

Shifting Economic Perceptions in South Africa:
The Impact of Migration

By

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Preface

This thesis is the culmination of nearly three years of research that I have conducted on economic perceptions in South Africa. As a Semester Study Abroad student at the University of Cape Town during my junior year of college in 2012, I wrote an Honours Thesis on perceptions of economic inequality and social mobility in Cape Town. When I returned to Yale University for my senior year, I incorporated my Honours Thesis and additional research that I conducted during July of 2012 on economic perceptions in Mount Frere, Eastern Cape and Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal into my senior thesis. With the generous support of the Fox International Fellowship, I returned to Cape Town last year to investigate how migration experience shapes these perceptions through this Master's dissertation.

Because of the extensive work that I have already done on the subject, large portions of the literature reviews and other background and methodological materials in the introduction and the chapters on perceptions of economic inequality and social mobility have appeared elsewhere. Smaller sections of the chapter on migration have similarly appeared in my earlier work. The heart of this thesis—the primary research that I conducted in Cape Town and the rural Eastern Cape—however, is entirely original and is being published here for the first time.

Abstract

For much of South Africa's history, rural areas provided the labor necessary to fuel the furnaces of South Africa's manufacturing and mining sectors. In turn, wage labor in urban areas and mines provided opportunities for black Africans to access the hard currency increasingly necessary for survival. However, since South Africa's transition to democracy, the connection between rural and urban areas has changed dramatically. Through this thesis, I seek to contribute to the nascent literature on the changing relationship between rural and urban areas in South Africa by investigating how economic perceptions—which have been shown to influence voting behavior, resource allocation, mental health outcomes, and the degree of social and political cohesion in a society—differ in both. In particular, I explore how these perceptions are shaped by migration.

Migration has framed how generations of black South Africans experienced the South African economic system, either directly, as migrants themselves, or indirectly, as beneficiaries of remittances. This study focuses on a particular migration pathway between “Alfred Nzo”—a district municipality in the rural northeast of the Eastern Cape centered on the town of Mount Frere—and Cape Town. Twenty-six individuals were interviewed, from three different, and socially and economically relevant, migration backgrounds: those who migrated to Cape Town and have remained there (“migrants”), those who migrated to Cape Town but have since returned to Alfred Nzo (“returnees”), and those who have never left Alfred Nzo (“non-migrants”).

I found that local economic conditions and personal economic experiences—including an individual's experience with migration—have a more profound impact on economic perceptions than national and international trends. Though they do not appear to influence how individuals view the overall distribution of income in South Africa, migration experience and the disproportionate role of the public sector in rural economies shape whether individuals believe that the top and the middle of the income distribution are comprised primarily of public sector workers, in the case of non-migrants; private sector workers, in the case of migrants; or a combination of the two, in the case of returnees. Similarly, non-migrants and returnees, all of whom currently live in rural areas, tended to emphasize the geographic character of the economic divisions in South Africa, while migrants, who live in Cape Town, a city with relatively small black middle- and upper-classes, highlighted the racialized nature of these divisions. Yet, regardless of migration experience, the vast majority of my interviewees greatly underestimated their relative economic position, suggesting that many South Africans continue to view their personal economic experiences through a lens of poverty.

In contrast, local economic conditions and migration experience appear to have a less direct impact on perceptions of social mobility. Interviewees from all three migration backgrounds highlighted the importance of two individualistic pathways to mobility—or those over which they believed they could exercise direct control—including education and hard work, and three structural pathways/impediments to mobility—or those that they believed were entirely outside of their control—including corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the availability of jobs. Ultimately, the vast majority of my interviewees believed that rural areas are substantially less meritocratic than urban ones, forcing individuals to migrate in search of economic opportunities.

Because my interviewees identified migration as the primary mechanism for accessing economic opportunities in South Africa, I also explore perceptions of migration itself. This thesis suggests that migration is viewed through a primarily individualistic, economic lens and that migrant networks may play a more fundamental role before and during the migration process than much of the existing literature suggests.

Though this study is ultimately based on a small sample of individuals originally from one area of South Africa and is thus unlikely to be representative of views held by the broader population, the findings in this thesis have potentially important ramifications for development policy in South Africa by suggesting that the underdevelopment of rural areas may in part be a construct of both the economic perceptions held by many South Africans and the existing power dynamics in these areas. Additionally, this study offers a number of fruitful paths for researchers to pursue, including investigating how economic and migratory perceptions differ among South Africa's many racial, economic, and geographic subgroups and examining in more depth the role of individuals, households, and migrant networks in the migration process.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The spatial and economic separation of rural and urban South Africa was greatly influenced by apartheid policies. The racist underpinnings of apartheid South African society demanded as complete a segregation of white and black individuals as possible. The National Party government thus herded the black African majority into rural reserves—known as “homelands”—which covered a fraction of the country’s territory. Simultaneously, however, the South African white minority required black African labor for both its mining and, later, manufacturing sectors.¹ As a result, the apartheid government deliberately underdeveloped tribal areas, while aggressively subsidizing the manufacturing and mining industries, to provide a pool of cheap labor for white-owned capital.

The relationship between this rural, black labor pool and the white-dominated mining towns and urban centers was mediated by a system of legislation that attempted to control the movement of black Africans completely. Successive governments—culminating in the National Party governments after 1948—developed an elaborate system of policies—including Pass Laws, Influx Control, and Separate Development—designed to satiate the demands of industry while maintaining, to the best of its ability, racial separation. Though these laws had limited success in controlling urbanization and movement in South Africa, they entrenched a system of circular migration between urban and mining areas and rural homelands that has left an indelible mark on South African society. This circularity deeply intertwined rural and urban locations, shaping the economic (through labor migration and remittances) and cultural (through sustained and frequent cultural exchange) landscape of both (see Bank, 2011; Hunter, 2010; Adepoju, 2006; Kok, Gelderblom, and van Zyl, 2006; Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006; Feinstein, 2005; James, 2001; Wilson, 1972, for detailed accounts of the history and cultural and economic impact of migration).

At the end of apartheid the nature of this connection between tribal and urban South Africa began to change. As the mining industry and segments of the manufacturing sector retrenched unskilled workers during the 1990s and 2000s, many rural areas lost their economic links to South Africa’s urban centers (Bank, 2005: 174; Bank and Minkley, 2005: 22; James, 2001: 98). As Bank and Minkley (2005: 32) argue, “If [the] rural struggle in the Twentieth Century was dominated by the quest of white capital for cheap black labour to fuel the furnaces of industry, ... then the main dynamic in the post-apartheid era at the beginning of the twenty-first century is that rural labour—once so eagerly desired—has become a burden to the state and an irrelevance to capital.”

The links between rural and urban South Africa were further eroded by fundamental changes in the nature of internal migration in South Africa. With the repeal of the repressive National Party policies near the end of apartheid, black South Africans no longer faced restrictions on when and where they could move. Although internal migration initially retained its circularity (Kok and Collinson, 2006: 25), there is growing evidence that greater numbers of migrants have begun to settle permanently in urban areas and are not maintaining as close a connection with their rural homes (see Posel, 2009: 3-4 and 7; see also Bank *et al.*, 2006: 30, specifically on the Eastern Cape). Consequently, the number of migrants sending remittances has fallen

¹ Though both sectors required black African labor, the manufacturing sector required a stable and skilled group of laborers that ultimately could afford to purchase its products, while the mining sector preferred cheap and oscillatory labor (Feinstein, 2005). This tension, which some have argued strained and ultimately broke South Africa’s system of apartheid, is explored in more depth in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

dramatically. In 1993, according to the October Household Survey (OHS), 78 percent of black South African households with at least one migrant member received some remittance income. By 2008, according to the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), this number had fallen to only 31 percent. At least part of this discrepancy may be attributable to differences in data collection between the two surveys. However, even if *all* black households in NIDS that received income from an outside source are assumed to be “migrant households,” an extremely generous assumption, the proportion of black migrant households receiving remittances in 2008 was still significantly below the proportion receiving remittances in 1993 (Posel, 2009: 9-12).

The rapid expansion of government social assistance and pension programs after apartheid has largely filled the gap left by the decrease in remittance income from successful rural-to-urban moves (Neves and du Toit, 2013: 106-107; James, 2001: 98; see also du Toit and Neves, 2009*b*). Still, “there may,” in the words of James (2001: 98), be an even “greater dependence [in rural areas] on the relatively fewer links which remain” to urban economies (see also du Toit and Neves, 2009: 26). Investigating these connections is thus necessary to understand the changing nature of and relationship between rural and urban societies in South Africa, topics that are poorly understood (Bank and Minkley, 2005: 174).

Treating the rural economies of South Africa as “marginal” spaces disconnected from “first-world” urban economies, as many development researchers and government officials do, however, is fundamentally misleading. The end of apartheid brought about fundamental structural changes to both rural and urban areas. As du Toit and Neves (2007; see also du Toit and Neves, 2009*a*; du Toit, 2008) argue, based on research conducted in the rural Eastern Cape and Khayelitsha, a township outside of Cape Town, the process of “jobless deagrarianization”—the decline of small-scale agricultural production during a collapse of local employment opportunities—and “deindustrialization” have marginalized segments of both areas. Simultaneously, the arrival of major consumer and financial firms has created pockets of formalization previously absent from rural areas. As du Toit (2008: 140) later summarized his findings, “These cases illustrate[] how both margins and centre are everywhere present in [] South African society, fractally interpenetrating and overlaid on one another.” In this context of increasing insecurity across the geographical landscape of South Africa, household connections to the formal labor market, du Toit and Neves argue, have become increasingly important, and simultaneously increasingly tenuous. How individuals access these formal-sector opportunities in both rural and urban settings, and the role of migration in this process, can thus provide profound insights into the changing economic structure of South African society.

This thesis attempts to contribute to the literature on the changing relationship between rural and urban areas by examining economic opportunities in both, as well as how migration connects the two. In particular, this thesis focuses on how *perceptions* of economic opportunity and migration differ in the rural Eastern Cape and Cape Town. Although there is a vibrant debate in the social psychology literature over to what degree perceptions reflect and shape reality (see Jussim [1991] for a more detailed discussion), it is generally accepted that, in the words of Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976: 4), “The relationship between objective conditions and psychological states is very imperfect and [] in order to know the [full] quality of life experience it will be necessary to go directly to the individual himself.”

This dissociation between perceptions and reality is not merely of academic interest. Though objective economic trends undoubtedly shape economic perceptions, perceptions—and not

necessarily reality—affect behavior, decision-making, and, subsequently, outcomes (Dijksterhuis and Bargh, 2001). It is thus important to understand how, and in what ways, subjective economic perceptions differ from objective realities.

Perceptions of economic inequality and social mobility in particular have profound repercussions on society. Internationally, perceptions of inequality and mobility have been shown to shape voting behavior (Birdsall and Graham, 2000: 5), how resources and effort are incentivized and allocated in capitalist societies (Graham, 2000: 228), mental health outcomes (Jin and Tam, 2012), and perhaps even democratic deepening. Studying these perceptions is particularly important in post-apartheid South Africa. As Burns (2009: 7) has argued, how individuals perceive their economic opportunities affects social and political cohesion in this already fractured country (see also Behrman, 2000: 77).

Because migration has framed how generations of black South Africans experienced their economic system—either directly, as migrants themselves, or indirectly, as beneficiaries of remittances—and continues to play an important role in both rural and urban livelihood strategies, in this thesis I examine whether and in what ways migration shapes these perceptions. This study builds on my earlier work. In two previous papers (Telzak, 2012, 2014), I investigated how experiences of social mobility shape perceptions of economic inequality and mobility in Cape Town, the Alfred Nzo District Municipality in the northeast of the Eastern Cape—an area that encompasses the rural towns of Mount Frere, Mount Ayliff, and Matatiele—as well as Newcastle in KwaZulu-Natal. In this thesis, I go beyond my earlier work by exploring how *migration* in South Africa affects both these economic perceptions and perceptions of migration itself.

1.2 Methodology

In order to gauge if and how migration experience shapes perceptions of South Africa's economic environment and of migration itself, I conducted a series of 26 in-depth ethnographic interviews with individuals from diverse migration backgrounds in April and May of 2014. Because South Africa's social, economic, and cultural spheres are diverse, I decided to focus on one particular migration pathway: movement between the Alfred Nzo District Municipality of the Eastern Cape and Cape Town. Alfred Nzo, a political and administrative district in the northeast of the Eastern Cape, typifies the underdevelopment of rural areas in South Africa and sits at the center of one of South Africa's most economically and socially important migration pathways: movement between the Eastern Cape and Cape Town.

I utilized the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS)—a longitudinal study of young adults in Cape Town currently piloting its sixth wave—to recruit a random group of individuals in Cape Town originally from Alfred Nzo. Through snowball sampling, this initial group of interviewees helped to recruit individuals living in or near Alfred Nzo who either had migrated to Cape Town and since returned or had never permanently left this rural district.

Although there is evidence that urban-to-urban moves may now be more common in South Africa than rural-to-urban ones (see Collinson *et al.*, 2007: 79; cf. Cross *et al.*, 1999, who argue that rural-to-rural moves may be dominant in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape), studying rural-to-urban migration remains extremely important. Because of the social and economic exclusion of rural areas during apartheid, migration remains among the only

opportunities for rural residents to integrate themselves into the contemporary South African economy. Furthermore, understanding this particular migration pathway between Cape Town and parts of the Eastern Cape appears especially important for understanding the nature of migration in South Africa. Cape Town, which is one of South Africa's largest cities and its parliamentary capital, absorbs a disproportionate number of migrants from the Eastern Cape, one of South Africa's largest and poorest provinces. According to the 2011 South African Census, the vast majority (nearly 78 percent) of those who had migrated to Cape Town over the previous 10 years moved from the Eastern Cape (Statistics South Africa, 2011a). In turn, in-migration from the Eastern Cape has dramatically altered the demographic makeup of Cape Town. Up until the 1970s, Cape Town was 90 percent white and colored. By 2011, in large part due to this in-migration, approximately 40 percent of the city's residents were black (Statistics South Africa, 2011a; Seekings, 2007).

At the center of the migration between Cape Town and the Eastern Cape are the former homeland regions of the Ciskei and Transkei. Until South Africa's largely unsuccessful attempt at "separate development," the National Party purposefully underdeveloped reserves in order to supply inexpensive black workers to South Africa's mines and farms, and later, its manufacturing and heavy industry sectors, which were concentrated in urban and metropolitan areas (see Section 1.1). With the lifting of apartheid restrictions on movement, migrants poured out of rural areas in search of better opportunities in towns and metropolitan centers (Bank and Kamman, 2010).

The Alfred Nzo Municipality District, one of the six administrative and political entities that comprise the Eastern Cape province, typifies this underdevelopment and the resulting migration dynamics. Located in the former Transkei, Alfred Nzo is an uninterrupted vista of rolling hills that abuts KwaZulu-Natal and the mountains of Lesotho. Potholed gravel roads connect small villages and largely uncultivated pastures to a series of major national highways and medium-sized towns, including Mount Frere, Mount Ayliff, and Matatiele. Much of Alfred Nzo's economic activity occurs in these towns, and local residents travel frequently to these towns for work, consumer staples, and recreation (du Toit and Neves, 2007).

From Alfred Nzo, many migrants travel to the informal settlements of Cape Town in search of work. Though Bank and Kamman (2010: 27-28) found that a disproportionate number of migrants from Alfred Nzo and the surrounding areas went to Johannesburg and Durban, over 25 percent of black migrants from the Eastern Cape congregate outside of the City of Cape Town. Located far outside the city center and separated from Cape Town's primary economic opportunities, tin shacks and small government-built houses stretch as far as the eye can see; infrastructure, though much superior to Alfred Nzo's, is uneven; and an informal economy of taxis, peddlers, and day laborers thrives alongside formal stores and factories. As Du Toit and Neves (2007: 160) described one such area, Khayelitsha, these settlements are "in, but not of Cape Town," economically, socially, and in many respects culturally.

The legacy of the underdevelopment of rural areas and the simultaneous state-driven development of urban ones can be clearly seen in the vast demographic and economic differences between Alfred Nzo and Cape Town, as Table 1.1 indicates. While Cape Town is only 40 percent black, fewer than one-percent of Alfred Nzo residents are not black. Similarly, the broad unemployment rate for black individuals in Alfred Nzo is substantially higher (by almost 50 percent) than it is in Cape Town. Additionally, there is both substantial out-migration from Alfred Nzo and substantial in-migration to Cape Town. Post-1996 South

Table 1.1: Summary demographic and economic statistics for Alfred Nzo, Cape Town and South Africa

	Alfred Nzo		Cape Town		South Africa	
Racial Composition (Percent)	<i>Black African</i>	99.1	<i>Black African</i>	38.6	<i>Black African</i>	79.2
	<i>Coloured</i>	0.4	<i>Coloured</i>	42.4	<i>Coloured</i>	8.9
	<i>Indian or Asian</i>	0.1	<i>Indian or Asian</i>	1.4	<i>Indian or Asian</i>	2.5
	<i>White</i>	0.2	<i>White</i>	15.7	<i>White</i>	8.9
	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100
Black African Unemployment Rate (Narrow, Percent)	44		35		36	
Black African Unemployment Rate (Broad, Percent)	58		38		46	
Black African Gender (Percent)	<i>Female</i>	54	<i>Female</i>	50	<i>Female</i>	52
	<i>Male</i>	46	<i>Male</i>	50	<i>Male</i>	48
	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100
Black African Age Profile (Percent)	<i>0-19</i>	54	<i>0-19</i>	35	<i>0-19</i>	41
	<i>20-49</i>	31	<i>20-49</i>	56	<i>20-49</i>	46
	<i>50+</i>	15	<i>50+</i>	9	<i>50+</i>	13
	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100	<i>Total</i>	100

Source: These statistics are from my own analysis of 2011 South African Census data (Statistics South Africa, 2011a) and from Statistics South Africa (2013: 8) and Statistics South Africa (2012: 17, 20, and 51).

African Census data do a notoriously poor job at capturing migration patterns (Kok and Collinson, 2006: 6; Posel, 2003: 7-8). However, by charting the age distribution of residents in Alfred Nzo and Cape Town—and comparing these distributions to that of South Africa as a whole—it is possible to gauge the degree of in- or out-migration for labor purposes in each area. The proportion of black Africans aged 20-49, or those who are most likely to be economically active (see Statistics South Africa, 2012a: 54), in Alfred Nzo is almost a third lower than in South Africa as a whole, perhaps reflecting significant out-migration of black Africans from Alfred Nzo. Similarly, the proportion of 20-49 year-old black Africans in Cape Town is over 10 percentage points higher than in South Africa as a whole, indicating in-migration to Cape Town. In the census data, there is also some indication of who is migrating from Alfred Nzo: while there are about 94 men per 100 women in South Africa as a whole, there are only 84 men per 100 women in Alfred Nzo. These conclusions are supported by findings in a comprehensive survey of socioeconomic conditions in the Eastern Cape (Bank *et al.*, 2006; see also Bank and Kamman, 2010, specifically on migration).

Because the focus of this study is on how migration influences an individual's economic perceptions, I sought to interview a sample of individuals with diverse migration experiences. As I described at the beginning of this chapter, the National Party's attempts to dictate population movement in South Africa produced a distinctive system of circular migration. Although there is growing evidence that migration in South Africa may be less circular today

than it was during apartheid (Posel, 2009; Bank and Kamman, 2010), this circularity has historical import and continues to influence the nature of migration in South Africa. As a result, I sought to interview individuals from the three distinct migration backgrounds comprising this circulatory process: “migrants” (M), or those who had migrated to Cape Town from in and around the Alfred Nzo District Municipality and have remained there; “returnees” (R), or those who had moved to Cape Town but have since returned home; and “non-migrants” (NM), or those who have never left the Alfred Nzo District Municipality with the intention of permanently resettling elsewhere.

I used the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) to identify randomly selected interviewees who were living in Cape Town and had spent at least some time in the Alfred Nzo District Municipality. These individuals were recruited into my “Migrant” category. CAPS, a joint effort of the Population Studies Center of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan and the Centre for Social Science Research (CSSR) at the University of Cape Town (UCT), is a longitudinal study of originally approximately 4,800 randomly selected Cape Town residents, who were between the ages of 14 and 22 when the study began in 2002. The study has since completed five waves, the most recent of which was in 2009 (for more information on CAPS, see Lam *et al.*, 2012; <http://www.caps.uct.ac.za/>).²

Schooling data from Wave 3 of CAPS was used to determine whether individuals had lived in Alfred Nzo. In total 55 CAPS respondents had attended a school in Alfred Nzo at some point during their lives, though this number most likely understates the total. Detailed retrospective data was not recorded until Wave 3 of CAPS—before Wave 3, only data on province of birth were collected—by which point the attrition rate had reached over one-quarter of the original sample (Lam *et al.*, 2008: 29). Because the major reason given among black respondents for not participating in waves 2 and 3 of CAPS was movement out of Cape Town, drawing the sample of interest from Wave 3 instead of from earlier waves of CAPS may introduce bias into this study (*Ibid.*: 31): it is likely that those who were interviewed during Wave 3 of CAPS (and thus had not moved back to their province of birth) either have a stronger support system in Cape Town or have been relatively successful themselves. Of these 55 individuals, 46 were successfully re-interviewed during Wave 4 and 38 were successfully re-interviewed during Wave 5.

Multiple attempts were made to contact these 55 individuals through the telephone numbers collected during each wave of CAPS for both the respondent and up to three non-household members who were listed as contacts. Of the 55 individuals from Alfred Nzo, two had died since Wave 3; 13 were completely unreachable (i.e., none of the contact numbers provided were operable or the people reached at these numbers had never met the individual of interest); and 17 failed to answer any of the phone numbers provided after six separate attempts. The remaining 23 individuals still lived in Cape Town.

² “The Cape Area Panel Study Waves 1-2-3 were collected between 2002 and 2005 by the University of Cape Town and the University of Michigan, with funding provided by the US National Institute for Child Health and Human Development and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Wave 4 was collected in 2006 by the University of Cape Town, University of Michigan, and Princeton University. Major funding for Wave 4 was provided by the National Institute of Aging through a grant to Princeton University, in addition to funding provided by NICHD through the University of Michigan. Wave 5 was conducted in 2009 with major funding provided by The Health Economics and HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD) of the University of KwaZulu-Natal” (see <http://www.caps.uct.ac.za/papers.html>).

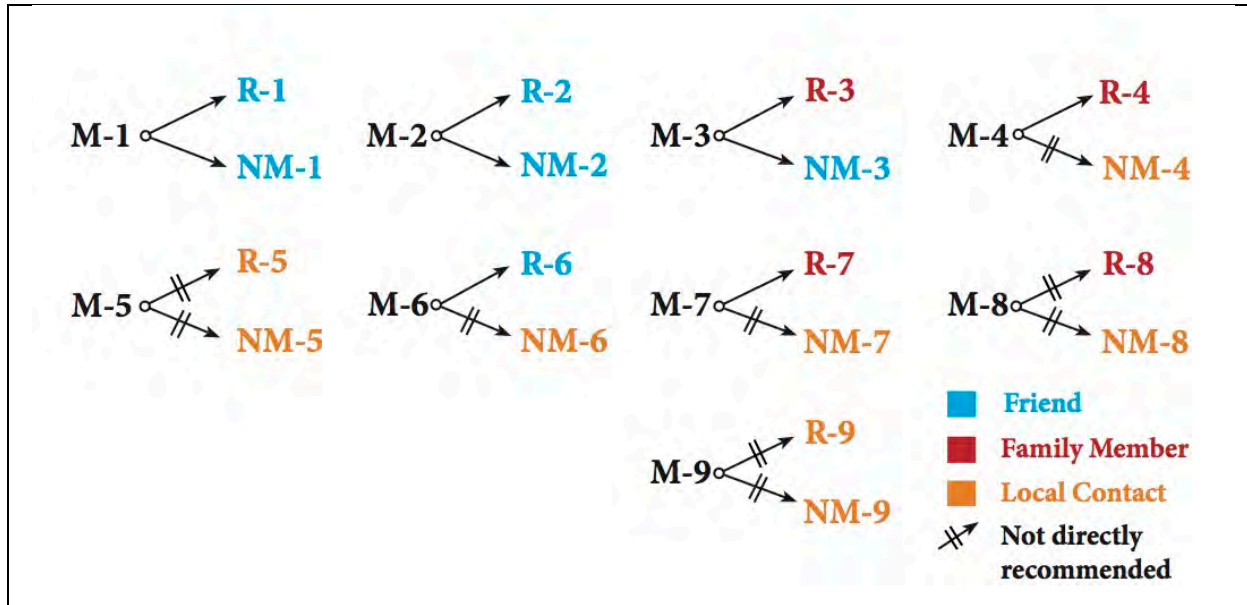


Figure 1.1: Connections among the interviewees

Snowball sampling was used to recruit individuals in the two other categories (i.e., returnees and non-migrants). The 23 individuals from Cape Town were asked to provide the names of two people from the location in the Eastern Cape where they are originally from—one who had never permanently left that area³ and another who had migrated to Cape Town but has since returned home—whom they considered “similar” to themselves. They were given no further instruction about what factors to take into consideration when selecting these individuals. In return, these individuals (in Cape Town) were promised an R100 gift voucher to Shoprite for each interview that was successfully completed with their contacts in the Eastern Cape.

Nine of the 23 respondents agreed to participate and to provide the names of two additional individuals.⁴ Respondents used a variety of methods to select the individuals that they recommended (see Figure 1.1). However, only 11 of the 18 individuals that were recommended agreed to be interviewed. In the seven situations where one of these individual was unwilling or unable to be interviewed, a substitute was found in the same rural area either by asking those whom we interviewed to recommend someone else or by using a local contact from that particular rural area. Three individuals (the two recommended by M-5 and one recommended by a local contact from M-8’s rural area) were unable to participate because they could not understand many of the questions asked; suitable replacements were found in all three situations through a local contact. Upon my return from the Eastern Cape,

³ An individual’s movement was considered “permanent” if he or she moved outside of Alfred Nzo for more than a discrete and predetermined period of time. Thus, those who left their local area solely for education and returned soon after graduation were not considered to have moved permanently.

⁴ Because CAPS school codes, and not actual home addresses, were used to identify individuals from Alfred Nzo, one individual, M-2, who had attended school in Alfred Nzo, was actually from a town (Qumbu) in an adjacent district municipality, OR Tambo. As a result, the two individuals she recommended for this study (R-2 and NM-2) also lived in Qumbu. Additionally, R-7, though she is originally from Alfred Nzo, moved to Tsolo, a town also in the OR Tambo District Municipality, as part of her job for the South African Police Service. Because these borders are largely political constructs and have little economic and social significance, the fact that these individuals live outside of Alfred Nzo should have little impact on my findings.

only eight of the nine CAPS respondents agreed to be interviewed, further reducing the size (and thus presumably the representativeness) of the Migrant category.

The interview questions (reproduced in Appendix A) were developed specifically to probe how the interviewees conceptualize their economic position in South African society and the role of migration in the South African economy. Many of these questions were adapted from the 2005 Cape Area Study (CAS) survey questionnaire and the 2001-2002 Human Sciences Research Council Migration Survey. However, unlike in CAS and the HSRC Migration Survey, individuals were not asked to choose from a number of predetermined responses; instead, these individuals formulated their own, often elaborate, responses to the questions asked. The questions thus served as a *guide* during the interviews and were not used as a formal script.

Individuals in the Eastern Cape were interviewed over the two weeks between March 22 and April 4 and individuals in Cape Town were interviewed over the two weeks between May 5 and May 16. Each interview lasted approximately an hour to an hour and a half. 13 of the 18 interviews in the Eastern Cape were conducted in isiXhosa through an interpreter, while four of the eight interviews in Cape Town were conducted in isiXhosa. Participants were given an R100 gift voucher to Shoprite in exchange for their time.

At the time of this study, the Centre for Social Science Research was piloting a sixth wave of the Cape Area Panel Study, using telephonic interviews. In order to solicit background demographic data from the Eastern Cape interviewees, a modified version of the telephonic questionnaire that is being used for Wave 6 of CAPS, with a detailed migration supplement, was administered after the interviews (see, Appendix B). Those in Cape Town were administered an unmodified version of CAPS Wave 6, followed by a migration supplement.

The arguments that follow are based on mixed methods research (see Thaler, 2012 for a good introduction to mixed methods approaches). This thesis is primarily concerned with the economic perceptions of the interviewees. It is thus important to examine when and in what ways these micro-level economic perceptions differ from the macro-level “reality.” Therefore, the careful examination and coding of the qualitative interviews are supplemented with an examination of both qualitative and quantitative surveys, including CAPS, NIDS, and the 2001-2002 HSRC Migration Survey.

In this study, I used Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) conceptualization of Grounded Theory and Glaser’s (1998) practical manual on the topic, *Doing Grounded Theory*, as guides during my analysis of the interviews. Analyses with Grounded Theory seek to aggregate similar data into thematic categories in order to generate a theoretical understanding for the observed patterns. There are three basic steps to Glaser and Strauss’ methodology: after identifying (or “coding”) the recurring topics, these topics are sequentially aggregated into “higher-level” categories until broader theories can be delimited (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 101-15). Glaser and Strauss’ approach to analyzing qualitative data, however, was only used to guide my analysis. Ultimately, through this process, I sought to identify continuities and discontinuities among the different migration groups interviewed and to uncover gender, location, and age-based variations. By combining this qualitative methodology with quantitative data analysis, I seek to offer preliminary insights into these underexplored, but extremely important, fields.

1.3 Introduction to the Interviewees

Although I sought to interview three groups of demographically similar individuals with different migration experiences, the groups differ along a number of important demographic and economic characteristics (see Table 1.2-Table 1.4). While the gender breakdown of those interviewed in the “Non-Migrant” (NM) and “Returnee” (R) categories was relatively evenly split (the groups were 56 percent and 44 percent female, respectively), 75 percent of those interviewed from the “Migrant” (M) sample was female.⁵ Many ethnographies in South Africa—including Hunter’s (2010) ethnography of HIV/AIDS—have found that perceptions are often gendered. The gender imbalance of the Migrant interviewees may thus ultimately shape the results presented here and may make it difficult to uncover gender nuances in the economic perceptions expressed by the migrant interviewees.

Similarly, the median age of those interviewed in the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories (27.5 years old) differed substantially—by over five years—from the median age of those interviewed in the Migrant category (32.5 years old). Additionally, the ranges of the ages of non-migrants and returnees were broader (at 14 and 12.5 years, respectively) than that of migrants (8 years). These age differences are in part a function of the design of CAPS. The initial cohort of CAPS respondents—first interviewed in 2002—was comprised of young adults between the ages of 14 and 22, with a median age of 18. Thus, by design, the highest possible age range of the interviewees in the Migrant sample was nine years.⁶ Still, the median age of the Migrant sample is higher than what would have been predicted (i.e., 30 years old) from the age distribution of the initial CAPS cohort.

On average, those interviewed in all three categories were more educated than the general population. Educational outcomes in South Africa have increased dramatically since the end of apartheid. Girdwood and Leibbrandt (2009: 3-4), in their analysis of the first wave of NIDS, found that the average years of education among black Africans in 2008 had risen from 4.04 years for those over 50 to 10.16 years for those between the ages of 20 and 35 (the first group subjected to South Africa’s minimum education law, which made education through Grade 9, or until the age of 15, mandatory). This large increase in years of educational attainment has also translated into a dramatic increase in matric passage rates (the equivalent of high school graduation) among black Africans: whereas only 1 percent of black individuals in the 21-to-25 year-old age cohort in 1970 had matriculation certificates, 36 percent of black individuals aged 21-to-25 in 2001 (roughly the cohort of interest for this study) had matriculation certificates (Louw *et al.*, 2007: 561). In total, only six of the 26 interviewees (23 percent) did not have matriculation certificates, which is less than one-third the percentage that would have been predicted from Louw *et al.*’s findings.

Despite the higher than average educational level of the interviewees, important differences in educational attainment emerge between and among the three groups in this study. Returnees had noticeably lower educational outcomes than those in the other two categories: one-third of returnees did not have matric certificates, while only one returnee had any post-secondary education (R-6 who has a diploma/certificate that does *not* require matric).

⁵ Although some of M-9’s information, which is drawn from publically available CAPS data, is included in Table 1.3, because M-9 refused to be interviewed, all calculations in this section exclude these data.

⁶ The high end of the range is 35 and not 34, as expected. Though only 12 years have passed since Wave 1 of CAPS, it is possible that an individual could have been interviewed in early 2002 and turned 23 soon thereafter, as appears to be the case with one of the interviewees.

Table 1.2: Descriptive statistics for those in the “Non-Migrant” (NM) category

	Sex	Age	Level of Schooling	Employment Status	Migration History	Current area of residence
NM-1	M	33-34*	Undergraduate degree from a university	Information Technology for the Department of Health	Studied at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg and has since moved from a rural area outside of Mount Ayliff to the city of Mount Fletcher for his son’s schooling	Mount Fletcher
NM-2	F	25-26*	Matric and a human resources certificate that does not require matric	Unemployed	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Qumbu
NM-3	M	21	Grade 11	Unemployed	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
NM-4	M	27-28*	Grade 12/Matric	Works as a security officer at a junior secondary school	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
NM-5	F	27-28*	Diploma/ Certificate that requires matric, from a university	Administrative internship at a local school	Spent time in Flagstaff and Mount Fletcher during her childhood for her education; then moved to East London for her certificate in 2006 for three to four years before returning to a rural area outside of Mount Frere in 2010	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
NM-6	M	32	Grade 12/Matric	Owens a spaza shop and owns vehicles, which he uses to transport people and goods	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Matatiele
NM-7	F	19-20*	Grade 12/Matric; currently pursuing an office management certificate that does not require matric	Works as a credit collector in a furniture shop	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Mount Ayliff
NM-8	F	23-24*	Grade 12/Matric	Works as an administrator on a government project building toilets in rural areas	Never left home area	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
NM-9	F	32-33*	Grade 12/Matric	Unemployed	Moved from a rural area outside of Matatiele to the city of Matatiele	Matatiele

*For most interviewees, only year of birth (and not birth date) was recorded. Thus, only a two-year age range for most interviewees can be deduced.

Table 1.3: Descriptive statistics for those in the "Returnee" (R) category

	Sex	Age	Level of Schooling	Employment Status	Migration History	Current area of residence
R-1	M	34-35*	Grade 12/Matric	Police officer	Moved to KwaZulu-Natal in 1994 for a year for school before coming back to the rural areas outside of Matatiele; then moved to Butterworth for two years for school in 1996 and Johannesburg for a year in 2001 for work; finally, spent eight years in Cape Town working as a policeman before transferring in 2010 to Matatiele	Splits his time between the city Matatiele (for work) and a rural area outside of Matatiele (where his family is)
R-2	M	26	Grade 12/Matric	Owns a taxi and works as a taxi driver	Moved to Durban in 2007 for work and moved back to Qumbu the next year; spent eight months in Cape Town in 2011 where he was working before moving back to Qumbu once he could afford to buy his own taxi	Rural area outside Qumbu
R-3	M	22	Grade 11	Unemployed	Moved to Cape Town in 2013 for a job as a cleaner but returned soon thereafter	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
R-4	F	27-28*	Grade 12/Matric	Unemployed	Moved to Cape Town in 2002 for education, where she lived for 11 years before moving back to a rural area outside of Mount Frere in 2013; intends to move to Johannesburg soon	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
R-5	M	26-27*	Grade 9	Works on a government project building houses	Moved to Durban in 2008, but moved back home that same year; then moved to Cape Town in 2009 for work, where he lived until 2011, at which point he returned home	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
R-6	M	28	Grade 12/Matric; Diploma/ Certificate that does not require matric, not from a university or technikon	Works for a municipal councilor and does various other community-development and government-related jobs	Moved to East London for a brief period in 2005; then moved to Johannesburg for two years in 2006 to study and to work before moving back to Matatiele; finally, moved to Cape Town for two years to work in 2009, and has been living in a rural area outside of Matatiele since 2011	Rural area outside Matatiele
R-7	F	32	Grade 12/Matric	Police officer	Moved to Cape Town in 1987 but was sent back home to Mount Ayliff four years later; moved back to Cape Town for 10 months in 2003 and has since moved around the Eastern Cape four times for her job as a policewoman	Tsolo
R-8	F	25-26*	Grade 9	Unemployed	Moved to Cape Town in 2007 for health reasons and worked there until 2012	Rural area outside of Mount Frere
R-9	F	29	Grade 12/Matric	Works in a clothing store	Lived in Cape Town in 2007 and moved to Johannesburg in 2008; after Johannesburg moved back to Matatiele and in 2009 moved from a rural area outside of Matatiele to the city of Matatiele.	Matatiele

*For most interviewees, only year of birth (and not birth date) was recorded. Thus, only a two-year age range for most interviewees can be deduced.

Table 1.4: Descriptive statistics for those in the “Migrant” (M) category

	Sex	Age	Level of Schooling	Employment Status	Migration History	Current area of residence
M-1	M	33	Studying for his undergraduate diploma/certificate from a university	Police officer	Moved from a rural area outside of Matatiele to the Western Cape to work on a farm during the harvest in 2001; has remained in Cape Town since and is now a police officer	Kraaifontein, Cape Town
M-2	F	27	Certificate, not from a university or technikon	Works at the Cape Town port for Transnet	Born in Johannesburg and moved to Qumbu for a year for education in 1993; moved to Cape Town in 1994 to join her parents and has remained there since	Khayelitsha, Cape Town
M-3	F	30	BTech from a technikon	Auditor for the Department of Labour	Moved from a rural area around Mount Frere to Mount Frere for schooling and then joined her mother in Cape Town for high school in 2001, where she has lived since	Crossroads, Cape Town
M-4	F	32	Grade 12/Matric	Works as a street cleaner and a sangoma (traditional healer)	Moved to Cape Town in 2001, after growing up in a rural area outside of Mount Frere, where she has remained since	Philippi, Cape Town
M-5	F	34	Grade 10	Works as a cleaner in government offices	Moved from a rural area outside of Mount Frere to Cape Town when she was 12 years old to join her mother	Philippi, Cape Town
M-6	M	29	BTech from a technikon; currently studying to become an educator	Manager in the collections department of a department store	Born and spent the first 11 years of his life in Cape Town; moved to a rural area outside of Matatiele in 1994, where he lived for four years; returned to Cape Town in 1999 and has lived there since	Khayelitsha, Cape Town
M-7	F	35	Grade 11	Sells electrical appliances on the street	Born in Mount Ayliff and came to Cape Town in 2002 to look for work	Khayelitsha, Cape Town
M-8	F	33	Grade 12/Matric	Works as a cleaner in a hotel	Born in Mount Fletcher and moved to Cape Town in 1997 for a year to study; returned to the Eastern Cape and studied in Mount Frere for two years; finally, moved back to Cape Town in 2001, where she has lived since, to complete her matric	Summerset West, Cape Town
M-9*	M	26	Grade 10	Works as a long-distance truck driver†	-----	Khayelitsha, Cape Town

*After providing the names of individuals whom he knew in the Eastern Cape, M-9 refused to be interviewed. The descriptive statistics for M-9 are thus based on publicly and privately available CAPS data.

†This information is based on our phone conversations with M-9, who refused to be interviewed because he was too busy working as a national truck driver.

Similarly, although four non-migrants and four migrants have some post-secondary education, the quality of these degrees is not equivalent: only one of the four interviewees in the Non-Migrant category with some post-secondary education had studied at a university or technikon—the most valued tertiary degrees—whereas three of the four individuals in the Migrant category with some post-secondary education had done so. The proportion of migrants with some tertiary education appears to dwarf that of black Africans in Cape Town with some tertiary education: in an unpublished paper, Telzak (2013) found that among participants in Wave 4 of CAPS in 2006, only 9 percent of those with co-resident mothers during Wave 1 had either completed or were enrolled in a tertiary programs that required matric.

In part, the higher educational levels were a function of the study design. The questions asked during the interviews require some level of mathematical aptitude; the opening showcard, around which much of the first half of the interview was based, for example, requires an ability to understand proportions (see Figure 2.1). Ultimately, three individuals—the two individuals recommended by M-5 and one recommended by a contact in M-8’s rural area—all of whom had not studied past Grade 8, could not complete the interview because they were unable to comprehend the complex questions being asked. If these individuals had been interviewed, then the average educational qualifications in the Non-Migrant category would have been much lower. These educational variations may also reflect the importance of education for migration outcomes. It is probably not a coincidence that those in the Migrant category, all of whom had lived in Cape Town for over a decade, had the highest educational outcomes among the three groups of interest.

The unusually high educational levels in my sample help to explain the sample’s strong employment outcomes. Across South Africa as a whole, tertiary qualifications have been shown to have a large employment premium, while secondary and matric qualifications appear only to affect wages (Branson and Leibbrandt, 2013). The unemployment rates in both the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories (33 percent) roughly track the official unemployment rate⁷ in South Africa, which reached 28.5 percent in 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2014b: 4); this rate, however, is much lower than the official unemployment rate in Alfred Nzo, which reached over 44 percent in 2013 (see Table 1.1). The zero percent unemployment rate among individuals interviewed in the Migrant category varies tremendously from the unemployment rate among black Africans in Cape Town, which was 34.5 percent in 2011 (see Table 1.1). This discrepancy may also be a result of the study design. If, as I argue later in this thesis (see Section 4.3.3), a major cause of return migration is failure to secure employment, it is likely that those who have lived in Cape Town continuously for over 12 years (the period over which, including its piloted sixth wave, CAPS has followed the individuals in the Migrant category) would be employed. The relatively high employment rates in all three categories may ultimately color how these individuals conceptualize the South African economy and migration.

Finally, this study was designed specifically to interview people with a broad range of migration experiences, and the migration experiences of individuals in all three categories do, as expected, differ substantially. Though there was some short-term educational migration among those in the Non-Migrant category,⁸ the majority (67 percent) had never left the rural area where they were born for a significant period of time and the vast majority (78 percent)

⁷ The official unemployment rate excludes those who have given up looking for work.

⁸ A move for educational purposes was not considered a “permanent” move if the interviewee returned home soon after graduation.

either never left their rural area or only moved within Alfred Nzo during their lifetimes. Those in the Returnee category had very different migration experiences. For only two (or 22 percent) of the returnees was Cape Town their only migration destination; the rest had moved at least twice over the course of their lives. Additionally, many of these individuals moved within Alfred Nzo: after returning from Cape Town, one-third of the Returnee sample had moved from their rural area to a nearby rural town.

Similarly, for the majority (63 percent) of those in the Migrant sample, Cape Town was not their first experience with migration. Still, most of those in the Migrant sample came to Cape Town when they were relatively young and for educational reasons; only two (25 percent) of the migrants moved to Cape Town for work. In contrast, six (67 percent) of those in the Returnee category had moved to Cape Town for non-work-related reasons. Again, this outcome is consistent with the study design: because CAPS was designed to track the economic, educational, health, household, and attitudinal progress of *young adults* (originally 14 to 22 year olds) in Cape Town, it is unsurprising that most of those interviewed in the Migrant category arrived in Cape Town when they were relatively young and for educational purposes, though this pattern may ultimately affect how the migrants conceptualize their economic environments and migration.

The demographic and economic differences among the three groups may have a potentially confounding impact on the perceptions expressed during the interviews. Throughout this study, I thus pay particularly close attention to how the gender, age, educational, and employment variations in and among the three groups shape these perceptions in order to determine what role migration experience plays in driving the observed trends. Though the small sample size of this study may make it difficult to examine such variation, this thesis offers preliminary findings of the relationship between migration experience and economic perceptions in South Africa and suggests potentially fruitful paths for future research.

1.4 An Overview of the Road Ahead

This study seeks to investigate perceptions of economic opportunity and migration in South Africa. Through the eight interviews that I conducted in Cape Town and the 18 interviews in Alfred Nzo, I examine whether and how migration experience influences these perceptions and investigate their implications for South African society. I do so in four parts.

In Chapter 2, I examine how migration experience affects perceptions of economic inequality. Because South Africa is among the most unequal countries in the world, how South Africans conceptualize this inequality is particularly important to investigate. Though migration experience does not appear to shape how individuals view the overall distribution of income in South Africa, it does affect how these individuals understand the makeup of this distribution. Whereas those in the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories believed that the top and the middle of the income distribution consisted primarily of public sector employees, those in the Migrant category argued that private sector individuals made up a substantially larger share of the middle and upper classes. Additionally, non-migrants and returnees tended to emphasize the geographic character of the economic divide between rural and urban areas in South Africa, while migrants highlighted the continued racialized nature of South Africa's economic divisions. Yet, regardless of migration experience, the vast majority of interviewees greatly underestimated their relative economic position, suggesting that many South Africans continue to view their personal economic experiences through a lens of

poverty. These findings add support to the hypothesis that it is local economic conditions, and not national economic trends, that shape economic perceptions.

I then explore how migration shapes the interviewees' perceptions of social mobility and the available pathways to economic success in Chapter 3. First, I develop a framework for subjective social mobility and argue that perceived mobility pathways can be divided into two categories: individualistic pathways—or those over which an individual believes he can exercise direct control—and structural pathways/impediments—or those which an individual believes are entirely outside of his or her control. I then examine the two individualistic pathways—education and hard work—and the three structural pathways—corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the availability of jobs—highlighted by the interviewees and explore whether and how migration experience shapes the interviewees' conceptualization of these mobility pathways. I conclude that the interviewees believe rural areas are substantially less meritocratic than urban ones, facilitating the extremely high rates of internal migration in South Africa.

As both large-n studies and my interviewees indicate, migrating from rural to urban areas is among the only strategies that many rural individuals have for accessing economic opportunities in South Africa. In Chapter 4, I thus turn to perceptions of migration itself and investigate how my interviewees conceive the migration process. First, I examine the theoretical literature on why individuals migrate, and argue that in South Africa at least, most individuals appear to conceptualize migration through a primarily individualistic, economic lens. I then explore how the interviewees perceive each step of the migration process: what categories of people are believed to migrate to urban areas, which individuals succeed while there, and finally which individuals return to their rural homes. Though the interviewees had difficulty pinpointing the characteristics of those who migrate, they argued that most of the individuals who remained in rural areas lacked access to social networks in urban ones, which they argued was a prerequisite for migration. The migrants judged the success of those who did migrate through changes in the material wellbeing of both the migrant and their rural household, but simultaneously argued that financial prudence (and not material acquisition) was fundamental to the success of any migration. Those who did not succeed, the interviewees believed, were the most likely to return to rural areas, if illness, the threat of crime, or the migrants' urban hosts did not force them to return home beforehand. Ultimately, this chapter points to two paths for future research: the role that individuals and their households play in the migration decision and the role of migrant networks both before and during the migration process.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes by summarizing the implications of these findings for South African society and pointing to a number of potentially fruitful directions for future research. Though the findings in this thesis come from a relatively small-n study of black South Africans originally from one geographical location, they offer among the first systematic, if preliminary, insights into these underexplored fields.

Chapter 2: A Geography of Disparity: Migration and Perceptions of Economic Inequality

On the eve of its transition to democracy, South Africa ranked “among the most unequal societies in the world” (Seekings and Nattrass, 2006: 188). After 1994, South Africa’s already unparalleled degree of inequality *rose* further, despite hopes that democratization and the enfranchisement of South Africa’s poor, black majority would work to redress the pernicious economic legacies of apartheid (Seekings, 2011a: 22). The Gini coefficient for income distribution—a commonly used measure of inequality that is derived from the Lorenz Curve and ranges from 0 in completely egalitarian societies to 1 in societies where a single individual receives all of the income—was 0.66 at the end of apartheid, 0.68 in 2000, and 0.7 by 2008 (Leibbrandt *et al.*, 2010: 32).¹ Furthermore, there is reason to believe that the Gini index may actually *underestimate* the growth of income inequality in South African society. The Gini coefficient is better able to capture changes in the middle of the income distribution than at the tails. Thus, if the rich are getting comparatively richer or the poor are getting comparatively poorer, as appears to be happening in South Africa (Leibbrandt *et al.*, 2010: 26), then the Gini coefficient will underestimate the degree of inequality (Seekings, 2011b: 29).

South Africa’s high and growing levels of inequality threaten to undermine its nascent democracy. Muller (1997: 152; see also Muller, 1988) first suggested that “high levels of income inequality are [completely] incompatible with the development of a stable democratic political system.” But it was not until Boix and Stokes’s (2003: 504; see also Boix, 2003: 129; cf. Muller, 1997: 134) seminal work that compelling evidence was presented indicating that “democracy is caused not by income per se but by other changes that accompany development, in particular, [a reduction in] income equality.” Boix and Stokes’ analysis was bolstered by Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2006) robust theoretical model elucidating the underlying connections between democracy and inequality—work largely absent from earlier analyses highlighting the relationship between income and democracy (Boix, 2003: 6). Most researchers also agree that, as Houle (2009: 590; see also *Ibid.*, 615; Lane and Ersson, 1997: 8) concludes, inequality unquestionably “affects consolidation ... negatively.”

Theorists have presented a number of hypotheses undergirding the negative relationship between democratic consolidation and income inequality. Muller (1997: 136), for example, argues that continued inequality impels “dissident groups [to] turn to non-democratic methods of participation, such as civil disobedience and violence ... increase[ing] the likelihood of a breakdown of democracy through civil war, revolution, or a *coup d’état*.” In contrast, Acemoglu and Robinson (2006: 222) stress discontent among elites as the primary threat to democracy: as inequality increases, so too do the redistributive demands of the masses, making coupes more likely. Others posit a more indirect relationship between inequality and the breakdown of democracy. Fukuyama (2011: 83) argues that inequality’s deleterious impact on criminality, educational and health outcomes, and social cohesion undermines democratic consolidation. And Solt (2008: 57-58) found that “economic inequality depresses political engagement,” undermining “political equality” and ultimately democracy. Although the precise pathway by which socioeconomic inequality undermines democratic deepening is debatable, there is resounding consensus that “income inequality is

¹ Although there is much variation in reported Gini coefficients in South Africa, these variations are largely attributable to the methodology employed and there is general “agreement” about the rising levels of inequality in post-apartheid South Africa (van der Berg, 2010: 12).

incompatible with the *stability* of democracy over time” (Muller, 1997: 137). Additionally, scholars have found that economic inequality has a pernicious affect on a number of other social, political, and economic indicators internationally, including physical and mental health (Pickett and Wilkinson, 2009), crime (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), political polarization (Duca and Saving, 2014), and growth (Berg *et al.*, 2008).

Because of South Africa’s persistently high and growing levels of inequality and its possible repercussions for South African society, significant space has been dedicated to analyzing the nature of this inequality. The available research indicates that the composition of this inequality has not been static. Towards the end of apartheid, South Africa’s distribution of income began to “reflect race far less than class” (Seekings, 2008a: 22) because of “the expansion of educational and employment opportunities for black South Africans” (Seekings, 2008c: 40). While aggregate inequality has risen since South Africa’s democratic transition, this growth in inequality is a result of increasing *intra-*, as opposed to *inter-*racial disparities, a trend that began before the end of apartheid (Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 300). The Theil-T Index for inequality—which analyzes the percentage of the Gini coefficient that is derived from within-group versus between-group inequality—indicates just how profoundly South Africa’s distribution of income has been de-racialized. Whereas in 1975 intra-racial inequality accounted for 38 percent of total inequality, by 1996 intra-racial inequality represented 67 percent of aggregate inequality, and by 2008 this figure had climbed to 70 percent (Whiteford and van Seventer, 2000: 17; Leibbrandt *et al.*, 2012: 30).²

This trend reflects the growing economic power of sections of South Africa’s previously marginalized black population and the partial de-racialization of South Africa’s class structures. The proportion of income going to South Africa’s white population fell from 71 percent to 48 percent between 1972 and 2001, while the proportion of income going to Africans rose from 20 percent to 38 percent (Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 304; Leibbrandt *et al.*, 2006: 102). Consequently the middle and upper classes in South Africa have become increasingly more de-racialized since the end of apartheid (Seeking and Natrass, 2006: 336). The “middle class,” for example, which was only 29 percent black in 1994, was nearly half black by 2000 (García-Rivero, 2006: 66). Similarly, whereas Africans made up only 28 percent of the top two income deciles in 1995, they constituted over 45 percent of the top two deciles in 2000 (Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 306). Although inequality is still correlated with race (Simkins, 2011: 107), as Landman *et al.* (2003: 7) conclude, “The main driver of inequality currently in SA is no longer the Black/White divide, but rather the intra-group divide between rich Blacks and poor Blacks.”

Additionally, focusing solely on the Gini coefficient fails to consider how post-apartheid tax and social spending reforms affect the distribution of income. South Africa has one of the most “progressive”—i.e., most redistributive—and successful income tax systems in the world (Lieberman, 2001: 516),³ and, according to calculations by Morekwa and Schoeman (2005: 18), the progressivity of South Africa’s tax system has grown considerably because of post-apartheid tax reforms. Furthermore, the relative success of these taxation policies has allowed South Africa to become one of “the developing world’s largest and most generous welfare state[s],” reflecting both the dramatic expansion of social assistance programs and of

² Bhorat and van der Westhuizen, in contrast, argue that inter-racial inequality has actually been increasing. However, they offer no explanation for why their “admittedly provisional evidence” does not conform to the predominant trends found in the literature (Bhorat and van der Westhuizen, 2010: 57).

³ South Africa collects close to 15 percent of GDP in income taxes, making it “one of the world’s most successful income tax collectors” (Lieberman, 2001: 516).

public spending more generally after South Africa's democratic transition (Hassim, 2008: 104). South Africa inherited an extraordinarily expansive, if racialized, welfare system from its apartheid past (Matisonn and Seekings, 2003: 57). These generous levels of social spending were not only maintained after South Africa's transition to democracy, but they were greatly increased. In 2006, South Africa spent R177 billion, or 10 percent of its GDP, on social and welfare programs, an increase of over 50 percent from 2000 spending levels. And this growth in spending came on top of the already large increase of over 20 percent, in per-person terms, in social spending during the first five years of democracy (Van der Berg, 2009: 1; Van der Berg, 2010: 17).

Perhaps more importantly, however, the incidence of South Africa's social spending has become increasingly pro-poor. After its transition to democracy, South Africa "saw a large and significant shift of social spending away from the more affluent to the formerly disadvantaged members of the population" (van der Berg, 2001: 157), due in part to the doubling, in real terms, of spending for means tested social assistance programs between 1994 and 2006 to nearly 3.5 percent of GDP (Seekings, 2008b: 29). Additionally, other social programs, including health care, education, and housing, have become dramatically more redistributive in practice since 1994. Thus, South Africa's concentration ratio—a measure of the incidence of social spending, which ranges from negative-one to one as the distribution of spending becomes increasingly more pro-rich—changed "considerabl[y]" from 0.095 in 1995 to -0.152 in 2006, indicating "extremely good targeting of spending on the poor" (van der Berg, 2009: 12 and 18).

South Africa's progressive system of taxation and its large and well-targeted social expenditures have had a profound impact on the distribution of income. Van der Berg (2001: 157-58) calculated that taxation and social spending lowered the Gini coefficient in 1995 from 0.68 to 0.44, a decrease of over one-third. And there is some indication that inequality may actually be *falling* in South Africa, once the impact of taxation and welfare spending are considered: in a subsequent study focused on fiscal outcomes, van der Berg (2009: 18) calculated that the impact of social spending reduced the Gini coefficient by 0.14 in 1995, 0.18 in 2000, and 0.22 in 2006. Even if the increasingly progressive nature of South Africa's tax system is ignored, the redistributive impact of social spending far outpaced the growth in income inequality between 1995 and 2006, as calculated by Leibbrandt *et al.* (2010: 26). As Bosch *et al.* (2010: 9) conclude, "The research shows that the true [or perhaps, the more economically consequential] Gini coefficient for South Africa resides at much lower levels of inequality than generally reported. ... [Although] the impact of government social policies on inequality is substantial, [it is] unfortunately often overlooked."⁴

Whether and how South Africans conceive the changing nature of inequality thus has profound ramifications for South Africa. Though South Africa's high and growing rates of pre-tax and -transfer inequality threaten to undermine South Africa's nascent democracy and social cohesion, if South Africans recognize the changing nature of this inequality and the aggressive social welfare programs instituted by the post-apartheid government, the impact of

⁴ Of course, the degree of redistribution through welfare spending says nothing about the efficacy of these social programs, and there are strong indications that South Africa's social programs have largely failed to live up to their potential (Van der Berg and Moses, 2012: 133-39; Hassim, 2008: 105). But the extraordinarily effective budgetary redistributive policies that post-apartheid South Africa has undertaken indicate that the "greatest threat" to South Africa's democracy may not ultimately lie in South Africa's ostensibly high levels of inequality, but may rather lie elsewhere, for example, in the South African government's failure to successfully deliver social services.

South Africa's rising inequality may not be as deleterious as predicted. However, to date little work has examined individual perceptions of inequality. In fact, what literature does exist merely states the expected. Roberts (2004), for example, examining data from the 2003 South African Social Attitudes Survey, found that the vast majority (87 percent) of those living in the most unequal country in the world unsurprisingly agree that South Africa is too unequal.

In previous work (Telzak, 2012, 2014), I examined how 27 individuals in Cape Town, the rural areas around Mount Frere (in the Eastern Cape), and Newcastle (a small city in KwaZulu-Natal) conceived of the economic system in which they lived. Both papers found that an individual's economic background and the degree of economic mobility that he or she had experienced greatly affected his or her perceptions of inequality. In particular, those from advantaged backgrounds and those who had experienced some degree of social mobility tended to identify a broader middle class linking poor and rich, while those who had experienced little mobility saw the gap between poor and rich as insurmountable. Those who had experienced little mobility represent the majority of South Africans, suggesting that rising rates of inequality are undermining South Africa's social and economic perceived inclusiveness. Furthermore, these papers indicated that differences existed in how rural and urban populations understood South Africa's inequality regime: while those in urban areas saw the distribution of income in distinctly racial terms, those in rural areas were much less concerned with the racial distribution of income.

This chapter augments my earlier work by examining how *experiences of migration* affect perceptions of inequality. Migration is one lens through which many South Africans experience their economic system, either directly or indirectly. Investigating how these experiences shape economic perceptions is therefore particularly important in South Africa. Unlike my two earlier papers, this chapter pays close attention to perceptions of geographical economic divisions in South Africa. It does so in four parts. First, I present how my interviewees generally view inequality in South Africa and how these views divide along migration backgrounds. Next, I examine the two major divisions that my interviewees expressed during their interviews: race and geography. Third, I examine where individuals situate themselves within the South African income distribution and why they do so. Finally, I draw conclusions about the potential repercussions of these perceptions for South African society. This chapter argues that local economic conditions, and not national trends, are the salient factor shaping an individual's perceptions of inequality.

2.2 Perceptions of Inequality in South Africa

In order to facilitate discussion about the distribution of income in South African society, my interviewees were given a copy of Figure 2.1 (which was originally used in the 2005 Cape Area Study) and read a version of the following:

These four pictures show different types of society. The first picture represents a society with a small elite of rich people at the top, a few people in the middle, and a large number of poor people at the bottom. The second picture represents a society that is like a pyramid, with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle, and a lot of poor people at the bottom. The third picture shows a society in which most people are in the middle. The fourth picture shows a society with lots of people at the top, some in the middle, and very few at the bottom. Which of these pictures, in your view, describes South Africa today?

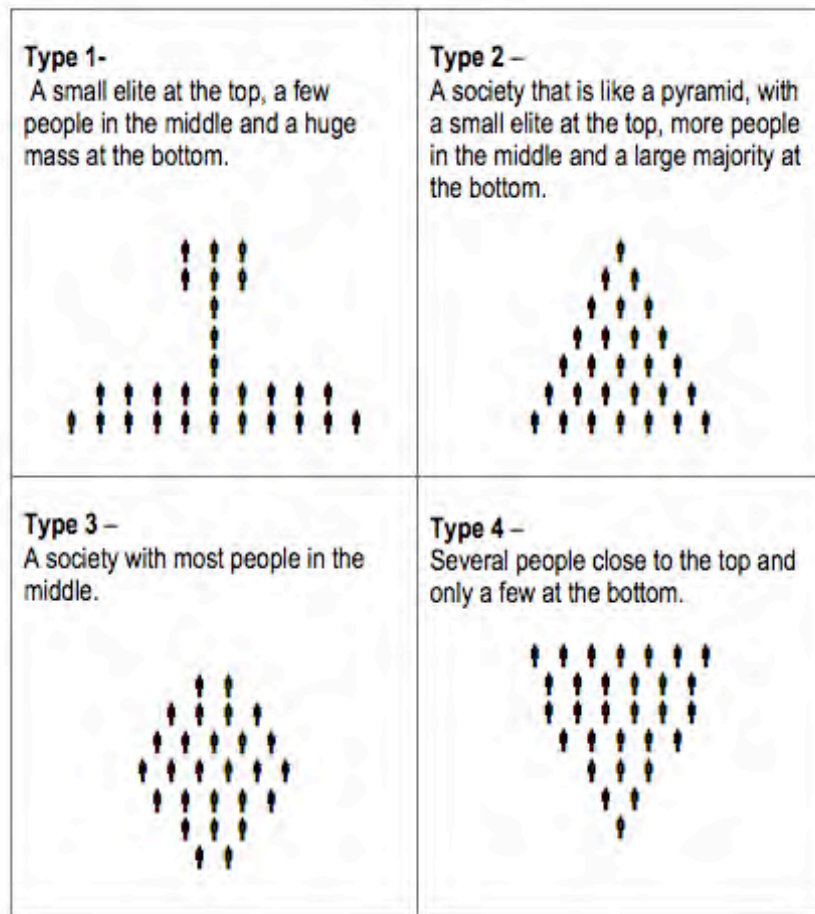


Figure 2.1: Pictures depicting different models of the economic stratification of South African society.

The small and non-random sample means that we should beware treating the data in Table 1 as representative of their larger respective populations. But it is striking that, in this small sample, there were only minor differences among the choices of interviewees in the three different migration categories. Most of the interviewees chose a picture of society that showed many poor people—i.e., most individuals in all three categories selected Type 1 or Type 2—because of what they saw as the intense suffering of the majority of South Africans. NM-6, the spaza shop and transport services owner, for example, explained that he believed society resembled Type 2 because there are people who “are making means,” but “most of the people [in South Africa] are starving. There are few people who have got money.” Similarly, R-2, the taxi owner, argued that “most of the people have got not enough money. Most people are suffering in South Africa financially. We cannot run away from that.” And M-4, the street cleaner and sangoma, asserted that she would “choose Type 1 because there are still a lot of people that are suffering. ... Many people have to go and sell just to eat something [instead of] sleeping with an empty stomach.”

Differences emerged, however, over explanations of persistent poverty. Interviewees who had never migrated, unlike migrants and returnees, tended to fault the wealthy and powerful for the continued suffering of the majority of South Africans. NM-2, the unemployed woman

Table 2.1: How the interviewees conceptualized the distribution of income in South Africa

Category	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	No Response	Total
Migrants	5	3	1	0	0	9
Returnees	6	1	2	0	0	9
Non-Migrants	5	1	1	0	1	8

from a rural area outside of Qumbu, for example, argued that the distribution of income resembled Type 2 “because South African society has some rich people but they are only interested in enriching themselves without uplifting others.” Similarly, NM-9, the unemployed Matatiele resident, described how “those who are in power don’t care about the country. ... When they are campaigning for election, they come to the people and give them false promises. When they get the positions, they forget about the people.” In rural areas, where there are many fewer economic opportunities, individuals appear to believe their fortunes are dependent on the whims of those who have control over the opportunities that do exist (i.e., the wealthy and the politicians) (see also du Toit *et al.*, 2007, which found a similar trend in Mount Frere, Eastern Cape).

The minority of the interviewees who selected Type 3—which shows a society with a broader middle class and fewer people at the top and bottom—emphasized how much society has progressed economically since the end of apartheid. NM-1, the information-technology specialist, for example, described how “those people that were in the bottom are uplift[ing] themselves to the middle, to the standard of the rest of South Africa. Everybody is striving to be in the middle ... and we now have the chances that we didn’t have before.” R-6, the municipal councilor employee, similarly described how “things are not the same as it was before.” Whereas society used to resemble Type 1, “the change that has happened is that the poor moved up now to join the richer people. They’re moving slowly but surely. The graph is moving up, up, and up day-by-day.”

These responses provide some support for the hypothesis advanced in my earlier papers (Telzak, 2012, 2014) that it is primarily an individual’s personal experience of economic mobility that shapes his or her conceptualization of the distribution of income. Although the current study did not separate individuals based on their experiences of economic mobility, two of three individuals who selected Type 3 had achieved unusually high degrees of mobility. NM-1 is an IT employee at the Department of Health and drives a luxury German car, while R-6 left a job as a financial advisor and sales representative at an insurance company to work for a ward councilor in his local community. The one exception from this pattern was R-3, who is unemployed. R-3’s mother, however, owns a spaza shop, which, according to R-3, has been very successful. R-3, who is only 22, may see himself as economically mobile because of his mother’s experience.

Despite the similarities among the interviewees in all three categories in their views of the distribution of income in South African society, they did not all agree on *which* individuals were located in different parts of the income distribution. While those in the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories tended to argue that those with government jobs occupied the upper end of the income distribution, migrants were much more likely to place those with private sector positions at the top. Non-migrants were by far the most emphatic in their views that public sector workers occupied the top of the income distribution. As NM-3, the unemployed

21-year-old, described, the people at the top are “people who are in parliament, ... Department of Education, [and] Health and Engineering.” Although he recognized that there “are” people at the top who are not part of government, he described these people as those “in nursing, those at clinics and hospitals, and teachers and police ... [and] traffic officials”—that is, people who do in fact mostly work for the South African government. Similarly, even those from the Non-Migrant category who recognized that there are private sector individuals at the top of the income distribution, failed to think of many examples. NM-7, the credit collector at a furniture store, described that she “think[s] it is politicians and business people” at the top. But when asked for specific examples of those at the top of the income distribution, she only mentioned those in politics: “People like Jacob Zuma and other political party leaders and then people in positions like public relations and councilors ... [and] mayors, people that are working for government departments.”

Those who had never migrated also conceptualized the middle of the income distribution as consisting primarily of government workers. NM-1, the information technology specialist, described how “the people [in the middle] are working “hand-in-hand with the MPs. ... I don’t know if you understand government structures, but people like Municipality managers, councilors, those people who are working for the government, to serve our communities.” Though some individuals who had never left their rural areas, like NM-4, the school security guard, were more likely to place those in the private sector in the middle of the income distribution—“people who are running small business,” for example—they ultimately believed most of those in the middle were “working in government departments.”

Returnees also emphasized the relative wealth of government workers; however, they were much more likely also to place private sector workers at the top of the income distribution than those who had never migrated. Though some, like R-4, the unemployed female individual planning to move to Johannesburg, believed that the top of the income distribution is comprised of “presidents, teachers and [] people who are working for government”—in fact, she argued that there are “no” people who are not working for government who are on top, at least “not that I can think of”—most saw the top of the distribution as more of a mix between the public and private sector. As R-8, the unemployed female who originally went to Cape Town for “health” reasons, flatly described, “I think it’s people with big businesses and those people that are working in parliament.” However, even though returnees believed that there were private sector individuals at the top of the income distribution, they often described private sector positions that were deeply connected to the public sector. R-7, the female police officer, for example, believed that “most of them [at the top] are in politics ... [and] some are in municipalities. Those,” in the private sector at the top, she continued, are those “who are getting tenders from government.”

Returnees, however, unlike those who had never left rural areas, conceptualized the middle of the distribution as much more of a mix between the public and private sectors. Though the views expressed by some returnees, like those of R-2, the taxi owner—who spoke of “teachers, nurses, police, correctional officers, [and] clerks” as the only people in the middle—resembled the views expressed by non-migrants, more often than not, the returnees believed that the middle was occupied primarily by those in the private sector. R-5, the government projects administrator, pointed to “mine workers, security guards, house builders and other people in construction.” While R-4, described those in the middle as “people who are working in mines, on the streets as cleaners and also cashiers.”

In contrast to returnees and non-migrants, migrants believed that the top of the income distribution was occupied primarily by those in the private sector. M-1, the policeman, “would refer to the businessmen” when describing the top of the distribution. “For instance, ... if I can talk about the man who owns all the Pick n’ Pays in South Africa. I refer to them as the people on the top.” M-6, the manager in a department store collections department, concurred: “The kinds of people that are here at the top are businessmen. We’re talking about the people who have means of businesses. ... Those people who own businesses, like investment banks, like investment companies, like goldmines and all that.” Similarly M-2, the Transnet worker, described how “most of them [on top], they are doing business, owning their own businesses. ... That’s all I can say.” Only after she was asked where she would place the politicians did she suggest that “parliamentarians,” “cabinet” members and “presidents” were all “on top.” Others were less emphatic and painted the top as a mixture of government and private sector workers. But ultimately most migrants believed that the top of the income distribution comprised primarily of individuals with private sector jobs.

The migrants’ relatively large emphasis on private sector jobs held for the middle of the income distribution as well. As M-4 described, “Teachers” are in the middle, but more generally the middle are the people who “are working for private companies and everyone who wakes up and goes to a job.” And as M-1 asserted, “I can refer to the working class, especially those who are working for the big companies like Old Mutual, Sanlam,” as those in the middle.

In large part, this trend probably reflects the different opportunities available in rural and urban areas and the relatively higher salaries of government workers. The private sector in rural areas is significantly less developed than it is in urban areas and the vast majority of formal employment in rural areas is in the public sector (du Toit *et al.*, 2007: 526; van der Berg *et al.*, 2002: 7 and 15). Furthermore, higher-level public sector jobs are particularly accessible to black individuals. Though black Africans have always been employed in large numbers in the public sector in South Africa, during apartheid their advancement was severely constricted (Cameron, 2005: 77). Since the transition to democracy, however, there has been a concerted effort to integrate the senior levels of the public sector, and by 2011 87 percent of senior managers were non-white, up from 35 percent in 1995 (Cameron, 2005: 82; Public Service Commission, 2011: 50). Furthermore, whereas black Africans occupy nearly all public-sector jobs in traditional areas because there are virtually no non-black residents, white and coloured individuals occupy many of the public-sector jobs in Cape Town, where black Africans are still in the minority. The public sector may thus represent the primary pathway to social mobility for most black individuals in South Africa, especially those who live in rural areas.

In contrast, the apartheid government focused on building private sector industry in the major commercial centers of South Africa, a legacy that survives today. In fact, the only clear exceptions to the emphasis among migrants on the concentration of private-sector workers in the middle and top of the income distribution were those who worked in government jobs themselves. M-5, who works as a cleaner in government offices, stated emphatically that “there’s no one” at the top who does not work for government. Similarly, M-3, who is an auditor for the Department of Labour, initially said, “I think the ones on the top are the ones like presidents. Those are the ones that are the richest,” but then backtracked, arguing that “maybe the business guys [are also on top], like those people who are running Woolworths, Shoprite, and stuff.”

These trends would lend some further support to the hypothesis that local economic conditions may shape how individuals in South Africa conceptualize economic inequality. It also suggests that *personal* economic experience may play an equally, if not more, important role (see Piketty, 1995). As M-1 described: Before he came to Cape Town, “I didn’t know anything about private sector. I only knew about government. ... I didn’t know anything about private sector.”

However, there seems to be another reason why the interviewees placed government workers near the top, divorced from their local economic experiences: the benefits and perceived stability of government jobs. My interviewees mostly used monetary terms—like “rich” and “poor”—to describe those on the top and the bottom of the income distribution and often spoke about the distribution of income as a “financial” issue. As NM-3, the 21-year-old unemployed individual, described, he placed people in various parts of the income distribution “because of their salaries: the ones of those at the bottom are not the same as those who are in the middle ... and those who are at the top.”

However, when describing the placement of government workers, my interviewees often highlighted the benefits these individuals were provided. R-5, who works on a government project building houses, argued that those in the government were rich because of their benefits: “They get government subsidies when someone is buying a car or a house. The government assists them in most of the things that they need.” Similarly, M-2, who works for Transnet, argued that government jobs are better than private sector jobs “because the government jobs, they’ve got a lot of—what can I call this? Let me make an example: you’re working for government, you do get a housing allowance, stuff like medical aid and all the other stuff of which the person who’s working for Shoprite doesn’t have a house allowance, doesn’t maybe have the medical aid that the government is providing.” As NM-8, the government projects administrator, described, “For most of us black people government opportunities are better. ... You can start a business but it may fall along the way. Yet if you work for government you’ll get a pension [until] the end of your time.”

The perceived stability of government jobs, however, was viewed by the interviewees as more important than the benefits that these jobs provided. The most important “benefit” of government jobs not “offer[ed]” by “private businesses,” according to NM-4, the school security guard, is that “in private jobs you don’t get formal notice. ... but you do with government.” As NM-7, the female credit collector, explained, she would rank teachers higher than those with tenders, even if those with tenders make more money, “because teachers are working for government on a stable income. People who are getting tenders are dependent on availability of tenders. They spend periods of time without doing work.” M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, was even more emphatic: “You don’t stop working for government until you retire or die. In [the] private sector [however] you [can] get retrenched” anytime. In fact, R-6 went so far as to claim that members of parliament were *not* on top because they were in “temporary” positions: “I can’t say the politicians are rich because that’s not a thing that someone can survive with because they are on contract. So you can’t really mention that because that particular job is not for a lifetime. Usually it’s a five-year contract. So you can be rich these five years and the next five years poor. So I don’t want to say they are rich.”

In contrast, migrants, who were more likely to place private workers on top, highlighted the relatively high pay of the private sector. M-1, once he learned about the private sector when he came to Cape Town, realized that “private jobs are also better” and asserted that “if there

could be posts advertised, for instance for protection services, [in the private sector] with all the requirements that I meet, I'll definitely leave the government and go for the higher post on that side.” Similarly, M-6 described how, though in government “they look after you and you know that you are secured in terms of retrenchments and all that,” “private jobs, they pay very well.”

There was, however, general agreement among interviewees from all three categories about who was at the bottom: those who were struggling financially. NM-8, the administrator of a government project, argued that those at the bottom are “people who are earning very little, just to eat at the end of the day. ... [And] those people that are not working but earning social grants.” M-4, the street cleaner and sangoma, described these people as those who “are struggling for survival. Those who depend on government grants, individuals who are selling in schools and stations to have food to eat.” However, there was much less agreement about whether the salient characteristic uniting those at the bottom was race or geography.

2.3 The great divide: race or geography?

Though migration experience does not appear to have as strong an impact on how individuals conceptualize the distribution of income in South Africa as mobility experience does (Telzak, 2012, 2014), it does influence an individual’s views on the relative economic position of those in the public and private sectors. Perhaps more importantly, however, migration experience deeply affects which of the two great economic divides in South African society individuals consider more salient: race or geography. While migrants to Cape Town highlighted the racial divide, those who had never left rural areas and those who had returned from Cape Town tended to emphasize the rural-urban divide. These findings provide further evidence that personal economic experiences, and not national trends, are the primary factor in shaping an individual’s economic perceptions and support the findings of my earlier research that those in rural areas are much less concerned with the racialized distribution of income in South Africa than those in urban areas.

2.3.1 Racial Divisions

Although the apartheid government deliberately structured the labor market, growth path, and welfare benefits of South Africa to benefit its white constituents, beginning in the 1970s race became less and less important for reproducing privilege (Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 6, 91). In fact, by 2000, the upper classes were nearly as black as they were white (García-Rivero, 2006: 66; Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 306). As Natrass and Seekings (2001: 47) conclude, “In South Africa, black and white are *no longer* synonymous with rich and poor” (emphasis in original).

Still, interviewees from all three migration categories continued to conceptualize the distribution of income in South Africa along distinctly racial terms. Migrants had the least accurate conceptualization of the racial division of income in South Africa. As M-1, the policeman argued, “In South Africa, most of the white people are still on top ... [while] most of [the black people] are here on the bottom. ... It doesn’t mean that because there are white people on top, there’s no black person. They are still there. But I think that there are just a few on top.” Similarly, M-5, the cleaner in government offices, argued that “most [of the

white people] are on top but also in the middle,” while most of the black people are below them.

In contrast, those from the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories tended to have a slightly more accurate understanding of the changing nature of South African inequality. Most still believed that race was still closely related to class. As NM-6, the spaza shop owner, described, “I would put most of [the white people] on top. ... There are some Africans who are higher up but the majority of them are in the middle to the bottom.” R-2, the taxi owner, echoed this sentiment when he said, “The white people are at the top and ... [there are only a few] black people, those who have benefited from the Black Economic Empowerment.” However, many of those in the Non-Migrants and Returnee categories recognized the changing relationship between race and class. R-4, the unemployed individual who was planning to move to Johannesburg, described how “when we were growing up in most cases, it used to be the white people who have got money and Africans were working for white people, not Africans working for other Africans,” though this had since changed. Similarly, NM-4, the school security guard, described how “I would rate most of [the white people] in the middle class and some of them on top.” Blacks, however, filled out the rest of those on top. As R-9, the clothing store worker, acknowledged, “I can put [the white people] on top. ... I have never seen a white person who is suffering,” but today, she continued, there are black people “on top, middle, and bottom.”

Perhaps more importantly, interviewees in all three categories gave different reasons for the continued association between race and inequality. While those who had never migrated tended to fault black South Africans—and praise white South Africans—for their relative economic positions, those who had migrated to Cape Town attributed the class divide between the races to the structural disadvantages faced by black Africans. Returnees, perhaps because they had spent time in urban areas but currently lived in rural ones, offered a combination of both reasons.

Those who had never migrated offered two primary reasons for why white South Africans continue to experience more economic success than black South Africans: the economic support that white individuals provide to one another and their shrewd economic planning. NM-3, the unemployed 21-year-old, described the support that white individuals provide for other white people in detail:

The thing is white people [] help one another—they [] assist one another and say, ‘To succeed, do like this!’ ... They do not look down on that other person. So for example, a person will ask them how they got to where they are and they will tell them, ‘I did this and this!’ and they will ensure that the other person gets to that level as well.

As NM-3 concluded, “White people look out for one another, but black people just don’t. ... We do not think about one another. When I see another person I will not care about him because I know he won’t care about me as well.” NM-9, NM-2, NM-7, and NM-8 all echoed this viewpoint. As NM-8, the administrator on a government project, argued, white people are “supportive towards one another in terms of helping each other. ... Perhaps it’s also in our nature that as Africans we are selfish and only do what we can to enrich ourselves. We only want to succeed alone.”

Some who never migrated did recognize that white individuals were starting from an economically advantaged position. As NM-4, the security guard, highlighted, “Most of [the white people] inherit what their parents planned for their future. Their parents give them financial support: at the age of 21, their parents give them their own place to stay. By the time he starts working, he’s already having money in his pocket and that doesn’t happen to us black people.” But instead of blaming the structural legacy of apartheid for these advantages, Non-migrants tended to fault the planning and spending habits of black South Africans. As NM-4 continued, black people do not have that support because of “our nature. Black people are more about owning livestock; they spend their money on livestock.” Instead of focusing on livestock, however, he argued that black people “should focus on investing money with intentions of supporting their children in the near future.” NM-7, the credit collector, expressed nearly identical sentiments: “Africans like expensive things more than planning for the future. They spend money on expensive things.”

In contrast, migrants were much more likely to attribute the advantaged economic position of white South Africans to the legacy of apartheid. Though at least one migrant—M-3, the auditor, who attributed the economic position of black Africans to their “laziness”—blamed black South Africans for their lack of economic success, most, like M-6, argued that “we cannot run away from [the] political structure that we had previously. They disadvantaged us. It was disadvantageous to certain people in South Africa. So that is why I am saying most of [the white people] are there because they have inherited from their forefathers.” M-4, the street cleaner and sangoma, was even more blunt in her assessment: “I would put most of [the white people] ... on top ... because they have stolen from us: livestock, land and everything our forefathers had. Now we must buy from them the same things they stole from us. ... We are struggling and begging from white people.” In fact, M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, saw the continued “suffering” of black South Africans as the result of “racial discrimination. ... [Black Africans] are racially discriminated at the workplace in favor of whites and sometimes coloreds.” Since apartheid, M-7 argued, “things have only changed a bit.”

Returnees offered a combination of these individual and structural reasons for the continued correlation between race and class. The vast majority of those in the Returnee category highlighted, to some degree, the advantages that white individuals gained from apartheid. R-1, the policeman, captured the prevailing sentiment well when he described how “the government—the apartheid government—they were supporting [white people]. They were supported by government and you’ll find out they were subsidized.” But they disagreed over how salient this support is for the continued inequality between white and black South Africans. R-1, for example, believed that this history was of little relevance to the present. Whites are “bit-by-bit going down, but not so far down,” because “they educate themselves and they try to keep the[ir] names alive.” Blacks on the other hand, “Let their kids do whatever they want to do.” Similarly, R-5 saw the success of whites as partially a result of their previous economic advantages: as he described, “Most of [the white people], their fathers have businesses which they inherit and keep them on top. ... That’s why they can’t be in the bottom. They inherit assets from their fathers.” But he blamed black individuals themselves for not being able to achieve similar success: black people, he argued, are “in the middle and some on top, but the majority [are] in the bottom. ... The problem is that, if one inherited a business from their father, they mismanage it and it collapses. Others get tenders and blow the cash. They all end up falling back to the bottom.” In contrast, R-2 attributed the economic differences among racial groups in South Africa exclusively “to the outcomes of white supremacy. Because of the apartheid system, most of the people lost their things.”

Both sets of explanations indicate how deep the racial divisions in South Africa remain. Those offered by non-migrants suggest that the legacy of apartheid (and its founding principle that black individuals were inferior to white individuals) may still continue to affect how black South Africans view themselves. And those offered by the migrants and returnees, which echo views frequently espoused by many past and current post-apartheid political leaders (see, e.g., Gillion, as quoted in Polgreen, 2012; Zuma, 2012; Mbeki, as quoted in Hadland and Rantao, 1999), indicate that racialized economic divisions in South Africa—despite the progress that has been made—continue to fragment South African society and oppose efforts at national cohesion. As R-2, the taxi owner, bemoaned, “Although they are saying now it’s a ‘rainbow nation,’ it’ll never be a rainbow nation. Why am I saying that? There are still people, there are still black people with no jobs. ... It’s a pity we’re in this” place. Both sets of explanations reflect the distinctly racialized prism through which many black Africans continue to view themselves and society, a trend observed repeatedly in South African social attitudes surveys (see, e.g., Grossberg *et al.*, 2006).

Although interviewees from all three migration categories had strong opinions on the relationship between race and class in South Africa, all of the interviewees were not equally interested in the relative economic position of South Africa’s racial groups. Most of those in the Migrant category brought up the connection between race and class organically. When asked, “What kinds of people are at the top?” and “What kinds of people are at the bottom?” more often than not, migrants responded with racial descriptions. This could reflect Cape Town’s unique demographics—a non-majority black African city in a majority black African country—and the continued association of race and class in Cape Town. Though the upper ends of the income distribution have experienced substantial integration nationally (see *supra* P. 17), economically Cape Town, with few wealthy black residents, still remains largely divided along racial lines. There is some tentative support for this hypothesis. M-6, the collections department manager, when describing who secured jobs in South Africa, argued that “it varies from province to province.” In Cape Town, where “the majority of people who are here are coloured and white ... [the] people who [] get most of the jobs are coloureds and whites.” Conversely, he continued, “If you go to other provinces, ... the first people who will be able to be appointed there is the other [black African] cultures.”

In contrast, those from the Returnee and Non-Migrant categories, who live in an area where the population is almost entirely black African, rarely brought up issues surrounding race independently. With two exceptions (both of whom were returnees from Cape Town), those in the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories only spoke about race once they were asked guiding questions. For them, the much more salient economic division in South African society was geographic.

2.3.2 Geographic Divisions

Those living in rural areas tended not to stress the intersection of race and class. During the interviews, the interviewees gave some indication of why they did not emphasize the continued relationship between race and inequality: to them, skin color was not the proximate cause of the poverty of black Africans. Rather, the concentration of South Africa’s black population in rural areas spurred their relative poverty. R-2, the taxi owner, for example, described how those at the bottom, based on “color, [are] black people. We’re always vulnerable. [We] live in the outskirts. You have people who are living far, far, far [away] in remote areas, where there’s no routes, no electricity, no water, nothing.” Similarly, NM-5, the

administrative intern at a local school, when describing why black individuals in South Africa were poorer than white individuals, attributed it to the geographical divide between blacks and whites: “Some of us [black people],” she argued, “Grew up in rural areas [while] most of the white people grew up in urban areas.”

These views reflect the systematic underdevelopment of rural areas during apartheid. While large numbers of black individuals were forcibly removed from “white” towns and farms to rural and peri-urban areas, the apartheid government purposefully neglected these areas in order to provide a source of cheap labor to white-owned companies. Two decades after the end of apartheid, South Africa’s rural, black population continues to lag behind the rest of South Africa in key infrastructural, economic, and human-development categories (Neves, 2008; du Toit *et al.*, 2007: 525; Anderson, 2006; Roux and van Tonder, 2006).

Although those living in the rural area placed particular emphasis on the geographical divisions in South Africa, migrants also recognized the importance of the economic divide between those living in rural and urban areas. However, interviewees from all three categories did not agree on why those living in rural areas were poorer than those in urban ones: while those who had never migrated stressed the relative lack of job opportunities in rural areas compared with urban areas, migrants and returnees tended to emphasize the lack of infrastructure in rural areas. Responses to questions about what the South African government could do to improve urban and rural areas (Appendix A, Questions 2a-2e) suggest why this division exists. Those who had spent some time in Cape Town recognized the economic impact of infrastructural development while those who had never migrated tended to view infrastructural development as a quality-of-life consideration.

Non-migrants viewed the economic divide between urban and rural areas as a result of the disparity in job opportunities. As NM-4, the school security guard, described, people in rural areas are “at the bottom ... because there are no jobs.” In contrast, NM-5, the administrative intern, continued, “I can put the [urban people] on top ... because we always believe that the money is in town and also jobs are found in towns.” Many, like NM-2, the unemployed female individual with a human resources certificate, recognized that there are people in urban areas who are “at the bottom because there are [] those in urban areas that are similar to us in rural areas, who are not working and struggling.” However, most still agreed with NM-8, the government projects administrator, who argued that “people that are in urban areas are getting lots of piece jobs because there are many ongoing projects there. People here are very poor and dependent on social grants.”

Returnees also stressed the lack of job opportunities in rural areas. R-1, the male police officer, described how people in rural areas are “at the bottom ... because most of them, they are depending on grants. ... [There are] no jobs, so the only person who’s got money in that certain home is the grandfather and grandmother,” who presumably have Old Age Pensions. Similarly, R-4, the female individual who had spent 11 years in Cape Town but has since returned, also described how people in rural areas are “at the bottom ... because there are many people who stay here not working.” In contrast, she continued, the urban people are “in the middle ... [because] some of them are working.” Even the jobs that do exist in rural areas, R-6, the municipal council employee, argued, are of lesser quality than those that exist in urban areas: “Here [in rural areas] we don’t have those big companies [like in urban areas]. ... Even if you are working here you are working for small companies and you don’t earn as much money as you could earn when you’re out there in cities.”

However, returnees, unlike those who had never migrated, also emphasized the infrastructural disparities between rural and urban areas when describing the economic divide between the two. R-2, the taxi owner, for example, described how those in the townships often “suffer[] the same as [] the ones who are in rural areas ... but they differ in terms of infrastructure. ... There are roads in urban areas. There’s electricity. In some rural areas, there is electricity and there are those access roads, but not proper roads.” In contrast, R-9, the clothing store employee, highlighted how these infrastructural disparities affected schools in rural and urban areas: “Even the schools are not the same like the ones in rural areas. ... The way that the schools are being built is not the same like rural areas. They have everything that the school needs.” As R-6 described, he “would place” those in rural areas “here, in the middle to the bottom. The ones that are on top are the ones that come from the locations or they are in towns ... [because] here we don’t have electricity [but there they do], so they have access to everything. They are watching TV. They have things at the current moment.”

Migrants, however, almost exclusively focused on the infrastructural differences between rural and urban locations. When asked why he would place rural people “on the bottom,” M-1, the police officer, responded, “Firstly if I can talk about infrastructure, it’s something that causes me to put those people [on the bottom] because the areas where they live, they’re unplanned, not easily accessible, you find no electricity in some areas.” As M-3, the Department of Labour auditor, described, people in townships were “definitely” better off than people in rural areas because “if you compare infrastructure of rural areas and here in townships, and you look at the police stations, clinics, all those things, those are the [things] that you never find nearby in rural areas. But if you go to townships, you will find a clinic—one or two—[and] you will have police stations.”

Even migrants who highlighted the difficulty of finding jobs in rural areas tended to attribute the lack of job opportunities to the infrastructural underdevelopment of these areas. M-6, the collections department manager, described why urban areas are better off than rural ones: It’s because of “the fact that they are able to get jobs. They can get jobs.” However, he believed that the job opportunities in urban areas were a result of the infrastructural development of these areas. As he continued, “They’re more exposed in different things [in urban areas]. Technologies are more advanced compared to the Eastern Cape. Like if you’re here in Cape Town in townships, you are able to have access to a computer. If you’re looking for a job then you can be able to apply through a computer.” M-3, the Department of Labour auditor, was even more direct in her connection between the lack of jobs in the Eastern Cape and the failure of government to build infrastructure in those areas. “The Eastern Cape”—what she describes as “those places that you can’t even reach them, [because] there’s no roads that you can go there”—“is the worst place for jobs. ... It’s not that they don’t want to do something, but the services that they’re getting, it’s very slow to go to Eastern Cape. It’s very slow, the services from government to go to the Eastern Cape. It’s very slow.”

Responses to questions about what the South African government should do to improve rural areas indicate why the disparities in job opportunities were the salient distinction between rural and urban areas for non-migrants, while returnees and migrants tended to emphasize infrastructure. Most of those in the Non-Migrant category failed to recognize the developmental impact of infrastructure. In contrast, returnees had a more accurate grasp of the relationship between infrastructure and economic development. Migrants believed infrastructural development was synonymous with economic development.

Those who had never left Alfred Nzo saw infrastructural development as primarily a quality-of-life concern. NM-3, the unemployed 21 year-old young man, for example, argued that “the government must do the same for rural [areas] as it is doing for urban areas. They have a lot of things there in urban areas ... like RDP houses, water, sanitation projects and so on.” These improvements according to NM-3, however, would primarily shape the quality-of-life of those living in rural areas. If the government does all these things, he continued, “Life would be much better for those people who are poor and in rural areas.” Whatever developmental impact those who had never left Alfred Nzo did see in government investment in infrastructure was extremely limited. NM-9, the unemployed woman living outside of Matatiele, described how, if the government brought “electricity, water, RDP houses in rural areas for the poor, clinics, roads, as well as transport ... jobs will be created.” However, once these services have been delivered, “People will carry on with life after that [as before].” Similarly NM-4, the security officer, described how the government needed to focus on “infrastructure development ... like construction of roads, water and other things like RDP houses.” During this process, “many people will get jobs and poverty will be alleviated,” but these efforts will do little to help “private businesses.” The non-migrants, thus, argued that in addition to infrastructure, the South African government—as NM-4 continued—must focus on a second, distinct goal: “open[ing] more job opportunities [and] help[ing] those graduates without jobs get jobs.”

Returnees, who attributed the economic differences between rural and urban areas to both differences in job opportunities and infrastructure, had a better grasp of the developmental impact of infrastructure. Some saw the direct relationship between infrastructure and development. R-8, the unemployed woman who originally moved to Cape Town for health reasons, for example, described how the government needed “to ensure that all the services reach people and provide RDP houses for people in rural areas.” If they do this, she continued, “There will be development here in rural areas.” Similarly, R-9, the clothing store employee, described how, if the government “can improve the schools, clinics, streets lights, and fix the roads, people can get jobs. ... People can get job opportunities.” But most saw infrastructure delivery as a mix of a quality-of-life and a development issue. As R-5, the worker on a government housing project, described, the primary benefit of infrastructure development would be “to provide us with electricity so that we can also watch TV [and] charge our cell phones.” However, “build[ing] roads, RDP houses, [and especially] deploy[ing] some white teachers in our primary education in order for our kids to improve their English”—R-5 believed that his lack of fluency in English was among the primary reasons he did not succeed while in Cape Town—would “open the doors” for rural South Africans.

Those in the Migrant category—who attributed the disparities between rural and urban areas to infrastructural issues—viewed infrastructural development as synonymous with economic development. As M-1, who had earlier argued that “infrastructure ... cause[d] me to put those people” in rural areas at the bottom, asserted that people in rural areas did want to work. However, “if their living condition is like that [i.e., without infrastructure], obviously it shows that those are [] people ... [who] cannot do anything for themselves, like maybe try to redevelop the place where they live. They have got no means to survive.” M-6 was even more direct in his associations between infrastructure and economic development: “If the government did everything [with relation to infrastructure] in the stage that they want it to be, then everyone would stay in the Eastern Cape because the jobs will be able to be created there and the people won’t have to move to other areas to look for a job.”

However, perhaps because they had achieved some degree of success in Cape Town, migrants were ultimately much less focused on the economic underdevelopment of rural areas. M-6 argued that the government does “enough [for rural areas]. It takes time. ... People who are there, they didn’t have toilets, they didn’t have running water, they didn’t have nothing. [Now,] the progress is there.” Similarly, M-1, who had earlier recognized the developmental impact of infrastructure, ultimately believed there was little urgency for the government to focus on the infrastructure of rural area and that doing so was wasteful: “I believe that if government might be thinking of having the structure in the rural areas whereby each and every house has a road next to it,” he argued, “it [would be] a lot of money that would be wasted.”

The relationship between infrastructure and economic growth is well documented in the development literature (see, e.g., World Bank, 1994; Aschauer, 1989). Cape Town—and the Western Cape more generally—has some of the most advanced infrastructure, and perhaps not coincidentally the second largest gross regional product, in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2011*b*: 31; Statistics South Africa, 2010*a*: 4). Those who recognized the relationship between infrastructure and economic development—i.e., those who had spent time in Cape Town—saw the lack of infrastructure as the proximate cause of the poverty of rural areas and suggested that the government should focus on building infrastructure to develop these areas. However, those who did not recognize this relationship—i.e., those who had spent little time outside of rural areas, including some returnees—believed that a lack of jobs was responsible for the relative poverty of rural South Africans and offered fewer concrete suggestions (besides the amorphous entreaty that the government deliver “jobs”) for how to develop rural areas in South Africa. Merely building this infrastructure may not be sufficient to foster sustained economic growth in rural areas. As Bank and Minkley (2005: 20-21) argue, this approach has largely failed in South Africa thus far and more direct government intervention is necessary to stimulate “new variants of rural capitalism.” However, regardless of what additional steps are necessary to economically develop rural areas, infrastructure appears to be a prerequisite.

2.4 Self-placement: A lens of poverty?

During the interviews, individuals were asked where they would place themselves in the income distribution of South Africa. Subsequently, in the survey portion of the interview the respondents were asked for their household income (Appendix A, Question 1D and Appendix B, Questions B.13 and B.14). The vast majority of interviewees placed themselves at the bottom of the income distribution, although most of them were in households in the top three quintiles. There are two possible explanations for why these individuals underestimated their relative economic position: these views could reflect the fact that individuals look primarily at their own economic experiences when determining their relative economic position in society or that poverty continues to be the lens through which many black Africans view their economic situation.

The vast majority of the interviewees placed themselves at the “bottom” of the income distribution (see Table 2.3). Only five of the 26 interviewees (19 percent) placed themselves in the “middle” of the distribution and none of the interviewees placed themselves at the top. Furthermore, those who placed themselves in the middle (including NM-1, R-6, and M-3) tended to place themselves at the bottom end of the middle. Where the interviewees placed themselves in the income distribution, however, appears to be largely divorced from reality.

Table 2.2: Per-capita household income in South Africa

Quintile	Monthly Per-Capita Income (2011)	Percentage CPI Change between Jan. 2012 and Jan. 2014	Monthly Per-Capita Income (2014)
1	Up to R379	11.45	R422
2	R380 – R819	11.45	R423 – R913
3	R820 – R1 749	11.45	R914 – R1 949
4	R1 750 – R4 759	11.45	R1 950 – R5 304
5	R4 760 and above	11.45	R5 305 and above

Sources: Per-capita income measurements were calculated from Statistics South Africa (2012) and CPI figures were calculated from http://beta2.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=735&id=3.

Every five years since 2000, Statistics South Africa—the statistical service of the South African government—has conducted a comprehensive Income and Expenditure Survey (IES). The last one, conducted in 2010/2011, collected income and expenditure data from 25,328 households between September 2010 and August 2011 (Statistics South Africa, 2012*b*). Because this study collected data on self-reported household income (Appendix B, Questions B.13 and B.14), by adjusting the per-capita household income reported in the 2010/2011 IES for inflation using the CPI deflator, these data can be used to determine where the interviewees’ incomes rank nationally. Although self-reported household income may be less reliable than expenditure-based measures,⁵ it is possible to get a rough estimate of how the interviewees’ self-placement compares to their actual economic position in society (see Table 2.2).

By comparing the per-capita household quintile data calculated from the 2010/2011 IES to the interviewees’ self-reported household income, it becomes apparent just how much the interviewees underestimated their relative economic positions (see Table 2.3). Although only five of the 26 interviewees did not place themselves in the bottom of the income distribution, well over half (15 of the 26 individuals) have per-capita household incomes that put them in the top three quintiles. Eight of those individuals are among the richest 40 percent of South Africans. This underestimation of their relative economic positions appears to transcend migration experience. NM-7, the credit collector, for example, whose per-capita household income was securely in the middle of the income distribution, describes herself as “on the very bottom end.” Similarly, R-1, the male police officer, whose income approached the fifth quintile, argued that he was only on the “second row from the bottom.” And M-6, the collections department manager, whose income was similar to R-1’s, also placed himself in “the second to last level.”

The remaining 11 individuals were relatively poor and had a more accurate understanding of their economic position in society: six of those interviewed had per-capita household incomes below R500 per month (or incomes at or below the inflation-adjusted lower-bound poverty line—the amount under which South Africans are not able to afford necessary food and non-food items—which was R443 in 2011 prices [Statistics South Africa, 2014*a*: 7-8]), and only two of them were in the second income quintile. Yet despite the comparative poverty of a

⁵ This study collected self-reported household income, and not expenditure data, because of the time-intensive nature of expenditure surveys.

Table 2.3: Distribution of per-capita household income among the interviewees

	Monthly Household Income	Number of Household Members	Monthly Per-Capita Household Income	Quintile (1 = poorest; 5 = richest)	Self-Placement (seven rows from the bottom to the top of each diagram in Figure 2.1)
NM-1	R19 000	6	R3 167	4	“Third one from the bottom,” but in the middle
NM-2	R1 000	7	R143	1	“I’d place myself in the very bottom end”
NM-3	R1 300	5	R260	1	“I am here at the bottom”
NM-4	R5 600	1	R5 600	5	“There, in the bottom”
NM-5	R7 500*	5	R1 500	3	“Maybe I am here in the middle”
NM-6	R4 200	5	R840	2	“Maybe in this line [the second one]” from the bottom
NM-7	R6 370	6	R1 062	3	“I’d place myself on the very bottom end”
NM-8	R2 000	7	R286	1	“At the bottom”
NM-9	R300	2	R150	1	“At the bottom”
R-1	R19 000	4	R4 750	4	“The second row from the bottom”
R-2	R13 000	10	R1 300	3	“I am there myself ... [in] the bottom group”
R-3	R2 500	2	R1 250	3	-----**
R-4	R4 800	6	R800	2	“Here at the bottom”
R-5	R1 600	7	R229	1	-----†
R-6	R4 000*	4	R1 000	3	“Third [from the bottom] in the middle”
R-7	R7 500*	3	R2 500	4	“On the bottom”
R-8	R1 500	4	R375	1	“I’m at the bottom”
R-9	R2 000	4	R500	1	“I can put myself at the bottom”
M-1	R13 000	6	R2 167	4	“At the moment, I will place myself here [the second level from the bottom]”
M-2	R20 000	7	R2 857	4	“I’m still at the bottom”
M-3	R25 000	5	R5 000	4	“For now I’m in the middle” but at the very bottom of the middle
M-4	R3 000	5	R600	1	“At the bottom”
M-5	R2 700	2	R1 350	3	“At the bottom”
M-6	R30 000	6	R5 000	4	“I would place myself here, the second to last level”
M-7	R1 000	2	R500	1	“At the bottom”
M-8	R2 300	2	R1 150	3	“In the middle”

*Those who did not know their exact monthly household income were asked to select the income range that best reflected their household income (Appendix B, Question B.14). For the purposes of this analysis, the simple average of these monthly ranges was used.

**R-3 did not provide a response to the question of where he would place himself within the income distribution.

†R-5 did not understand the question; he answered prospectively (where he wants to be) and not contemporaneously (where he is now).

significant portion of the sample (and their accurate understanding of this poverty), the overall self-placement trend is clear: none of the 26 interviewees overestimated their relative economic position.⁶

Posel (2012: 6-11) found a similar trend in her analysis of data from the first two waves of NIDS. Respondents were asked to place their households' relative economic position on a six-step ladder, with the top of the ladder representing the top of the income distribution. Over half of NIDS respondents placed themselves in the bottom third of the income distribution in both 2008 and 2010, while fewer than three percent of respondents believed they were in the top third of the distribution. Posel posits that part of the discrepancy between subjective and objective economic status may reflect the fact that "people do not have complete or accurate information about the economic status of others" (*Ibid.*: 9).

During the interviews, a second explanation presented itself: individuals may mostly ignore the economic status of others when conceptualizing their own *relative* economic position. Instead, they may judge their economic position based on where they had *expected* to be economically, not on where they are relative to the rest of the population. R-2, the taxi owner who is on the upper end of the fourth quintile, for example, described how "I am there myself ... [in] the bottom group ... because I don't have money, I don't have means to make my life progress the way I wanted it to be. I wanted to be educated, I wanted to have professional jobs, you know. But now see where I am?" Similarly, M-2, the Transnet worker who is also in the fourth quintile, described how "I am still at the bottom. ... It's because I haven't got what I want. I haven't achieved what I was supposed to be achieving at the moment, so I'm still at the bottom trying my way up to the middle." M-6, the debt collector whose per-capita household income approaches the fifth quintile, provides the most direct evidence for this hypothesis: "On this picture, I would place myself here: the second to last level ... because I'm still very far. I'm still very far from where I'm supposed to be. ... You can see that in terms of salaries that I get, I'm still very far." These responses indicate that the discrepancy between subjective and objective economic status among South Africans may reflect the fact that individuals look towards their own experiences and aspirations when estimating their relative economic position more than it reflects imperfect information about the economic status of others, as Posel suggests.

There is another potential explanation for why South Africans tend to underestimate their relative economic position. Posel (2012: 8) found that black Africans were more likely to underestimate their relative economic position than white individuals. She hypothesizes that this may be the case because "one of the legacies of apartheid may be that even relatively rich Africans still perceive their economic status as being inferior, particularly to Whites" (*Ibid.*: 9). The individuals in all three migration categories viewed themselves as part of an "inferior" economic group, though they differed over which group this was: while migrants emphasized the racial elements of inequality, returnees and those who had never migrated emphasized inequality's geographical elements.

These findings suggest that black Africans continue to view society through a lens of poverty. Viewing society through a particular economic lens is not unique to black South Africans.

⁶ Because Statistics South Africa does not release local quintile data, national income quintiles were used in this analysis. Individuals in rural areas like Alfred Nzo are, however, poorer on average than individuals in urban ones like Cape Town. The interviewees who live in Alfred Nzo are thus most likely underestimating their *local* economic positions by a greater amount than the national data suggest, while those living in Cape Town may in fact have a more accurate understanding of their *local* economic positions.

Surveys from both the Pew Research Center and Gallup—both polling organizations that track social, demographic, economic, and political trends—for example, have consistently found that approximately half of Americans identify themselves as “middle class,” though the Pew Research Center observed a marked decline of those who consider themselves “middle class” during the Great Recession (Pew Social & Demographic Trends, 2012: 3-4; Dugan, 2012). This middle-class ethos has been synonymous with American society since at least 1835-1840 when Alexis de Tocqueville published his two-volume tome *Democracy in America* (de Tocqueville, 2000). Similarly, Cruces *et al.* (2013) found that most Argentines consider themselves middle class as well. It is possible that after centuries during which blackness was inextricably linked to poverty in South Africa, black Africans continue to conceptualize their economic system through this lens.

The fact that the majority of black Africans view themselves as poor may have profound political and economic repercussions for South Africa. Many have argued that the middle-class ethos in America influences its tax and welfare policies (see, e.g., Rampell, 2011). And Cruces *et al.* (2013: 106-110) found that once respondents were informed of their objective place in the income distribution, they altered their views on certain redistributive policies. The findings in South Africa suggest that black Africans still feel alienated from the rewards of the South African economic system. This isolation may thus imply that there is more widespread support for expansive redistributive policies than the purely objective economic position of South Africans would imply.

2.5 Conclusion

Though South Africa still has among the highest rates of economic inequality in the world—potentially undermining its nascent democracy and social cohesion—the nature of this inequality has changed dramatically since South Africa’s transition to democracy two decades ago. Not only has there been a significant integration of the upper deciles of the income distribution, but social spending and taxation have also become dramatically more pro-poor, reducing overall inequality by over one-quarter. Whether and how South Africans conceptualize the changing nature of inequality thus has profound repercussions for South African society.

Migration background does not seem to affect how individuals perceived the distribution of income in South Africa. However, migration background does shape whom the interviewees believe are located in different parts of the income distribution and what they view as the primary economic division in society. While those who had never permanently left their rural areas and those who had returned to their rural area after migrating to Cape Town saw the top and middle of the income distribution as primarily comprised of those from the public sector, migrants to Cape Town argued that private sector individuals made up a substantially larger share of the middle and upper classes. The non-migrant and returnee focus on the public sector indicates that a potentially troubling dynamic may be developing in South Africa: if the majority of South Africans believe that government jobs are among the best opportunities available to them, then they may apply increasing pressure on the South African government to increase the public sector employment rolls, a trend that is already underway.⁷

⁷ The proportion of formal sector employees working for the government has increased from 18.6 percent in 2005 to nearly 23 percent in 2012 (UASA, 2012; Bosch, 2006: 17). And these figures are likely to underestimate the South African government’s impact on formal sector employment; they exclude employment created indirectly through government expenditure.

Additionally, migrants were much more likely to highlight the racialized nature of class divisions in South Africa, while non-migrants and returnees more often pointed to the geographic character of economic divisions between rural and urban areas. How the interviewees conceptualized the distribution of income in South Africa provides further evidence for the hypothesis advanced in Telzak (2014) that local economic conditions may be more important than national trends in shaping perceptions of inequality.

Finally, this chapter examined where interviewees placed themselves within the income distribution in South Africa. The vast majority of the interviewees substantially underestimated their economic position in society, arguing that they were at or near the bottom of the income distribution, when in fact many were in the upper-end. These findings suggest that South Africans may continue to view their economic position through a lens of poverty, which has potentially profound repercussions for South African policymaking.

Chapter 3: Migrating to Mobility: Perceptions of Social Mobility

Analyses of inequality and, by extension perceptions of inequality, though important, are ultimately limited. As Louw *et al.* (2007: 549) emphasize, “Analyzing the income distribution at any given moment using cross-sectional data generates a static picture only.” That is, although these studies offer insights into *what* is changing in South African society, they offer less insight into *who* is benefiting from these changes and *why* these changes are occurring (Woolard and Klasen, 2005: 866). And the study of these trends—the study of social mobility—may ultimately provide greater understanding of the evolution of post-apartheid South Africa than studying inequality alone. As Birdsall and Graham (2000: 5) note, “Mobility provides a better measure of changing opportunities than do the traditional measures of inequality, and [] understanding mobility is critical to the discussion of inequality and of what to do about it.”

Unfortunately, the study of social mobility in South Africa is very “limited and generally more ad hoc” (Woolard and Klasen, 2005: 896; see also Louw *et al.*, 2007: 549). Although social mobility—or the changes in economic status of an individual either within his or her lifetime (known as “intra-generational mobility”) or across generations (known as “inter-generational mobility”)—is among the most studied topics internationally for precisely these reasons, little work has been done on social mobility in South Africa, in no small part because of a lack of available data (Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 264).¹

What studies do exist suggest that there has been a considerable degree of upward absolute mobility—or the overall socioeconomic gains that an entire society makes over time—among some black individuals since the end of apartheid, as the dramatic de-racialization of the *top* of the income distribution in South Africa suggests (see Section 2.1). However, what upward relative mobility—or the extent to which particular individuals in a given society gain relative to others—exists appears largely to be captured by a small group of black South Africans. Schneier (1983), who studied mobility in Soweto and three townships outside of Cape Town, and Crankshaw (1997), using data from manpower surveys since 1965, found that black Africans began to experience significant upward absolute mobility (primarily to formerly white occupations) near the end of apartheid. However, Schneier, who unlike Crankshaw collected retrospective data for his study, discovered that the degree of relative mobility within the black population was largely uneven. He concluded that black Africans from relatively privileged backgrounds monopolized most of these new opportunities.

These trends appear to have persisted into post-apartheid South Africa. Agüero *et al.* (2007), for example, in their analysis of the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PSLSD) and its follow up study, the KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Survey (KIDS), found some intergenerational mobility among those living in KwaZulu-Natal, but concluded that there was little intergenerational mobility among poorer households. Similarly, though Finn and Leibbrandt (2013) uncovered both absolute and

¹ The National Income Dynamics Survey—a nationally representative survey of individuals that seeks to follow income dynamics in South Africa—promises to do much to close this gap in the existing data on intra-generational mobility. However, only now, with the completion of the third wave of NIDS and its available retrospective data, can scholars begin to examine intra-generational mobility trends and do more than identify short-term income volatility patterns (as Woolard and Leibbrandt [2006: 12] highlight in their prospectus for NIDS, “You generally need 3 waves of a panel to [even] start to ... tease out mobility pathways”). To analyze inter-generational mobility fully—that is, to go beyond a dependence on retrospective data—you need panel data that spans generations and covers at least a three-decade period.

relative intra-generational mobility among black South Africans generally between the first and third wave of NIDS—which were completed in 2008 and 2012, respectively—they found relatively little mobility (over this short period of time) among those at the top of the income distribution, suggesting that individuals from advantaged backgrounds continue to monopolize the most lucrative economic opportunities in South Africa (see also Finn *et al.*, 2012). This pattern of social mobility reflects that observed in many post-industrial, developed economies (see Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992; Goldthorpe *et al.*, 1980).

The literature that does exist is almost exclusively focused on objective mobility trends and has largely neglected the study of perceptions of social mobility, a common trend globally (Strauss, 2006: 4). Nor is this lacuna innocuous; the available literature indicates that perceptions of social mobility appear particularly dissociated from reality (Graham, 2000: 227; Heath *et al.*, 2010: 30) and that this dissociation may have a profound impact on society (Lipset and Bendix, 1991: xxii). Perceptions of social mobility not only influence an individual's views of the economic system in which he or she operates, but these also shape voting behavior (Birdsall and Graham, 2000: 5). Furthermore, as Graham (2000: 228) argues, subjective mobility trends “can [also] have long-term effects on incentives and allocation structures,” the foundations of any capitalist economic system. Additionally, Jin and Tam (2012) found that perceived mobility affected mental health outcomes of individuals in China. And, for post-apartheid South Africa, examining perceptions of social mobility appears particularly important because perceptions of economic mobility have profound repercussions for social and political cohesion (Behrman, 2000: 77; Burns, 2009: 7). Thus, it is impossible to fully comprehend the intricacies of any economic and social system without also investigating subjective perceptions of social mobility.

Perceptions of social mobility, which often differ greatly from objective trends, may ultimately be self-fulfilling. Piketty (1995: 556-7), for example, in his model of the impact of mobility experience on redistributive policies, found that individuals who have experienced negative economic shocks “may get (rationally) discouraged and supply less effort; whereas more successful agents supply more effort.” As he concludes, “Eventually a lot of persistent inequality has been created simply because of endogenous beliefs dynamics.” Piketty's model indicates that perceptions of the degree of mobility held by different groups in society, which are shaped by past experience, may influence which cohorts are ultimately economically mobile. Although Piketty makes the simplifying and most likely incorrect assumption that individuals only examine their own experiences of mobility and not those of their peers (*Ibid.*: 562), his analysis suggests that studying perceptions of social mobility may ultimately provide important insights into why some groups are economically mobile while others are not, and can serve as a leading indicator of the degree of social mobility in a given society. The study of subjective mobility is thus a vital, if often neglected, component of the larger discipline of social mobility scholarship.

There has been some work done on perceptions of social mobility internationally (see, e.g., Graham, 2000, on Latin America, especially Peru; Materju, 2000, on Eastern Europe; Webb, 2000, on Peru; Heath *et al.*, 2010, on Britain). However, this work suffers from a common trend: most of it is based on responses to survey questionnaires that tend to highlight the dissociation between objective and subjective mobility and fail to uncover why this dissonance exists and the potential repercussions of this dissonance for society. The few studies undertaken on perceptions of social mobility in South Africa tend to suffer from these same shortcomings.

The authors who have indirectly waded into the difficult task of cataloging perceptions of social mobility in South Africa have discovered that, as predicted, perceptions do in fact differ greatly from reality. Bray *et al.* (2010: 217-9) examined “expectations” of educational attainment among Cape Town youth and their parents and found that young people were particularly poor at predicting their future educational attainment (and thus their future economic mobility), often greatly overestimating their educational potential. This raised the possibility that reported “expectations” were, perhaps, aspirations. Burns (2009: 7-12) found that this dissociation between perceptions and objective trends also exists in expectations of future economic mobility in South Africa. In an attempt to uncover perceptions of social cohesion in South Africa using data from the first wave of NIDS in 2008, Burns concluded that there was “an expectation of significant upward economic mobility” among South Africans in all locations of the income distribution: only 18 percent of those in the lowest quintile, for example, expected to remain there over the subsequent two years, with over two-thirds of these individuals predicting that their income would gain at least 17 percent compared to the average South African. These expectations, however, appear largely unfounded in the existing literature, indicating that individuals are poor at predicting their future mobility. As Bray *et al.* (2010) suggested, these “expectations” might be better understood as “aspirations,” given how far removed from reality they are.

Posel (2012: 5-11), in her exploration of subjective well-being in South Africa using data from the first two waves of NIDS, also found that individuals were overly optimistic about their future mobility and overly pessimistic about their current location within the income distribution: Not only did most NIDS respondents underestimate their comparative wealth, but in 2008, nearly three-quarters of these individuals expected to experience upward relative mobility within two years. The number expecting to experience upward mobility, however, fell to 50 percent by 2010, perhaps reflecting the impact of the global economic downturn on the economy of South Africa.

Wale (2013) has engaged in perhaps the most concerted effort to uncover perceptions of social mobility in South Africa. In “Perceptions of Class Mobility,” Wale drew on 72 qualitative interviews—a non-random subset of 2,550 respondents to a 2006 survey run by the University of Johannesburg, designed in part to uncover perceptions of class mobility in Soweto (the set of townships outside Johannesburg). Wale demonstrates that class-consciousness is deeply rooted in concepts of “affordability” and, thus, that individuals assess their mobility through the lens of material acquisitions (*Ibid.*: 167-172). She ultimately argues that respondents presented both “individualistic explanations”—highlighting the importance of hard work and determination—and “structural explanations”—emphasizing the high barriers of unemployment and access to capital—of social mobility (*Ibid.*: 172-181).

In my earlier work (Telzak, 2012, 2014) I examined whether previous mobility experiences, and not just current class position, influence perceptions of mobility. Based on both economic background and outcome, I interviewed four categories of individuals according to their mobility experiences: those who were poor and had experienced little mobility, those who were poor and had experienced some mobility, those who were born into advantaged families and remained advantaged, and those who were born into advantaged backgrounds and have had relatively unsuccessful outcomes. Because there are few individuals in South Africa who have experienced downward mobility, I focused primarily on the first three categories. I showed that previous mobility experience did influence perceptions of social mobility among black Africans in Cape Town. Though the interviewees had a largely racialized view of the distribution of income in South African society, all of the interviewees saw a number of

different pathways to economic success—including education, hard work, social capital, and government patronage—open to all South Africans. However, the interviewees largely disagreed on the accessibility of these pathways. Those who were born into relatively advantaged families or who had experienced some degree of upward mobility were optimistic about their children’s and their chances for further mobility. In contrast, those from poor backgrounds who had experienced little upward mobility were pessimistic about their children’s and their opportunities for economic success. I ultimately hypothesized that an intergenerational “mobility trap” may have developed in South Africa: because of this pessimism, South Africans may not invest in their children’s future regardless of their ability to do so; their perceptions may thus become reality, pulling whole families into a cycle of immobility.

Because Cape Town is demographically and economically dissimilar to the rest of South Africa, I then reproduced this methodology in two other areas of the country: the rural areas around Mount Frere, Eastern Cape and the town of Newcastle, KwaZulu-Natal. Interviewees in Mount Frere and Newcastle, like those in Cape Town, stressed the importance of education for social mobility, but, unlike those in Cape Town, they emphasized the necessity of political connections for getting ahead and the danger of drug and alcohol abuse to an individual’s mobility potential. The interviews in Mount Frere and Newcastle confirm the finding from Cape Town that there may be a “mobility trap” developing in South Africa (Telzak, 2014). These results, however, were very preliminary. The sampling methodology—which used purposive sampling to identify interviewees—was not nearly as rigorous as the methodology used in Cape Town and relied disproportionately on a single contact: Thobani Ncapai, the fieldworker who provided knowledge of the local areas and translation services.

In this chapter, I test my previous findings on perceptions of mobility in rural and urban settings, examine whether and how migration itself shapes economic perceptions, and consider the perceived role of migration in an individual’s mobility prospects. I do this in three parts. First, I argue that the perceived pathways and impediments to social mobility highlighted by the interviewees can be grouped into two categories—an individualistic one and a structural one—the relative importance of which can vary based on an individual’s location. I then examine these individualistic and structural groupings in more depth, exploring whether and how migration experience shapes how the interviewees’ perceive these mobility pathways and how these pathways differ in rural and urban settings. Finally, I conclude by arguing that the interviewees conceptualize migration as an opportunity to overcome the structural impediments of rural areas.

3.2 A Framework for Perceived Social Mobility

Individuals can exploit any number of pathways to achieve economic success. How socially mobile an individual is, is thus a function of that individual’s ability to exploit one or more of these mobility pathways. Similarly, individuals can *perceive* any number of mobility pathways, which may or may not reflect the economic realities of society. The aggregation of an individual’s ability to exploit these perceived mobility pathways is thus an individual’s *expected* mobility potential—that is, not his actual mobility, but the degree of mobility one would be expected to achieve if these perceived mobility pathways and their presumed outcomes directly mirrored reality. Expected mobility is a particularly meaningful concept because individuals make economic and social decisions based on their perceived outcomes,

which may or may not be accurate; that is, they choose which perceived mobility pathways to pursue based on their expected, and not necessarily their actual, payoffs (see Section 1.1).

Social mobility theorists and egalitarian philosophers, however, are not merely concerned with measuring the degree of social mobility in society, but are also interested in investigating to what degree the mobility that does exist reflects individual merit (i.e., to what degree there is equality of opportunity, if not necessarily equality of outcome, in a given society) (see, e.g., Roemer and Trannoy, 2013; Roemer, 2012; Sen, 1980; Rawls, 1971 and 1958). Just as equality of opportunity is a salient consideration when studying objective social mobility trends, it should also be considered during the study of perceived mobility.

In this chapter, I thus divide perceived mobility pathways into two categories: the first, which (borrowing from Wale's distinction) I call "individualistic" pathways, are those which are perceived to have entirely meritocratic outcomes and which individuals believe they can directly exploit, for example education and hard work. The second, which I call "structural" pathways, are broader societal trends, which individuals believe they have a limited ability to influence, for example nepotism and racism.² Although these structural "pathways" can facilitate economic mobility, they were more often perceived as impediments to this mobility by the interviewees. For clarity, I thus refer to them as "Structural Pathways and Impediments" throughout this chapter. In reality, no perceived mobility pathway fits neatly into either category; no pathway is either completely structural or completely meritocratic. However, dividing perceived mobility pathways into these two categories has considerable practical, in addition to philosophical, significance: whether or not an individual believes that the outcome of a particular mobility pathway is meritocratic will help determine the degree of effort he will dedicate to that pathway.

In societies with perfect equality of opportunity, only meritocratic pathways exist. Individual effort still matters, and thus outcomes will vary, but each individual is given equal access to the available mobility pathways. In contrast, in societies with perfect inequality of opportunity, an individual's degree of mobility is dictated entirely by structural factors, and his or her economic outcome is predetermined. In reality, in all societies, both individual effort and structural factors matter and an individual's mobility is a function of pathways and impediments both within and outside of that individual's control. However, the relative importance of individualistic and structural factors need not be constant within a single country; in fact, in this chapter I argue that the importance of individualistic and structural factors are perceived to vary considerably between urban and rural areas in South Africa, thus inducing individuals to migrate.

3.3 Individualistic Aspirations in a Structural Reality: Perceived Social Mobility Pathways and Impediments

During the interviews, I asked my interviewees whether it was possible for an individual to move from the bottom of the income distribution to the top and, if so, how (Appendix A, Question 1c). We can thus examine the pathways and impediments that the interviewees believe lead to or inhibit their economic success. My interviewees identified two pathways that were primarily individualistic, which they believed they could directly exploit: education

² These names loosely follow from Wale (2013)'s discussion of the kinds of explanations given by individuals in SOWETO for social mobility.

and hard work. In contrast, they identified three structural pathways/impediments that they believed they had little, if any, direct control over: corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the availability of jobs. Throughout this section, I highlight differences in the conceptualization of these pathways among the three migration groups, though there is a surprising degree of consistency in perceptions among individuals from different migration backgrounds.

3.3.1 Individualistic Pathways

In this section, I examine the two individualistic pathways stressed by the interviewees: education and hard work. The interviewees believed education to be among the most important pathways to economic success available to South Africans. The interviewees also argued that hard work was a necessary, but insufficient, pathway to mobility.

3.3.1.1 Individualistic Pathway 1: Education

All the interviewees in this study highlighted the importance of education for mobility (as did interviewees in my previous studies). NM-8, the administrator for government projects, for example, described how “it’s easier [to be mobile] if you are educated, but very difficult without an education.” Similarly, R-4, the unemployed 27 year-old who spent 11 years in Cape Town before returning, argued that what “differentiates” those at the top from those at the bottom is “education.” M-8, the hotel cleaner, similarly argued that “one has to be educated to get” to the top. “Those who are not on top are the people who didn’t get an education.” And M-4, the street cleaner, observed the changing requirements for reaching the top of the income distribution in South Africa: “It used to be your role in the struggle for South African liberation” that allowed you to reach the top, “but now it’s an education.”

In fact, many perceived education as the most important pathway to mobility. Both NM-2, the unemployed woman who lives outside of Qumbu, and R-6, the municipal council employee, asserted that “education is the key” to success. “Just allow me to say that [successful people] study,” R-6 continued. “If you’re educated, you can go all these steps. But it is mostly impossible for someone who is not educated.” “Without an education, you cannot be on top,” R-9, the clothing-store employee, argued. M-1, the police officer, used similar logic: “Through education, it is possible that from the bottom you can see yourself on top. ... There is nothing else [other] than education.” M-8, the hotel cleaner, was even more emphatic: “Everyone who is educated gets to the top,” she flatly asserted.

These views echo those reported in previous studies (Telzak, 2012: 26-29, 2014: 17-19) and largely reflect the empirically established relationship between education and economic outcomes in South Africa (Louw *et al.*, 2007: 549; Seekings and Nattrass, 2006: 265). Educational attainment not only affects an individual’s employment prospects (Bhorat, 2004: 951), but also affects his income level (Statistics South Africa, 2010*b*: x). Returns to education in South Africa, however, are not linear: there appear to be very few, if any, returns for lower educational qualifications. Keswell and Poswell (2004: 835 and 844), for example, found that returns to fewer than ten years of education are negligible. In contrast, returns to tertiary education in South Africa are large and increasing. Additionally, Branson and Leibbrandt (2013: 16 and 18) found that, although there may be some wage advantages to secondary schooling and matriculation degrees, only those with tertiary qualifications

received an *employment* premium (i.e., there was a higher likelihood that they would be employed compared to those with only primary levels of education).

Many of my interviewees seemed to recognize the particular importance of tertiary qualifications. NM-6, the spaza shop owner, for example, described how “we’re making efforts to send our kids to higher learning institutions” because through those institutions, they will “access opportunities that offer better outcomes.” Similarly, M-6, the collections department manager, argued that “you will need to study ... and make sure that you at least do your honors” to get to the top. At the extreme, R-2, the taxi owner, asserted that even to get to the “middle” you must “have tertiary education. The people in the middle have tertiary” degrees.

Interviewees from all migration backgrounds saw educational attainment, especially at the lower levels, as primarily an individualistic pathway to mobility. NM-3, the unemployed 21-year-old from outside of Mount Frere, for example, attributed the difference between those who pursue education and those who do not to “how serious [the] person is. ... Some are willing, some aren’t. Some don’t care.” People who don’t get educated are those who “don’t take education seriously,” NM-4, the security officer, agreed. Returnees and migrants were more pointed in their critiques of those who do not complete their educations. Those who don’t make it to grade 12 “are [too] lazy to study,” R-9, the clothing store worker, asserted. “I think it’s laziness,” M-2, the Transnet employee, concurred. “It’s being lazy to just drop off at secondary education. And then if you’re lazy, you can’t make it.” Ultimately, most were in agreement that educational opportunities, at least through high school, were largely open to those who chose to pursue them.

However, the interviewees recognized that there are very real structural barriers to education, particularly at the tertiary level. In addition to “laziness,” the interviewees often attributed a lack of educational achievement to poverty. Although some—including NM-7, the credit collector in the furniture store, argued that there are “pupils [who] give up because they don’t have school uniforms. They get ridiculed by other pupils and are starving and not getting enough support even from the schools”—believed that poverty inhibited educational attainment at lower levels, the vast majority of my interviewees believed that monetary concerns only became relevant after high school. NM-6, the spaza shop owner, described how “some of our children don’t continue studying after matric” because of a “lack of money and bursaries.” Similarly, R-6, the municipal council employee, argued that most people “are trying to be educated. ... But when they [get] their matric [degrees], they don’t have more money to go up and continue with their studies.” “With us [black people],” M-2, the Transnet employee, described, “It’s a problem because sometimes you finish high school and there’s no money for you to study further. You finish your matric and then you [have to] start looking for a job. [As a result,] you don’t go further and go to a tertiary [institution] so that you can study for something that [will help] you live the life that you want to live.”

These views reflect the realities of South African society. The South African constitution guarantees all South Africans a right to basic education. South African primary and secondary schools are funded by a combination of government allocations and school fees. In practice, however, the cost of education for the majority of South African students is at or near zero. In 2007, South Africa extended the number of no-fee institutions—or those schools who are prohibited from charging fees in exchange for supplementary governmental funding—from 40 percent to 60 percent of all schools. Additionally, parents are exempt from paying school fees if the fees represent 10 percent or more of a household’s income, and they

receive a partial exemption if the fees are between 2.5 percent and 10 percent of their total income (Department of Basic Education; www.etu.org.za).

This generous support, however, does not extend fully to tertiary education, which is often prohibitively expensive. Although South Africa provides funding for tertiary education through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), the majority of this funding must be paid back upon graduation (up to 40 percent of the loans will be forgiven, depending on academic performance). Additionally, NSFAS loans do not cover living expenses, which are a necessary, and often insurmountable, financial burden for many South Africans (www.nsfas.org.za; van der Bank and Nkadimeng, 2014; Mdepa and Tshiwula, 2012: 24). As the Department of Higher Education concluded in 2012, “There are inadequate financial resources [in South Africa] to allow most school leavers ... to successfully enter post-[secondary] provisions” (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2012: 9). Thus, the interviewees, who recognized the structural barriers to tertiary education but believed primary and secondary schooling was accessible to most, had a relatively accurate understanding of the educational opportunities and barriers in South Africa.

3.3.1.2 Individualistic Pathway 2: Hard Work

In addition to education, interviewees from all three migration categories suggested a second individualistic pathway to economic success: hard work. As NM-6, the spaza shop owner, described, “One has to be extremely hard [working] to get from the bottom to the top.” Similarly, R-6, the municipal council employee, argued that “it is possible” to move up economically, but “you need to work very, very, very hard—very, very, very hard.” As, M-6, the manager in the collections department, concluded, there are “only [two] things that can take you clean” to the top: first, “to make sure that ... you study” and second, to “work very hard. ... Those [are] the only options that can take you there.”

Thus, many of the interviewees concluded, those who are not socially mobile are not successful at least in part because they do not work hard enough. NM-5, the administrative intern, described how “some of us are lazy. ... We don’t want to stand up on our own and some of us want to be unemployed.” Similarly, NM-7, the credit collector, argued that some of those who fail to advance economically are “lazy. ... They are not serious. They don’t want to get out of their comfort zone. They are only expecting things from other people ... [and not] aiming for anything better than where they are.” R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, believed that those who don’t have jobs “are those who are ... not getting things. They are not motivated. That is why you’ll find a lot of matriculants out there in rural areas ... just sitting.” These people, M-3, the Labour Department auditor, argued, “want someone to work for them. They just want something on the plate [and someone] to say, ‘Take it.’ They don’t want to work for themselves.”

The views expressed by these interviewees are what Wale (2013: 172-173), in her examination of perceptions of class mobility in Soweto, called “individualistic” explanations for social mobility. “The assumptions underpinning” these views, Wale describes, “Is that the opportunities of a better life are there for the taking. Responsibility is [thus] placed on the individual to’ take advantage of these opportunities (*Ibid.*: 173-174). In fact, like in Telzak (2012: 30-33), previous mobility experience appears to be the link among those who emphasized the importance of hard work for economic success: the vast majority of those who believed hard work was a key pathway to mobility had achieved some degree of

economic success themselves, though this “success” reflects an extremely broad range of economic outcomes.³ In contrast, those who were unsuccessful tended not to highlight the role of “hard work” in social mobility; only one of the six unemployed interviewees (i.e., R-3) considered “hard work” an important mobility pathway, though none of the other interviewees rejected the role of hard work outright.

In fact, there was awareness among those who emphasized the importance of hard work that hard work was necessary but not sufficient for economic success. R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, argued that “maybe some [who do not succeed] are lazy, but others are trying” and they still don’t succeed. Many of the interviewees also felt similarly about education. There were a number of interviewees who echoed R-2’s contention that education could only take an individual so far: “We have graduates here with master’s, honours,” R-2 described, “They never got a job, even now.” As the interviewees argued, there are other, structural pathways and impediments—including corruption and nepotism, a lack of available jobs, and access to information—that hamper the potential economic gains from both hard work and education.

3.3.2 Structural Pathways and Impediments

Though my interviewees emphasized the importance of two individualistic pathways to mobility—education and hard work—they believed that there was tension between these pathways and a number of structural impediments that were completely outside of their control, including corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the availability of jobs. In this next section, I examine these three structural pathways/impediments in more depth and argue that my interviewees believe the structural barriers to mobility are much higher in rural than in urban areas.

3.3.2.1 Structural Pathway/Impediment I: Corruption and Nepotism

Corruption in South Africa is endemic. Nearly a quarter of South Africa’s procurement budget (or approximately US\$3.8 billion) gets lost to corruption every year, according to South Africa’s Special Investigating Unit (*The Economist*, 2011).⁴ Newspapers are full of stories of corruption at every level of the South African government, including (it is alleged) at the presidency itself. More immediately, according to the 2011 Afrobarometer survey, on average 40 percent of South African respondents believed that “all” or “most” government officials across seven different categories (“President and his Office,” “MPs,” “Government Officials,” “Local Government Councillors,” “Police,” “SARS,” and “Judges and Magistrates”) were corrupt, up from fewer than 25 percent in 2002. Additionally, 35 percent of respondents admitted to have personally paid a bribe to a government official in their lifetimes (Wielders, 2013: 3-5).

It is thus no surprise that many of the interviewees saw corruption as a prominent pathway to economic success. NM-1, the information-technology specialist, argued that Members of Parliament are on top because “they have forgotten where they came from [and] are selfishly keeping the gains [for] themselves.” Parliamentarians and other government officials are on

³ R-9, for example, works part time in a clothing store, and NM-4 is an administrative intern. In contrast, R-1, R-7, and M-1 are police officers and M-6 is a manager in a collections department and owns a number of rental properties.

⁴ For a more thorough examination of corruption in post-apartheid South Africa, see Hyslop (2005).

top “because of the corruption that is taking place here,” NM-4, the security officer, agreed. Similarly, R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, described how “you’ll find those corrupt people [in] the middle and also on the top. ... There are [a lot of these] people who are getting money that they weren’t supposed to get.” R-2, the taxi owner, was even more emphatic: “*Most* people are on top because of” “corruption and fraud.”

The intense corruption found in most of South Africa, according to many interviewees, is not only an opportunity for some to profit, but also inhibits the abilities of others to succeed. NM-1, who asserted that parliamentarians reach the top by “fork[ing] money for themselves,” described how doing so “keeps them on top and everybody below.” NM-9, the unemployed Matatiele resident, argued that “I think government allocates money for services”—which many interviewees believed was one of the key reasons why rural areas remained poorer than urban ones (see Section 2.3.2)—“but it gets lost due to corruption” and thus presumably inhibits the development of rural areas. R-2 was again more direct: corruption “and fraud,” he argued, are “killing this province, not to mention the country.”

Those in the Migrant category, however, were much less focused on corruption. Only one—M-2, the Transnet employee—made a vague and passing remark about it: “There’s a lot of corruption,” she argued, “In the government and stuff.” The differing emphasis on corruption between those in Cape Town and those in the Eastern Cape reflects the large differences in the degree of corruption in both areas. Though corruption is endemic in South Africa, the Western Cape is by far the least corrupt province in the country, while the Eastern Cape is arguably the most corrupt. And the City of Cape Town was one of only 22 municipalities—and the only metropolitan area—to receive a clean audit report from the South African Auditor General (Auditor-General South Africa, 2014). It is thus unsurprising that those in the Migrant category, all of whom had been living in Cape Town for over a decade, would not consider corruption as significant to economic success as those who live in the Eastern Cape. Migrants, however, wholeheartedly agreed with those who live in rural areas on the profound impact of another, related mobility pathway: nepotism and connections.

Those from all three migration categories believed that nepotism and connections were important, if not essential, to social mobility. NM-9, the unemployed Matatiele resident, described how “people hire their friends and families and that’s the problem we face in our communities. ... If you know someone inside that company, by the time the job is advertised you already know the details. When other people apply, the job is already yours.” “People that are in jobs first consider their relatives if there’s a vacancy where they are working,” NM-7, the credit collector, agreed. Similarly, R-9, the clothing store employee, argued that “if you don’t know anyone it’s difficult to get the jobs.” This happens even when individuals are unqualified to fill the vacancy: “If someone has got a relative who is in the position to give him or her a job, they get it even if there is someone who [actually] qualifies for that job,” R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, bemoaned. As M-4, the street cleaner, stated flatly, “These days, you find a job through another person.”

The importance of connections—what is often called “social capital”—for securing employment in South Africa is well documented (see Seekings and Nattrass, 2006: 280-7). As early as 1984, McCartan (1984), through a series of interviews with 43 employers in the Eastern Cape, observed that informal networks played a large role in the hiring processes of both skilled and semi-skilled workers. Similarly, Standing *et al.* (1996: 338), in their analysis of survey responses of 500 manufacturers in Cape Town, Durban, Gauteng, and Port Elizabeth, found that 41 percent of manufactures utilized family and friend networks to fill

their vacancies, while only 7 percent considered applicants with no prior relation to the firm. And it appears that those looking for work have adjusted their approach accordingly: Erasmus (1999: 60), in his survey of 2,000 unemployed individuals, ultimately concluded that most black South Africans “relied [mainly] on family and friends” to seek and secure employment.

And unlike corruption, the role of informal networks in securing employment also appears very important in Cape Town. Seekings and Natrass (2006: 284-6; see also Schöer and Leibbrandt, 2006), for example, in their analysis of Khayelitsha and Mitchell’s Plain Survey responses, found that nearly two-thirds of respondents reported that their first job came through help from either friends or family and nearly 60 percent of respondents reported that they got their “previous” job through these social networks. Perhaps more interestingly, 91 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “Employers employ the friends and relatives of their existing workforce rather than other people.” Furthermore, Magruder (2007: 18-21, 28-9), in his analysis of familial network effects among respondents of the Cape Area Panel Study, found that father’s employment status had a “substantial” impact on son’s employment status, perhaps reflecting the importance of familial connections in securing work. In my own unpublished research, I found that of the 53 percent of CAPS respondents who had searched for work in the months directly preceding Wave 5, over 93 percent had sought help from either friends or family members in the job search (Telzak, 2013).

The interviewees not only believed that corruption and nepotism were important mobility pathways for certain individual; they also argued that their widespread use impeded the realization of the full economic potential of other, more meritocratic pathways, particularly education. “In South Africa, we have this thing called nepotism,” M-1, the police officer, explained. “That is the other effect that may cause those educated people to not get to the top because they are not known by well-known-people.” You “need to go and study” to be successful, M-5, the government-office cleaner, argued, “But these days people are promoting others with no qualifications. ... [It is impossible to reach the top] if you don’t know anyone.” NM-8 the government project administrator, agreed: “Some are not reaching the top due to high levels of corruption. [] You can be educated only to struggle to get a job because jobs are only gotten by those who have connections.” In fact, the importance of corruption and nepotism to mobility, some of my interviewees argued, discouraged individuals from pursuing an education to begin with: NM-7, the credit collector, described how nepotism “is a problem which discourages other people from studying because they feel like education doesn’t help if jobs go to [those with] connections.”

Many of my interviewees, especially those who lived in rural areas, believed that there was disproportionately more corruption and nepotism in rural areas than in urban ones. As NM-2, the unemployed woman from Qumbu, argued, “To put it in perspective, here in rural areas, you have to know the top officials to get the top positions within power. ... Even if there are positions that have been advertised, nepotism is the way they determine who gets such positions.” Officials engage in this gross nepotism, she continued, because “they assume people in rural areas know nothing and will be grateful for what they get.” R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, confirmed NM-2’s suspicions: “There’s a lot of stealing” in rural areas, unlike in urban areas, because people “don’t have the knowledge to follow up that maybe there was 100 rand that was sent to the community” but it got lost.⁵ Similarly, R-2, the

⁵ Here, I interpreted R-1’s references to “Limpopo” and “Gauteng” as synonyms for “rural” and “urban.”

taxi owner, argued that in rural areas, in contrast to urban ones, “There is a lot of unemployment. You will see that most people are not working. [So] if you don’t have any connections, you don’t get a job.”

The prevalence of corruption and nepotism in rural areas does in fact appear higher than in urban ones. As du Toit *et al.* (2007: 526) describes during his discussion of economic opportunities in Mount Frere, which is a major town in the area where this study was conducted, “What stable and secure livelihoods there are in the area are those linked to the state and local government. In turn, access to these is governed by a local elite that is both traditional and political and which [abuses] its economic clout and connections with state power.” R-8, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from Mount Frere who had moved to Cape Town for health reasons, observed this process firsthand in her community: “There are no other jobs” except for those given out “by the local municipality ... [and] through the councilors” who distribute the jobs through “nepotism.” “You find out that there’s a position in a municipality”, she continued, and “when someone [] applies for it, they won’t get a job, but if an applicant is related to a councilor, he or she will get the job.”

Notably, few of the interviewees highlighted racial discrimination as a continued hurdle to mobility during the interviews, though some did recognize the historical legacy of apartheid in shaping the distribution of income in South Africa (see Section 2.3.1). In the survey portion of the interview, individuals were asked “Which of these things”—“a wealthy family,” “working hard,” “a good education,” “knowing the right people,” “your race,” “your gender (i.e. whether you are a man or a woman),” “luck,” or I “don’t know”—“is the most important in terms of whether you do or do not get ahead in life? Which of these things is second most important?” (Appendix B, Question D.8). *None* of the interviewees believed that “your race” was either the first or second most important factors determining an individual’s mobility. In contrast, nearly 20 percent (n=5) believed “knowing the right people” was significant in an individual’s economic outcome. Much as intra-racial income disparities have become a more important driver of inequality in South Africa since the end of apartheid than inter-racial income disparities (see Section 2.1), these interviews raise the possibility that intra-racial discrimination in the form of nepotism and corruption has come to replace inter-racial discrimination as a more important constraint to (or opportunity for) mobility in the minds of South Africans.

3.3.2.2 Structural Pathway/Impediment 2: Access to Information

A prerequisite for social mobility is knowledge of the available economic opportunities and how to exploit them. Interviewees from all three mobility backgrounds recognized the importance of this information. R-9, the clothing store worker, for example, argued that some of “those who are not working hard [are] people who don’t know where to start from to get on top.” NM-3, the unemployed young man from outside of Mount Frere, offered a suggestion for how to access this information: for “a person [to] get” to the top, he argued, he must “asking [] another” at the top “how they got there.” NM-7, the credit collector, explained why these people are potentially helpful: “They know what it takes to be on top. They have been through stages of success that led them there. [You] cannot just move there without their help.” Thus, to reach the top, “you need advice from those who are already on top. You shouldn’t be lazy. You must be someone who is curious for information.” M-2, the Transnet employee, elucidated this process with an example: Let’s say “maybe you’re here at

the bottom and you want to make a business, you go out and find out from the people who already have businesses and ask for help from them.”

Although the interviewees felt like they had some control over accessing this information, it is telling that the only suggestion they offered for doing so was relatively vague and of nebulous efficacy: seeking advice from successful individuals. Notably, only one of the interviewees—R-6, the municipal council employee—claimed to have gained helpful information by talking to others, and even he acknowledged that his ability to do so ultimately “depend[ed] on luck” and was largely outside of his control. In fact, most of the interviewees felt that access to information in South Africa is almost entirely dependent on where one lives: information about the available economic opportunities and how to pursue them, the interviewees argued, is much more accessible in urban areas than in rural areas.

Interviewees from all three mobility backgrounds believed that rural areas in South Africa were, in effect, informational deserts, where few details about economic opportunities and how to access them penetrate. NM-2, the unemployed woman from Qumbu, argued that “Grade 12 is a great achievement. There’s a lot you can do, but our problem in rural areas is [a] lack of advice on what you can do ... after passing matric.” R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, described this phenomenon: “A lot of matriculants out there in rural areas, [] they’re just sitting. They’re thinking maybe, ‘If we don’t have someone who is up there, who will always support you with the newspapers, with the information [it doesn’t make sense to look for work].’ In contrast, people in urban areas know “how to access things ... so [there is a difference between] those who are in rural areas and those who passed matrics in the cities.” Blacks are on the bottom of the income distribution in South Africa, NM-5, the administrative intern, argued, “Just because they don’t know most of the things as [they] are living in rural areas.” “If you are in urban areas,” however, “you can’t miss anything.”

Some of those in the Migrant category—those who live in urban areas—expressed nearly identical sentiments. M-2, the Transnet employee, concluded that the lack of information in rural areas contributed directly to the poverty of these areas: People in rural areas “are on the bottom,” she explained, because of a “lack of knowledge. ... Some of the people, they don’t know where they can go and get help. The information is not so clear.” M-3, the Department of Labour auditor, proposed a straightforward solution that she believed would help solve this problem. “I don’t think they have [information] in rural areas. There are rural areas that have that [information], but [] most of the rural areas” don’t, she argued. “The government [should thus] have a community hall [] for placing jobs. You use the notice boards to [advertise the jobs], then people can go there” and learn about them.

3.3.2.3 Structural Pathway/Impediment 3: Availability of Jobs

Perhaps more important in determining an individual’s mobility prospects than knowledge of how to exploit the economic opportunities that do exist is the number and kinds of opportunities—that is the number and kinds of jobs—that are available to begin with. All of the interviewees believed that there were far too few economic opportunities available in South Africa and that this dearth of opportunities greatly hindered their mobility. NM-1, the information-technology specialist, for example, argued that “everybody is trying to be in the middle [everybody wants to be mobile], but there are [just] not enough [job] opportunities.” In South Africa, R-9, the clothing store employee, agreed, “There are people at the bottom just because there are no jobs. ... There [is a large] population in South Africa and the jobs

are very few.” M-2, the Transnet employee, was even more emphatic: “I would say [a lack of] jobs,” she concluded, is “*the most important thing* that makes people still stay at the bottom” (emphasis added). In fact, M-3, the Department of Labour auditor, implicitly argued that the dearth of jobs in South Africa was as important for an individual’s potential lack of mobility as education was for augmenting their expected chances of mobility (see Section 3.3.1.1): the two reasons why “most South Africans are poor” are that “they don’t have skills [i.e., education] and there’s a scarcity of jobs.”

The scarcity of jobs in South Africa, the interviewees argued, does not just affect low-skilled individuals. According to the interviewees, there is also a dearth of high-quality jobs. R-9, the clothing store employee, argued that there are “those who cannot get to the top [even though] they are educated [] because [there is a] lack of jobs. You will find out that people get educated then stay with their qualifications without getting a job.” R-7 agreed: “Some of the people, they have grade 12 and they have diplomas, and they are not working. They have been applying for work, but they haven’t been finding jobs ... [because of] job scarcity.” In fact, NM-5, the administrative intern, who has a diploma from a university, believed she had not found a job because “there are a lot of people who are looking for a job and these years [a lot of people have] an education.”

The extremely high rate of unemployment in South Africa—which reached 28.5 percent for black Africans in 2014 (Statistics South Africa, 2014b: 4), and which, according to some commentators, including Johnson (2009), grossly underestimates the actual number of unemployed individuals by counting many individuals as *underemployed* though they are, for all intents and purposes, not working—appears to confirm these views. The official unemployment rate only includes those who have searched for a job in the previous month. The act of looking for work reveals an individual’s preference for employment; that is, it suggests the individual would prefer to be employed but is unable to find a (suitable) job. It is thus, as the interviewees suggested, a scarcity of jobs, and not an unwillingness to work, that appears to be hindering the mobility prospects of many South Africans.

The lack of job opportunities, according to the interviewees, also interacts with other mobility pathways in negative ways. NM-4, the school security guard, argued that rampant nepotism in South Africa existed in part because “there are not a lot of job opportunities,” a not unreasonable conclusion. Similarly, NM-9, the credit collector, attributed her decision not to pursue tertiary education to the shortage of jobs in South Africa: “I have grade 12 but I did not continue [with my studies] because ... we don’t have [that many] job opportunities” here. And the scarcity of jobs in South Africa, according to some, is demotivating and stops some individuals from working hard. R-4, the unemployed 27 year old from Mount Frere, described how “laziness [does] come from the person, but also the scarcity of jobs makes people lazy.” “It’s not easy to [motivate yourself to] work,” NM-5, the administrative intern, continued, when “the jobs are very scarce [for] the qualifications they have.”

Although the interviewees believed that South Africa as a whole suffered from a dearth of job opportunities, they argued that the issue was significantly more acute in rural areas than in urban ones. The interviewees repeatedly argued that in rural areas “there are no jobs.” At various times nearly every interviewee emphasized the particularly severe scarcity of jobs in rural areas, especially when compared with urban ones (see also Section 2.3.2). M-3, the Department of Labour auditor, captured this sentiment best when she argued that the rural areas are “the worst place for jobs,” but “here [in urban areas] there are jobs. There are jobs for people in the urban areas.” That is not to say that the interviewees believed urban areas

did not also suffer from employment shortages. As NM-8, the government projects administrator, observed, “Even in urban areas there are lots of people who are struggling to get jobs.” However, the vast majority of the interviewees argued that the scarcity of jobs in urban areas was less intense than in rural ones. These views reflect the economic realities of South Africa: while the broad unemployment rate (which includes those who have given up looking for work but would still like to work) in rural areas was over 50 percent in 2005, the broad unemployment rate in urban areas was only about two-thirds as large (Ardington *et al.*, 2009: 3).⁶

Klasen and Woolard (2009: 30 and 41) offer two primary explanations for why rural unemployment is so much higher than urban unemployment. On the one hand, they argue, because black Africans were herded into rural homelands during apartheid, those who are unable to find work will necessarily gravitate towards their private safety nets (i.e., their rural homes). On the other hand, this concentration of the unemployed in rural areas has been reinforced by the post-apartheid public safety net, particularly the extremely generous Old Age Pension, which in 2009 reached more than 940 Rand per month, more than double the median per capita income of black Africans (Ardington *et al.*, 2009: 23). Because black Africans traditionally return to their rural homes upon retirement,⁷ the private safety nets of the unemployed are further concentrated in rural areas. Additionally, as Anderson (2006: 111-113; see also Neves, 2008: 4), observes, despite improvements, rural infrastructure continues to pale in comparison to urban infrastructure in South Africa. Because of the close relationship between infrastructure and economic growth (see, e.g., World Bank, 1994; Aschauer, 1989), it is unsurprising that there are fewer jobs, and thus higher levels of unemployment, in rural areas.

3.4 Conclusion: Migrating to Overcome Structural Constraints

My interviewees identified a number of pathways to social mobility in South Africa. Though none of these pathways fit perfectly into the individualistic-structural binary presented in Section 3.2, the interviewees argued that two of these pathways—education and hard work—were primarily individualistic in nature and were largely shaped by an individual’s own efforts. In contrast, there were three pathways that my interviewees believed mostly impeded their mobility and were primarily structural in nature: corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the supply of jobs. Though the interviewees believed that all five pathways affected mobility in South Africa, they argued that the relative importance of the individualistic and structural pathways varied considerably between rural and urban areas. Specifically, the interviewees suggested that rural areas were substantially less meritocratic than urban ones. In this context, the interviewees viewed migration as an opportunity to overcome the intense structural barriers of rural areas and to better exploit the individualistic pathways available to them.

⁶ Although dated, these are the most recent, comprehensive unemployment figures available for urban and rural areas in South Africa, in part because Statistics South Africa (the statistical arm of the South African government) does not release unemployment by geotype (see, e.g., Statistics South Africa, 2014b) and does not cross reference their Quarterly Labour Force Surveys with census data, which contain location information (Berkowitz, 2013). There is some indication, however, that rural unemployment rates have remained mostly constant over the last decade (see, e.g., Davies, 2012).

⁷ This is another legacy of apartheid when elderly black Africans were forced to return to their homelands (Klasen and Woolard, 2009: 30).

The vast majority of individuals, the interviewees believed, migrated from rural to urban areas because there are simply too few opportunities—too few jobs—available locally. NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from Qumbu, described how “people decide to leave because they see themselves getting old photocopying CVs without getting employed. They decide to go to urban areas in hope that things will be better there.” NM-5, the administrative intern, believed opportunities are better elsewhere: “There are no jobs, and it’s very scarce in rural areas,” she asserted, “So we are looking for better jobs in other” areas. In fact, R-2, the taxi owner, argued that he never would have left his area if he had found a job there: “If in my location, on my homestead there, if there was a big firm there, I don’t think I would have left my home place to go and look for a job [in Durban and Cape Town] because everything would be here close to me. But because there are no industries, nothing, we have to leave there and go to [urban areas] and look for a job.” M-6, the collection department manager, believed that R-2’s feelings held for others as well: “If the government did everything in the stage that they want it to be [in the rural areas], then everyone would stay in the Eastern Cape because the jobs will be able to be created there and people wouldn’t have to move to other areas to look for a job.”

Furthermore, the interviewees argued that what economic opportunities do exist in rural areas are captured almost entirely by corrupt government officials and those with connections. Individuals, my interviewees argued, thus move to cities in part to escape this nepotism. NM-2, the unemployed Qumbu resident, described how “even if there are positions that have been advertised [in rural areas], nepotism is the way such positions are determined on who gets what. It’s because of such issues that most people in rural areas leave for cities like Cape Town. We realize that if you don’t have a relative there, you’ll only apply for posts in places like the municipal council, but you’ll never get employed.” Similarly, R-2, the taxi driver, argued, “There’s a lot of unemployment. You will see that most people are not working. If you don’t have any connections, you don’t get a job. As a result, most of us, we leave our homes.” Interestingly, there is some indication that this nepotism also shapes migratory flows back to rural areas, by encouraging those who are able to exploit them to return. M-6, the collections department manager, for example, has a degree in sport’s management from a technikon in Cape Town. However, because he wishes to return to the rural Eastern Cape, he is pursuing a degree in education so that his brother, who is a principal in a school in the Eastern Cape, can “help us [his wife, who is also a teacher, and presumably himself] look for a teaching job.” As he described, “Once I [am able to] get [into] the government, then I will go back to the Eastern Cape. ... I need something that is going to sustain me” before I am able to return.

Though my interviewees believed that connections were also important in urban areas, they argued that, free from the insurmountable nepotism of rural areas, individuals are better able to exploit the individualistic pathways to mobility available to them, namely education and hard work. NM-2, who argued that most of the opportunities were captured by those with connections, thus contended that because of the “lack of opportunities[,] it’s better to move elsewhere after obtaining qualifications [i.e., education]. ... I think it’s better in [the] cities.” Similarly, NM-3, the unemployed 21-year-old male individual from Mount Frere, believed individuals migrate so that they can be judged on their own merits, not constricted by the structural barriers of rural areas: “If a person feels like they are not well treated—they cannot get a job or do something—in the rural areas, then they will go to the city where they can be easily identified as what type of person they are.”

The findings in this chapter also offer some evidence for the “exaggerated expectations” thesis presented in Bray *et al.* (2010). Bray *et al.* argued that the educational “expectations” of their sample of Cape Town youth could better be understood as “aspirations” because of how far removed they were from reality. This logic, I posited, could be extended to the exaggerated expectations of upward mobility among NIDS respondents (Posel, 2012; Burns, 2009). These interviews reveal that my interviewees appear to have a relatively accurate conception of the workings of the South African economy. They were able to identify the major pathways and impediments to mobility and understood how these pathways and impediments differ in rural and urban settings. Thus, if the wider black South African population also has a relatively accurate conception of the South African economy, it is likely that the NIDS respondents did not truly “expect” to be as mobile as they claimed in the survey—a level of mobility that is largely divorced from any objective reality—but rather *aspired* to be that highly mobile.

Additionally, this chapter adds some nuance to Wale’s (2013) conclusion that individuals in Soweto hold either “individualistic” understandings—highlighting the importance of hard work and determination—or “structural” understandings—emphasizing the high barriers of unemployment and access to capital—of social mobility in South Africa. Though individuals may have a *primarily* individualistic or structural view of the South African economy, none of the interviewees in this chapter viewed social mobility as *entirely* individualist or structural, as Wale suggests; all of my interviewees identified both individualistic and structural components to social mobility.

Chapter 4: Oscillating between Opportunity and Stagnation: Perceptions of Migration

The economic and social history of South Africa is a history of migration. Beginning in the 19th century, young men left their rural homes to work for British and “Afrikaner” colonists in order to pay lobola, appease chiefs seeking a source of hard currency, buy guns and other goods, and cover the hut, poll, and labor taxes designed specifically to compel these men to migrate (Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006: 83; Feinstein, 2005: 55). With the expansion of British military and legal control over South Africa in the second half of the nineteenth century, black Africans systematically lost their rights to own land and farm for themselves and were cultivated for labor on white-owned farms. Beginning with the Natives’ Land Act of 1913—which abolished sharecropping and banned the sale of land to black individuals—black Africans were eventually herded into reserves, where traditional and communal farming was all but impossible. As Feinstein (2005: 47-48) argues, “The final outcome of [this] whole process was that, for the African people of South Africa, land was no longer abundant; in areas they could still own, land was scarce and it was labour that was plentiful.” Less and less able to earn a living from farming their own land, black men had little choice but to seek employment elsewhere to support themselves and their families (Nattrass and Seekings, 2012: 535; Kok *et al.*, 2006: 15; Feinstein, 2005: 47-48).

Initially, these men sought employment primarily on white-owned farms and in white-owned mines (Nattrass and Seekings, 2012: 535). The system of labor that developed in the mines—and to a lesser extent in agriculture—set the tenor for all future labor policy in apartheid South Africa. Mining companies employed migrant laborers for relatively short periods of time—on average twelve-to-eighteen months. These men migrated without their families and lived in company-owned dormitories with other miners; until 1969, mining companies were prohibited from providing housing for the families of more than three-percent of their work forces, and in practice a much lower proportion of black men were able to live with their families. At the conclusion of their contracts, miners were forced to return home, entrenching a system of “oscillating” migration in South Africa, which allowed these companies, free from the constraints of supporting entire families, to pay below-market wages. Migration in South Africa was thus largely gendered: though some women were required for domestic services in the mines and in cities, the vast majority of migrants were men (Feinstein, 2005: 49 and 64-66; Wilson, 1972: 7-9).

However, the low-wage, oscillating black African labor of the mining sector undermined South Africa’s growing manufacturing industries. In contrast to the needs of a mining-dominated economy, a flourishing, industrialized South Africa required a stable and educated work force, concentrated in urban centers, and with plenty of disposable income. Manufacturing was thus where the economic needs of a modernizing economy abutted the racist ideology of the Union and National Party governments. As Wilson (1972: 156-157) presciently observed in the early 1970s, “And herein lies South Africa’s dilemma. For the country is simultaneously pursuing two goals [—the first, economic growth and the other separation of the races—] whose consequences move people in different directions.” To reconcile the demands for an urban labor force with the desire to achieve as pure a segregation of white South Africans from their black counterparts as possible, the Union and then apartheid governments enacted a system of ever constricting residency, labor, and migratory laws that were largely fashioned on the system of oscillating labor developed for the mining sector (Feinstein, 2005: 128-130, 151; Wilson, 1972: 156-158).

The roots of the National Party's attempts after 1948 to completely control the movements of South Africa's black population can be found in the framework instituted by previous governments. Beginning with the Urban Areas Act of 1923 and continuing with a series of laws passed in 1937 and 1945, South Africa laid the foundations for an oppressive system of influx control that made it increasingly difficult for migrant black laborers to seek employment in urban areas and all but impossible to do so with their families. By the time the National Party won control of South Africa in 1948 and began to institute its own system of "apartheid," the mobility of the black population was already severely constricted: only those with special passes could reside in specifically demarcated locations near major urban centers, and these individuals had a limited amount of time to find employment before risking "rustica[tion]" (Kok *et al.*, 2006: 15; Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006: 84; Feinstein, 2005: 152).

The apartheid government, beginning with the Group Areas Act and continuing with the Native Laws Amendment of 1952 and Separate Development, developed a system of centralized control and complete domination of black movement in South Africa. Not only did the National Party attempt to direct which individuals could migrate and where they could go, but it also actively removed millions of individuals from urban areas. When it became clear that these policies alone would not fully stanch the rapid increase of the black African population in urban areas, the apartheid government instituted its policy of Separate Development, which sought to economically and socially develop black African homelands in order to present an attractive alternative to working in urban areas (Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006: 86-88; Feinstein, 2005: 153-155). The entirety of apartheid labor policy was well summarized by the Minister of Bantu Affairs, who in 1955, soon after the National Party began instituting its own vision for the labor policy of South Africa, proclaimed, "I see the future economic pattern of South Africa being that there will [continue to] be thousands of Bantu on the white farms, in the mines, in industry and also as servants in the white homes. The difference, however, will be that the natives will be there, not as a right but at the bidding and by the grace of the whites. At best they will be visitors in the white areas" (as quoted in Wilson, 1972: 163-164).

The ultimate effectiveness of this elaborate system of population control is questionable. By 1970, the census indicated that one-third of Africans—or over 5 million individuals—were living in urban areas (Feinstein, 2005: 156). Though net rural-urban migration fell dramatically between 1970 and 1990 with the National Party's increasingly stringent migratory policies, the number of black Africans in urban areas continued to rise (Anderson, 2006: 110). Still, as Anderson (2006: 110), argues, "Migration in South Africa [during apartheid] was far below what it would have been in the absence of policies that severely limited such movement." The long-term impact of over 100 years of direct legal intervention in population movement was to entrench a unique system of temporary, oscillating migration in South Africa that differed from patterns observed across much of the rest of the world (see Seekings and Natrass, 2006: 125-127; see also Portes [1985] on Latin America; Adepoju [2006] on the similarities between international migration in Africa with internal migration in South Africa; International Organization for Migration [2005] on Asia, especially pages 25-32, which show that rates of temporary migrants, though growing in number, represent a much smaller proportion of total migrants in Asia than in South Africa).

With the erosion and then repeal of apartheid South Africa's repressive migration policies in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, South Africa did not experience a sudden massive influx of permanent migrants to urban areas, contrary to expectations (Collinson, 2010: 5081; Casale and Posel, 2006: 15; Mabin, 1989, 1990). In fact, overall migration flows remained

surprisingly constant. Kok and Collinson (2006: 7-9), using census data, concluded that the migration rate was around 12 percent of the population at all points between 1975 and 2001. Similarly, Posel and Casale (2003: 462-463), analyzing data from the 1993 Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development and the 1995, 1997, and 1999 October Household Surveys, found little change in the number of migrant workers among black Africans, which averaged around 10-11 percent.

The relative consistency in gross migratory flows in South Africa, however, obscures changes in the nature of this migration. Posel and Casale (2003: 462-463) found a modest increase (of around one-percentage point) in the number of rural African labor migrants. Anderson (2006: 108-110), using an expanded definition of “urban” areas that includes many rural towns and analyzing United Nations data, found that the rate of net rural-to-urban migration increased dramatically at the end of apartheid and the beginning of democracy from around two individuals per thousand between 1980 and 1984 to over 15 individuals per thousand between 1995 and 1999. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Migration Study also found a large increase in movement from rural areas after the end of influx control (Cross, 2006: 208-209). Additionally, what was once primarily a male activity has become increasingly female (see, generally, Hunter, 2010: 47 and 94-95). Posel and Casale (2003: 462-3), for example, found that the proportion of female migrants increased by four percentage points (from 30 percent to 34 percent) between 1993 and 1999, and Posel (2009: 8), using data from the first wave of the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS), concluded that the proportion of female migrants continued to increase at least through 2008 to 39 percent. Collinson *et al.* (2003: 9) uncovered a similar trend in the Agincourt sub-district of Mpumalanga after 1997.

During the period immediately following South Africa’s transition to democracy, despite changes in the geographical origins and gender composition of migrants, migration remained largely circular (see, generally, Todes *et al.*, 2010: 340-341; see also Kok and Collinson, 2006: 25; Posel, 2003). There is some evidence, however, that the circularity of migration in South Africa is ebbing. In her analysis of the first wave of NIDS, Posel (2009: 3-4 and 7) found a marked decrease in the number of African households reporting members absent for employment reasons, from around 24 percent in 1993 to 13 percent in 2008. She hypothesized and presented some evidence (i.e., the dramatic increase in households reporting members “living elsewhere”) that many of these individuals may be settling permanently at their places of work and not following the traditional circular routes.

Migration in the Eastern Cape typifies many of these changing migration dynamics (see, generally, Bank and Kamman, 2010: 6-16). Cross *et al.* (1999) found a pattern of “rural densification,” or movement to informal settlements outside of rural towns, in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal as restrictions on movement to these towns were repealed at the end of apartheid. They argued that these rural-to-“rural” moves were becoming more dominant than the more traditional rural-to-“urban” (which are perhaps better characterized as rural-to-“metro”) ones (see also Cross *et al.*, 1998, specifically on KwaZulu-Natal). Bank (1997), summarizing much of his research in townships in the Eastern Cape during the 1990s, found similar patterns in specific towns. In Butterworth, for example, a town in the former Transkei, Bank found that the number of “shacks” increased from 700 in 1989 to over 5,000 in 1995 (*Ibid.*: 21). He also concluded that rural-to-urban streams generally fell into two categories: long-distance routes to major metropolitan centers including Cape Town and Johannesburg, which were generally dominated by men, and routes to local urban centers including East London, which tended to attract mostly women. However, an increasing

proportion of migrants, Bank established, began to avoid these regional urban centers altogether and migrate directly to larger metropolitan areas, where there was greater economic opportunity (*Ibid.*: 21-22).

Bank and Kamman (2010; Bank *et al.*, 2006), in their analysis of a comprehensive socio-economic survey of over 12,200 households in the Eastern Cape, confirmed many of Bank's (1997) earlier findings. The majority of migrants in the Eastern Cape (approximately 80 percent) originated in rural areas, and 55 percent of these went to either Cape Town or Johannesburg. Women migrants, however, who were in the minority, tended to stay closer to home than men, but overall many fewer migrants (approximately 6 percent) moved to rural areas than in the 1990s (Cross *et al.*, 1999; Bank, 1997). Finally, Bank *et al.* (2006: 30) found that a lower proportion of black African households reported having an active migrant member, perhaps reflecting decreased circularity among migrants who move further from their homes. Posel's (2009) findings (see above) and research on circular migration specifically between the Eastern Cape and Cape Town (van der Berg *et al.*, 2002: 5; Bekker, 2001-2002) appear to confirm this conclusion.

The historical and contemporary importance of migration in South Africa has led to a number of sociological and anthropological studies of how migration has shaped rural and urban identity. James (2001; see also James, 2000), for example, argues that the process of migration has intimately connected rural areas with urban ones, refashioning representations of both and rural identity itself. Although other authors, including Bank and Minkley (2005: 23), have since argued that the connections between rural and urban are less robust than they once were, James (2001: 105-107), drawing on anthropologic interviews from the Northern Province and Mpumalanga, concludes that migration has "turned rural areas into places of retirement and refuge for labour migrants" from places for agricultural production. In turn, she argues, land reform and poverty alleviation programs that hope to rely on farming to develop rural areas face high barriers.

Migration has also re-formed identity in urban areas. Reexamining the *Xhosa in Town* trilogy, a series of anthropological studies of the townships of East London, a medium-sized city in the Eastern Cape, Bank (2011) traces how urban identity in one such township, Duncan Village, was shaped by the rural identity of migrants from the surrounding Ciskei and Transkei homelands and contestation among successive generations of these migrants. And Hunter (2010: e.g., 41-44, 180-182) observes how labor migration has altered conceptualizations of marriage and love in South Africa and how the recent rise in female labor migration has altered gender roles in South Africa.

Much less attention, however, has been paid in sociological and anthropological circles to the actual migration process. With the exception of Schapera (1947), who in the 1940s examined migration from present day Botswana (which was, for a time, a de facto province of South Africa) to South Africa and the Human Sciences Research Council's 2001-2002 Migration Survey,¹ little work has been done to systematically uncover individual motivations for migrating and perceptions of each step of the migration process. Furthermore, no one has yet examined how *migration experience* itself influences these perceptions. And examining perceptions of the migration decision and process has important practical, in addition to academic, ramifications: as a number of authors have suggested, it is necessary to investigate

¹ Though the HSRC Migration Survey has been criticized for methodological flaws, particularly in the administration of the survey (van Zyl, 2006: 147), it is cited throughout this chapter because it is among the only other sources of data available for comparison.

these perceptions in order to better understand the causes, impacts, and ultimately aggregate trends of internal migration in South Africa (see de Jong and Steinmetz, 2006: 249; Kok and Collinson, 2006: 9). This chapter, through interviews with 26 individuals from diverse migration backgrounds, begins to fill this gap in the existing literature.

In this chapter, I attempt to do so in two parts. First, I explore why my interviewees believe individuals migrate from rural to urban areas, and investigate whether a household or individual understanding of migration decisions—whether the “new” or “old” economics of migration—is a more appropriate lens through which to view migration in South Africa. I then explore how the interviewees perceive each step of the migration process: what categories of people are believed to migrate to urban areas, which individuals succeed while there, and finally which individuals return to their rural homes. Throughout this chapter, I compare these perceptions to the available data and examine some of the possible repercussions of the views held by the interviewees for both internal migration in South Africa and the South African economy more generally. This study marks the first attempt to examine perceptions of migration in contemporary South Africa; as a result, many of the conclusions presented here are preliminary and primarily suggest areas where further investigation is merited.

4.2 The Migration Decision

Over the past half-century, two opposing theoretical schools have emerged in an effort to explain global migratory patterns.² The first school, which gained prominence in the mid-1960s, considers migration to be an economically equilibrating movement of autonomous individual or household actors. In contrast, the second school, which emerged in the mid-1970s as a response to the limitations of this economic paradigm, emphasizes the larger structural and historical context in which migration occurs. This section argues that, though both “individual-equilibrium” and “historical-structural” approaches may have some theoretical import in South Africa, economic migration theories may be more practically significant. My interviewees mostly conceptualized rural-to-urban migration through an economic lens.

Early migration theorization examined the motivations and outcomes of migration through the lens of neoclassical economics (see Massey *et al.*, 1993 and Paton, 1995 for detailed explorations of the economic migration literature). Though economic theorization about migration was far from monolithic, these theories, as Paton (1995: 3) argues, shared a fundamental theoretical framework, which placed “an emphasis on the individual decision maker as the determinant and greater economic equilibrium as the result. Th[ese theories

² Most migration theoreticians focus on international migration—or movements of individuals across national borders—as opposed to internal migration—or movements of individuals within a single country (Kok and Collinson, 2006: 4). Though international migration differs in many important respects from internal migration, international migration theory can inform the internal migration patterns observed in South Africa. Firstly, the context in which internal migration in South Africa developed closely resembles an international migratory system. Anderson (2006: 107), for example, merely states the obvious when he recounts how “the creation of homelands and the laws regarding residence in the rest of the country effectively treated Africans in South Africa as foreign residents.” Secondly, though cross-border migration often adds considerable legal and economic obstacles to movement usually absent in internal migration (Zolberg, 1981: 4), borders themselves do not fundamentally alter *why* individuals choose to migrate or the historical and structural relationship between sending and receiving areas. Thus, in the South African case at least, international migration theories can be applied to internal migration with relatively minor adjustments.

presented] a positive vision of migration as a voluntary movement towards greater socioeconomic equality.”

The neoclassical, microeconomic approach—the dominant economic approach to migration—focuses on the individual decision maker (Todaro, 1969; see also Gelderblom, 2006: 271-272; Paton, 1995: 4-5 and Massey *et al.*, 1993: 434-436). An individual decides whether to migrate weighing the short-term costs of moving to a new location and searching for a job against the expected long-term income benefits of migrating, given the demand for the individual’s skills in the receiving economy. If the expected income gains outweigh the costs of migration then the individual will move; if not, the individual will remain. Spengler and Myers (1977: 14) captured this neoclassical, microeconomic framework well, when they argued, “Migration on the part of an individual ... reflect[s] an expectation that the individual will be better off at the point of destination than at the point of provenance.” Over time, the market wage and opportunities available in the sending and receiving areas, are equilibrated.

This general microeconomic framework has served as the starting point for a number of other migration theories, perhaps the most important of which is the push-pull model. The push-pull model argues that an individual bases his decision to migrate by balancing the “pulls”—“those things in either the destination or the origin area that are attractive to the potential migrant”—and “pushes”—“things in either area that tend to drive the migrant away.” This model expands the traditional economic analysis of migration beyond a simple income calculation to include infrastructural, educational, and social considerations in both the sending and receiving areas. Ultimately, in the push-pull framework, the potential migrant will choose to live in the more appealing location (Gelderblom, 2006: 270; Adepoju, 2006: 36; Cross *et al.*, 1998: 639; Alonso, 1977: 85-86).

Beginning in the 1970s, an opposing theoretical school that focused on the historical and structural contexts of migration began to take shape. This school, which is deeply rooted in the Marxist theories of dependency and center-peripheral development, removes individual decision-making from the migration equation, and instead focuses on how global economic forces create conditions in both sending and receiving areas that inevitably lead to the observed migratory patterns (Gelderblom, 2006: 272; Brettell, 2000: 103; Paton, 1995: 3 and 7-8; Massey *et al.*, 1993: 444-448). Brettell (2000: 103-104) nicely describes the fundamental differences between historical-structural approaches and microeconomic migration analyses: “The unit of analysis in this body of theory is not the individual migrant, but rather the global market and the way that national and international economic and political policies, and particularly capitalist development, have disrupted, displaced, or even attracted local populations, thereby generating particular migration streams.”

During the interviews, my interviewees viewed migration in primarily economic terms. Most of the interviewees saw migration as an opportunity for economic mobility: the push of poverty in rural areas and pull of jobs in urban ones encouraged individuals to migrate. “They’re tired of poverty,” R-7, the clothing store employee, said of those who leave rural areas. Similarly, NM-6, the spaza shop owner, described how people leave “because [they’re] suffering” and “expect[] something better in urban areas.” “It’s [because of] hunger” that people leave, NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from Qumbu, concurred. “They decide to go to urban areas in hope that things will be better there,” she continued. M-5, the government office cleaner, agreed: “Most of them are forced by circumstances. They see poverty getting very critical and decide to move to urban areas.” R-6, the municipal council employee, believed that the individuals had very little autonomy over the decision: “They

have to leave because there's nothing here. There is no improvement. There is poverty. ... They have to leave due to the situation that they are living under." As M-8, the hotel cleaner, described, people "are forced by circumstances. ... They are starving and going to bed on an empty stomach. They don't have money and so they decide to go elsewhere ... [thinking] it will change their situation."

The pull of jobs and the subsequent ability to overcome this poverty attracts these individuals to urban areas, the interviewees argued. As NM-5, the administrative intern, related, "We all believe that at least if you stay in Johannesburg [and other cities] it's easy to get a job. ... There are so many factories there. It's not that difficult to find a job." "Most [people] are leaving to find jobs [in urban areas] and make means to support their families," R-5, the government project employee, argued. M-4, the street cleaner, agreed with R-5's assessment: "Most people leave to get jobs in urban areas [because] they need money." M-1, the police officer, was even more emphatic: "To look for jobs [in urban areas] ... that's the main, main, main reason. ... I cannot think of another reason why people leave their areas."

These pure economic considerations were far and away the most common explanation offered for why individuals left rural areas. However, a number of the interviewees emphasized an additional push from rural areas and pull to urban ones: infrastructure and services.³ NM-9, the 32-year-old unemployed woman from Matatiele, for example, argued that some individuals migrate because they "can't take the things of non-service delivery. They leave to areas where there is service delivery." Similarly, the R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, described how many "want a better life. In the rural areas sometimes there is no electricity, no water, no toilets. So they move to the urban areas."

The majority of those who viewed infrastructural disparities as a motivating force for migration, however, had never permanently left Alfred Nzo; only a fraction of returnees and migrants believed that infrastructure and services were important considerations in an individual's decisions to leave rural areas. The non-migrant emphasis on infrastructure is not particularly surprising. As Section 2.3.2 argued, non-migrants view infrastructure as primarily a quality-of-life concern. However, migrants and to a lesser degree returnees emphasized the developmental impact of infrastructure and the close relationship between service delivery and job creation. If individuals understand infrastructure mainly in relation to economic outcomes, as those in the Migrant category and many in the Returnee category do, then emphasizing *jobs* as the motivating force for migration would implicitly account for the infrastructural disparities between rural and urban areas. However, if individuals understand infrastructural development as a concern largely unrelated to economic outcomes and one that is desirable in itself, as the non-migrants do, then infrastructural disparities could provide a second, unrelated motivation for migrating.

Ultimately, the views expressed by the interviewees—that individuals migrate to town primarily for economic reasons—reflect the findings of large-n, South African surveys that, at least in part, focus on migration. Collinson, in his study of the Agincourt sub-district of

³ A handful of individuals also argued that "education" was an important motivating force. However, most of those who argued that education was an important factor in migration were from the Migrant category. Due to the design of this study (i.e., using CAPS—a longitudinal study of *young adults* begun over a decade ago—to find interviewees for the Migrant category), many of the migrants came to Cape Town while they were still in school and a large proportion came specifically for educational reasons. Thus, the migrants may have been projecting their own experiences onto others and their views may not fully represent broader opinions about migration.

Mpumalanga—a rural sub-district in the Northeast of South Africa—argued that “a limited labour market is a function of underdevelopment and a major determinant of migration” (Collinson, 2010: 5081; see also Kok and Collinson, 2006: 10). Similarly, the 2001-2002 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Migration Survey, which interviewed a group of 2,142 internal migrants, concluded that economic justifications—particularly employment opportunities—were the primary reason given by individuals who left rural areas (Casale and Posel, 2006: 13; Cross, 2006: 215-217).⁴ And Posel (2009: 3-5), in her analysis of the first wave of National Income Dynamics Study data, found that the majority (59 percent) of absent household members were working or looking for work elsewhere, though that number had fallen substantially (around 18 percentage points) since 1993 when the Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (PLSD) was conducted. The economic imperative to migrate appears particularly strong in the Eastern Cape: in their analysis of a comprehensive survey of Eastern Cape residents, Bank and Kamman (2010: 23) found that three-quarters of black Africans who were no longer living in their primary household were absent because of employment-related activity. There is thus strong evidence that the economic lens through which most of the interviewees viewed migration both reflects the views held by the majority of South Africans on migration and the reasons that most South Africans choose to leave their rural homes.

These primarily economic justifications for migration suggest that any examination of internal migration in South Africa must consider the economic rational behind migratory decision-making. Though researchers would be remiss to ignore the historical and structural context in which this migration takes place—especially because of the profound impact that apartheid has had on contemporary migration dynamics—viewing migration through a purely historical-structural lens would undoubtedly lead researchers astray. As these interviews and data from large-n studies in South Africa reveal, migration in South Africa has primarily economic roots. Thus, if the goal is to understand *why* individuals in South Africa migrate (and ultimately to understand larger migration trends), economic theory and analysis must play a fundamental role in research on migration.

4.2.1 A “New” or “Old” Economics?

Though the previous section examined *why* individuals migrate, it is equally important to explore *how* these economic decisions are made. Early migration theorists argued that *individuals* moved to the location where their income potential was greatest. However, recognition of the integral role that *households* play in developing countries forced migration theorists to reexamine the individual focus of their work. Not only do groups of individuals in developing countries often have to pool resources for survival, but individual choices are made in the context of these familial structures (Gelderblom, 2006: 274). Households, like individual actors, do not focus solely on income maximization; rather, households seek to maximize total wellbeing by striving to diversify risk and overcome credit constraints through the household members. In what became known as the New Economics of Migration, these theorists posited that migration was one tool of many available to households in their efforts to maximize their wellbeing (Collinson, 2010: 5087; Massey *et al.*, 1993: 436-440).

⁴ In contrast, services and infrastructure were much larger concerns for migrants originating in urban areas (Cross, 2006: 215-217).

During the interviews, I asked my interviewees whether “individuals decide for themselves [] to leave or [whether] others decide for them” (Appendix A, Question 3a) in an attempt to probe the relationship between individuals and their households in the migration decision. It is thus possible to explore whether migration decisions are made at the individual or household level. Although most of the interviewees argued that the ultimate decision to migrate was made by the individual, there was general consensus that migration decisions were almost always made in consultation with other household members.

Most of the interviewees believed that individuals ultimately decided for themselves whether to move. “I decided for myself and most people decide for themselves. Very few of those are told to leave and [to] go look for a job,” R-2, the taxi owner, described. Most of the other interviewees echoed this sentiment, arguing as R-5, the builder on government projects, did that “it’s their choice. ... It’s [] their decision [whether] to go.” As NM-5, the administrative intern, stated bluntly: “Adults make their own choices. Only kids are told by [their] families what to do.”

There are situations where household members do force an individual to migrate. “A few [people] are forced to go by families. ... Maybe the family has lost a breadwinner and someone in the family has to find a job to keep the bread on the table,” M-5, the cleaner in government offices, explained. But, ultimately, as M-5 concluded, “Most people decide for themselves.” R-8, the unemployed 25-year-old woman who had moved to Cape Town for health reasons, agreed: “Maybe [there are situations where] people don’t choose to leave by themselves. ... [But] most of the times it’s their choice.” These views appear consistent with those expressed by respondents in the HSRC Migration Survey: 47 percent of internal migrants indicated that the decision to migrate rested solely with themselves, while only 21 percent responded that their families had made the decision (Wentzel *et al.*, 2006: 190).

Though most of the interviewees believed that the decision to migrate more often than not rested with the individual, these decisions, the interviewees argued, were frequently made in consultation with other members of the household. People “decide for themselves. ... [But families] support that person and give advice,” R-9, the clothing store employee, described. Similarly, R-4, the unemployed 27-year-old woman from outside of Mount Frere, believed that “you decide for yourself but you consult your parents” before you go. Both NM-4, the security officer, and M-8, the hotel cleaner, agreed that families play some role in the migration decision. “Most of the times, families advise people [who] go,” NM-4 reiterated. M-8 even argued that this consultation process extended to family members “who [are] in the city [who do] call and advise someone to come.”

How instrumental this “advice” is to a given individual’s migration decision, however, was unclear from the interviews. Certain individuals used “advice” as a euphemism for “force.” NM-7, the credit collector, for example, who described how “families [often] advise” those who migrate, later argued that these individuals are in fact “forced by parents [to migrate] most of the time.” In contrast, for others, this “advice” was entirely incidental to the decision to migrate. As R-4 argued, individuals “consult [their] parents” before they migrate just “to tell them in case something happens.” Although more detailed questioning may have clarified the roles of the individual and household in the migration decision, it appears that neither the “new” nor the “old” economic theorization on migration adequately illustrates the migration dynamics of South Africa: both individuals and households appear to serve important functions in the decision to migrate, though understanding the nuances of this relationship requires further investigation.

4.3 The Migration Process

In the following section, I examine how the interviewees perceive each step of the migration process in three parts. First, I investigate what kinds of people are believed to migrate from rural areas to urban ones. I then explore the perceived attributes of the migrants who “succeed” and those who do not. Finally, I examine how the interviewees conceptualize return migration—that is, what kinds of people are believed to return to rural areas and why.

4.3.1 Who Migrates?

Using census data and data from other household surveys, scholars have developed a relatively detailed profile of the typical South African migrant. This individual is most likely an African male (though African women appear to comprise an increasing proportion of migrants) (Posel, 2009: 7-8; Posel and Casale, 2003: 465), younger than 44-years-old and probably in his mid-to-late twenties (Wentzel and Tlabela, 2006: 92), and on average better educated than the local population (*Ibid.*), though van der Berg *et al.* (2002: 1, 7, and 10) found the most educated individuals (i.e., those with tertiary educations) have a propensity to remain closer to home. Yet despite these clear trends, my interviewees had difficulty pinpointing who migrates from rural areas. Though there was *some* recognition that migrants were on average younger and more likely to be male than the general population, my interviewees tended to focus on the characteristics of those who did *not* migrate rather than on the characteristics of those who did.

My interviewees may have had difficulty pinpointing the characteristics of those who migrate, because, according to the interviewees, nearly everyone migrates from rural areas at some point in their lives. As R-6, the ward council employee, described, migration is “not for everyone. But ... you can see here, there are no people who are my age. [Those] people [] are not here. ... You can see now the village is empty because” they have all migrated. M-1, the police officer, agreed: though “old people” remained, all of the “youth leave.” Because so many people migrate, it is not surprising that the characteristics of those who do *not* leave would be much more salient to the interviewees than the characteristics of those who do.

My interviewees identified two primary characteristics of those who never migrate: a general lack of ambition and a lack of access to social networks in urban areas. NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from outside of Qumbu, for example, described how migration was dependent on an “individual’s thinking. Some people are less ambitious. They don’t really think of changing.” NM-7, the credit collector, compared these people to those “who migrate to urban areas ... who feel like they need something different in life.” Those who had migrated to Cape Town, however, tended to be more critical of this lack of ambition. R-2, the taxi owner, for example, tried to be diplomatic in his description of those who stay: “Those who stay,” he described, “Some of them are lazy. I’ll put it like that.” Similarly, M-4, the street cleaner, was also critical of those who did not migrate: “Others just say, ‘The government is giving me grant money. What am I [going to] do[] in the big cities?’” If migration is viewed by the interviewees as among the only opportunities available for rural residents to access economic opportunities (see Section 3.4), it is unsurprising that the interviewees believe many of those who do not migrate lack ambition.

However, according to my interviewees, a lack of ambition was not the only reason why individuals did not migrate; more importantly, many lacked access to social networks in urban areas, a prerequisite, the interviewees argued, to migrating. “Those who don’t leave,” NM-8, the administrator of government projects, argued, “Are often those who don’t have relatives in urban areas.” “It’s because they don’t have families” elsewhere that people do not leave, R-4, the unemployed 27-year-old woman from outside of Mount Frere, agreed. Those in the Migrant category were even more emphatic in their belief that a lack of access to social networks inhibited migration. M-4, the street cleaner, for example, argued that the key difference between those who migrate and those who do not is access to these social networks: “Those people who don’t have families or friends in urban area are unlikely to move because they don’t have a support or shelter in [these] areas. Those who have relatives or friends are more likely to leave,” she described. M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, also thought that for most individuals a lack of ambition was not the major hurdle to migration: “Most [of those who stay] want [to leave] but a lack of opportunities”—like, for example, “not having relatives in urban areas”—“prevents them” from doing so.

The importance of social networks to migration is well established in the migration literature (Brettell, 2000: 106-108). Social networks facilitate migration by decreasing both the costs and risks of movement. By providing assistance, local knowledge, and job market access to migrants, these networks increase the chances of successful outcomes and create “a self-sustaining diffusion process,” where “each act of migration itself creates the social structures needed to sustain it,” thus further increasing migratory flows (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 448-450). The vast majority of the interviewees recognized the importance of the assistance and information that these networks provided. “Relative[s]” in destination cities “help you until you are able to stand on your own,” NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old from outside of Qumbu, described. They “help with accommodation and even money to go look for a job,” NM-8, the government project administrator, elaborated. Without family in urban areas, “you have to struggle for a place to stay because you are not working. At least if you move where you have family, it’s easier. It’s easy to move if you have someone there,” M-3, the Labour Department employee, agreed. Similarly, R-3, the unemployed 22-year-old man from Mount Frere, emphasized the importance of the information that these networks provide: “It is very important to know someone so that they can inform you on what is going on in that area,” he argued. Without that knowledge, he continued, it is difficult to succeed.

There was more debate, however, on the role of these networks in securing employment for migrants. Some, particularly those who had never left Alfred Nzo (and thus had limited, if any, firsthand experience with migration), thought that these networks were integral to the success, or lack thereof, of a migrant’s job search. These networks “play a very important role” in helping people find jobs, NM-7, the credit collector, argued. NM-2, the 25-year-old woman, described this process: “Someone who is working may attempt to get you a job where the person is working. ... A relative may take you where he’s working and introduce you. If they have a vacancy, then you’ll be in.” NM-9, the administrative intern, agreed: “Yes they [help you find a job]. They ask around [and] are also providing shelters so you can come and live in the city.”

The rest of the interviewees—primarily those who had spent at least some time in Cape Town—recognized the direct role that these networks do sometimes play in securing employment but argued that the indirect support they provide is more fundamental to a migrant’s success. R-9, the clothing store employee, for example, argued that “it’s important to have family [in urban areas] because they support you while you are still looking for a

job.” Almost as an afterthought she added, “It is [also] important [to have these networks] because some of the jobs you will find through connections.” M-2, the Transnet employee, described the support that these networks can provide: “Yes, [these networks] ... can support you. Support in such things as motivation: they motivate you, they support you with money for transport when you go up and down looking for a job, they support you to get food, to get something to wear to go up and down.” Though many of those in the Migrant and Returnee categories agreed with the non-migrants that members of these urban networks, as M-4, the street cleaner, put it, “even speak with friends [to tell them they] have someone who is looking for a job” and help secure the migrant a job, most saw this as of secondary importance to the “accommodation, a place to stay, money for transport,” et cetera that these networks provide.

Though the interviewees appeared to confirm the role of social networks in facilitating migration, there is some indication from the interviews that, in South Africa at least, much of the existing literature may actually *understate* the importance of these networks to migration. The vast majority of my interviewees argued that it was close to impossible to move without knowing individuals in receiving areas. NM-6, the spaza shop owner, argued that “it rarely happens that someone moves to a city without relatives or someone they know.” NM-1, the information-technology specialist, quantified NM-6’s statement: “Maybe three percent of people go where they don’t know anyone.” R-4, the unemployed 27-year-old woman from outside of Mount Frere, was even more emphatic: “You choose the area to go because you have a family member in that city,” she described. “You *cannot*” go if you don’t know anyone (emphasis added). M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, agreed with R-4: Ultimately, she argued, “You need to know someone in that area. You can’t just go to [a place] if you don’t know anybody there.” In fact, four of the nine non-migrants claimed that they could not move in part because they did not know individuals in urban areas with whom they could stay, and 15 of the 17 of those in the Migrant and Returnee categories lived with relatives when they first moved to Cape Town.

There was a seemingly prohibitive barrier to migration that all but three of the interviewees failed to mention: the financial costs—which include transportation costs and relocation fees, among others—of moving to a new location. In other studies of migration in South Africa, these costs have been found to be prohibitive. Collinson (2010: 5087), in his examination of the Agincourt sub-district of Mpumalanga, discovered that wealthier households were more likely to send migrants to other areas than poorer households. Similarly, Kok *et al.* (2003: 59; see also Kok and Collinson, 2006: 2), in their examination of 1996 census data, concluded that districts in South Africa with higher unemployment rates had lower rates of out-migration. And Bank and Kamman (2010) found that households with migrants in the Eastern Cape were “poor, but not the poorest of the poor.” Both Ardington *et al.* (2007) and Posel *et al.* (2006) found that the probability a household will have a labor-market migrant increases considerably if at least one household member is eligible for South Africa’s generous Old Age Pension. These findings all suggest that there are financial costs to migration, which are insurmountable for some.

There is, however, a compelling explanation for why more interviewees did not see the financial barriers to migration as a significant hurdle: these costs may not actually be prohibitive. As both Collinson (2010) and Kok and Collinson (2006) acknowledge, poorer households not only have less capital but also tend to have less access to migrant networks (see also Gelderblom, 2007; Seekings and Nattrass, 2006). Access to Old Age Pensions may allow individuals to compensate for a lack of access to these networks, by, for example,

covering living expenses—which these networks often subsidize—while they look for a job in the destination location. Thus, the salient factor limiting the migration of poorer households may not be the financial costs of moving to a new location, but their exclusion from migratory networks.

Ultimately, the views held by the interviewees on the importance of migrant networks in South Africa appear to largely reflect reality. A analysis of migration intentions measured during the 2001-2002 HSRC Migration Survey found that “the presence of a migrant network in the possible destination is by far the most important predictor of” intentions to move (Wentzel *et al.*, 2006: 195-196). As Seekings and Nattrass (2006: 284) conclude after reviewing the available literature on social networks and migration, “The unemployed people who remain in rural areas ... where there are few job opportunities [i.e., those who do not migrate] are probably those who lack the social capital to escape the constraints of local conditions” (see also Klasen and Woolard, 2009; Nattrass, 2000; Murray, 1995; Sharp and Spiegel, 1985).

The importance of social networks to migration in South Africa thus suggests that this understudied aspect of the migratory process should be explored in much greater depth. Researchers should map these migration networks, exploring the relationships between migrants and receiving individuals, the motivations for accepting migrants, the degree of autonomy migrants retain over their decisions to migrate, expectations of these migrants upon arrival, and the impact of various characteristics of receiving networks on the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of migrants. It is likely impossible to understand the nuances of migration in South Africa without also understanding the nuances of these migration networks.

4.3.2 Who “Succeeds”?

My interviewees judged a migrant’s “success” primarily through the lens of material acquisition. They believed that the success of a migrant was ultimately inseparable from both his own material comfort and the material comfort of those in his rural household. Ironically, however, the interviewees simultaneously argued that budgeting and saving—and not spending money frivolously—were fundamental to a migrant’s long-term prospects. These long-term prospects were further undermined by what the interviewees believed was a major pitfall awaiting those who migrate from rural areas: the lure of urban vices.

The interviewees believed that the acquisition of material goods reflected the success of a migrant. “It’s when someone accumulates his own possessions” that his migration becomes successful, NM-7, the credit collector, argued. R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, elucidated what “possessions” NM-7 may have been referring to: “You will see [he is successful in] the way [he] dress[es]. Maybe he’s coming with updated fashion or is driving a nice vehicle or now he managed to build his [own] home.” R-8, the unemployed 25-year-old who had moved to Cape Town for health reasons, similarly considers an individual’s migration successful once he has “money, a good house, material possessions like a car and so on.” M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, agreed: A successful migrant, she argued, “Is someone who manages to buy his own cars and a house in the city. ... Everything goes well for him.”

The interviewees looked in particular to improvements in the standard of living of the migrant's rural household when determining the degree of success a migrant has achieved. In order for a migrant to be successful, NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from outside of Qumbu, argued, "There must be something that is showing at home. I must build houses and also help other people that are in need." Similarly, NM-9, the unemployed 32-year-old woman from Matatiele, described how, "You see the difference [when a migrant is successful]. Like if someone is from a poor family, which depended on the mercy of the neighbors, [they] begin to manage without their help. If houses were in bad condition you'll see them rebuilding." R-2, the taxi owner, agreed that investment in rural houses was a key indicator of success: "This [migrant is] able to build his home. You see most of us we are coming from two rondavels or three rondavels homes. But now [with this person] you see no more rondavels. You see tiled houses with face bricks. You see houses with garages. And you say, 'This person, he has made it in the city!'"

Improvements in the quality of life of the migrant's rural household did not just signal success for those who live in rural areas (i.e., the non-migrants and returnees); Those in the Migrant category, who still live in Cape Town, also believed that migrants were only successful once they were able to support their rural family. M-4, for example, described how when a migrant becomes successful, "you start seeing a change in his [rural] home. He starts renovating houses. If his family is dependent on neighbors for something to eat you start seeing them buying their own groceries." M-8, the hotel cleaner, agreed that a migrant is successful when he "is earning [enough] ... to support his rural family."

The views of success expressed by the interviewees add an important piece of evidence to the assertion made in Section 4.2.1 that neither the "new" nor the "old" economic theories of migration are adequate to describe the migratory process in South Africa. Not only do both individuals and households play an important role in the migration decision, but also a "successful" migrant, according to the interviewees, must support both himself and his household, which are not ultimately synonymous. This provides further impetus to investigate the seemingly intricate relationship between individuals and households in the migration process.

This emphasis on material acquisition could have potentially deleterious consequences for the South African economy. The desire of migrants to appear successful to others could be one of the factors fueling South Africa's extremely high household-debt and unsecured-credit burdens. Household debt in South Africa has largely stabilized at 76 percent of disposable income (South African Reserve Bank, 2013: 10). However, unsecured credit—or credit that is either secured by placing a lien on an individual's salary or is not secured at all—increased by 400 percent between 2007 and 2012 and accounted for 40 percent of credit issued in 2012 (International Monetary Fund, 2013: 6 and 26; South African Reserve Bank, 2013: 44; World Bank, 2013a: 21). Notably, unsecured credit is among the only avenues available to lower income households (or those making fewer than R10,000 per month) to borrow money (National Credit Regulator, 2013: 28-29). There is growing evidence that the increased unsecured credit burden threatens South Africa's macroeconomic stability by undermining its banking system (International Monetary Fund, 2013: 11) and contributing to the wave of labor unrest crippling South Africa's mining and manufacturing industries (see, e.g., Rhode, 2013). If a large proportion of the population, like my interviewees, also measures a migrant's success by his or her ability to acquire material goods, then these views could help explain South Africans' insatiable appetite for credit.

My interviewees' emphasis on material acquisition, however, was in direct opposition with what many of them thought was fundamental to the success of any migration: financial prudence. To succeed, NM-3, the unemployed 21-year-old male from Mount Frere, argued, "You must also bank [i.e., save] some of your money." NM-7, the credit collector, agreed that a migrant's success was due to "how [he] managed money." And NM-9, the 32-year-old woman from Matatiele, posited that those who do not succeed "spend recklessly, while" those who do "have a budget plan."

Saving, according to the interviewees, serves two purposes. First, it helps migrants reach their long-term goals and thus achieve success. As R-8, the unemployed 25-year-old who had moved to Cape Town for health reasons, described, "People succeed because they have planned and committed to their plans. Those who fail, it's because they don't have a plan. ... The plan is the set goal of what you want to achieve and how you want to achieve it. You put money aside so you can be able to see your plan through." NM-3, who earlier had emphasized the importance of saving, viewed the benefits of putting aside money similarly: "If you were not going to school you can go to the city and actually further your studies if you can save up the money that you get from work. And then once you are educated, you can become successful." Secondly, frugality provides insulation from negative economic shocks. R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, for example, argued, "You see, some of them, they've got jobs but still you don't see anything coming from them. ... They enjoy their money while they are still young and ... [t]hey don't secure whatever they've got. So one day, when they lose their jobs, they can't point to something out of it." Thus, a desire on behalf of a migrant to *appear* successful may not only undermine South Africa's economic outlook, but it may actually directly undermine the migrant's probability of achieving this success.

Many interviewees—primarily those who had returned from Cape Town—identified a second pitfall awaiting those who migrate from rural to urban areas: the lure of urban vices. "Some will go there [and just] have fun," NM-3, the unemployed 21-year-old man, said of certain migrants. The people who just go to have fun "lose track of [their goals]. When they get to the city, they forget that they left hungry parents, they left hungry children at home. They start enjoying the city life [instead]," R-2, the taxi owner, elaborated. You can even "earn a lot of money but fail," R-5, the builder on government projects, described, if you "have no ambitions except drinking too much alcohol and are addicted to women. Alcohol and women are a big downfall of many." In contrast, he continued you can "succeed even if [you] earn so little" if you avoid these vices and "have a goal." As R-6, the municipal council employee, concluded, "If you drink too much, move at night going out to those parties ... you won't succeed." Like financial imprudence, engaging these urban vices, the interviewees believed, lowered the probability that a migrant would ultimately be successful and thus be capable of materially improving both his life and the life of his rural household.⁵

⁵ The views of those in the Migrant category are not part of the discussion of how financial prudence and the lure of urban vices affect a migrant's potential for success, because I neglected to ask half of those in the Migrant category the question from which this discussion was drawn ("Why do you think some migrants succeed while others fail?" [Appendix A, Question 3f]). Additionally, the answers provided by three-quarters of those who were asked this question were perfunctory and not particularly insightful.

4.3.3 *Who Returns?*

Because of the distinctly circular nature of migration in South Africa (see Section 4.1; see also, Posel, 2009: 3; Adepoju, 2006: 28; Kok and Collinson, 2006: 25; Posel and Casale, 2003: 460; c.f. Posel, 2009, for evidence that return migration may be decreasing in post-apartheid South Africa), it is not only important to investigate who migrates and who succeeds, but it is also necessary to explore who returns to rural areas and why. Expectedly, by far the most common reason given by the interviewees for why people return home was failure to achieve economic security in urban areas. The interviewees also suggested a number of additional reasons why individuals return to rural areas, including sickness (which has been found to be a particularly strong pull for those returning to the rural areas around Mount Frere [Neves, 2008]), urban crime, and because they are forced to do so by their urban hosts. Though there was some indication from those in the Migrant category and those who had never permanently left Alfred Nzo that individuals who return are better positioned to exploit the economic opportunities available in rural areas, the only interviewees to have actually experienced return migration—the returnees—strongly disagreed that there were benefits from migration upon return.

My interviewees argued that the primary reason why individuals return to rural areas was because of economic failure in urban ones. NM-2, the unemployed 25-year-old woman from outside of Qumbu, for example, described how “some people [go] back because they don’t find work and are struggling. They just say, ‘It’s better to suffer at home in rural areas than in the city.’” Similarly, NM-9, the unemployed 32-year-old woman from Matatiele, argued that individuals “return to rural areas because they’re not working and don’t feel like being in the city makes any difference.” R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, agreed: Those who return “realize [] that this [migration] was nothing”—“They have no money, they have no job, they have nothing. They were just staying in those shacks, depending on grants or depending on boyfriends’ salaries. They have nothing of their own”—“So they’ll have to go back and plough mielies in rural areas.” As M-1, the police officer, argued, using language resonant of NM-2’s descriptions, “Some people, they go back home because they say, ‘Okay, I’m not going to die here without anything. Let me rather be at home and starve at home because this is where I was born, this is where I live.’”

Though interviewees from all three-migration backgrounds believed that migrants returned to rural areas primarily for economic reasons, those in the Migrant category tended to be more critical of these individuals. The vast majority of non-migrants and returnees used neutral language when describing this phenomenon, but it was impossible to miss the more judgmental tone that a number of the migrants adopted for these individuals, often faulting them for “giving up.” M-2, the Transnet employee, for example, described how “some they give up. They lose hope” and then return. M-7, the electrical appliance saleswomen, agreed that those who return for economic reasons have “give[n] up looking for jobs.” M-6, the credit department manager, was perhaps most forceful in his critique: “There are those people who just go back there, who already [have] give[n] up on life and say, ‘Okay, I’m going back home. I’m just going to go there and then I will look after the cattles or [plough] mielie.’ ... Most of the people who go [back] to the Eastern Cape, most of them, they [have] given up.” The judgment evident in a number of the migrants’ descriptions of these individuals could perhaps reflect the economic position of these individuals. Because all of those in the Migrant category were employed, they could believe that securing employment in urban areas may simply be a function of not “giving up” and returning home. As M-1 argued, those who do not succeed in urban areas, “don’t persevere. They are losing their hope very quickly.”

Although the interviewees believed that economic failure was the primary reason why individuals return to rural areas, they identified three other drivers of return migration: sickness, urban crime, and disagreements with their hosts. Sickness was the second most common reason mentioned by the interviewees for why individuals return to rural areas. “Some return,” NM-9, the unemployed 32-year-old woman from Matatiele, argued, “Because they are sick and have no one to look after them. They go back to rural areas [] because someone can look after them there.” R-7, the police officer from Tsolo, also believed that sickness was an important factor in return migration: “HIV, tuberculosis, stroke because of drugs. Maybe others were stabbed so they became disabled” drive individuals who “don’t have someone to look after them in urban areas, ... back so they can get support.” Even those who do have support in urban areas, NM-4, the security guard, argued “come back before they die, [so as to] avoid[] being a burden.” Neves (2008) and Clark *et al.* (2007) found that illness was a significant factor in return migration to both the former Transkei in the Eastern Cape and to the Agincourt sub-district in Mpumalanga, respectively. This trend, however, as both papers argue, is not innocuous: the return of sick and dying migrants places an extremely heavy burden on both rural households and infrastructure, which are already in precarious positions.

Some of those who do not return home because of economic failure or illness, according to the interviewees, are driven away from urban areas because of crime. NM-7, the credit collector, described how people return because “it’s [] not safe, especially in the informal settlements.” “Certain people come back because they do not like what is going on in the city [and] because of crime,” R-3, the unemployed 22-year-old man from Mount Frere, agreed. “They’re [more] used to the rural livelihood.” M-1, a police officer, confirmed these views: “You get those people who didn’t feel comfortable anymore living here [because] crime [] is very high in the cities. So you get those people who are very scared to be victims of crime. Then some of them rather prefer to go back home because they say the crime rate is less than in big cities.”

Crime in South Africa is in fact rampant. South Africa has among the highest murder rates (World Bank, 2013a; see also, UNODC 2013) and the highest rate of rape (Heiskanen, 2010: 39) in the world. Though there is some indication that crime *rates* in urban and rural areas are largely comparable, the absolute number of criminal events in urban areas most likely dwarfs those in rural areas, perhaps driving the perception of urban areas as a place of vice (Pelser *et al.*, 2000). Thus, because of its perceived impact on migration, crime, in addition to its psychological and physical toll, may also have adverse economic consequences: if individuals leave urban areas because of crime (and presumably the threat of crime keeps others from migrating to urban areas to begin with), then the economic benefits of migration, both to the individuals and households and to the broader South African economy, may be diluted.

Even if an individual wishes to remain in the city, however, he is still ultimately at the mercy of his urban hosts. Those in the Returnee and Migrant categories, though not those who had never permanently left Alfred Nzo, believed that many individuals return home not because they want to but because they are no longer welcome by their hosts. Returnees and migrants highlighted two specific situations where individuals are spurned by their urban support systems. In the first, the migrant gets involved in unsavory activities. R-6, the municipal council employee, for example, described how “if [someone] is misbehaving, his relative there decides to take him home because they see he is stoned, he is not doing things, he

almost dies. Then they tell him[:] ‘No man, the thing that you were here to do, you failed to do. Just go home.’” “It could be that some people have not adapted or they become troublemakers in the city that makes those housing them worry” and forces these individuals to return, R-8, the unemployed 25-year-old who had moved to Cape Town for health reasons, argued. In the second situation mentioned by the interviewees, the hosts grow frustrated at the migrant’s economic stagnation and force the migrant to return home. As M-2, the Transnet employee, related, “For a person who came here ... and then someone else took him or her in, then it becomes three months or six months or one year, the person doesn’t get a job. ... At some point the other person is getting fed up knowing that there is someone in the house who is not working, who’s not contributing anything.” Notably, none of those who had never permanently left Alfred Nzo considered this a serious concern for migrants, perhaps because none of them had any direct experience contending with the vagaries of these migration networks. However, the emphasis that returnees and migrants placed on the role of urban networks in return migration questions the degree of autonomy that migrants have in the migration process and provides additional motivation to explore how migrant networks in South Africa shape this process (see Section 4.3.2).

There was some indication, however, that, regardless of the reason, those who return home are better positioned to take advantage of the economic opportunities in rural areas. Some non-migrants and migrants believed that the skills and experiences a migrant gained while in urban areas ultimately benefit him in the rural labor market. NM-5, the administrative intern, for example, argued, “It is easier than before [to get a job] ... because you learn a lot of things while you are in urban areas. ... Some come back with experience of the jobs that they were doing there and others tried to get those tenders.” M-6, the credit department manager, agreed: “If you come to Cape Town, you will get a better education⁶ obviously. And then when you go back [home], then there is a post there or a job there, you are privileged [i.e., in a better position] to get [it]. ... [In urban areas,] you learn different cultures, different ways of living, ... [and you get] exposure [to certain things like] how to open your own business.” As M-7, the electrical appliance saleswoman, concluded, “No, it’s not easy [to find a job] but someone who has been in the city is more likely to find [one] because of the experience [he] acquired while in the city.”

Yet those who had returned from Cape Town—the only individuals in the sample who had first-hand experience with return migration—adamantly disagreed that there were benefits from migration upon return. R-4, the unemployed 27-year-old woman from outside of Mount Frere, for example, argued that after a migrant returns, his job prospects are “one and the same like before.” R-1, the police officer from Matatiele, explained why this was the case: “No, [migrating] doesn’t help them, because those things they do [in the city], they are not here. For instance, there are factories there and we don’t have factories here. ... You’ll find [some of them were] working on the factory, or where they make tires, or where they do metal work, [but] we don’t have those things here.” However, the differing views held by non-migrants and migrants on the one hand and returnees on the other suggest the importance of investigating the long-term impact of migration on those who return.

⁶ Here, M-6 appears to be using “education” informally. He seems to be referring to all the knowledge that an individual gains while living in an urban area, not his formal schooling.

4.4 Conclusion

Despite the profound impact that migration has had on South Africa, few anthropologic or sociological studies have examined individual motivations for migrating and perceptions of each step of the migration process. This chapter strove to begin to fill this gap in the existing literature and to suggest potentially fruitful paths for further research.

The interviewees in this study viewed migration primarily through an economic lens. Though some who had never left Alfred Nzo argued that infrastructural disparities facilitated migration, the vast majority of my interviewees ultimately believed that the push of poverty in rural areas and the pull of economic opportunity in urban ones encourage individuals to migrate. This finding suggests that comprehensive examinations of migration must include economic analysis and not rely solely on historical-structural approaches. The decision to migrate, however, could not be fully explained by either the “new” or “old” economic theorization on migration: both individuals and households, my interviewees indicated, are instrumental in the decision-making process, suggesting that a more nuanced theoretical understanding of migration may be warranted.

I then examined how my interviewees conceptualize the migration process. The interviewees had difficulty pinpointing the characteristics of those who migrate; instead, they tended to highlight the characteristics of those who remain in rural areas. Though the interviewees believed that some of those who remain in rural areas are unambitious, they suggested that most lack access to migrant networks, a *prerequisite*, the interviewees argued, for moving to a new location. The interviewees judged the “success” of those who did migrate through the material progress of both the migrant and the migrant’s rural household, which was in conflict with what the interviewees believed was a primary attribute of successful migrants, financial prudence. Those who did not succeed, however, were likely to return to rural areas, if illness, the threat of crime, or the migrants’ urban hosts did not force them to return home beforehand.

This chapter suggests two important directions for future research. First, researchers should further examine the relationship between the individual and the household in migration decisions in South African. This relationship appears to deviate from the individual-household binary presented in the theoretical literature: not only do both individuals and households play an important role in the migration decision, but the success of migrants is also judged on the material progress of both the migrant and her household. Second, researchers should explore the intricacies of migratory networks in South Africa. The views expressed by the interviewees indicate that these networks may play a much more fundamental role both before and during the migration process than the literature suggests. Understanding the nuances of migration in South Africa thus ultimately requires understanding both these individual-household and migrant-network dynamics.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to contribute to the nascent literature on the changing relationship between rural and urban areas in South Africa by examining perceptions of economic opportunity and of migration in the “Alfred Nzo” District Municipality in the rural Eastern Cape, and in Cape Town. Though much work has been done on the changing economic realities in rural and urban areas, few scholars have investigated economic *perceptions*, which ultimately shape South Africa’s economic and political systems. This thesis differs from the few existing studies of economic perceptions in South Africa by examining how migration—which has framed how generations of black South Africans have experienced their economic system, either directly, as migrants themselves, or indirectly, as beneficiaries of remittances—shapes these perceptions. In particular, I interviewed individuals from three distinct migratory backgrounds: “migrants” (M), or those who had migrated to Cape Town from in and around the Alfred Nzo District Municipality and have remained there; “returnees” (R), or those who had moved to Cape Town but have since returned home; and “non-migrants” (NM), or those who have never left the Alfred Nzo District Municipality with the intention of permanently resettling elsewhere. Through in-depth interviews of individuals with diverse migration experiences, I sought to offer initial insights into how migration shapes perceptions of economic inequality, social mobility, and migration itself in rural and urban areas in South Africa.

The findings in this study add additional support to the hypothesis advanced in my previous work (Telzak, 2012, 2014) that local economic conditions and personal economic experiences—including an individual’s experience with migration—have a profound impact on economic perceptions. Although migration experience does not appear to shape how my interviewees perceived the distribution of income in South Africa, as Chapter 2 argues, it does affect how my interviewees conceptualize the makeup of this distribution. Those in the Non-Migrant and Returnee categories—who live in a rural area of South Africa where most of the employment opportunities are in the public-sector and where there is little racial diversity—tended to argue that the top and the middle of the income distribution consisted primarily of public sector employees and to emphasize the geographic character of the economic divide between rural and urban areas in South Africa. In contrast, migrants—who live in Cape Town, where there is a more robust private sector and intense racial disparities persist—argued that private sector individuals made up a substantially larger share of the middle and upper classes and that race was a much more salient economic division in South Africa than was geography. In contrast, regardless of migration experience, the vast majority of my interviewees greatly underestimated their relative economic position. However, there is some evidence that the lens of poverty through which most of my interviewees conceptualize their economic positions reflects their *individual* expectations and aspirations more than their perceived economic position relative to others.

Personal economic experiences and local economic conditions also appear to shape perceptions of social mobility, although not as profoundly as perceptions of inequality. Interviewees from all three migration categories highlighted two individualistic pathways—or pathways over which the interviewees believed they could exercise direct control—including education and hard work, and three structural pathways and impediments—or those which the interviewees believed were entirely outside of their control—including corruption and nepotism, access to information, and the availability of jobs. However, my interviewees did not concur on the relative importance of each pathway/impediment to social mobility: those who live in rural areas (i.e., never-migrants and returnees) placed more emphasis on the

roles of corruption and a lack of information in impeding mobility than those in urban areas. Ultimately, many of my interviewees believed that structural barriers to social mobility were substantially higher in rural than in urban areas, and they viewed migration as an opportunity to overcome these structural barriers and to better exploit the individualistic pathways available to them.

The findings in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 appear to support previous assumptions about economic perceptions. Piketty (1995), for example, in his theoretical model of how mobility experience affects redistributive policies, assumes that individuals only look towards their own mobility when formulating political views. Though, as I hypothesized in Chapter 3, Piketty is probably overstating the importance of personal economic experiences in economic and political decision-making, this thesis lends some support to his assumption. When formulating their economic views, national and international trends were of secondary importance to my interviewees; they more often looked to their personal experiences and local economic conditions. This conclusion has particularly important ramifications for South Africa. South Africa has made significant macroeconomic strides since the end of apartheid. However, most of these economic gains, as Chapters 2 and 3 argue, have been captured by the most advantaged elements of society. These findings indicate that many South Africans do not recognize these gains when formulating their economic perceptions. South Africa may thus be at greater risk for many of the negative repercussions—including decreased economic output, social and political alienation, and negative mental health outcomes—associated with pessimistic perceptions of economic inequality and social mobility.

Because my interviewees identified migration as among the only tools that many rural residents have for accessing economic opportunities in South Africa, in Chapter 4 I examined how these individuals conceptualize migration itself. My interviewees understood migration through a primarily individualistic, economic—as opposed to structural—lens. This economic lens shaped how my interviewees perceived each step of the migration process. The interviewees had difficulty pinpointing the characteristics of those who migrate—in part because, they believed, most people migrate for work at some point in their life—but argued that those who remained in rural areas lacked access to social networks in urban ones that could provide financial support during and after the move. The success of a migration was thus unsurprisingly judged entirely on the economic gains, measured by material acquisition, of both the migrant and his family. Migrants who did not achieve this material success, my interviewees believed, were likely to return to their rural homes, if illness, the threat of crime, or the migrants' urban hosts did not force them to return beforehand.

The findings in this thesis have important implications for development policy in South Africa and may help to explain the persistent underdevelopment of rural areas. Bank and Minkley (2005: 20) describe how simply “expanding rural services, restoring rights to land and pursuing more market-friendly economic policies”—oft advocated developmental interventions—have largely failed to foster “competitive farmers and rural entrepreneurs” in South Africa. This thesis offers some evidence about why this may be the case. James (2001: 105-107), in her study of land reform in the Northern Province and Mpumalanga, argues that migration has “turned rural areas into places of retirement and refuge for labour migrants” from places of agricultural (and presumably other forms of) production and has turned urban areas into the “site of wage labor.” Although Bank and Minkley (2005: 23) are correct that the interdependency between rural and urban areas has “become increasingly disentangled by post-apartheid developments,” this thesis suggests that the psychological relationship between rural and urban areas that James describes may still permeate the perceptions of

South Africans. My interviewees still viewed urban areas as the centers of economic opportunity in South Africa and migration as the means to access this opportunity; few believed that there were meaningful opportunities in rural areas, despite the infrastructural development that these areas have experienced since the end of apartheid. Rural South Africans may thus avoid investing resources and their own human capital near their homes, contributing to the underdevelopment of these areas. Economic development of rural areas in South Africa may thus depend as much on changing preconceived notions of the economic roles of rural and urban locations as on pro-development policies and interventions.

A crucial part of changing these preconceived notions may involve changing the existing power structures in rural areas. The interviewees believed that a nepotistic and corrupt elite captured the vast majority of economic opportunities available in rural areas. Migration was thus seen as a way to escape this intense nepotism and corruption and access South Africa's economic opportunities. Although rural areas have changed dramatically since the end of apartheid, my interviewees may continue to view these areas primarily as "places of retirement and refuge" and not economic centers because the opportunities that do exist are largely inaccessible. This thesis thus adds further support to du Toit and Neves' (2007: 171, 175) argument that "rather than aim at 'eliminating' the second [rural] economy or hoping that it can somehow be transfigured into the first, policymakers would do better to look carefully at measures that can ameliorate existing power imbalances and reduce inequality." Though infrastructural development and some degree of integration into the South African economic system are likely prerequisites to the economic development of rural areas, reducing these power imbalances could go a long way in changing the conceptualization of rural areas and in keeping individuals who could contribute substantially to the development of these areas from migrating to urban centers in search of work.

This study began to explore how migration experience shaped perceptions of economic inequality, social mobility and migration itself in South Africa. However, this thesis suffers from a number of limitations. The findings in this thesis were drawn from interviews with a relatively small sample of 26 individuals, which lacks statistical significance. Additionally, my interviewees are not representative of the broader South African population. This study focused on a specific cohort of individuals—relatively young black South Africans originally from the area in and around the Alfred Nzo District Municipality of the rural Eastern Cape—which is unlikely to reflect the tremendous diversity of both the South African population generally and the black South African population specifically. As previous studies have found (Brey et al., 2010: 217-219 on South Africa; Graham, 2000: 243-244 on Latin America) younger cohorts of individuals have systematically different (and generally more optimistic) economic expectations than older cohorts. Furthermore, although understanding migration between the Eastern Cape and Cape Town is important for understanding broader economic and social trends in South Africa, the distinctive racial and economic makeup of Cape Town may limit the generalizability of the economic perceptions articulated by my interviewees. And these interviews with black African interviewees reveal nothing about perceptions of social mobility among coloured or white individuals, who comprise significant minorities of South Africa's population. Because the small sample size of this study fails to capture the full demographic, ethnic, and economic diversity of this enormously heterogeneous country, it is possible that the views expressed by my interviewees are not commonly held among black South Africans and instead represent outlying opinions.

There is also a risk that social desirability bias—or the tendency for interviewees to orient their answers during surveys and interviews in a way that portrays their lives as positively as

possible—influenced the opinions expressed by my interviewees. Although I strove to uncover this bias by asking questions multiple times at various points during the interviews, there is a chance that the opinions expressed by my interviewees were ultimately formulated to appeal to the interviewer—a white, American student—and my translator—a Xhosa-speaking, black African from Alfred Nzo but currently living in Cape Town—and thus may not have been entirely reflective of their views.

These shortcomings ultimately suggest a number of potentially fruitful paths for researchers interested in economic perceptions to pursue. To better understand economic perceptions in South Africa, research must investigate how these perceptions differ among various age cohorts; how different locations in South Africa affect conceptualizations of inequality, social mobility, and migration; and whether different racial and economic subgroups of South African society have similar aspirations and expectations about their futures. Additionally, future research should employ more statistically robust methods, including survey instruments, to supplement in-depth, open-ended interviews. In the end, a more detailed analysis of how South Africans conceptualize their economic environment would require a larger sample of individuals that captures more of the geographical, economic, racial, and cultural diversity of South Africa as a whole.

Additionally, researchers must do more to understand the intricacies of the migration process in South Africa. Any comprehensive attempt to understand this important economic and social force must further investigate the role of individuals, households, and migrant networks in this process. This study suggests that there is a nuanced relationship between individual and household actors in the migration decision—and thus neither the “new” nor the “old” economics of migration is an appropriate lens through which to view migration in South Africa. However, there were insufficient data to develop a comprehensive theoretical alternative. Moreover, this thesis indicates that migrant networks play a much more fundamental role both before and during the migration process than the available literature suggests. Understanding the nuances of migration in South Africa thus necessitates understanding the intricacies of the role that individuals, households, and migrant networks play in this process.

Ultimately, this thesis sought to highlight the importance of studying economic and migratory perceptions in South Africa and to present findings on how individuals from one migration pathway conceive of their economic opportunities. As South Africa enters its third decade of democracy with an increasingly tenuous economic and political outlook, it will become even more crucial to study and understand the nuances of economic and migratory perceptions among South Africans. The results of this study, thus, indicate a number of meaningful and important paths for scholars to pursue in the future.

Appendices

Appendix A: Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews

Economic Perceptions Questions:

1. These four pictures show different types of society. The first picture represents a society with a small elite of rich people at the top, a few people in the middle, and a large number of poor people at the bottom. The second picture represents a society that is like a pyramid, with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle, and a lot of poor people at the bottom. The third picture shows a society in which most people are in the middle. The fourth picture shows a society with lots of people at the top, some in the middle, and very few at the bottom.
 - a. Which of these pictures, in your view, describes South Africa today? Why?
 - b. What kinds of people are at the top? What kinds of people are at the bottom? (Probe with specific examples [e.g., teachers, policemen, taxi drivers, etc.] if not forthcoming.)
 - c. Is it possible for someone to move from the bottom to the top? How do people get to the top? Why do some people get to the top and not others?
 - d. Where would you place yourself in that picture? What are the chances that you'll reach the top? What about your children? What are the chances you'll be in the bottom? What about the middle?
 - e. In your understanding of how society looks, where would you place most of the white people? Where would you place most of the black people? Where would you place most of the people living in rural areas? What about the people living in urban areas? The people in townships?
2. Government intervention
 - a. Are people in urban areas better off than people in rural areas?
 - b. Do you think that the government is doing too much, enough, or too little for people living in rural areas in South Africa?
 - c. Do you think the government is doing too much, enough, or too little for people living in urban areas in South Africa?
 - d. What do you think the government should do differently for people in rural areas?
 - e. What do you think the government should do differently for people in urban areas?
 - f. Do you think government jobs are better than private sector jobs?

Migration Questions:

3. Migration decisions and outcomes
 - a. Why do people leave their home villages and move elsewhere? Do you think people want to leave their homes or do they feel like they have to? Do individuals decide for themselves whether to leave or do others decide for them? Do individuals migrate to make money for themselves or for their families?
 - b. Some people migrate while other people don't. What kinds of people migrate and what kinds of people remain in their home village?

- c. How do people choose an area in South Africa to move to? Why do people choose certain areas over others? (If they respond that “knowing people” is important, ask: Are these individuals important for helping migrants find jobs?)
- d. To where do most people move? Do more people migrate to urban or rural areas? Do more people move to big cities or small towns? Do you consider places like Mount Frere and Matatiele urban areas?
- e. Why do some people go back home? Do you think those who return are more likely to find jobs than before they left?
- f. What do you think counts as a successful migration? Why do you think some migrants succeed while others fail?

For “Never Migrants”:

- 4. Your lack of migration experience
 - a. Why have you never left your home village?
 - b. Do you, or have you ever, wanted to move elsewhere? If so, why have you not moved elsewhere?
 - c. Are there any individuals in your household who have migrated? If so, why did they migrate and why didn’t you migrate?
 - d. Do you want to move elsewhere? To where would you move?

For “Failed Migrants”:

- 5. Your Past migration experience
 - a. To where did you move from the Eastern Cape? Why did you move to that area instead of another one? Why did you leave your home in the Eastern Cape?
 - b. Why did you move back to the Eastern Cape?
 - c. If you had a chance to do it over again, would you still move?
 - d. Do you intend to migrate again? Why or why not? What would have to change for you to move back to the area you originally migrated to?

For “Successful Migrants”:

- 6. Your migration experience
 - a. Why did you move from the Eastern Cape? Why did you move to Cape Town as opposed to another location? Why did you leave your home in the Eastern Cape?
 - b. As you know, not everyone who migrates to a different part of South Africa stays in that area permanently. Why have you remained in Cape Town?
 - c. When you first moved to Cape Town, what were your goals? Have you accomplished these goals?
 - d. Would you consider your migration to Cape Town “successful”? Why or why not? Why did you succeed, while others failed? OR Why did you fail, while others succeeded?
 - e. If migrant has a job: why were you able to find a job while others were not?
- 7. Home and remittances
 - a. Where do you consider “home”? When you draw your Old Age Pension,

- where do you want to live?
- b. How often do you visit your home in the Eastern Cape? Do you send money back to the Eastern Cape? Do you like to send money home or do you feel obligated to do so? When your children have jobs would you like them to send money to your family in the Eastern Cape?
 - c. Have you ever had someone from the Eastern Cape live with you? Why did you decide to let this person live with you? How did you choose which of your relatives/friends to bring over? How was the experience? How did you help them adjust to life in Cape Town?

For everyone:

8. Migration intentions

- a. Do you plan to move away from this area to settle permanently in another area in the next 12 months?
- b. If yes, why do you intend to move? To where do you intend to move? Why do you want to move to this area instead of other areas?
- c. If no, why don't you intend to migrate? What would it take for you to want to move? (e.g., If you had a job waiting for you in another part of the country would you move? What kind of job would it take for you to move?)

First, I have some questions about where you live						
B.1	What kind of a house do you live in?	House or brick structure on a separate stand or yard	1	Go to B.3		
		Flat in a block of flats	2			
		Town/cluster/semi-detached house (simplex, duplex or triplex)	3			
				brick house/flat/room in backyard (including converted garages etc.)	4	Go to B.2.1
				Informal dwelling/shack, in backyard	5	
				Informal dwelling/shack, NOT in backyard, e.g. in an informal/squatter settlement	6	
				Room/flatlet not in backyard but on a shared property	7	
				Room inside house (i.e. rented from the owner of the house)	8	
				Other, specify:	9	
B.2.1	If not in formal housing: Do you have electricity inside the shack? If so, do you have your own meter or electricity box?	Yes, and we have our own meter	1			
		Yes, but we do not have our own meter	2			
		No, we do not have electricity	3			
B.2.2	If not in formal housing: Do you have your own tap inside or outside the shack, or do you share a tap with other households?	Yes, we have a tap inside the shack	1			
		Yes, we have our own tap in our yard	2			
		No, we share a tap with other households	3			
B.3	Who owns this residence?	The respondent	1			
		Another member of the household	2			
		A family member <u>not</u> living in the household	3			
		Someone else	4			
		Don't know	9			

We would now like to ask you some questions about the things household members own. Does anyone in this household own the following items in good working order ...?		Yes	No	Refuse	Don't know
B.4.1	Radio, stereo or cassette recorder	1	2	8	9
B.4.2	Television	1	2	8	9
B.4.3	Video, VCR, DVD	1	2	8	9
B.4.4	Telephone (not cellular)	1	2	8	9
B.4.5	Cellular telephone	1	2	8	9
B.4.6	Refrigerator/freezer	1	2	8	9
B.4.7	Gas/electric stove	1	2	8	9
B.4.8	Microwave	1	2	8	9
B.4.9	Washing machine	1	2	8	9
B.4.10	Bicycle	1	2	8	9
B.4.11	Motorcycle	1	2	8	9
B.4.12	Car, Bakki or Combi	1	2	8	9
B.4.13	Computer/laptop	1	2	8	9
B.4.14	More than 5 books	1	2	8	9

Household members
Now let's think about who lives in this household.

B.5.1	How many children (under age 18) live with you in this household?		Don't know	9	
B.5.2	How many of these children are you biological children?		Don't know	9	
B.6	Excluding yourself, how many other adults (aged 18 or more) live with you in this household?		Don't know	9	
B.7	Are you the head of the household?	Yes	1	No	2
B.8	Are you married?	Yes	1	No	2
B.9	If married, does your husband/wife live in this household?	Yes	1	No	2
B.10	If not married, do you cohabit with a boy/girlfriend in this household?	Yes	1	No	2

Your biological children living elsewhere

B.11	Do you have any biological children who are <u>not</u> living here with you?	Yes	1	Go to B.12
		No	2	Go to B.13
B.12	How many children do you have living elsewhere?		Don't know	9

Your household's financial situation

B.13	About how much money in total do all of the members of this household receive in a typical month (including all earnings, pensions, grants and so on, received by all household members)? Interviewer: Probe respondent for best guess.	Rand per month		Go to B.15
		Refused	8	Go to B.14
		Don't know	9	
B.14	Would you say that the total received by all of the household members is less than R1,000 per month, or more than R1,000 per month, or more than R3,000 per month, or more than R5,000 per month, or more than R10,000 per month?	Less than R 1,000 per month		1
		R 1,000 – R 3,000		2
		R 3,000 – R 5,000		3
		R 5,000 – R 10,000		4
		More than R 10,000		5
		Refused		8
B.15	Did anyone in this household receive income <u>from employment or self-employment</u> last month?	Yes	1	Go to B.16
		No	2	Go to B.17
		Don't Know	8	
		Refused	9	
B.16	About how much money did this household receive <u>from employment or self-employment</u> last month?	Rand per month		
B.17	Did anyone in this household receive income <u>from government grants</u> last month?	Yes	1	Go to B.17
		No	2	Go to B.19
		Don't Know	8	
		Refused	9	
B.18	Which <u>government grants</u> did this household receive (mark all that apply)?	Old Age Pension		1
		Child Support Grant		2
		Disability Grant		3
		Care Dependency Grant		4
		Other (Please specify)		
B.19	Does this household receive <u>remittance income</u> from anyone?	Yes	1	Go to B.20
		No	2	Go to B.21
		Don't Know	8	
		Refused	9	
B.20	How much <u>remittance income</u> did this household receive last month?	Rand per month		
B.21	How would this household classify its overall financial situation now? Would you say it is very comfortable, comfortable, just getting by,	Very comfortable		1
		Comfortable		2

	poor, or very poor?	Just getting by	3
		Poor	4
		Very poor	5
		Refused	8
		Don't know	9
B.22	How does this household's financial situation now compare to the situation of other households in this same neighbourhood? Would you say that the situation of this household is much better, slightly better, the same, slightly worse, or much worse than other households in the neighbourhood?	Much better than neighbours	1
		Slightly better than neighbours	2
		The same	3
		Slightly worse than neighbours	4
		Much worse than neighbours	5
		Refused	8
		Don't know	9
B.23	Is does this household's current financial situation compare with the situation four years ago, in 2009? Is your situation better now, the same now as then, or worse now?	It is now better than then	1
		It is the same as then	2
		It is now worse than then	3
		Refused	8
		Don't know	9
B.24	Do you expect that this household's financial situation will be better in four years' time, in 2017, than it is now, or will it be the same, or will it be worse in four years' time than it is now?	Better in 2017 than now	1
		The same as now	2
		Worse in 2017 than now	3
		Refused	8
		Don't know	9

Education			
I now have some questions about your education.			
C.1	What is the highest grade in school that you have successfully completed? (Do not count the final year you were in school if you did not successfully complete the year.)	Grade 1/Sub A	1
		Grade 2/Sub B	2
		Grade 3/Standard 1	3
		Grade 4/Standard 2	4
		Grade 5/Standard 3	5
		Grade 6/Standard 4	6
		Grade 7/Standard 5	7
		Grade 8/Standard 6	8
		Grade 9/Standard 7	9
		Grade 10/Standard 8	10
		Grade 11/Standard 9	11
		Grade 12/Standard 10/Matric	12
		Other, specify:	25
		No Schooling/Grade 0/Little Sub A	95
Don't know	99		
C.2	Have you successfully completed any diplomas, certificates, and degrees outside of school? (Don't include any courses that you did not successfully complete.)	Undergraduate Diploma/Certificate from a Technikon with Grade 12/Std 10	20
		Undergraduate Diploma/Certificate from a University with Grade 12/Std 10	21
		Undergraduate degree from a Technikon	22
		Undergraduate degree from a University	23
		Postgraduate degree or diploma	24
		Diploma/Cert that requires matric, not from a University or Technikon	26
		Diploma/Cert that does not require matric, not from a University or Technikon	27
		Other, specify:	25
		None	95
		Don't know	99
C.3	Are you currently enrolled in school?	Yes, specify:	1
		No	2

Work				
C.4	Are you currently working? By “work”, we mean anything that you are doing for money or for payment in kind (such as food) or if you are helping unpaid in a household business of any kind. Please tell us even if the work was not a proper job. Work also includes self-employment or working in your own business, casual or part-time work, and even occasional work you might do.	Yes	1	Go to C.6
		No	2	Go to C.5
C.5	Have you done any work since 2009?	Yes	1	Go to C.6 and tell us about your most recent work
		No	2	Go to C.11
C.6	What kind of work did/do you do? Interviewer: Probe most recent job if not currently working and please record the person’s occupation or job title (e.g. supermarket cashier) using 2 or more words.			
C.7	What was/is the name of your employer?			
		Domestic worker, private household	2	
		Self-employed	3	
C.8	What was/is the main business of your place of work? What does it produce, sell or do? Interviewer: e.g. builds houses, sells food, teaches students using 2 or more words.			
C.9	How much money did/do you earn from this work in a typical month? Please tell us your <u>take-home</u> pay after tax and other deductions. If your work involves making or selling goods, how much money do you take away and spend or save after paying expenses?	Rand per month	Go to C.11	
		Unpaid	5	Go to C.10
		Refused	8	
		Don't know	9	
C.10	Interviewer: If the respondent refused to answer or said don't know to previous question, ask: Is your income in a typical month less than R1000, or between R1000 and R3000, or between R3000 and R5000, or between R3000 and R5000, or between R5000 and R10000, or more than R10000?	Less than R1000 per month	1	
		R1000 – R3000 per month	2	
		R3000-R50000 per month	3	
		R5000 – R10000 per month	4	
		More than R10,000 per month	5	
		Refused	8	
		Don't know	9	
C.11	Have you looked for work in the last month?	Yes	1	Go to C.13
		No	2	Go to C.12
C.12	Interviewer: If not looked for work in last month and not working currently: Do you want work, even if you are not looking for it?	Yes	1	
		No	2	
		Don't know	9	
C.13	Would you accept a job that pays less than R4000 per month?	Yes	1	
		No	2	
		It depends	3	
		Don't know	9	
I am going to read a list of jobs. For each job, would you accept this job if it was offered to you now?		Yes	No	Don't know
C.14.1	A domestic worker or gardener with a monthly wage of R1300?	1	2	9
C.14.2	A security guard with a monthly wage of R2000?	1	2	9
C.14.3	A general worker with a monthly wage of R2400?	1	2	9
C.14.4	A machine operator with a monthly wage of R2700?	1	2	9
C.14.5	A cashier at a retail store/supermarket, with a monthly wage of R3200?	1	2	9

C.15	How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the <u>past 12 months</u> ? Interviewer: Read options.	I have never had a drink containing alcohol	1	Go to F.12
		Not in the past 12 months	2	
		Once a month or less	3	Go to F11
		2-4 times a month	4	
		2-3 times a week	5	
		4 or more times a week	6	
		Refused	8	
		Don't know	9	
C.16	How many drinks containing alcohol do you have on a typical day when you are drinking? Interviewer: Read options. Interviewer: one tot of spirits, or one can of ordinary beer, or one glass of wine counts as one drink.	1 or 2	1	
		3 or 4	2	
		5 or 6	3	
		7 to 9	4	
		10 or more	5	
		Refused	8	
		Don't know	9	

What you think

I now have some questions about what you think about some things.

Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.		Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree / disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
D.1	If you work hard you can get rich in South Africa today.	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.2	The value of old age pensions should be increased even if it means that people like you have to pay higher taxes.	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.3	The value of the Child Support Grant should be increased even if it means that people like you have to pay higher taxes.	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.4	You are nobody if you do not have a job.	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.5	Antiretroviral (ARV) medicines to treat AIDS harm you more than help you.	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.6	Some young women have children so that they can get the Child Support Grant.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Whether you get ahead in life depends a lot on whether ...							
D.7.1	... you come from a wealthy family	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.2	... you work hard	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.3	... you have a good education	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.4	... you know the right people	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.5	... your race	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.6	... your gender (i.e. whether you are a man or a woman)	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.7.7	... you are lucky	1	2	3	4	5	9
D.8	Which of these things is the most important in terms of whether you do or do not get ahead in life? Which of these things is <u>second most</u> important? (Interviewer: read all options)					Most important	Second most important
		a wealthy family				1	1
		working hard				2	2
		a good education				3	3
		knowing the right people				4	4
		your race				5	5
		your gender (i.e. whether you are a man or a woman)				6	6
		Luck				7	7
Don't know				9	9		
D.9	Overall, do you think that South Africa is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?	Going in the right direction					1
		Going in the wrong direction					2
		Don't know					9

Interviewer: What is the respondent's year of birth? Check that there is a zero in E.1 in this year.

Migration

I now have some questions about where you have lived.

E.1 Year	E.2 When you had your birthday in this year, how old were you?	E.3 Where did you live during the year? Name of suburb (if in Cape Town) or nearest town (elsewhere), District, and Province Only include places where you lived for at least three months during the year.		E.4 What was your main reason for moving?		E.5 Who decided that you should move?	
		First move	Second Move	First Move	Second Move	First Move	Second Move
1979							
1980							
1981							
1982							
1983							
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2012							
2013							

Codes for E.4:

- 01 To find employment
- 02 Because I had a job offer/contract
- 03 For education and/or training
- 04 Because I have family or friends there
- 05 Marriage or divorce
- 06 Because I got sick
- 07 Because I couldn't find a job
- 08 Because I wasn't allowed to stay in the house
- 09 I moved with a family member, specify reason
family member moved
- 10 Other, please specify

Codes for E.5:

- 01 I did
- 02 I did in consultation with individuals in my household, please specify
- 03 Another household member, please specify
- 04 Another family member or friend not part of my household, please specify
- 05 Other, please specify

Your health

Finally, I have a few questions about your health

F.1	In general, how is your health? Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?	Poor	1		
		Fair	2		
		Good	3		
		Very good	4		
		Excellent	5		
		Refused	8		
		Don't know	9		
Do you have any of the following health problems or disabilities?		Yes	No	Don't know	Refused
F.2.1	Tuberculosis	1	2	8	9
F.2.2	Other respiratory problems (asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia)	1	2	8	9
F.2.3	Physically handicap	1	2	8	9
F.2.4	Problems with sight, hearing or speech	1	2	8	9
F.2.5	Mental problem	1	2	8	9
F.2.6	HIV/AIDS	1	2	8	9
F.2.7	Other sexually transmitted disease	1	2	8	9
F.2.8	Diabetes	1	2	8	9
F.2.9	Heart disease	1	2	8	9
F.2.10	Cancer	1	2	8	9
F.2.11	Epilepsy or fits	1	2	8	9
F.2.12	Headaches or migraines	1	2	8	9
F.2.13	Blood pressure problems	1	2	8	9
F.2.14	Other, specify:	1	2	8	9
F.3	Do you receive a disability grant?	1	2	8	9
F.4	Over the past month, have you consumed any alcohol?	1	2	8	9
Interviewer: Ask WOMEN RESPONDENTS only					
F.3	Do you currently receive a child support grant?	1	2	8	9
F.4	Are you currently pregnant?	1	2	8	9

F.5	Interviewer: record time at the end of the interview	Use 24 hour clock	h	h	m	m
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