purposes of the Dudula Project taking into account the reason(s) for violence in protest actions. To conclude the thesis, Chapter 6 sets out to illuminate an orb of possibilities of sociality. It also invites conversation between strangers in understanding and accepting their incompleteness as nothing but an inevitable reality. Living is all about encounters. Whether good or bad they all contribute to the socialization process of beings.

Chapter 2: Becoming a *runner.*

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the dilemmas and the challenges I faced as an anthropologist entering the field. I detail the rationale, process as well as the politics of entering the field. Accessibility is an essential element of being. Without it you are not free. Accessibility into the field is often met with challenges which require constant negotiation and renegotiation within space. It draws on elements of incompleteness and trying as currencies fueling the need to encounter others for the fortification of belonging. When one belongs, one has freedom of access. This, however, does not detract from the challenges and blockages one may face. Borrowing from Lakoff's analysis of freedom as a metaphor, we realize the understanding of freedom as freedom of motion (2006). "You are not free to go somewhere, get something, or do something if access is blocked, or if there is no path (or road or bridge) to it. Freedom requires not just the absence of impediments to motion but also the presence of access." (2006:5). From this statement two things emerge, "freedom from and a freedom to" (ibid.).

As a migrant *runner* freedom from being caught by police and unpleased locals and freedom to navigate spaces and make a living is essential. This emphasizes the need for access. Accessibility has evoked many study interests and theories. Greco notes the various shifts within which accessibility has developed and changed. He posits three notable shifts: 'particularist' (focus on disability narratives) to 'universalist' (inclusive of other groups) accounts; 'maker-centered (innovators, makers of knowledge) to user-centered approaches' and 'reactive to proactive approaches' (2019). Of interest of these three shifts is the 'reactive' and 'proactive' approach. Although Greco discusses the reactive (post-use upgrades and solutions informed mechanisms) to proactive (constant re-evaluation tactics to product improvement) approach within the parameters of technology development, I borrow this approach in detailing my experience within the field. As a newcomer in the *runner* trade and researching student at the University of Cape Town, it already put me in a pedestal that could easily distance me from the field. My field site, predominantly constituted of a close knit of migrants who kept to themselves. This was a defense mechanism to avoid confiscation by the local authorities.

As a researcher my hovering being would 'tick off'[9] the migrants into thinking I was spying for the local authorities. This meant I had to be 'proactive' to ensure accessibility and freedom for the purposes of understanding the different *runner* networks. It is with this I shadowed Mai Chenai and became a *runner* assistant. Through shadowing her it enabled freedom to gain knowledge of the business as well as of the different social actors involved in the *runner* network. By immersing myself, as an anthropologist would, in her world, I was able to seamlessly fit in and access the field as well as trace the nimble footedness of the *runner*.

2.2 Playing in the shadows: Shadowing as a methodology.

> "Intense methodological awareness if engaged into too seriously can create anxieties that hinder practice, but if taken in small doses it can help to guard against most obvious errors. "
>
> Seale, 1999: ix

When it comes to social scientific perspectives, the insiders view is taken very seriously. Often it is a sought for position that is perceived as a precondition of research (Wax, 1971: 3). The way it is sought can sometimes be problematic. The process of understanding social phenomena is often taken for granted that it must be understood according to the people's symbols (Evans-Pritchard, 1951: 79, and Harvey and Stensaker, 2008). This evokes the reality of incompleteness of being which does not necessarily arise 'because of absences but because of possibilities' (Lategan, 2015). The process of understanding requires an immersion[10] (Pehrson, 1957: iv) into the "mediums, symbols, and experimental worlds which have meaning" (Vidich, 1955: 354) to the participants. With this Rosalie Wax argues understanding as a precondition of social research. To achieve this however requires the researcher to position themselves in such a way they can experience and be (re)socialized (Wax, 1971). One ought to embrace their incompleteness. "The realisation of incompleteness promotes the exploration of ways to complement ourselves with the added possibilities brought to us by the incompleteness of others" (Lategan, 2015). I thus lived with my respondents – Mai Chenai's family. In this regard, during the course of the fieldwork, my

[9] 'ticking off' the migrants into a point of 'eruption'. Eruption entailed being blocked off from being within their circles or being met with silence. This consequentially would have made it impossible to converse, participate or observe within the field.

[10] Be able "to think, see, feel and sometimes act and sometimes act as a member of its culture and at the same time as a trained anthropologist" (Pehrson, 1957: iv).

primary method of data collection was intensive participation. This entailed living with Mai Chenai and her family. Each day would see me helping out with the chores be it washing dishes, cooking, or cleaning the house. I did these tasks interchangeably with her children. By associating and involving oneself in the day-to-day lived experiences of respondents one can devise their role thereby enabling data gathering.

A shadow stays close to its object and takes the form of its object. In a short story, *A Day's Work* (1975), Capote details how he followed around a Hispanic woman to better understand her cleaning craft. She was everything he was not, Hispanic, working, and a woman. This interested the Russian philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin to see the requirement of an *outsideness* attitude. Such an attitude contributes to an understanding of the self. By being located outside the object of one's understanding, Bakhtin argues that we are understood by other people because they are in our exterior (1990). Shadowing is therefore an attitude and a technique (Czarniawska, 2007: 21). The former being the element of outsideness and the latter being an element of following around for the purposes of learning and understanding. To shadow Mai Chenai, I had to embody her *runner* identity which required an agile mindset. Such a mindset required flexibility, nimble footedness, understanding of clients and spaces and collaboration with other actors within the *runner* network. It must be noted however that in positing oneself as an understander it bears limitation in what is researched. Anthropologists have become so familiar with diversity to the extent they are not surprised by exotic customs (Miner, 1956). There is the likelihood to document details according to self-understanding. This however blurs intricate details and romanticizes the respondent. To avoid this requires a flip method, that is making the familiar strange and the strange familiar as observed in Miner's reading of *Body ritual among the Nacirema* (1956). I took each encounter as a learning experience, asking many questions even about the obvious. Mai Chenai was more than happy to share which made the entire experience wholesome. To be a *runner* you had to be a shadow, a shadow of the city, cross, crisscross and recross unseen. I provide more about this in detail in Chapter 4.

The shadowing process as a data gathering method also raises questions of informed consent of the shadowee and participant discomforts of being followed around for extended periods of time (Johnson, 2014). This was met by an active ethical decision-making process which enabled the constant negotiation and renegotiation of ethics (Posel and Ross, 2014). Caught

in-between being a learner, assistant, and daughter[11] to Mai Chenai, I found information to be shared quite willingly. Overtime, the extra respondents acquired through Mai Chenai's network got to learn of my purpose as a student doing a project on the work they do. This was often met with excitement, excitement to be seen, recognized for their efforts. They found confidence in sharing their stories and being born and bred in Zimbabwe made it even easier for them to relate to me. I was a daughter of their soil, I was familiar. My ability to converse in Shona and Ndebele, the predominant languages of the migrants, gave me an advantage in the field and allowed the respondents to open up freely. They had the freedom to share. Having been socialised within Ndebele and Shona cultures, I was able to comprehend the language, mannerisms, and social symbols that were essential to my study. I was able to better understand their experiences which was an advantage in the field.

2.3 The Field Site: Benoni- Johannesburg CBD, Gauteng Province

In the province of Gauteng, the town of Benoni is a part of the Ekurhuleni municipality. It was proclaimed a mining camp after the discovery of gold in 1887. The name of the municipality is Xitsonga for "place of peace." Although it is one of the three municipalities in Gauteng it is home to Oliver Reginald Tambo International Airport, the biggest airport in South Africa. In 1907 it was formally proclaimed a town. Benoni is a good example of apartheid town planning where railways and highways were used to keep communities apart. The town is east of Johannesburg and is heavily urbanized with an estimated 3 969 937 population. Its valley was landscaped by Sir George Farrar. Benoni is renowned for its steel and iron production and being part of the Witwatersrand industrial complex. Being a small town, it has a designated residential area constituting of schools, health facilities and houses, residential complexes, and townhouses. It also has a mini commercial area which is home to multiple shops and company properties. Although already equipped with different service providers we carried out our *runner* errands within the Johannesburg CBD.

The driving distance to Johannesburg was about 37.4km via N12 route, which is about 32 minutes. (See Fig 2.1).

[11] Due to my friendship with her eldest daughter, she had adopted me as her own daughter.

Fig. 2.1: Map showing distance between Benoni and Johannesburg

Due to its high concentration of migrants from Zimbabwe, I concentrated my research in these areas (Benoni and Johannesburg). Mai Chenai, lived in this region which made it convenient. Through her I had the opportunity to interact with three other female Zimbabwean immigrants and social actors who worked in the same industry, a process that conveniently made snowballing possible. These social actors included the wrapper, Mupositori, random shop keepers and staff as well as two bus drivers.

2.4 Plunging-in: Entering the field.

If I were to describe the first day of 'fieldwork', I would say it began with my first shopping order. It was the 8th of April 2021 and although I had not yet even begun thinking of my proposal, the experience sparked huge interest around the *runner* business. After enquiring on WhatsApp Messenger about an order I was sent a message containing details and instructions of Mai Chenai's *runner* group as well as the joining link (see Fig. 2.2a, b, c). After entering the group, I received daily updates of various images of styles and sizes of clothing available. The experience was characterized by a rush, excitement, and frustration all at the same time. The images were eating into my phone storage, and I ended up removing the auto download function. I then chose a dress and handbag set for my sister's upcoming birthday and was assigned a shopping day[12] days later. In the interim as I waited for my shopping day, customers would testify their appreciation of great service. I was hoping to experience the

[12] clients would be assigned a day and a time slot where live shopping would take place.

same. One of her strict rules was being online and available for contact at any time (see Fig. 2.2b), particularly when she started shopping to approve off shopping selections.

Fig. 2.2a WhatsApp Runner group rules

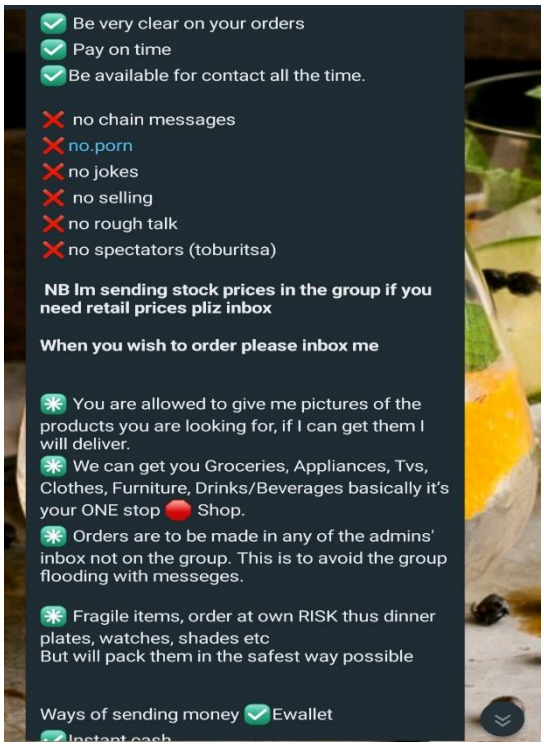

Fig. 2.2b continuation of rules of conduct

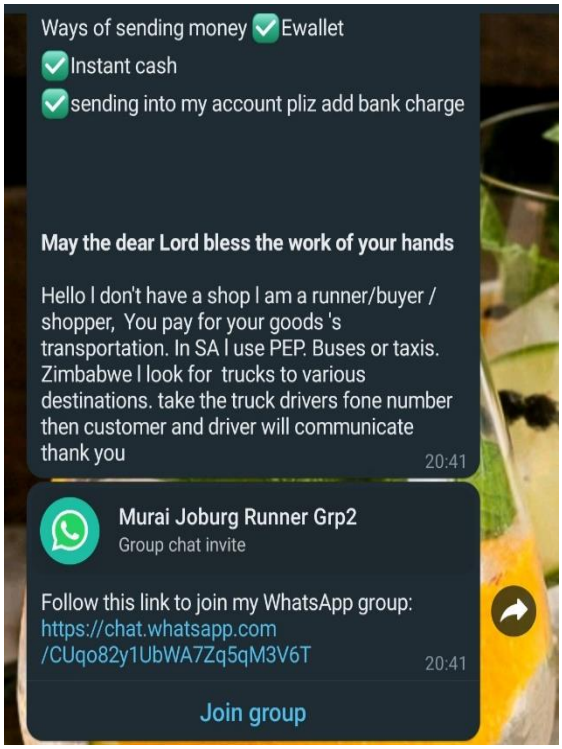

Fig. 2.2c continuation of rules and link to the WhatsApp group.

While frantically waiting for Mai Chenai's feedback on the availability of stock on the dress I had picked for my sister's birthday, I was met with frustration. The dress was available but was of poor quality. I was sent various pictures of other dresses from another shop to select from. We finally found a dress which was both appealing and of quality as testified by both Mai Chenai and my sister. Later in the year I continued to order remittances for my family back in Zimbabwe through her. This gave me an opportunity to become a participant observer through a process of 'doing'. According to Bernard the process of 'doing' is "worth the effort" if "you want to know what people do and won't settle for what they say" (1994, 312). Early January 2022, I took it up to become a *runner* assistant which further fortified my participant observation tactics. Tim Ingold (2001) argues that in trying to understand skill one needs to actually do the work and not only observe. This eliminates the distance between the researcher and their field or topic of study. Consequently, in doing the work I was able to have impromptu conversations with the drivers, conductors, shop assistants and other people I had met during my *runner* errands from time to time. This fostered trust between myself and potential participants and enabled an ease into interviews once they knew my research focus. Mai Chenai had often bragged I was a university student and often pleaded with some of the people in her network to teach me all the ropes in the business. I conducted semi-structured and informal interviews which were focused mainly on their life stories to elicit experiences within South Africa. According to Tuan, "place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning" (1979: 387). This provides a holistic view. As I engaged in the *runner* work, I became aware of the hindrances and constraints which gave me a clearer picture of being a migrant worker. In Chapter 4, I describe how some of these hindrances are navigated. I also show how some of ill-hate migrants face is concealed or endured in Chapter 5 by conceptualising them as medicated circumstances requiring care and attention to the wounds and injuries. In this chapter the increased migratory patterns of women sparked interest.

Immigration scholars often draw attention to migratory patterns, policy and legislation around migration, local attitudes and strategies limiting spatial and temporal access to foreigners. The underpinning tool used in framing and shaping the aforementioned ideals rests on the concept of fear. This fear is often manufactured for the sole purposes to control it socially or politically. The actors in this case migrants end up embodying fear and map out mobility

strategies that contribute to their fluency at a particular time and space. Survival hood involves a lot of politics and rests on social positioning. One ought to have access to resources to get by. Whilst most literature may focus on women migrants as being the vulnerable links in society who may find themselves being abused, in prostitution, trafficking or other exploitive labour (Piper, 2003), I hope to be in conversation with other socio-political dynamics women migrants may find themselves in. This is not to disregard ongoing experiences of other women migrants but to also shed light on other experiences. The exploration of fear as a concept is not one of unravelling weaknesses but seeking out women resistance strategies in their day-to-day experiences. In highlighting the overarching conversations around identity matters that is, conditions, affordances, and agencies of different identity markers, I also explore their vulnerabilities.

My research focus was on the experiences of female *runners*. However, as an assistant who had fully embodied the skills of the trade and entered the field as an active participant in my research. I also share my experiences within the process of *doing*. During my research as a *runner* assistant, I assumed the identity of a daughter to Mai Chenai. Calling her "Mama" came naturally as we had already built a relationship outside the field. She had openly adopted me as her 'daughter' because of my friendly relationship with her eldest daughter. She had naturally referred to me as her first born to anyone who asked, and this carried over into the field. This kind of relationship enabled me access into the male-dominated field, a political sphere requiring social currency to practice.

Although having been born in Zimbabwe and socialized within Ndebele traditions, I also identify as a South African, drawing on my ancestry in Limpopo. Despite this however I lean more to my Zimbabwean ties as this is where I spent the better part of my childhood. My fluency in Zimbabwean culture further aided my fluency within the field that was predominantly Zimbabwean. My identity however has always been one questioned by either country set of relatives. In Zimbabwe I am too privileged to share or claim the socioeconomic struggle and in South Africa I am not fully accepted due to my inability to speak the Xitsonga language. Abu-Lughod discusses the term 'halfie' to refer to those located between two cultures (Abu-Lughod, 1991:141). I could co-opt this idea of being to explain my hybridity between the two aforementioned nations, and hence my incompleteness when obliged administratively or otherwise to opt exclusively for the one or the other. As a regular customer within the male dominant spaces that is the shops and bus station or taxi ranks, Mai Chenai had earned the trust of the social actors within those spaces as well as fluency in her

mobility as a result of regularity. Applying our performed kinship enabled the transfer of trust and access into these spaces. My initial positive experience was encountering Mupositori _ *the wrapper*[13] _ for the first time. He had openly welcomed me, adopted me as a sister, and referred to Mai Chenai as 'Mama'. His gesture although humbling did not necessarily apply to all men within the space. I encountered many instances of being sexualised by many men in the field, including the taxi drivers, conductors, shop assistants and other gatekeepers. The treatment I received was no exception but the general order of the day.

2.5 Being the subject: Ethical dilemmas in the field.

Procedural ethics and ethics in practice make the main components of qualitative research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Often they have been discussed independent of each other however, they both encapsulate the ethical practice of research (Johnson, 2014). Procedural ethics do not always anticipate the ethical issues that may emerge within the field. Being the shadower I never anticipated the possibility of being the subject of inquiry. In as much as I anticipated difficulty of my positionality as a female researcher entering a male dominated field, what I discuss in the following paragraphs, I never fathomed. Instances I considered 'bearable' included having men explaining to myself and Mama on how to handle a pricing negotiation process for a package with the driver as though we had no idea of what we were doing, seeking my hand in marriage from Mai Chenai or compliments on our looks, some instances leaned over to the 'unbearable'. In some instances, there was intense flirting, uncomfortable piercing looks that felt like one was stripping me naked in their mind, as well as the random hand brushes or grabs in attempts to get my contact number. As all this unfolded, I remained calm and gently ignored the gestures for fear of being denied a service. These were instances I had to practice *kungwara*[14] (being clever and calculating) in trying to manoeuvre spaces. Navigating Johannesburg CBD required a calmness and fast paced stance to it. At one point we were being followed by the locally known 'Amaphara' – young men who are drug users, who often rely on petty theft to get money for their next drug score. We had to quickly change routes, clench to our bags and entered a nearby store to shake off our trail. This was bearable as it was everyday life in this area. Below I show one of the unbearable episodes where I had to respond with nothing but silence.

[13] Self-employed persons found in the bus terminus or airport. Recognised by their carrying around of cling wrap rolls and tape. Responsible for wrapping and packaging goods for travel for a price.
[14] Further explored in Chapter 4

Surprised by his generosity one of his workmates I had initially rejected his courtship jealously asked "why are you helping her will you get a kiss? Phone number?" I simply smiled. Was I avoiding him? Why did I not respond? Was my smile genuine? (Notes from Philadelphia Shopping Centre, 17 January 2022)

Why did I smile? I realised as a woman sometimes silence meant safety from backlash. This was a proactive act. I was forced to reflect on the intersection of my gender, age, and ethnicity and through that develop strategies and tactics in dealing with my experiences throughout the research process. Social scientists often stress the importance of practicing ethics within the field, where protection of the participants is emphasized. The vulnerability of the researcher is barely accounted for. In as much as I felt vulnerable in many instances, I still had to remain professional as a face of my academic institution and reflect on the reality of my reliance on gatekeepers who predominantly were men.

Feminist scholarship has argued the vulnerabilities of feminized social actors. Little is said about the experiences of female researchers within the field thus painting an incomplete reality. Self-reflexivity has been one emphasized within literature as a necessary practice throughout the research process (Ackerly & True, 2010; Robben & Sluka 2012). Feminist scholars within the early 2000's have argued the 'unidirectional flow of influence' where the researcher has power to shape the research or the researched (Thapar-Bjokert & Henry, 2004). Other ethnographic accounts have argued the over reliance on gatekeepers who in turn influence research by either sharing or concealing information (Rutten 2007; Hammersly & Atkinson, 1996). Albeit appreciating contemporary literature discussions around the "diffusion of power in the field", not enough has been discussed in terms of the vulnerability of researchers in the field (Mugge, 2013).

Now I try to forget the Philadelphia scenario only to face another. In a taxi on our way home to Benoni, Mai Chenai and I were sitting in the front seats, with her sitting in between the driver and me. He was Zulu; his accent proved this. He kept trying to make eye contact as he drove. Despite my attempts to avoid meeting his eyes, I felt the uncouth constant eyeing. Although uncomfortable I still handled myself within the different accounts. We are taught research ethics and one of them emphasizes the point of research not doing harm. In both accounts despite the researcher's discomfort, she still brushes off the gestures in silence. Hubbard, Backett-Milbur, & Kemmer (2001) are concerned with the researcher's temptation into simply being objects of data collection. It is often hard to map research proposals onto

the field of study. Many a time one walks in blindfolded without the slightest idea of the dangers or uncomfortable encounters that lie ahead. It is only through doing the work that certain truths are unfolded. The desperation of gathering data renders the researcher at the mercies of gate keepers of knowledge sites. Research thus becomes a risky affair of increasingly emotional work. According to Emerald and Carpenter "emotionality is often still constructed in binary to rationality, intellectual work, and professionalism" (2015: 747). Despite this however feminist thought argues the personal as political and complex. The personal experiences can feed into the understandings of the layered social, cultural, and political nuances. This idea emphasizes the increasing realisation of researcher's emotions as data (Blakely, 2007). In this context my emotions enabled me to fully embody the *runner* experience and gain deeper understandings of my research interlocutors. In the quest of exhuming the layered identities assumed by the *runner*, I further discuss the instances and affordances of convenience that emerge.

2.6 Summary Conclusion

Having entered the field as an active participant in the *runner* business, my experiences were influenced by the *runner* identity. I had preferred it this way as it would enable me access and first-hand experience of the day-to-day typical encounters by *runners.* Accessibility into the field is frequently confronted with difficulties, necessitating ongoing discussions about space. It requires one to accept their incompleteness of being and thus constantly fight for survival. To do this one need to embrace the likelihoods of encounters and try ways and tactics of belonging even if it means slightly performing multiple selves to gain access. This may mean embracing the position of being a shadow to understand the spaces and people one is researching with. Sometimes this exercised embodiment may mean reacting and acting like a *runner* and at some moments proactively leaning to silence for the purposes of access. This raises questions of vulnerability.

Chapter 3: Chasing dreams amid nightmares.

3.1. Introduction

In navigating suffering, conflict and alternatives, this chapter sets out to explore the (im)mobilities that Zimbabwean migrant women encounter while working as *runners* in Johannesburg. The research attempts to do this by tracking the nimble footedness as well as the overlapping identities *runners* assume on a daily basis that is wife, sister, migrant, mother, friend, social target etc. The varied identities enable various affordances and limitations. In discussing the varied affordances and limitations, I will also exhume the 'intersection of relationships with significant and strange others' (Kallio, Wood, & Häkli, 2020: 717) as well as complexities that emerge as a result of their intersected identities. Being a female migrant within certain publics breeds a type of identity politics that exposes migrant female *runners* to vulnerability. I start off by exhuming the layered identities the *runner* assumes in different contexts as well as the strategies of carving a sense of belonging and navigation. Furthermore, I explore the way the migrant transforms space into place in attempts of inserting themselves within society. Their conscious alert action of acknowledging their incompleteness enables them to be in a position of enrichment by others. Despite the failing economy in Zimbabwe, these female migrants forge alternative ways of survival which feed into the emancipatory activism of femininity. In addition, I investigate patriarchal micro publics and the vulnerabilities they expose as well as an alternative masculinity shift observed.

The growth of unemployment and precarization regarding one's wellbeing thus forges intimate subjectivities that in turn foster self-reliant ideologies. Many of my Zimbabwean informants recounted their belief in forging new ways of living in their neighbour's grounds that is in South Africa. Ambitious quests of employment are entrapped in a world of mystery and enchantment. The current political and socioeconomic climate in South Africa has left the migrant hope for employment as a thing remembered through nostalgia, a thought trapped in the past. Mai Chenai amongst many others migrated into South Africa with the hopes of using their qualification, a shared dream with Mai Chenai's goods wrapper, known as Mupositori. Although qualified in their respective fields that is education, they have fostered alternative means of survival within the informal economy. In trying to survive they are left under the mercies of a hopeful future and remain vulnerable to risk. I found that life in the Johannesburg CBD is not just a space of getting by but also a space where gender and fear

converge. This chapter thus explores the subject in this case the female Zimbabwean migrant as multiple, constituting of different identity layers which in turn shape their experiences.

At some point in our lives, we have waited. The act of waiting steers anxiety, uncertainty, or reluctance furthermore it rests on the idea of hope, resistance, and determination. Despite the continual decline of the Zimbabwean economy, Zimbabweans continue to show resistance in many ways. Whereas others wait and linger around their nostalgic memory bubbles of better living conditions others, burst away from this nostalgic bubble, and attempt new survival strategies. With the constant rise of inflation many are forced to move in different directions for better pastures. For some this means migrating to other states, others fold back into their creative gifts such as carpentry and sought out entrepreneurships in their home countries. Some migrants take risks and cross over without proper documentation and become independent 'economic migrants' by creating their own space within the global market (Sichone, 2020). Whereas others follow the legal route and acquire the proper travel documents and permits's and seek employment. For those choosing to utilize their skills certificates and acquire work permits in the employment industry, they continue seeking better job opportunities with the hope of better renumeration. Sadly, for the migrant this is no easy task due to the increased unemployment rates and constant revisions to immigration laws in the neighbouring countries which make it harder for them to acquire employment or even reside within their neighbours' borders. This then forces them to remain in their underpaying jobs for the sake of temporal financial stability. Agency within the employment industry is only afforded to the privileged, the citizens. The migrant in this context is nothing but a common stranger, recognised and loathed for her efforts. Choked by her own realizations of being hated by her fellow African she harbours feelings of fear and anxiety. The migrant body becomes the zone of constant 'suffering' of which according to Chabal (2009:152) equates to the daily reality of resentment, conflict, and lack of documentation.

3.2 Making sense of space: Common strangers in the city.

Although strangers, there was a growth of familiarity within random migrant encounters within some spaces. This was observed by nods here and there, friendliness and small talk around family and wellbeing with the one of the *runners'* suppliers, the boutique shop owners. They were for the most part either of Ethiopian, Pakistani or Asian descent. The social atmosphere was different at the Newtown Bus Terminus, where the Zimbabwean buses were housed. Both sites housed migrants. The former revealed friendship as a common order,

whereas the latter i.e., the bus terminus, provided a sense of family relatedness. I felt at home at the bus terminus. From the smell of braaied meat, smoke from the braai stand, sadza (mealie pap) and muriwo (rape, leafy vegetable) and the sight of Mazoe bottles (Zimbabwean common concentrated drink) and exchange of conversations in Shona, these all fed into my nostalgia. There was a sense of peace of home within that place, a sense of familiarity, nostalgia and kinship encapsulated this area. According to Rufaro Mushonga (2022: 1) "the notions of place, belonging, home and identities are relationally constructed through convivial encounters." (see Chapter 1). In my field site the idea of home wrapped around the sight and smell of food. Although the CBD order of business between the *runners*, boutique shop owners, consumables shopkeepers, and shop assistants carved instances of conviviality between fellow migrants, the bus terminus fostered instances of kinship and familyhood.

Situated in a stranger's land, the people at the bus terminus have transformed space into place. This experience can be likened to that of Sichone's informants - 'finding a place', in his *Xenophobia and xenophilia in South Africa Africans migrants in Cape Town,* 2020 research article. It was a matter of convenience. Robert David Sack discusses in his book *Homo Geographicus* that one of the important features is "place and its relationship to space" (1977). The order of existence rests on the idea of transforming space into place, these invites efforts channelled towards building senses of belonging and forming notions of identity within space. Edward Casey brought to the fore and understanding of what space and place were.

> " I maintain, "space" is the name for that most encompassing reality that allows for things to be located within it; and it serves in this locatory capacity whether it is conceived as absolute or relative in its own nature. "Place," on the other hand, is the immediate ambiance of my lived body and its history, including the whole sedimented history of cultural and social influences and personal interests that compose my life history".
>
> Edward Casey, 2001:404

I borrow Casey's themes of self, body, and landscape in understanding the multi-layered the runner assumes in their line of work. The self has to do with identity and agency of being within particular geographical settings; the body however connects the self to lived experiences; and the landscape is the presented layout of places (Casey, 2001). In his essay, Locke writes about the idea of selfhood or personal identity and place as two completely

unrelated elements, literature since then has deviated from this late modern thought to contest this idea (1847). The two feeds into each other and need each other to activate. “There is no place without self; and no self without place” (Casey, 2001). The bus terminus felt like home due to the people and sense of community within that place. It also enabled a set of conveniences that is goods wrapping services, home staple foods for those far off from home amongst others. The place enabled freedoms of identity representations, people could freely speak in their native language, Shona, and foster senses of familiarity and homeness within a country that marginalises them as the perfect stranger. My experience of the convivial relationship between the shop keepers and their *runner* customers as well as my experience of the bus terminus kin relations alludes to the different hats, the *runner* wears to blend in and navigate the world. Within certain spaces they are complete strangers, migrants and are consequently marginalised. In some places however they are extended kindness, friendship, and kinship possibilities. I found that either circumstance be it convivial or kin related, both hint on a common aspect, incompleteness, and convenience. Both friendship and kin relations created notions of convenience in the *runner* line of business and asserted a sense of belonging and familiarity. Both forms of relationship strengthened the runner social networks. Whether understood as a behaviour, phenomenon or heuristic, convenience has not received much attention within anthropology. Later in the thesis I will discuss convenience as a term that shapes the experiences of getting by. Before delving into strategies of survival it is important to understand the socio-politics masking female migrant bodies.

3.3 Telling her story: Vulnerabilities of migrant women.

> *“Even if we do not know tomorrow, todii mwanangu? We leave it to the one above.”*
> *(Field participant observation with Mai Chenai, 4th of January 2022)*

In trying to understand social phenomenon it is pertinent to fully embrace everyone’s story to avoid propagating single stories. Francis Nyamnjoh emphasizes the point that the ways of knowing should echo people’s histories and stories (2018). With this I attempt to echo the migrants’ foraging experiences, vulnerabilities, and attempted forays. In masking and unmasking, I discuss how female Zimbabwean migrants mask themselves in attempts of blending into or manoeuvring within society and how they unmask or are unmasked within familiar places. I embarked on my search to satisfy my curiosities of *runner* experiences in the Johannesburg city. Initially I had had a conversation with Mai Chenai before plunging into the field. My main worry was blending into the CBD atmosphere considering the stories

of theft and muggings that precedes its reputation. I found it easier to navigate the space alongside Mai Chenai. We always took the public taxi at the Benoni taxi rank and got off at the same corner street in the Johannesburg CBD filled with many small wholesale boutiques and street vendors selling clothes. Overtime the regularity and repetition of mobility built my confidence and familiarity of the space. We would clutch onto our handbags or wear jackets over the handbag straps to hide our bags. This was done to avoid having our bags snatched by thieves. Our dress code was one that was simple, not flashy to avoid drawing attention to our movements. Everything we did was intentional from behaviour to mannerisms. One golden rule Mai Chenai kept repeating was not to look lost. One had to be swift and appear purposeful in their movement. We had to match the pace of the city folk which was fast paced to blend in. To understand her role as a *runner* it is ideal to investigate her story.

Taken into consideration the close analysis of intersectional gendered experiences, contributes to a more critical contribution towards social change. Despite the failure of her plan to use her teaching credentials, Mai Chenai still exercised resilience in providing for her family. Unlike the old tales of having the man being the overall sole provider, women find themselves at a position of contributing to the welfare of their family's finances. In one of our impromptu conversations around marriage, Mai Chenai's daughter had often painted her father as being a present father who played an active and supportive role in the family. Before Mai Chenai migrated to South Africa, her husband was the primary caregiver to their daughter both financially and socially. As a result of his unfortunate illness, he was bedridden, and Mai Chenai had to take on the care responsibility of the family. Questions around what constitutes care often arise. Can a woman take care of the family financially where previously it was assumed as a man's responsibility?

With the rise in women emancipation, we see the social transformation and shift in gender roles. Kimmel 1987; Peacock, Khumalo, and Mcnab 2006 and Barker, Ricardo, and Nascimento 2007 all describe this as an 'alternative masculinity', a response and eradicator of 'problematic masculinity'. This points to the alternative form of the traditional man, the 'new man', one who is an advocate for women's rights, caring and domestically responsible (Morell, 1998:7). Ifi Amadiume's work on *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (1987) invites further conversation around gender roles. I build on her work by exploring female migrant's perception of cultural values their understandings of social, and/or traditional family roles. Amadiume centres her argument around gender roles particularly around inceptions of when biological women become men socially and

additionally when men become women socially (1987). In situating her argument, she traces women's role within the precolonial era. From her findings sex was not always a determining factor for gender roles, this is evident even within Mai Chenai's family. During my fieldwork stay, their son would easily take up cooking or cleaning chores traditionally thought to be for women. We would come from the CBD with Mama after one of our *runner* errands and find food cooked served for us. This highlights the responsibility and exercise of care despite so called traditional gender roles. This idea of equitable family roles is seen even in Nzwengu's work on *Family Matter: Feminist Concepts in African Philosophy of Culture* where she discusses Igbo women's involvement in political roles within precolonial Nigeria. The conception of gendered roles preludes the colonial era, a time were patriarchal notions influenced the way of life. This highlights the gender inequality and furthermore contributions of colonialism in engineering a patriarchal society that seeks to silence women's efforts. Both Amadiume and Nzwengu contribute to foundational African feminist thought. Nzwengu (2012) helps us trace the roles and affordances of women in precolonial and colonial eras. Moreover, Amadiume invites us to unveil the invisible hand working against African women (Magadla, Magoqwana and Motseme, 2021). Henderson (1988) discusses Amadiume's conception of women's economical involvement. He notes how it is centred around motherhood and womanhood notions (Henderson, 1988).

"but I am a mother. Ndini baba, namama".

I was struck by the *runner's* constant reference to feminist notions. Their experiences often echoed the practice of mothering and family care. Their maternal care instincts, and activism in their mobilities as women was commendable. In one of our *runner* errands, we met Kundi. A young *runner* in her twenties who was using her profits to further her education as well as take care of her parents and siblings back in Zmbabwe. In our brief encounter, I had learned she had just purchased her first vehicle and was doing driving lessons. Of course, this was met with admiration especially from Mai Chenai who was still new to the industry. Although a daughter, Kundi's caring can be attributed to mothering. Mothering is usually assigned to female kin (LeVine, 1994; Seymour; 1983 and Werner 1984) including siblings (Ochs, 1988). Feminist scholars have argued against the conceptualisation of mothering as a 'natural' attribute and have shown how it emerges because of family, work, and kinship (Moore, 1988: 25). In Kundi's instance however, mothering emerges as a result of being economically equipped to take care of her siblings. Mothering in this instance falls into the current understandings of mothering which embrace the idea of it being 'produced' than

'natural' (Barlow and Chapin, 2010). In essence it emerges from circumstance. Another *runner*, NaPrecious, 'NaPre' whom I had conversed with a few encounters via WhatsApp Messenger had also briefly shared her story. She was a mother of two with the youngest residing with her and her husband in South Africa. Her eldest, Precious was in boarding school back in Bulawayo Zimbabwe. Her reason to become a runner was after losing her job during COVID. She had worked as a domestic worker however with the retrenchment of her employer at work she subsequently lost her job. Her husband was working as a security guard however his salary could not support the whole family. Having met through a friend of mine who utilised her services we immediately became friendly due to realisations of both having family back in Bulawayo. Of our online conversations we would immediately switch to IsiNdebele and converse. Mai Chenai had also introduced me to Mai Ruth who also shared her positionality of being a mother and how this influenced her lived experienced.

> *"I became a runner because of my desperate situation when COVID started. I was a single mother who was self-employed as a hairdresser but due to lockdown, I couldn't work anymore. The times were hard. We were stopped to go to work by COVID regulations and I didn't have anything to give my family back at home. My kids were being taken care of by my mother. They needed me more than ever, I had to provide" (Post field interview with Mai Ruth, 21 August 2022).*

The responsibility of family in a life signified by precarity and uncertainty evokes a lot of anxieties and feelings of distress. Despite the loss of a job or state influence in the migrant's existence within the country, she still soldiered on. Luibheid, Rosi and Stevens (2018) provide a conceptual framework that explains how governmental power and interpersonal connections manage and govern migrants' lives. By looking into the motherhood intimacies, we ultimately understand notions of connectivity and relationality. According to Papadaki (2017) motherhood is understood as a legal category stemming from the time of birth, involving child custody and maternal rights over the child. Joseph (1993) argues that motherhood is a relationship with fluid boundaries that connects one to the other. It is a kinship term that is shared.as seen in Kundi's instance. Furthermore, this relationship is found to be 'a small zone of familiarity, comfort, meaning, and safety' (Willen, 2014). One finds purposeful meaning of their role and responsibility as a parent and more importantly a mother in this instance. It also meant living in fear. Fear of letting her children down, fear of not being able to provide for her family. In another story, Mai Chenai shared hers.

"My husband got sick and was admitted for an operation in December 2021. Even though I was a primary school teacher it wasn't paying much…What is R4000 nhai mwanangu (really my child)? I can't even pay rent! I was scared to leave my job, but I had to trust God, He always sees me through…. I have to woman up and take care of the family while my husband is recovering". (Impromptu conversations with Mai Chenai during fieldwork, February 2022)

In the above excerpts we see the layered identities of being a mother and daughter for the former and mother and wife for the latter. Either identity required a need for the exercise of care. To understand care, one needs to situate it within its moral and political contexts (Tronto, 1994). Although the social conceptions of care are culturally complex and sometimes culturally specific, they ought to follow some ethics of care. Tronto and Fisher identify four ethical elements of care which include attentiveness, competence, responsiveness, and responsibility (Tronto, 1994). All these are required in carrying it the different element of care which include caregiving, taking care of (responsibility), caring about and care receiving (Tronto,1994). The above excerpts describe the different instances within which some of my participants became *runners*. They highlight their roles as mothers and responsibilities in taking care of their families. This required a sense of competence that was enabled through seeking out other ways of generating finances. They needed to be attentive and responsive to their family's needs and consequently take on responsibility for their family's welfare. They needed to be competent economic participants. This relates to Amadiume's argument around motherhood in Nnobi society. According to her, motherhood was highly regarded and yet did not prevent women from attaining positions of economic emancipation (Henderson 1988: 43). Every action requires motivation, and they were no exception. The constant need to fight to take care of their families and children strikes as activist work in their African femininity. The mothering revealed by Kundi, NaPre, Mai Chenai and Mai Ruth's experiences remains a question of inquiry.

According to Millman (2013), motherhood and caring for children come across as demanding and challenging processes for women despite their social status or position. However further complexities arise when mothers migrate and become transnational workers (Alzoubi, 2011). Focusing on some of the stories and experiences shared by some of the transnational *runner* mothers, it is clear their identity and practice of mothering encapsulates cultural, socioeconomic, and political dynamics. While some *runners,* like Mai Chenai, lived in South Africa with their families, other *runners* practiced transnational parenting. Mai Ruth, a

transnational mother, and *runner* expressed some of her experiences as a *runner*. Resilient in fending for her family, her primary role as a mother, forced her to constantly cross the border in a bid to involve herself in the physical upbringing of her children. Before being a worker, we see that both women understood their primary social responsibilities as mothers. In furthering the conversation around the layered identity of a *runner* the mother-daughter relationship offers a great lens through which to understand the intimacies of how migrants regulate their lives. Being mothers fuelled both Mai Chenai's and Mai Ruth's need for survival. Each day was a step to better life for their families. In a post field interview with Mai Chenai, I had asked her to share her life story. In detailing her migration to South Africa and unfortunate incidence of her husband's sickness, she shared words of wisdom from the Bible that had kept her going. For one she had placed her hope in the One above, Her God. "God will provide". She repeatedly uttered this during our errands. This had fuelled her strength in trying to provide for her family within precarity. Apart from being a common stranger within society or being culturally inaudible in the past, female migrant's nimble footedness and multiple identities enables them to soldier on. Some draw purpose from their motherhood relations with their children and use this to channel their inner strengths to fight, survive and endure.

3.4 Motherhood amidst uncertainty

> *"When I came to South Africa, Tendai was young and had just begun grade school. It was hard leaving her, but I had no choice. It's hard to see your child starve in front of you. I left her with my mother and came with malayitsha and tried kuzamazama." Everyone was doing it (Impromptu conversations with Mai Ruth, 12 January 2022).*

It was a combination of her social and economic status that led her to migrating in search of a better living. Mai Ruth's lived experience as well as other migrants was shaped by financial constraints and uncertain futures. This enabled fate acts as a propeller of experimentation. In this unpredictable period, there is a good probability that possibilities will materialize if one seizes them as they present themselves (Johnson-Hanks, 2005: 363). Amongst the *runners* I spoke to the common response to the fear of failure and uncertainty of the future was often met by prayer. Both Mai Ruth and Mai Chenai had mentioned this. During my stay with Mai Chenai, we always prayed just before bed with her son and daughter. Uncertainty not only covered financial matters but also the health of her husband who still was in medical care. In one of our random conversations, Mai Chenai had expressed her faith in the One above, her

God, if He could feed the little birds daily who had not worked or toiled, surely, He could take care of her family too. It was a matter of faith amidst uncertainty. Mai Ruth on the other hand despite her work of faith she had tried and sought options of relieving her family of hardship. Her use of malayitsha services who essentially are transport persons who connect Zimbabwe and South Africa usually using the Quantum taxi vehicles, evokes conversations around legality. Consequently, we can look at her efforts as an act of 'good citizenship'. By being an economically self-reliant (Erel, 2011) thereby reducing the financial burden on society (Ong, 2003: 12), it makes her a good citizen. Additionally, migrants can be viewed as good citizens of their home countries due to their entrepreneurial abilities and remittance flows.

Malayitsha's are known to be fast, calculating and with deep connections at the borders that enables their fluidity of both goods and persons with no papers. Mai Ruth's act of bravery is one of improvision which although necessary for survival is not a leisurely gesture but one characterised by effort. In her cultivated effort Mai Ruth and fellow *runners* find themselves facing various adversities in crossing both borders and boundaries. This requires a constant need for negotiation and renegotiation, and improvisation in trying to take care of their families. Living requires one to try attempt different ways of survival, no one way is truly sufficient. This is what we see in the case of Mai Ruth who from being a hairdresser turned to being a *runner* to keep her family afloat. This is the same even in the case of Mai Chenai who left her teaching job to try out the entrepreneurial route. The same also goes for NaPre who even after losing her job as a domestic worker tried to be a *runner*. It is through their primary identity of being mothers as well as their nimble footedness which helps them navigate fluidly through life. In all circumstances they try to survive.

3.5 Summary Conclusion

In the quest of exhuming the layered identities assumed by the *runner*, I have discussed the instances and affordances of layered identities that emerge. I have discussed Kundi, NaPre, Mai Ruth and Mai Chenai as being women, mothers and daughters. Their positionality both channels strength to endure as well as puts them further in vulnerable positions from both local and fellow migrants of the male species. Furthermore, the precarity of the COVID-19 pandemic comes as an added complexity which threatens livelihoods due to job losses. Consequently, it has also enabled notions of survival through offering services of convenience. The mobility of people was/is a moderated aspect due to the ongoing viral

infection rates; this differs with the movement of goods as they often enjoy the freedoms of mobility. This recurring practice enabled the boom of the *runner* business. Mupositori described some of the uncertainties of the *runner* business. The line of business rested on the idea of trust, hope and networking. This networking surfaced as a result of the convivial encounters (see Chapter 1). In making sense of space, the migrant sets out to transform space into place and utilise its affordances in a more convenient manner. It thus invites one to examine the different ways in which convenience either shapes our interactions with the environment and other significant and stranger persons or experiences thereof. How does convenience consciously and unconsciously organize our networks of influence? Therefore, convenience emerges as a tactic to assert belonging. I argue, convenience is an important topic for anthropological interest.

Chapter 4: Navigating borders and boundaries.

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 elaborates on the concept of incompleteness and conviviality thus offering detailed accounts of nimble footedness. It hopes to unveil why and how *runners* are nimble footed. Of interest is uncovering the regimes, limitations and challenges of completeness and exclusionary logics of belonging. Identity is a fluid medium within which one finds themselves navigating. Through it we as humans realize our incompleteness as we constantly negotiate its tentacled forms for the purposes of belonging and fluidity. It is human and universal to be incomplete. Through our travels, our interactions with others and the chances for self-improvement that present themselves, we mobilize ourselves and indulge in mobility to lessen the responsibilities presented by incompleteness (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Our human limitations and our drive to survive are exacerbated through very dangerous circumstances like the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. The complexities of the identities held by the Zimbabwean female runners in Johannesburg were examined in the preceding chapter. The discussion of the methods used to try to make ends meet at the margins (Rekopantswe Mate, 2005) is expanded upon in this chapter. It further discusses the strategies used to resist or get around such structures and rigid prescriptiveness in belonging. In tracing these strategies for survival, I analyze how the Joburg *runners* have aimed to alleviate the constraints of incompleteness despite their (im)mobilities. In addition, I look at how migrants' survival strategies overlap with the ideas of morality, temporality, and agency. This will be accomplished by looking into the social interactions that *runners* had as well as the various manoeuvring and positioning techniques they employed. In examining the invitation of the works on the incompleteness framework (see Chapter 1) articulated by Francis Nyamnjoh in exposing the links in how we relate to the world and its structures, I call attention to the relationship networks within the *runner* business. I contend that in navigating the politics of inclusion and exclusion, migrants employ meticulous strategies which overlap with ideas of agency, morality, and temporality.

Frontiers are neither borders nor boundaries however the frontier logic appears in these zones (Korf. Hagmann & Doevenspeck, 2013). The frontier logic by Kopytoff although it focused on the politically controlled and constructed spaces it has not discussed the African contemporalities within the African peripherals (Korf, et al., 2013:30). Rosler and Wendl (1999) in their literature review they noted the shift from frontier studies to that of borders

and borderlands. The shift not only notes the mobility flows of goods and people but also looks at how border practices are emphasized and reproduced daily. The Zimbabwean immigrant within South Africa is constantly reminded they do not belong. This becomes more pronounced in their social exchanges with locals who constantly blame them for the economic downfall, unemployment, and pressure on health services. A border in this case not only includes the physical separation of two entities but also involves a 'dynamic relation and social practice' (Korf, et al., 2013: 30). It thus serves the purpose of being a territorial marking as well as a symbolic social boundary (ibid.). Boundaries are zones of relational change. The way in which one is treated or relates changes significantly (Migdal, 2004). Frontierness is precisely the capacity to straddle many identity margins in an attempt to defy rigid prescriptiveness. As frontier beings, migrants' behaviour (nimble footedness) means that they simply do not yield to being reminded that they do not belong.

Relating back to Chapter 1, I discussed the permanence of change. In Tutuola's cosmos, reality and logic of sensory perception are continuously being tested (Nyamnjoh, 2015). Life becomes bigger than logic, what feeds into normalcy is contested. In this universe, not even the oneness of being is a permanent condition, morphosis is inevitable. My investigation made this noticeably clear. Despite sentimental memories of a happy past, life presented challenges that necessitated readjustment. Nyamnjoh (2015) notes how Tutuola's teachings challenge us to see connections between things and to take connections into account when relating to the world and the hierarchies we wish to assert or challenge within it. It is with this I trace the different *runner* networks, realities, and social encounters to understand their fluency. Change remains the normal order of the day. Where at one point there is peace, conflict looms. Readjustment and flexibility become nature's constants. The whims and caprices of shifting periods and the morphing shapes of the beings, things, words, and deeds they strive to subdue are equally subject to structures (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Everyone and everything, including humans and their anatomical structures are pliable and flexible.

4.2 Readjustment: Living outside nostalgia.

> *"Hazvina basa mama (There is no point mother). There is no use working for a boss, a job is a job, life still goes on" (Impromptu conversations with Mupositori during fieldwork, February 2, 2022)*

In trying to make ends meet, Mai Chenai and her family had relocated after the increasingly dire inflated economic reality in Zimbabwe. You either remained trapped in nostalgic

memory bubbles of a bearable past or simply forged a way out and soared out survival. Mai Chenai often expressed the need to fight for her family survival. *"You cannot sit back and watch your children go hungry"* she would often say. Although employed as a teacher at the time, she did not stop seeking other means to subsidise her low salary and contribute to the family financial provisions. The financial strain on her family birthed the efforts of *trying*. In trying to 'get by', *kuzamazama*, as the Shona people put it, one must be calculating and intentional. *"Unofanira kungwara mwanangu"* (You must be clever my child) she would say. It is with this she began her journey as a *runner* in 2019. She was introduced to this line of business by a fellow colleague within her workplace. She had expressed her indebtedness to her fellow colleague who too was a Zimbabwean.

"Hushamwari runobatsira" (Friendship helps) (social echoes within the field)

Mai Ruth had also expressed the same sentiments. A friend of hers had introduced her to the *runner* business after the onset of COVID-19, lockdown regulations had forced the hair salon she worked for to close. She resorted to the *runner* industry as a source of revenue and started *running* full-time. In contrast, Mai Chenai would conduct her errands after work and on weekends, but this meant she had limited *runner* time. Although she knocked off work in the afternoons, it would be a race against time in trying to fulfil a customer shopping list in time to take it to the departing busses or trucks. There were additional challenges faced by Mai Chenai. She expressed the tension between herself and the school Principal she worked for. The principal had found out about her side hustle and consequently made it difficult for her to juggle the two. She kept assigning extra work that would delay her from knocking off for example assigning her to be the after-care teacher for the other classes. She was never renumerated for this extra work. This did not stop her. She continued to work on her orders via WhatsApp and Facebook secretly and partnered with her son who would shop for some of the things on her behalf. Both mother and son were now involved in 'running'.

Despite the rising uncertainty of her craft, she still found ways to navigate around obstacles. This relates to Jenifer Johnson-Hanks's emphasis on how, "effective social action is based not on the fulfilment of prior intentions but on a judicious opportunism" whereby "the actor seizes promising chances." (2005). Social action in this instance rests on the idea of rational choices (ibid). Her argument goes against the notions of individualism and posits social change as a "result of the action and interaction of individuals" (Elster 1989:13). Therefore

Johnson-Hanks's argument rests on the ability to, "respond effectively to the contingent, sudden, and surprising offers that life can make" (2005:376). Mai Chenai's care for her family rested upon her ability to be responsive to her reality and consequently, actions. In understanding the actions of *trying* in times of precarity, I borrow from Patience Mususa's framing of *trying* and adaptation being the adoption of "one's conscious and unconscious abilities." Feminized migratory patterns are no new phenomenon, however, they have received quite a lot of attention because of increased mobility activity. The increased activity has been aided by the technological advancements such as the smartphone which have accelerated and necessitated the making of connections with potential and existing clientele, border patrol agents, transporters/movers (i.e., bus or truck drivers) and immigration officers. The mobilities in question not only include persons but goods and information. Furthermore, the practice of connectedness is fuelled by acts of friendship and fictive kinship. This is observed through the referral system fuelled by acts of conviviality and the making of place through fictive kinships. Trust is earned and cemented through these channels. Although COVID-19 regulations put a tight leash on movements in and out of the country, the Zimbabwean *runners* still had ways of crossing and recrossing the border.

4.3 Navigating spatiotemporalities

Borders are pliable and permeable, which makes them highly adaptable. This makes border connecting possible. Considering this, I examined the concepts of nimble-footedness and border permeability through the *runners'* experiences. The term "*runners*" refers to how they quickly cross, crisscross and recross borders. These borders not only included the state borders but also included social boundaries. Borders as external geographical frontiers and boundaries as internal social categorizations are inextricably linked in a process that racializes immigrants and reminds ethnic minorities of their foreign origin (Fassin 2011). Borders are socially constructed too and no two are alike. Some are porous others are impermeable but all are negotiated/negotiable. Although Fassin's argument investigates migration politics amongst the West and non-West areas, we can draw similarities with the African politics migration. Boundaries although socially constructed extend themselves into a political sphere. Identity is political and with it comes matters of inclusion and exclusion, agency, and limitation. According to the Weberian and Durkheim understanding, borders were typically seen as territorial boundaries defining political entities (states, in this case) and citizens, boundaries however were social constructs that emphasized inequalities and disparities within class, gender or race identities (Fassin, 2011). In the case of my study,

boundaries marginalise the migrant in intrinsic ways. Gender and nationality identity layers affect their experiences in diverse ways. I shared some of the experiences in the preceding chapter and further explore how the Zimbabwean migrants navigate boundaries and employ *kungwara* and conviviality as mechanisms of survival. It is also important to note the plurality of the *runner* business. Some *runners* purchase their clients' items and connect with the *movers*, (truck or bus drivers) to deliver them to their end destinations, some *runners* traverse borders with their commodities and some *runners* work by connecting with other *runner* players at the destination places. From a commodity point of view this resembles the regular supply chain model. Humans often partake in repeated social networking exercises that see the connecting and reconnecting of persons. These social networks and modes of communication help in their navigation. How does agility demonstrate or clarify the concepts of permeability, porousness, and flexibility of borders?

Being a mother, wife, Joburg *runner,* and someone who is taking care of others allows one to change identities easily and fluidly in this situation. These immigrant women are adept at running and are aware of when, to be, and when not to be *runners*. Identity is fluid and bendable according to situation and context. This is not to say identity is faked however it is reshaped to fit context. For example, in purchasing shopping items which included high end sneakers and clothes ranging from male jeans to dresses for a regular client, Sophia, we came across a huddle that required quick thinking. Although the dresses ordered by Sophia were lovely in the catalogue images, some were constructed of low-quality material. Some of the jeans selected for Sophia's husband were not appealing when closely seen. Having natured a mother-daughter relationship overtime, Mai Chenai advised her 'daughter' to take an alternative and provided images to choose from. This shows the identity shifts in thinking like a mother and wife and applying these in the field. In another instance we were purchasing valentine gift ideas for resale for another customer. We had to embody the role of a lover and purchase goods that would satisfy a romantic other. In the small shop stalls in Small Street or other shopping complexes, encounters with other ethnicities required a form of friendly currency. Whether it was encounters with, the shop owners who were Ethiopian or Indian; security staff who were sometimes South African, Uber/taxi drivers or shop staff who were of different nationalities, conviviality was employed. Nyamnjoh attributes this shape shifting to the frontier nature of Africans.

> "As frontier beings, Africans and the fruit of their creative imagination adopt different forms and manifest themselves differently according to context and necessity. And

> because frontier Africans do not insist on permanencies, any person or anything that transforms (or is activated and projected into something else) can regain the state that preceded the transformation." (2017:2 58)

This contests the idea of identity permanence. Having multiple identities and roles and adapting to different environments only becomes problematic when one fails to differentiate between identities or to figure out the appropriate one for the circumstances. Migrants in this context employ various means of fostering togetherness within diverse publics. Frontier Africans are individuals who challenge commonly institutionalized, limited, and taken-for-granted notions of being, becoming, belonging, and location (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Migrants' activities within identity margins sometimes comes with complexities. Their choices are not that simple and at times may require cleverness sprinkled with immorality -*kungwavha*. Despite the traditionally prescribed roles for women, the modern woman finds herself living at a time when the idea of what it means to be a woman capable of taking care of and supporting her family is being rethought, restructured, and reformatted. Being tactical is the foundation of it.

4.4 "Ngwarisa mwana waMai"- (Be clever my kin)

Kungwara (being clever and calculating) has been one of the dominant themes to surface within the field. It posits itself as one of the qualifying skills to be embodied by those within paths crafted by opportunity. The nimbleness of being adopted by the *Joburg runner* rests as a default characteristic of their nature. Being clever in knowing when and how to navigate certain spaces is an important aspect in their line of work. I take liberty to address the founding themes of this research and in addition discuss sub-themes that arose from data collected within the field. One of the founding questions aimed to prove how nimble footedness would show or illuminate the ideas of permeability, porousness, and flexibilities of borders. While the question calls for explanations around (im)mobility it also serves to invite into the conversation conditions that enable the likelihood of the forementioned ideas. The research proposed an oscillation of ideas that included incompleteness, trying, and surviving as the main themes to draw from. While incompleteness pokes ideas around belonging, being and identity, trying and surviving capture the curiosities around matters of opacity, plunging in, convenience, notions of masking and wrapping, network flows and permeability.

4.5 Fluidity in spatiotemporalities

Friendly ties

In addition to challenging us to be open-minded and open-ended in our claims and articulations of identities, being, and belonging, conviviality motivates us to acknowledge our own incompleteness (Nyamnjoh, 2017). Manuel Callahan contends that social interaction, both physiologically and socially, is essential to human existence and that conviviality is essential to societal renewal, regeneration, or, in some circumstances, reconstruction (2012). In the field, this was evident. Conviviality was not only necessitated as a humanitarian practice but, it was also used as a set of techniques (Nyamnjoh, 2017) necessary for navigating the field. The shop keepers referred to Mai Chenai as 'my friend'. Although one would tend to consider them complete strangers, conviviality shaped their relationship. The shopping malls although ethnically diverse offered spaces of networking between the shop keepers and customers. The use of WhatsApp groups further emphasized the intimacy between the *runner* and shop keeper forming social relationships of "intimate strangers"[15] (Nyamnjoh, 2010b). This essentially is the basis of conviviality. As 'friends' it was easier to convince the other into making decisions, this was common in their negotiation process of pricing or promotions. It was easier to seek a discount of a product from a 'friend'; easier to convince a 'friend' to support their business and buy more products in future. It was also easier to seek favours in the form of safeguarding some bags as a 'friend' continued with their shopping. All these acts rested on the idea of 'friendship'. A friend in need often proved themselves to be a friend indeed.

As Anderson notes, "people tend to become integrated into webs of relationships through which they are able to function as individuals and as groups with a minimum of friction" (Anderson, 1960: 36). In this view, the sense of community that is encouraged by these WhatsApp groups offers a sense of belonging. The unfolding of the friendship circles in the *runner* networks is a stark contrast from the kin networks. The experience in the *runner-shop owner*[16] networks reveal a dimension of friendly relatedness that matures with consistent encounters overtime. However, the experience in the *runner-mover*[17] networks revealed a

[15] sharing close proximities although remaining relatively strangers
[16] often Indian, Ethiopian, South African, Asian
[17] mover- bus/truck drivers who were predominantly Zimbabwean.

dimension of fictive kinship relatedness that matured as a resulted of cultural similarities endorsed by nationality and ethnicity. Conviviality also played a role in the *runner* circles.

Community building

"South African governments policy towards Zimbabwean immigrants seems to lean more towards temporary stay than permanent residency of citizenship" (Mpondi and Mupakati, 2018: 231). In such instances intersectional, disadvantaged persons such as migrant women find themselves having to create safety nets for survival. While there are mainly three forms of WhatsApp Messenger group networks which comprise of *supplier-to-runner; runner-to-runner* and *runner-to-customer* networks, they all oscillate around ideas of solidarity and conviviality. The *runner-to-runner* WhatsApp groups find themselves acquiring more functions which include locations of solidarity, community building and sisterhood. Within these sites, citizenship and belonging are practised and fostered. Although virtual they enable the building of community networks which assume fictive kinship and Ubuntu within group participants. Like any society there are structures and rules that enable the smooth exchange of services and conversation. The groups are not limited to country but are open to whoever requiring assistance in buying or selling. This increases the mobility of goods, services, and ideas.

The acts of conviviality were also embedded in the *runner-to-runner* relationships. Although *runners* ran their businesses independently, they still fostered networks of conviviality which were facilitated through WhatsApp groups. These helped in mobilizing *runners* into distributing cost, where *runners* collectively bought in bulk to reduce buying costs. The WhatsApp groups also helped to facilitate conversations around tips in buying and availability of cheaper goods in certain locations. At times these WhatsApp groups would act as notification centres on places with heavy police patrol a threat to their business. All these functions centred around conviviality and nurtured forms of solidarity and sisterhood. Where in doubt, a *runner* simply reached out to their 'sisters'. In this way, kinship was cultivated. This contributes to the awareness of incompleteness and the ongoing requirement for social interactions that are advantageous to the socioeconomic emancipation of women.

Conviviality presented opportune moments which called for the exercise of *kungwara* and convenience. Both emerged as tools and strategies of survival and navigation. Conviviality rested as a common currency that afforded agency and enabled the formation of relations and social networks. Through these network flows, fluidity was enabled. The migrant although an

outsider in local communities, joins forces with the fellow migrant to create 'intimate stranger' (Nyamnjoh, 2010b) relationships which create a sense of belonging and enables fluidity and mobility in socioeconomic spaces. Although not permanent it creates a sense of community and belonging. Knowing how and when to navigate borders and boundaries, however, does not mask away the deeply ingrained pain of being an outsider. It thus calls for a focus on intentional healing. To do this however we ought to first unmask the veil of modernity and expose the deeply entrenched histories, inheritances and violence's that materialize and target the migrant in today's social climate. By doing this we may begin to understand the processes leading up to the migrant being branded as the other and consequently learn the ways in which to reimagine and contest their belonging in an estranged space.

I found that in both circumstances where conviviality and kin relations were exercised, a common aspect of convenience was evident. Convenience in this sense is an extension of *kungwara* – being clever enough to take advantage of the networks and situation for the reasons of survival. Both friendship and kin relations created notions of convenience in the *runner* line of business. Both forms of relationship strengthened the *runner* social networks. Whether understood as a behaviour, phenomenon or heuristic, convenience has not received much attention within anthropology (Oka, 2021). The precarity of the COVID-19 pandemic has enabled notions of convenience in different ways. Despite the mobility of people being a moderated aspect due to the ongoing viral infection rates, the movement of goods often enjoyed the freedoms of mobility. This recurring practice enabled the boom of the *runner* business. It thus invites one to examine the different ways in which convenience either shapes our interactions with the environment and other persons. How does convenience consciously and unconsciously organize our networks of influence? How does it help in reducing time and effort invested in the runner business? I argue, convenience is an important topic for anthropological interest.

With less time and effort required, convenience technologies have traditionally been perceived to benefit users by increasing productivity and ease of use (Oka, 2021). As cited by Oka, economists define convenience as "a process that seeks to maximize utility and/or satisfaction from a commodity or service, subject to the constraints of time and effort/energy." (2021). Such universalizing definitions, however, are problematic since each of the four variables (utility, satisfaction, time, and effort/energy) are culturally and socially diverse (Ensminger, 2002). I borrow from Rahul Oka's definition that posits:

> "convenience as a culturally shaped heuristic behaviour within a larger doxa informing the judgment or calculation, unconsciously or consciously, used to assess utility and/or satisfaction gained and time, effort/energy, and other culturally defined constraints expended, in order to make a decision on an intended activity."
>
> (2021:190)

The *runner* networks in one way or another make use of convenience which is enabled by the practices of conviviality. I looked at the challenges that convenience as a concept poses. Although it has some positive aspects, it also has some negative ones. The remittance system has over the years developed to necessitate ease of care. Technological advancements such as internet banking, remittance money sending institutions such as World Remit and Mukuru etc have aided the convenience of care to migrant's beneficiaries in the home states. The mobility of tangible goods has also been made possible via the transport networks of busses and trucks crossing borders. In general, literature has looked at convenience from the perspective of the customer. Tracing elements of satisfaction, time, effort in making decisions and choosing a service. I extend the conversation by discussing convenience from the service provider perspective (in this case the *runner*). How does conviviality capacitate convenience and *kungwara* - cleverness? Convenience uncovers multiple complexities.

In one of our runner errands, Mai Chenai and I were stuck in a traffic jam along the N12 highway route. Fellow passengers had expressed their anxieties on being late for work amongst themselves. The taxi driver overheard these commentaries and decided to take a chance and form his own route on the offramp lane. He overtook and forced re-entry into the main road vehicle queues despite the traffic rage from fellow drivers. Although his cleverness was slowly getting us ahead and seeming convenient for his passengers and himself it also posed risk of collision. Surprisingly no one complained nor cautioned the driver. *Kungwara* in this instance becomes an important element in the lived experiences of a people. It not only focuses on invisibilising the problem – being late but, also masks the conditions of the experience one is in as well as how it is addressed and challenged (Barfuss, 2008). This project came at an opportune time needing one to employ agility as well as be attentive to surroundings. Barfuss (2008) highlights how agility is incorporated into one's work. For the purposes of keeping up with the times and day-to-day conditions, "individuals need to be agile and flexible, constantly on the lookout" (Barfuss, 2008). Early February 2022, the Dudula project concerned with clearing trading spaces of undocumented traders was

underway. Mobility proved difficult and required a form of masking. Despite the ongoing need for facial masks for health reasons, the art of masking had also infiltrated the *runner* business. These masking techniques revealed notions of hiding in plain sight. I will discuss two instances, (a) masking of goods and (b) masking of identity. Both reveal instances of utilizing convenience in clever ways.

Valuable trash: Masking in public

The wholesale box packages often drew unwanted attention from both opportunistic thieves and police officers. Police presence within the area was communicated by a whistle call code to alert fellow traders. After hearing the whistle, migrant traders would quickly clear up their side-road stalls and vanish within the crowds. If we were in the shopping complex like the Jeppe Shopping Mall in downtown Johannesburg, the indoor shopping stalls would roll down their metal gates and close their establishments. Hiding was necessary. Some shops even packed their customers purchases in black bin liners that were plain and unbranded, others would advise the customer to cover the boxes with black bin liners to ward off police curiosity and avoid confiscation of their goods. Although these initiatives served to increase communication and unification relatively, showing the acts of conviviality amongst "intimate strangers" (Nyamnjoh, 2010b) they also required calculated cleverness to carry out. The act of friendliness enabled the fluidity of both customers and sellers' business interests.

> *"My friend they will take, be careful" (Shopkeeper warning Mai Chenai of police activity, January 25, 2022)*

Black bin liners are often used as trash collectors. By looking into the idea of masking using bin bags we reveal curiosities of how we define waste. I argue in this instance to go behind the mask, go beyond simple understandings and trace the different positions the goods assume. Where at one point they are priced valuable goods, upon purchase they are stripped and repackaged in trash bins. The general assumption is to disregard trash, however through deeper analysis we can reveal deeper meanings of morphosis. In a nutshell, this links Michael Thompson's theory of rubbish. Objects are divided into three categories: transient, with declining value over time; rubbish, having no value at all; and durable, with growing value with time. In this case the customers goods assume a no value category and seen as rubbish due to the packaging they are put in. Only the bin liner is rubbish, the goods/commodities camouflaged inside are valuable and will constitute a great loss if not retrieved. This shows how things are not always as they seem. Neumann contends that value creation is primarily a

social activity rather than something that is inherent in objects themselves (2018). Value and identity then become fluid. This raises questions about cultural universalism and cultural relativism; what some may consider rubbish may actually be attempts to hide value in an effort to ensure security and blend into the unconscious mind of spectators. By covering packages with trash bin liners *runners* were 'devaluing' and disguising their clients' valuables. The system of devaluing also presented itself in the manner the *runner* dressed. The manner in which a *runner* dressed also followed a type of performed masking. She would wear simple clothes that would paint the ordinary, basic being. Often the dressing style was unappealing to avoid drawing attention of observers. This was a camouflage of blending into the city and appear poor. This was necessary considering the amounts of cash she would carry around. This exposed an exercise of cleverness - *kungwara* in fluidly navigating spatiotemporalities. This art of masking culture carried over into the wrapping/packaging scenes.

Upon arrival at the Newtown Bus Terminus, Mupositori would help with carrying our goods and lead us to the common shed with benches and tables to package goods for transit.

Fig. 4.1 Views from the common shed. Wrappers working together to wrap and package a customer's blanket order. Wrappers were predominately Zimbabwean.[18]

[18] The shed had a clear view of all the buses and was used by the kitchen shop located in the terminus to sell Zimbabwean staple meals. Customers would sit on the benches and tables provided and eat before the bus

Fig 4.2 Mupositori unloading the shoes from their original packaging and packing them into black bin bags. Further masking of goods.

Under this shed, Mupositori would unload our products from the boxes, shopping bags, or black bin bags and repack them into more manageable, compact labelled packages that would be secure for transit. Both the handlers (bus staff, *runners*) and the clients found this handy. Items could be clearly distinguished from the others and be easily identified by all parties. Since delivery costs were based on the size of the package, making them more compact reduced the cost of delivery. This reduced the client's delivery costs. Additionally, compact parcels within the trailer allowed for easy transportation of many items in one sitting. This essentially ensured many deliveries would be made benefiting multiple customers. This was important particularly during a time when borders were less porous as a result of COVID lockdown regulations. Although transporters were regarded as essential services and mobile, border crossing was slow due to safety and security checks of vehicles and persons. Packing needed careful dexterity.

In one of our impromptu conversations, Mupositori and Mai Chenai had explained how for some goods, you had to be clever (employ *kungwara*) and hide them. This act could also be seen as an extension of friendly care to the customer. This was essential to avoid confiscation of customers goods by the revenue authorities. Such goods included bulk products such as shoes. They had to be cleverly placed in the bottom of the package, then topped with permitted items. A protective enclosure built from the torn cardboard box sheets from the

departs. Bus destinations included Harare and Gokwe, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Some of the bus companies included Tamuka Coaches, Graca Luxury Coaches and MB transport etc.

recycled boxes would be put inside the bin bag to shield the merchandise from shock and damage. Once fully packed, the bag was sealed at the top, wrapped with plastic clingwrap, and tapped with Sellotape respectively. The shipment would then be labelled with the client's full name, contact information, and destination city. This process of labelling could be seen as a morphosis of 'trash' into valuable goods. An exercise of seemingly repurposing trash. The parcel would then undergo a process of valuing by size and durability of the good. If for example the parcel contained sensitive machinery like a printer or smartphone it required to be packed and handled safely and put under the care of the driver to ensure against theft and damage. This would result in higher delivery costs. In the negotiation process there were two types of payment methods: pay forward (delivery costs paid on destination arrival by customer) and up-front payment (initial payment of delivery costs by *runner* on behalf of the customer). Both payment methods observed different forms of convenience. The former although convenient for the customer to pay later, posed risks. During negotiations opportunists would take advantage. Below I share a story from the field:

> *At one point a wrapper had stolen money. The wrapper would organise the bus to carry the goods and not pay the driver only to find out he was taking the transport money for himself. This created conflict and made the customer pay twice. Upon discovery the wrapper fled the bus terminus and was never seen again. (Notes on an impromptu conversation with Mai Chenai, Tanaka – bus conductor, bus driver and Mupositori January 20, 2022}*

The above excerpt shows the ways in which disloyalty can take place. Kungwavha *(kungwara + humbavha - cleverness and immorality)* emerges as a concept of alternative efforts. Means and attempts of survival and trying take a different turn which is not always ethically acceptable. In some instances, it took place within negotiation processes between the bus drivers and border revenue authorities. I borrow from the IsiNdebele proverb: *Izandla ziyagezana* which in context means help is a reciprocal activity. By exercising reciprocity, convenience in this regard is ignited. Rather than staying in the long vehicle queues awaiting security checks, individuals find themselves engulfed in convenient dealings that allow one to skip the queue and get ahead thereby saving on time and additionally avoid any security checks. This requires a strategic exercise of bribing.

Fig 4.3 Labelled parcel being cling wrapped.

Kungwavha although stemming from a perspective of convenience, rests upon the craft of cutting corners here and there to get ahead. The business operations in the *runner* networks evokes conviviality. Zimbabwean bus drivers although posing morally questionable business operations at the border posts, they still do it out of necessity. The webs of relationships discussed by Anderson, Hakansson and Johanson enable the fluidity of functionality without friction (1994). Immigrants tend to stick together, and this is quite evident in these operations all working dependently for the basis of survival of the fellow migrant.

4.6 Summary conclusion

In this chapter, we see how despite one being of familial identity (wife, mother, friend etc), there are moments where they are branded as frontier beings within certain spaces. We therefore see how boundaries are zones of relational change. The way in which one is treated or relates changes significantly. This is fuelled by the need to survive which constantly begs the need to belong in order to access the network flows and be permeable. It requires the acceptance of incompleteness as the basis through which to be open to encounters. These encounters through conviviality contest the ideas of frontierness and enable the migrant to go about their livelihood operations. Although everyday life presents challenges and opportunities for its subjects, the human incompleteness and survival necessity encourages co-operation amongst encountered strangers. The human finds themselves employing meticulous strategies which may not always satisfy the ideals of morality. Despite this

however, they soar through life masking in bids of securing what is necessary. This requires an exercise of cleverness to know when and how to cross and not cross certain borders and boundaries. This helps us understand the reimagined ways of relationality that foster belonging amidst precarity. Before reimagining ways of relationality with space we need to understand its geography and history to know how to navigate it.

Chapter 5: Looming dangers – the invisible and visible pains

5.1. Introduction

> "I believe that one cannot leave home. I believe that he carries the shadows, the dreams, the fears, and dragons of home under one's eyes and possibly in the gristle of the earlobe."
>
> Maya Angelou, 2008:4

In the beginning of this research, I shared the migrants need to dream amidst nightmares. Although foraging at their neighbors somewhat greener pastures, trouble still looms. These social troubles are like shadows, purposefully present due to their illuminated hopes and wins. The migrant, although seeking refuge in her neighbor's quarters, she still carries with him pockets of fear and dream demise. As a constant zone of 'suffering' (Chabal, 2009: 152), social dragons of poverty and uncertainty follow them daily. Despite deploying calculated efforts in navigating spatiotemporalities within South Africa, the Zimbabwean migrant still faces social traps and conflicts year after year. How then does she navigate what she cannot see, particularly when it is deeply embedded in history? This raises questions of the underlying truths and tales fueling these social conflicts with their neighbors, in this case South African locals. In societies where fear is the reality, it requires one to learn, relearn and unlearn the politics of space. Why is the social climate in that state? It begs the question of what narratives are shared and passed down generations. What kind of inheritance is propagated through the years? Cultural inheritance whether tangible or intangible invites curiosities. While the previously colonized body tries to endure it is constantly reminded of its inheritance. Through neoliberalism loss and inequality have been inherited by the previously disadvantaged colonized persons. Like any social being, the colonized body tries to seek alternative ways of survival. It is often dealt a bitter hand which sees it inheriting loss and pain. These unfortunately come fortified with lifelong trauma from a wounded past characterized by marginalization and violence of different forms.

The topic of wounds sparks discussions around vulnerability. In South Africa the social narrative is often filled with painful colonial histories, present and futures. Which include sociopolitical and economic histories of inequality (Fourie, 2022). These colonial histories are not only heard of, but also seen and felt. These unfortunately propagate into the present and materialize on the marginalized migrant body. The marginalized migrant body constantly embodies the ills and filths of society. It constantly takes on the blow of rage and hatred

perpetuated by the inner societal pains and anger. It is laid vulnerable to the random scribbles of piqued inner selves of locals. This opens new lines of investigation by tracking shadows and residues of colonization, thus whetting the anthropologist's hunger for study. The vulnerable bodies are those who run the risk of being harmed, injured, ostracized, and subjected to discrimination (Philo, 2005). The idea of "talking about 'vulnerability' potentially opens up geographical inquiry to new possibilities" (Philo, 2005: 441).

My query is one that sees violence (visible or invisible) as a medium, shaping, and reshaping lived worlds. The violence that is laced with colonialization forms scars which become symbols of belonging and identity. It is through suffering the same ordeals that migrants are brought together in a sense of community. In this chapter my interests are centered around reimagining citizenship and belonging amongst migrants in a country where they are vulnerable outsiders. It also begs to unveil the invisible realities from an incompleteness point of view. In the preceding chapters, I have discussed the foraging efforts and navigation skills and tricks of the migrant amidst precarity. Furthermore, in this chapter I take the liberty to look into the previously colonized bodies of the Zimbabwean migrant and the South African local's relationality with space by assessing the South African Operation Dudula Project in detail. This is essential as it invites conversations of the impact of histories on bodies and space.

5.2 Tracking shadows

The Operation Dudula Project's objective is to redistribute resources amongst locals by forceful, sometimes violent acquisition of opportunities from the migrant community. This project begs inquiry into its reasons and experiences thereof. One thing is for certain, the migrant and local are vulnerable in one way or another. Both are products of a painful colonial past and take in trauma as a daily pill. While the migrant draws its histories from a Rhodesian perspective the local draws on the Apartheid historical silos. Endurance in their case includes ignoring the injuries and wounds and soaring on. This may not always be effective considering the constant fighting and shared squabbles. The air is filled with echoes, demanding the Zimbabwean neighbour to leave. They have outstayed their welcome it seems. "They must go back to Zimbabwe!", the piqued local shouts. This questions the need for repair. We thus see the importance of connecting these vulnerable bodies to their sensitive spaces when talking about them. By looking into the Dudula Project we see the need to understand it as an event that can be located. Events in this case have 'histories' and

‘geographies’ (Hinchliffe, 2000: 127-8). Similarly, Tim Cresswell contends the value of stories of place. These he believes are meaningful in distinguishing one place from another (Cresswell, 2004). By critically assessing these we get to understand the different textures of place. In this case the textures include the wounds inflicted on the vulnerable bodies as well as the “spatially networked processes of wounding leading up to their wounding” (Philo, 2005: 445). It thus calls upon two exercises, tracing the histories of place as well as the bodies with which it produces. How does one navigate belonging? It is with this regard I trace the marginality, colonial histories – *the shadows*, and their futures thereof in the post-colonial era amidst precarity.

I conceptualise precarity as an ongoing narrative for black bodies. As mentioned in Chapter 1 migrant experience provides a window through which to understand the experiences of the natives as well as precarity (Paret & Gleeson, 2016:277). Uncertainty constantly looms and purposefully leans on fear as a constant in black bodies lived experiences. This however does not aid paralysis but purports the need to endure and improvise for the sake of survival. For migrants this may mean forming new ways of belonging. This requires the unmaking and remaking of what it means to be human. To be human is to feel and sometimes this may mean scrapping off the wound scabs to expose the deeply entrenched feelings of pain as a reminder to soar on. I thus take the liberty to also analyse the Operation Dudula ‘cleaning up’ project as a refraction thought of colonial trauma and violence. The project thus stands as an analytic tool of tracing belonging and citizenship imaginaries within society. Having started midway my fieldwork activities, the anxieties around the Operation Dudula Project provided a lens through which to trace the utilization of ICT systems. These helped in building migrant communities, forming a sense of belonging and ensuring safety of its members in a place where they were targets of suffering and removal.

5.3 The Mirrored self

In the days that followed my fieldwork, tension had risen. The Operation Dudula Project was actively operating. It purposefully paraded through the city in what appeared as a ‘clean up’ anti-immigrant campaign led by Nhlanhla “Lux” Dlamini, a South African activist. But cleaning up of what? In one of the protests the campaign had turned violent and claimed the life of a Zimbabwean man in Diepsloot (Myeni, 2022). The movement having started off by gaining social media attention, took it to the streets of Soweto on the 16th of June 2021 – Youth Day 45th commemoration of the Soweto Uprising. It targeted suspected illegal

migrants involved in drug trafficking, and targeted businesses that had hired these undocumented migrants for the purposes of cheap renumeration. During my field work the month of February proved difficult to carry out any research activities. The CBD area had become quite difficult to maneuver considering the presence of protests and police which consequently incited fear amongst migrants particularly the *runners*. Despite being a South African citizen, I was still anxious for not having my Identity card (I.D.) with me. I had a habit of leaving it at home out of fear of losing it. One day, the law enforcement persons dressed in navy blue shirts and khaki belted pocketed trousers had populated the streets. I was anxious. "What if they catch us?", I asked Mama. She replied, "they won't. God is with us and anyways you have papers". Her words calmed me down and reminded me of my positionality, and access to South African identity papers. It was a privileged status at that moment which also bore guilt. Guilt of the pain imparted on individuals I saw as mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons of Africa. The land they called home and spit them out like poison. The intimacy I shared with individuals within the *runner* network made my experience of the self quite complex. "Intimacies generate complex pushes and pulls" (Antwi et al., 2013: 8). It challenges one's being and relationality to others. You are either drawn to or away from these bodies of intimacy, which are either strange or familiar.

Fig. 5.1: Operation Dudula members observing what seemed to be a peaceful anti-immigrant protest to remove undocumented foreigners taking part in informal trading in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. Leader of the group dressed in militalia form. Taken February 19, 2022. (Siphiwe Sibeko)

With this I decided to focus on "looking" and "appearing" and the metaphor of constellation. I used these to trace the threads of lived experiences of Zimbabwean female migrants during the Operation Dudula project. It may have 'looked' like a peaceful protest at the beginning but later 'appeared' violent and forceful towards the immigrants. Writings from the lived experience standpoint are understood to produce 'knowledges that speaks to the experiences of these groups' (Lewis and Baderoon, 2021: 2). Similarly, it can be perceived as 'seeing from below' (Raycraft, 2020) which can also serve as a new post-colonial way of understanding the meanings of being human. This encompasses researching stories from the participants point of view. This lessens the likelihood of making the participant the object of study rather than the subject and co-contributor of research. The world is seen differently from this standpoint, (Lewis and Baderoon, 2021: 3) free from assumptions.

My query was one that sought to show the framing of the self in circumstances of precarity. In the modern day, precarity alludes to the fragility of working conditions, social reproduction under neoliberalism (Standing, 2011) and globalization (Han, 2018). Precarity also finds itself grouped with understandings of marginality, suffering and survival (Han, 2018). It begs the question of the type of bodies constantly being produced. In tracing this, I reflect on my participants experiences. How they went about staying true to their migrant selves. How they sought and maintained belonging in a place where they were estranged. Hayek proposes that "experience is not a function of mind or consciousness, but mind and consciousness are rather a product of experience" (1984: 226). In other words, the idea of self is mirrored from social settings. How a person is socialized and the elements such as histories, environment etc. that contribute to shaping their being all play a part in the ongoing modelling of the self. Drawing from the understanding of 'looking' and the metaphor of constellation, it is worth co-opting incompleteness as a lens to better understand that which is comprehended and also ignored by our senses. By 'looking' into Blackness as a construct and the narratives that surface particularly amongst Zimbabwean female *runners* as well as the overall narrative of the Operation Dudula Project we may begin to trace the wounds and injuries that appear. Herein begin to understand the human behind the mask of either

marginality or what may appear to be a position of power. How is identity and belonging asserted during times of precarity?

5.4 The violence's within

As human beings we often focus on what our senses can comprehend as though this were the 'complete' deduction of reality. We forget to factor in that which is hidden/underlying or invisible - our thoughts, beliefs, traumas, fears etc. Human beings sometimes focus on the ancestors and or Gods when faced with crises or when the invisible world becomes very visible. The science of ethnography is partly victim of focusing on the senses as well as it overly dramatizes the senses as sources of knowledge. "To be able to know, the anthropologist has to take a certain position" (Halstead, 2001: 310). This knowing requires an element of deep immersion as well as reflexivity for the purposes of objectivity. It thus requires a balancing of sorts between intimacy and distancing (Joseph, 1988: 33). Sometimes these invisible realities embed themselves as trauma and internal pain and often surface as violence, hate crime, protest action, and anger. According to Kochenov (2019), the understanding of citizenship has been glorified as a social ordering of nationhood, liberation, and dignity. However, in reality, the idea of citizenship has been weaponised as a tool of complacency, domination, and hypocrisy (Kochenov, 2019). Citizenship promises to apply the virtues of solidarity, dignity, and equality but in modern day contributes to the separation of groups and individuals. This ordering has fostered violence in some cases where one is seen as an outsider. Through this we get to see how violence has chosen "pathways of race, gender, class and nationalist power in ways both obvious and blurred" (Gqola, 2021: 163). In South Africa, using violence as a means of communication is common (Durbach, 2016).

Outsiders in this case include the migrants and sometimes locals who purposefully are discriminated due to their appearance. These may include but are not limited to women and the Venda people who are branded as 'foreigners' due to their darker skin tones. These social categories though used in the present day, are informed by colonialism. These categories foster division and incite anger within society when weaponised by power structures such as the government. The vulnerable body finds itself bearing the brunt of societies anger and gets injured and wounded in the process. In the preceding chapter, I discussed how migrants employ calculated tactical cleverness – *kungwara,* in navigating through borders and boundaries they face. In this section I explore the ideas of trying to exist, make life and

survive in a place that ‘hates and others them. How is history surfacing to the present? What kind of embedded trauma is noticeable?

‘What can we do?’, a common statement in the field that pointed to the notions of endurance as the daily order of the day. According to Povinelli (2011: 45), endurance is a mode of life that is conditioned by “tense” and “eventfulness” of one’s state of being. It depends on substantial strength and depth of woundedness to prevail. Its capacities thereof depend on the extent of damage inflicted by the wounds and the aftercare exercised during the healing process. Colonialism and apartheid were horrible times which wounded many and left many scarred. Sadly, these times came with alternative intuitions on scars. The process of repair – post apartheid, saw the need to erase the scars totally. “This mindset is based on the tenet that the beauty of the act of repair is represented by the disappearance of scars altogether” (Attia, 2015). This suggests a performance of healing that is pretentious. Colonialism was followed by post-colonialism similarly; apartheid was followed by post-apartheid. The transition leaves a lot to be desired. The decolonial mandate although continuous it still wrestles with the embedded trauma within black bodies. The body is a living archive with strokes of trauma surfacing into its social behavior. Bolted trauma always finds a way out and we see this in the protest actions and violence’s we have today. If we reflect on the TRC’s – Truth Reconciliation Commission era, we could see that its failure to address the sexual violence against women during apartheid has resulted in the continued violence against women (Durbach, 2016) and cry for change. The perpetuated violence is a result of psychological trauma (De Zulueta, 2006). The same is observable even in the aggression and attitude of locals towards immigrants that is shaped by their apartheid and colonial histories. The “reliance on political violence, coupled with the dehumanizing features of apartheid – disenfranchisement, racism and ‘the powerlessness of poverty’ – resulted in violence becoming ‘a form of communication’ which seeped into your relationships as well as your social and community relationships” (Durbach, 2016). This explains the epidemic of violence we see today.

What emerges from the description above is an inheritance of violence that has trickled down from apartheid to post-apartheid and/or colonialisation to post-colonisation. Where is the decolonisation phase? Are we really addressing decolonisation fully? An exploration of this unmasks the shadowed narratives that may not always be obvious. Anthropology is frequently concerned with the examination of conceptions of intangible cultural legacy. Heredity encompasses various dimensions of being, whether tangible or intangible. Although

this appears to be social, neoliberal approaches have demonstrated that everything that appears to be social can be otherwise (Gershon, 2011). Neoliberalism shapes the experiences of being by reshaping its subject. It does this by positing class relations and social contours which are raced and gendered. With this it sees itself as a totalizing agent capable of puppetry. By looking into the Operation Dudula Project can the locals be seen as simply exercising their agency in pushing out the 'foreigner'? To understand this however requires an inquiry of the self. "One becomes a subject for oneself" (Rose 1990: 240). This reflexive approach pushes one to face the bitter inheritance that has shaped their being as well as the survival mechanisms employed. I argue that apartheid and post-apartheid provide a type of politics that sees the exercise of nationalism as one that others the 'foreigner'. During apartheid, the South African indigene was the foreigner subjected to exclusion and violence. Despite what may be argued as a democratic state, the same nationalistic notions continue to be witnessed through to the present. This is supported by Hinsdale who argues that the process of "witnessing contextualizes relationships; acknowledging history and social positions" (2014: 84). It thus invites a constellation of understanding in making out the meanings of the current social climate in South Africa. Tables have turned and the deep incised wounds and trauma are performed to the present 'other' - the immigrant. The indigene at some point was treated like a foreigner in their own land and with the current social climate, the perceived other is dehumanised and frowned upon. Survival hood comes with injury and sometimes embodied knowledge from past wounds. To understand a wound, one must first understand the object that caused the injury. This will be revealed by tracing the source of the local's anger in the contemporarily, neoliberal society.

5.5 The invisible and visible scars

Kader Atia (2015) cited Paul Ricoeur who argues the need to look into history when repairing 'the injuries of memories.' By looking into those histories, we may begin to expose the wounds and heal from within. It is essential to distinguish colonialism from coloniality as the latter appears to be a shadow or 'darker side' (Mignolo, 2005) of modernity it the contemporary world. "Coloniality is a useful concept that names various colonial-like power relations existing today in those zones that experienced direct colonialism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). South Africa has a similar experience which maintains Hinchliffe's claims of understanding experiences from the basis of their histories and geographies. Maldonado-Torres explains the difference between coloniality and colonialism. He discusses how:

> "colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, intersubjectivity relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations".
>
> (2007: 243)

In other words, coloniality is not simply the residue that remains after colonialisation, but it is however kept alive in the knowledge silos and interrelations with others (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). It is present every single day. Scholars such as Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skins, White Masks* and Ngugi wa Thiong'o *in Decolonizing the Mind* amongst others have engaged with the term coloniality without directly alluding to it in their texts. Kwame Nkrumah however has documented the inherited patterns of power within modernity. He is credited for coming up with the term called 'neo-colonialism' which enabled him to explain imperialistic domination of the world (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Samir Amin and Walter Rodney on the other hand understood coloniality from a 'dependency' and 'underdevelopment' point of view (Rodney, 1973 & Amin, 1990). This emphasizes the economic impact of coloniality. Ngugi wa Thiong'o discusses another strand of coloniality that is psychological/epistemological. Coloniality as per his understanding functions to rob its target's identity, language, cultural beliefs, and heritage (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986: 3). It is an invisible power that constantly shapes the experiences of its targets who in this case are the black bodies. This proves that sovereignty has continued past colonisation. This argues against Foucault's understanding that saw sovereign power as an 'archaic form' (Agamben, 1998: 6). Colonialisation was simply reconfigured, and this is seen in the constant propagation of coloniality. Mignolo further discusses coloniality and posits how the 'wretched' – colonial subjects, are a product of the colonial wound (Grosfoguel, 2013). Racism consequentially leads to the colonial wound which can be either psychological or physical (ibid.). These wounds left untreated get infected and wear out any strands of humanity. We see this in the case of the xenophobic interrelations between locals and immigrants.

5.6 Fear as a constant

As mentioned above, Operation Dudula had spread in February. There were days were Mai Chenai and I would avoid going to the CBD for fear of clashing with the mob. The presence

of the operation's compatriots although communicated via the news outlets was also shared in the *runner-to-runner* WhatsApp groups. *Runners* shared safer routes and areas to move in and warned fellow *runners* of potential risky areas. This also meant delays in pushing their clients' orders. Word had spread in these groups that migrants were being targeted and forced to evacuate spaces. The local communities had taken matters into their own hands. Although the operation had started off in Soweto it had spread across the metropolitan. The safety of migrants was at stake considering some of the visuals that had circulated showing the forceful removals. Fear had engulfed the migrant masses. This was not new considering the daily anxieties the migrant carried or triggered. Navigating the visible or invisible meant learning, relearning and unlearning ways and tactics of mobility. Sometimes it meant suppressing oneself, partnering with the intimate other, avoiding the danger zones as a whole or simply foraging ways of fluency by blending into spaces. An example of this, can be a time when I was in a taxi on my way home after a day of field work. I had occupied the front seat next to the taxi driver. Part of my responsibility was to ensure the counted fare accounted for every passenger. As I handed over the total fare, the driver had brushed and tickled my palm with his finger. I felt a gnawing feeling. Such mannerisms translated to silent intimate requests. Uninterested, I dismissed the gesture with a smile. It was not like I could complain, taxi drivers in this country are their own government. It is hard to caution them of their behaviour. Most of them carry weaponry such as knobkerries or guns. I knew this very well considering my knowledge of South African taxi wars. As a woman, I dared not challenge him.

According to Pumla Gqola, "fear is both an individual emotional experience and a very particular public phenomenon" (2021: 60). It legitimises the authority of those in positions of power by intimidating the other (Robin, 2004). Although it may appear to be a personal attribute it is very much political (Gqola, 2021: 60). Whether it is manufacturing space or bodies, it holds the power to create. I borrow from Pumla Gqola's conceptualization of seeing fear as a factory. Leslie Slazinger (2003) nudges us to an understanding of viewing a factory as a zone of production that bears both products (women, foreign others) and factory workers. Production requires force. This force can be traced back to the colonial era. The local although being in a position of power has been at some point conditioned to be the 'social factory worker' responsible for the continued production of marginalised bodies. The factory worker is a product of the factory due to the supervision he receives. This goes back to the time where the South African indigene was a foreigner under the Apartheid regime or the patriarchal connotations upon women's existence. We thus see fear as having been

propagated through time in an act of manufacturing social hierarchies and othering. These institutionalized hierarchies maintain the 'traditions of oppression and containment' (Gqola, 2021: 60) which are evidence of coloniality.

Fear is expected in humans whether consciously or unconsciously, it emerges as a social response to triggers. When triggered one will either fight or flee the scene on the basis of calculated efforts of fluency. You either flight or deal with issues head on. This channelling requires efficient agility. By understanding the locals, deeply embedded trauma and histories of violence, the migrant has the opportunity to devise means of navigation that may assist in the reimagining of their identities within zones of marginality. They are not enemies but are perceived to be such due to the materialized traumas that are constantly surfacing. Fear although it is a subjective experience triggered by violence's perpetuated by the piqued South African citizen, it should be utilized as a mechanism of mobility. Through it the migrant can gauge instances of when to flight or fight in the exercise of fluency. In this case fighting does not encompass the negative violent reciprocation but rather the employment of conviviality and community amongst strangers. It is with this; the WhatsApp groups became integral parts to the day-to-day experiences of immigrants. They were home, virtual homes within which the migrant found solace and belonging. In those spaces they could be their true selves, they could be Zimbabwean without any fear. Here we see how the migrant utilizes their convivial encounters to forge mutual connections (see Chapter 1) which in this case act to reposition the South African space from being "conflictual, exclusionary and dystopic to a more accommodating space where difference is routine" (Mushonga, 2022:14). Difference as routine, is the exercise of incompleteness amongst the migrants. Despite being of different nationalities which included Ethiopians, Zimbabweans etc. they formed intimate connections that offered opportunistic strategies to survive.

5.7 Summary Conclusion

True to the textured images of colonial inheritance, the damages imparted by colonialization proliferate. It is this preoccupation of histories that condition spaces and bodies into visual artefacts of pain and violence. Fear remains the medium with which bodies are manufactured, conditioned, and made fluent in precarious prevalence. The immigrant though a stranger and 'foreigner' uses this fear as a guiding factor in navigating what he cannot see or fathom. Despite being zones of 'suffering', she finds a way to exist and make life. This chapter feeds into the ideas of incompleteness birthing convivial encounters which later results in mutual

connections. She recognises her fellow intimate othered scars and draws herself to them in a sense of community building. She does this through the use of magical spaces enabled by ICT. Despite navigating the known and unknown, one thing is true, she is not alone.

Chapter 6: Conclusion - An Orb of possibilities

This research aimed to celebrate the observable shift from "labour migration and refugees to independent 'economic' migrants" as observed by Owen Sichone (2020: 1). Although migration literature often concentrated on male productive labour, this work hoped to contribute to feminized migration discourses. This meant moving away from depicting women as weak and inaudible passive actors. The household model that saw the male as the breadwinner and the wife as the dependent was one believed to be true when looking into social responsibilities (Francis, 2010). This research however offers a different perspective were women find themselves financially contributing to their family's wellbeing. Focused on female migrants it reveals the migrants' efforts in existing within zones of marginality. Despite suffering intersectional exclusion which encompasses race and gender, migrant women still try to survive by employing tactical thinking in their navigation. I observed how Zimbabwean female migrants are 'zones of suffering' who are repeatedly vulnerable to risk. Life in the Johannesburg CBD proved to not just be a space of getting by but also a space where gender and fear converged.

In their nimbleness, female migrants found themselves wrapped in convivial encounters with intimate others. These resulted in long term mutual relationships and connections. Community building fostered senses of belonging and identity in dystopic spaces. I also explored how notions of incompleteness and conviviality had shaped the socioeconomic networks of the *runners*. My findings revealed that intimacy amongst strangers was enabled thus encouraging familyhood and friendship which further carved notions of belonging and navigational fluidity in the *runner* line of work. Furthermore, I traced how the digital technology and facilitative platform of WhatsApp, enabled encounters between the *runner* and her networks and how this had challenged notions of identity, belonging, and citizenship. Using Nyamnjoh's incompleteness and Mususa's *trying* conceptual framework, I have shown how these multiple convivial encounters generate myriad interconnections and interdependencies which birth convenient strategies of survival. These strategies involve *kungwara* (calculated cleverness), knowing when to cross, crisscross or recross borders and boundaries, *kungwavha* (cutting corners here and there to get ahead), and convivial social networking. This is a notion of responsiveness. Borrowing from Patience Mususa's understanding of *trying* in times of precarity as seen in the adoption of "one's conscious and unconscious abilities" of survival, this research aimed to examine migrant women's experiences and vulnerabilities in their navigational tactfulness of survival. It further explored

the nimble footedness and the permeability of borders. Her concept of *trying* has combined with incompleteness to mitigate the regimes and limitations of completeness as zero sums. Both incompleteness and trying advocate for open-mindedness to encountering possibilities amidst impossibilities. Furthermore, they open up to the potential possibilities that may arise from chance encounters.

Given the variability of navigation strategies it is worth noting they are forged in precarious environments. Importantly precarity as an analytical concept provides contexts of vulnerability (Paret & Gleeson, 2016). The concept therefore situates 'inequality within broader historical shifts and social structures (ibid.: 277). This in turn informs the present reality. Nyamnjoh discusses what is known as "African potentials" which are important in understanding African realities as they "point the wider world in the direction of alternative and complementary modes of influence over and above the current predominant modes of coercive violence and control" (2022:3). This relates to the supposed realities of what constitutes reality. It invites conversations around the multiplicity of being which shuns away from popular ideas of African realities which dramatize Africa as primitive and invisible. Instead, as alluded earlier my research is one that seeks to echo the realities of the marginalized and often silenced. African reality is one stuck in a permanence of possibility of being and becoming therefore rendering it incomplete (Nyamnjoh, 2017). He further argues the need for 'frontier Africans' to adopt conviviality as a strategy of enhancement which can better enable them in their sociality (Nyamnjoh, 2015: 1). Within my research these social encounters rested on trust, friendship, friendliness, and solidarity. These encounters through conviviality contest the ideas of rigid prescriptiveness and binary oppositions and enable the migrant to go about their livelihood operations in pragmatic and accommodative ways. Conviviality as put forward by Nyamnjoh (2017) acts as mediation tools of existence. The networks relied on the concepts of relationality and conviviality. Despite the relationship networks however, the immigrant remained the frontier being. The notion of Africans as frontier beings according to Nyamnjoh (2015) questions restricted conceptions of being, belonging, and becoming and deepened notions of incompleteness. Something like this makes use of the capacity for imaginative creativity and ongoing survival efforts.

To better understand the next person and accommodate their differences Boellstorff (2008: 55) introduces 'techne' – an intentional action that creates "a gap between the world as it was before the action, and the new world calls into being". This invites the tracing of time as well as the knowledges birthed along the way. In this research the immigrant is one who is

actively involved in foraging their livelihood. Birthed within a time where she has been silenced and seen as an accompanying social actor stuck in the shadows of a male actor, she rises to counter that argument. Her story is one yet to be told. Attracted to the need to know, the human is challenged with the constant need of development and cultivation which depends on the enhancement by others. This positions the human on a road of becoming which accommodates enrichment. Incompleteness therefore gives the actor reassurance and opens up the actor to trying new ways of survival as well as accommodating (Nyamnjoh, 2022) other stories, histories, realities, and futures. To have an approach to understanding the life experiences of others through incompleteness would mean not reproducing the self but rather accommodating those different from you (ibid: 6). This disabuses notions of seeing ourselves as complete in any space or time. Through this capacity of understanding, we see how incompleteness differs person to person. Whether one is primarily interested in identity, belonging or precarity I suggest a triangular analysis that poses questions on what it means to exist, endure, and resist. Difference nudges change. It is that accommodation of difference that can offer futures of complementary co-existence. By accepting the notion of being incomplete we can begin healing and/or propping up one other in a complementary fashion. Without the other we are nothing.

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