

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN  
ACCOMPANYING THEIR MIGRANT SPOUSES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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## DECLARATION

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I declare that “**AN EXPLORATION OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN ACCOMPANYING THEIR MIGRANT SPOUSES IN SOUTH AFRICA**” is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



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SIGNATURE

03 May 2019

DATE

## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my mother who, despite the fact that she never had the opportunity to acquire basic education, understands the value of education and worked herself to the bone to give me that.

Thank you, Mom, for being my pillar of strength and for carrying me in prayer.

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## SUMMARY

Early migration across borders predominantly involved movement by males for work. While changing times have seen a considerable increase in the number of female migrants as principal migrants solely for independent employment, women still move as passive participants, who have to play an often obscure supporting role beside men. Through a qualitative, exploratory research design, this thesis explored the lived experiences of accompanying immigrants, particularly women from other African countries, accompanying their immigrant spouses in South Africa. Data collection was conducted through individual face-to-face unstructured in-depth interviews with eight female accompanying spouses. The data were thematically analysed and yielded seven overarching themes, namely: motivation to relocate and power dynamics; effects of migration; how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse; challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face; meaning-making, adaptation; and strategies deployed to cope. These were discussed in terms of the construction of the 'accompanying spouse status' and how this powerful social discourse impacts women's wellbeing. Participants reported education, socioeconomic factors and related life aspects were amongst the motivations for their relocation to South Africa, in addition to citing both positive and negative effects of their migration. From the study results, accompanying spouses recounted how they encountered various adversities, including how accompanying spouse status fundamentally reduces the holder to a dependent, whose being revolves around the principal migrant spouse. Notwithstanding participants' struggles, the study results show how the participants have, through it all, learnt to live with their status, deployed methods of coping against all odds, and today still stand.

**KEYWORDS:** Accompanying spouse, African countries, coping strategies, justice, legislation, migration, immigrant, migrant women, social constructionism; South Africa

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADHD</b>	<b>Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder</b>
ANC	African National Congress
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
DHA	Department of Home Affairs of South Africa
<b>ESOL</b>	<b>English for Speakers of Other Languages</b>
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers
<b>ILO</b>	<b>International Labour Organization</b>
IMPP	International Migration Policy Programme
ISISWICCE	Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
MIHR Law	Migration and International Human Rights Law
<b>NMMDP</b>	<b>National Migration Management Diaspora Policy</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</b>
<b>SA</b>	<b>South Africa</b>
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMP Project	Southern African Migration Project
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SID Computed	Not Computed
<b>STD</b>	<b>Sexually Transmitted Diseases</b>
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
<b>UNAIDS</b> <b>AIDS</b>	<b>The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS</b>

UNDESA ..... United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
 UNDP ..... United Nations Development  
 Programme  
 UNFPA ..... United Nations Population Fund  
 UNGASS ..... United Nations General Assembly Special Session  
 UN-INSTRAW ..... The United Nations  
 International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women  
 UNRISD..... United Nations Institute for Social Development  
 Unisa ..... University of South Africa

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Controversies and political conflicts associated with most African countries have resulted in the mass exodus of people to neighbouring countries and abroad. South Africa, with its relatively healthy economy and well-established government, has represented a political and economic paradise for some migrants. Amongst those migrants, are thousands of women that leave their friends and families and, who in some cases have given up their careers to become what is commonly termed trailing spouses, who migrate to South Africa on accompanying spousal visas with the dreams of a 'first world' lifestyle (McNulty, 2012). Migration may bring drastic changes to the lives of these women, as many of them may move from being successful professionals to sedentary housewives. Moreover, when re-establishing their lives in South Africa, migrants may encounter dramatically different conditions in their family life including the parenting context, situations of paid and unpaid employment, and the schooling systems their children may have to go through; conditions often negotiated with varying degrees of frustration and delight. Immigrants may resist opportunities for change, or alternatively, the changes they do make may largely be compromises brought about by factors such as strain on financial resources. Thus, adaptation to a new country and lifestyle can be a complex and taxing process that is compounded when changes in status and identity have to be made. This exploratory, qualitative study examines the lived experiences of women from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa, as well as how they negotiate the multiple meanings of immigration as a result of demotion in status, from independent professionals living their dreams of happily ever after, to being dependent wives.

The expression trailing spouse has been used recurrently in human resource and business literature (Gedro, 2010; Lauring & Selmer, 2010; McNulty, 2012; Gedro, Mizzi, Rocco, & van Loo, 2013) to denote individuals who relocate for their spouses' employment opportunities. However, the term trailing spouse could be problematic, as it could be considered by some as contentious, for denoting the spouse as lacking human agency (Braseby, 2010; Swanson, 2013). For the purposes of this study, the use of the phrase will be kept to a minimum, interchangeable with accompanying spouse. Nonetheless, having personally experienced and lived through the status, I concur with Swanson (2013), who puts forward "...no objection to the traditional term and will continue to use it. It describes how I [Swanson] felt: second-class" (p. 155). Through analysis of data collected from in-depth interviews, the study examines the women's motivations to move; the cultural and lifestyle differences between their lives before and after relocation; the communities into which they integrate; and the changes that they experience to their sense of self after the relocation. Besides, this research also explores the possible impact accompanying spouse status has on spousal relationships and how the participants adapt to their situation.

Migration, or movement of people, is a phenomenon that is growing in scope, complexity, and impact (Castelli, 2018; Douglas, Cetron, Spiegel, 2019; Skeldon, 2017). Equally complex are the terms migrant and immigrant that may in some instances be depicted as distinctly different and defined in time and across space and yet, in others as synonymous. The researcher is aware of the important difference in meaning, - a migrant worker is someone who works in a country on a non-permanent basis, whereas an immigrant is someone whose intention is to move relatively permanently to a new country. Nevertheless, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a migrant is 'any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of ... whether the movement is

voluntary or involuntary; what the causes for the movement are; or what the length of the stay is', a broad definition indeed. (Castelli, 2018, p.2) Under such definition, and strictly limiting the analysis to migrants from other African countries to South Africa, at migration stages ranging from three years to more than five, both terms will be used interchangeably as participants were at different stages of the migration journey. Moreover, the use of the terms will also depend on their use in the available literature.

## **1.1 Background/Rationale**

Close to a third of long-distance relocations in the present-day United States are believed to be for career opportunities, and the likelihood of professionals moving to different locations for work commitments is high (Swanson, 2013). A study on business emigrants and their spouses by Luring and Selmer (2010) revealed that the immigrant experience is perceived to be disruptive and demanding for both parties, but more so for the accompanying spouse. The study is further indicative of the notion that while the emigrant is prospectively migrating to greener pastures, the accompanying spouse often experiences the added stress of leaving their employment and support systems behind and establishing new connections and resources, reconstructing distal family relationships, and searching for new employment.

South Africa's economic stability attracts millions of economic migrants including highly skilled professionals (Adepoju, 2008). The search by South Africa for scarce skills that contribute to the economic development of the country has attracted many people around the world, particularly Africa, to migrate to this country for economic purposes. Among those who respond to the call for scarce skills are married men who migrate with their wives, who do not qualify to apply for a scarce skills visa. Whereas the skilled professionals who are the principal immigrants may find continuity in their work-life, their spouses, on the contrary, have restricted access to organisational structures and may experience strong disruption to their personal lives, as well as their established social



networks (Ali, Van der Zee, & Sanders, 2003). Disruption to the latter has been identified to be particularly stressful for spouses, as they face competing family responsibilities, social isolation, socio-political constraints, and changes in their social and/or work status (Copeland & Norell, 2002). Furthermore, Suh and Lee (2006) found that language barriers, cultural adaptation, homesickness, financial difficulties, disrupted family relationships, and lowered self-esteem are amongst triggers of stress for accompanying spouses.

Looking closely at the findings from extant studies, women seem to almost always bear the brunt of the impact migration of highly skilled workers has on households and work lives. Hardill and MacDonald (1998) concur as they argue that migration of professionals is particularly challenging for dual-career households; it could have a detrimental effect on the career of the other partner and may disrupt family life. Furthermore, they concluded that “one career (more frequently that of the woman) has to bear the burden of compromise in most instances” (p. 25); a development described by Purkayastha (2005) as one where professional women are left with no choice but to compromise and make the presumably rational decision to sacrifice their career for the household interest. Noble as the decision may be perceived by the principal migrant and the rest of the world, studies have found that highly “skilled women that migrate due to familial motivations encounter decreases in income and damaged career prospects; under-or unemployment in addition to an increase in household responsibilities and/or childcare to a complete immersion in the domestic sphere” (Meares, 2010, p. 475).

Apart from financial, professional and social challenges, accompanying spouse status may also have a psychological and emotional impact on the accompanying women. Studies have reported that accompanying immigrants struggle with economic hardship and a sense of low self-achievement due to their inability to pursue employment opportunities; the change in status from being a working professional to becoming a full-time housewife, leading to even more pronounced gender roles than back in their home

country, where dissonance emerges from unhappiness with their reduction to the status of housewife; wanting to return to the workplace; and being far removed from their previous lives (Chen, 2009; Cho, Lee & Jezewski, 2005; Sakamoto, 2006; Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2011).

In this context, South African immigration regulations stipulate that a spouse of a primary holder of a visa is required to apply for a spousal visa that does not allow the spouse to study, work, or open a business. Traditionally, gender constructions presume the husband to be the provider. Thus, the chances of the husband being a spouse or dependent of his wife are very slim, if not non-existent. Men accompanying their migrant wives for work purposes are still a rare phenomenon in Africa, owing to the dominance of patriarchal systems; where the norm is that a wife accompanies her husband, who is the principal holder of a work permit. Given the preceding background, migration decisions made in “dual-career” households in the home country tend to prioritise the demands of the husband’s career over that of the wife (Halfacree & Boyle, 1999). The wife is often left with no choice but to abandon her job in her home country to join her husband in migration to preserve the marriage, with no prospects of securing a work permit when their skills are not on the critical skills list as stipulated in the immigration regulations of the receiving country. This scenario indicates that men still enjoy the benefits of migration, while women’s suffering is further intensified by it (Crush & Williams, 2001; Dodson, 1998). The convincing case has been made that labour migration is not merely a category of human migration, but it is in practical terms a highly masculine concept, where its contemporary character relies upon unequal gender relations (Halfacree & Boyle, 1999).

The end of apartheid saw an upsurge of migration to South Africa, “especially by Africans, long excluded or confined to migration to serve as labour zombies in the mines” (Nyamnjoh, 2006, p.2). Moreover, the end of wars, disasters, and famine elsewhere in Africa have been crucial factors in the upsurge of the numbers of migrants to South Africa.

Since 1986, about four million people are said to have been displaced in Sudan, almost two million in Uganda, more than 4 million women in Mozambique and more than half of the population in Liberia in the early 1990s (ISISWICCE, 1998, p. 1; Turshen & Twagiramariya, 1998, p.180). In 2013, the United Nations reported at least 3% (232 million) of the human population as being international migrants who have moved across borders to live in other countries for twelve months or more. While the United Nations estimates that 37% of international migration is from developing to developed countries, over half the world's migrants move within developing countries (IOM, 2005a; Mora, 2006; United Nations (UN), 2006, 2009; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), 2006). South Africa has been no exception as a receiving country. Official figures on the total number of foreign residents in South Africa apart from the census-based projections data are not available. Nonetheless, the 2011 Census figures suggest that 3.3% (approximately 1.7 million) of the country's 51.7 million population are foreign nationals (Green Paper on International Migration, 2016). In a similar vein, AfricaCheck, that is, data collated by the World Bank and the UN, suggests a migrant population of about 1.86 million people. Moreover, estimations from the IOM suggest the total migrant population (legal and irregular) rose significantly from just about 2% in 2000 to over 5, 5% of the population in 2015, which aligns with the census projections (IOM, 2015).

Due to the influx of immigrants to South Africa from neighbouring countries, as well as the entire African continent, South Africa can record a huge number of illegal immigrants, with the result of the fear of being 'flooded' by migrants prevailing; manifold exploitation; and deception (Trimikliniotis, Gordon & Zondo, 2008). Several countries dispute indiscriminate migrant influx and have adopted policies to reduce unrestricted immigration while allowing specialised labour to fill sector-specific needs (Talani, Wolff, Henrard & Thielemann, 2003; Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2011), and South Africa

has been no exception. Against this background, free movement has been replaced by tough migration control. The restrictions have even penetrated the area of temporary migration for work, and there has been a drop in the issue and re-issue of temporary work permits since 2000 (Crush & Williams, 2001, 2005; Southern African Migration Project [SAMP], 2002). As a result of the latter, employers have found it increasingly problematic to hire migrant personnel, even provisionally; those foreign workers who are recruited find themselves entangled in the Department of Home Affairs' (DHA) bureaucratic red tape (Peberdy, 2001; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2002; Trimikliniotis, Gordon & Zondo, 2008).

Over the years, immigration policies have incessantly been refined to broaden eligibility in some areas while constricting it in others for foreign nationals. Compared to the Immigration Act of 2002 (Act 13 of 2002) that represented a significant policy and legislative departure from the Alien's Control Act of 1991, some serious changes in the conditions to permits have been made (Immigration Regulations, 2014). Consequently, although some categories for these permits remain the same, several details within them have been changed and some permits have been scrapped outright (Department of Home Affairs Republic of South Africa, 2007, 2014). In the last few years, the amendment to some policies has rendered adult accompanying immigrants redundant and floating in-between countries, because they cannot engage in any kind of paid work or be gainfully employed outside of their homes. Their migration is classified as trailing or associational, and in other instances as family reunification (Piper, 2003; Dannecker & Sieveking, 2009). The perception of women as dependents was also supported by the 1949 International Labour Organisation's (ILO) conceptualisation of a migrant worker's family as his wife and minor children (ILO 1999; IOM, 2013). The immigration status of an adult accompanying migrant is, in some instances, just as good as that of a minor.

Before the current conditions, an accompanying adult immigrant could easily open a bank account, engage in some part-time work, and be paid directly into their account;

something that could give them some kind of financial freedom and/or flexibility. The accompanying migrants in some cases have given up their careers and left their friends and families in their home countries to be stuck in a place of uncertainties. They may indeed desire to share their experiences, but they cannot make that contact for reasons ranging from inability to speak the local language to the cost of making that call back home being prohibitive for someone dependent on their spouse financially. There is little known about accompanying migrant women's experiences because they do not have the means or the voice to express themselves. It is against this background that this study explored the lived experiences of women from other African countries accompanying their immigrant spouses in South Africa.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The post-apartheid political climate in South Africa and the new population movements linked to increasing globalisation since 1994 have made the country a destination of choice for most Africans (Crush, 2001). However, amendment to some policies in the last few years has rendered adult accompanying immigrants redundant, and literally floating in between countries- trans-migrants, who want to establish homes both in their home countries and South Africa as they spend their lives moving across the borders of these two countries; although much of the time is spent in South Africa (Maphosa, 2010; 2011). The immigration status of an adult accompanying migrant is just as good as that of a minor, a reality that some women (the researcher included) accompanying their migrant spouses have had to live with.

While few studies have as yet compared male with female accompanying spouses' experiences with adjustment and examined some of the root causes of how structural and societal gendered expectations affect that adjustment; accompanying spouses have mainly been portrayed as wives trailing behind in a passive role, experiencing adaptation

challenges to their new identity in a new environment (Johnson & Salt, 1990; Beaverstock, 1991; Findlay, 1995; Arieli, 2007). Hardly ever addressed are the gender relations inherent in a relationship where the spouse possibly forfeits a career to follow the principal migrant to a new geographic location. Limited studies focus on the experiences of women who join their husbands in migration, and literature specifically on women accompanying their migrant spouses is scarce. It is against this background that the lived experiences of women accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa is explored here, in order to better understand how accompanying immigrant spouse status is experienced by women accompanying their migrant spouses. Specifically, this study's aim was to examine the lived experiences of women from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of accompanying immigrants, particularly women from other African countries, accompanying their immigrant spouses within the sociocultural context of South Africa. It explored in-depth how migrant accompanying spouse status is lived out and understood by those experiencing it, revealing the (un)intended effects that this status has on those who are affected, as well as the strategies they deploy to cope with and react to their own status (Dow, 2007). Through reviewing migration literature, the study wished to:

- identify the factors that influence participants' decision to migrate;
- describe what effect migration has on participants' well-being as well as what coping strategies are employed to facilitate fulfilling settlement;
- develop an intervention model that facilitates and increases awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by accompanying immigrants in South

Africa, as well as help prospective accompanying immigrants make informed decisions; and

- suggest possible recommendations to policymakers and other stakeholders.

## **1.4 Research questions**

The aim of this research was to determine how accompanying migrant status is personally experienced, through examining the underlying factors that landed the women into accompanying spouse status, identifying psychosocial challenges they may face, in addition to the coping mechanism they employ. With this objective in mind, the research was set to answer the following major question:

How is accompanying immigrant status experienced by the female accompanying spouse?

The preceding research question represents the departure point for the study and will be unpacked into the following sub-questions:

1. What factors influence the decision to embark on an immigration journey as an accompanying spouse?
2. What effect (positive and negative) does migration have on those who undertake it?
3. What challenges do immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face?
4. In what ways does accompanying status influence one's sense of justice, security, and self, and how does that translate into everyday life?
5. What strategies are deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status?

In this thesis, these questions were addressed through an examination of the experiences of accompanying migrants, particularly females from different African countries, accompanying their spouses in South Africa. The study was conducted in light of a constructivist framework, which will be briefly described in a proceeding chapter.

## **1.5 Significance and relevance of the study**

The experiences of migrant women are not well known, due to the subdued attention paid to them as migrants (Lefko-Everrett, 2007). Limited studies that have been conducted on the experiences of accompanying immigrants, and most studies that have been undertaken either focus on a specific migration topic, or are conducted by non-migrant researchers. This study was undertaken with great personal interest, as I have had the privilege of experiencing being a migrant from another African country accompanying their spouse on a critical skills permit in South Africa. Having interacted with other accompanying spouses in a social capacity, my curiosity was awakened. A brief preliminary literature review revealed the potential depth of the challenges accompanying spouse status poses and an expanding number of migrant spousal and family studies indicated that there was space for more exploration and insight to be gained from research into the experiences and understandings; situations and circumstances that accompanying spouses find themselves in, particularly female accompanying spouses.

This study seeks to contribute in its own capacity towards filling this lacuna, by paying attention to the experiences of migrant women from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa. It documents and analyses their experiences, with the intention of bringing out the various ways in which women are impacted upon by various forms of exclusion, and how they, in turn, negotiate for space and structure their coping strategies. In so doing, I hope to significantly contribute to the increasing visibility of female migrants. The migration of both men and women into South



Africa is rising and concomitantly triggers a negative attitude from the host country. The study should be particularly significant, as it aims to generate knowledge and provide information about the life experiences of eight women constructed as accompanying migrant spouses, as part of a bottom-up process, rather than a top-down one. The participants will, therefore, provide clues to the researcher (and perhaps future researchers) as to how to move forward in terms of immigration laws and future research. Therefore, this study may provide an alternative look at or add to the prevailing conditions associated with accompanying immigrant status. Participants considered accompanying migrants will be provided the space to tell their life stories/lived experiences. Thus, the participants themselves, rather than outside experts, will provide the information, and will be regarded as the experts on their life stories, with reference to their experiences of accompanying immigrant spouse.

This study aims to witness the life stories narrated by eight women, who construct themselves as accompanying migrants and/or have accepted others' (for example, legal and immigration practitioners) constructions of them as accompanying migrants. Rappaport (1993, p. 240) posits that, in telling their stories, people give "order, coherence, and meaning to events and provide a sense of history and of the future." This study is therefore anticipated to provide a space for the eight participant women to share their experiences and subsequent meanings, from the moment they set foot in South Africa to the present time (the time of the interview). Since the researcher in this study is an accompanying immigrant spouse in South Africa, she felt that the participants would possibly be less hesitant to share their personal experiences or to approach sensitive issues as there would be a bond of mutual trust and understanding. This research may create a forum for women accompanying their migrant spouses where they have the freedom to tell their immigration stories at their own pace, without fear of judgment, and to uncover unique facets of the accompanying migrant community in South Africa. By

creating a safe space in which each of the eight participants who construct themselves as accompanying migrant spouses might share their narrative on their own terms, I hope that rich and possibly even 'new' understandings may emerge about the life experiences of those accompanying their migrant spouses who are often alienated and marginalised by legislation and within the larger societal context.

The women's participation was dependent on experiencing themselves as accompanying immigrant spouses and/or if they accepted the constructions of others about themselves as accompanying immigrant spouses. It was another of the researcher's aims during this study to create a safe space in which the participants who construct themselves as accompanying migrant spouses and seem to accept the constructions of a larger social discourse (for example legal and immigration professionals) of themselves as such, may tell their unique life stories. As the researcher, I connected with the accompanying women in this study to tell their stories and acknowledge that their status has evolved over time and contained established patterns of interaction. It is hoped that the women would benefit from this research process, and gain greater insight into their respective relationships. By conversing with the participants regarding their life stories, the researcher may, through her interactive participation, contribute to a co-constructed interview, as she may bring to the conversation parts of her reality, according to her own story. After the conversations have taken place, the researcher reconstructs their stories in terms of themes. Although the researcher recognises that the lens through which she examines this particular point in time will be coloured by her own account of reality, she nonetheless acknowledges the importance of allowing each participant to remain the expert on their life story.

The final presentation of highlighted themes, as well as comparative themes, may, therefore, represent a co-construction between the researcher's reality and the participants' individual accounts of reality. Although this co-constructed reality will not be

generalised to a larger population, it could stimulate a somewhat different understanding of accompanying migrant status and may open new doors for thinking about and assistance to those living it. The research is likely to recommend further investigation of challenges that represent potential barriers to the access to and navigation of services by accompanying immigrants, providing accompanying immigrants – particularly women, who are the most socially isolated members – the opportunity to identify their own needs. Although the researcher's aim was to give voice to her participants, free of judgement or prejudice, she recognises that her participation in the conversations, along with her analysis of the stories, could render subjective the interview process and the final outcome of the study, with her own perceptions and story. I, therefore, acknowledge that the conversations with each participant, along with the final written product, will be a co-construction between my reality, that of the participants, as well as the various theoretical voices I will integrate into this study.

## **1.6 Scope of the study**

This study was conducted in the geographic area of South Africa's Gauteng region with a focus mainly on Johannesburg. The current study sought to advance understanding of accompanying migrant spouse experiences by women through adopting a broad exploratory stance in terms of subject matter as well as the analytic method. A small sample size, comprising eight female accompanying spouses to immigrant spouses from other African countries, who have been living in the region specifically in Johannesburg for at least three years or longer, was drawn. Study participants were purposefully selected through personal and professional connections.

## **1.7 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis is presented in seven chapters, with the present chapter providing a general background to the study, its objectives and research questions. Moreover, the

chapter discusses the thesis' potential to add to the body of knowledge of migration literature pertaining to accompanying migrants particularly females accompanying their migrant spouses. In Chapter Two, a review of migration literature will be undertaken. This will see: reviews of general background migration literature; factors influencing the decision to emigrate; what effect migration may have on those undertaking it; how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse; how accompanying status influences one's sense of justice; security and self, and how that translates into immigration legislation; challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face; and the strategies deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status. This will be followed by an exploration of the study theoretical framework in Chapter Three. The social constructivist epistemological perspective, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the personal perceptions and meaning attributions made by the individual participants, will be discussed.

Chapter Four includes an explanation of the research design; sample selection and the data collection methods utilised to address the research problem to answer the research questions; and in addition, a discussion of the issues of validity and reliability for this thesis as well as ethical considerations. The chapter closes with a discussion of how data analysis procedures were applied. The research results are presented in Chapter Five. An overview of the findings and results of this research study are described first. The chapter proceeds to describe: participant motivations to relocate; effects of migration; how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse; how accompanying status influences one's sense of justice, security and self; and how that translates into immigration legislation. Challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face and strategies deployed to cope with and react to those challenges will also be presented after analysis of the data. A discussion of the results of the data analysis

is presented in Chapter Six. The thesis closes with Chapter Seven, which presents limitations to the study, and suggestions for future research. Recommendations will also be put forward and some closing remarks made. What follows is a review of the literature pertaining to migration and accompanying spouse status holder experiences.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The movement of people across borders has been ongoing since time immemorial. In 2015, the global number of international migrants reached 224 million, up from 173 million in 2000 (O'Neil, Fleury & Foresti, 2016). Early migration across borders predominantly involved movement by males for work, a considerable proportion of whom had to permanently settle in the host country as stringent labour regulations were put in place. Consequently, the changes in legislation resulted in the migration of women to join the men for family reunification, or for the purposes of starting families. Despite the considerable increase in the number of female migrants as principal migrants solely for independent employment and the decline in the overrepresentation of males in migration flows, women still move as passive participants, who have to play an often obscure supporting role beside men (Dannecker & Sieveking, 2009; Gödri, 2006).

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to migration, with a focus on the lived experiences of female spouses from other African countries accompanying their spouses in South Africa. After briefly defining and discussing migration in general, the factors that influence the decision to embark on an immigration journey in particular by females accompanying their migrant spouses and the effect (positive and negative) migration has on the women are reviewed. Challenges faced by immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status, as well as how accompanying migrant status influences one's sense of justice, security, and self, will also be drawn into discussion. The literature review would be incomplete without an explanation of how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouses, and how that translates into everyday

life. The last section of the chapter presents the strategies deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status.

## **2.2 Migration General Background**

Migration can be broadly defined as the change of residence from one location to another for a particular period of time, or permanently, for various reasons; and the movement of people searching for a better life is a reality in many countries the world over, be it for economic or political reasons, or to escape natural disasters (Caritas, 2012). People could also migrate to escape extreme poverty, improve their livelihood and opportunities, or escaping conflict and devastation in their countries of origin. Other than being triggered by natural catastrophe, movement by humans from one part to another may predominantly be in direct response to scant economic and social prospects in the home country, and anticipated superior opportunities in the receiving area (Lowe et al., 2016). Furthermore, loss of state capacity, the unstable effects of structural adjustment programmes, and human insecurity have also prompted the migratory movement (Adekanye, 1998; Crush & Williams, 2010). According to Rogler (1994, p. 702), migration encompasses transitions by way of dismantling and reconstruction of interpersonal social networks; removal from one socioeconomic system and insertion into another; and movement from one cultural system to another. Thus, there exists a dynamic interaction between individual decision to migrate and the socio-economic milieu in which the decisions are taken (UNDP, 2009).

Since the 1960s, the number of migrant women has been increasing steadily, reaching 51% of all migrants in the developed world; amounting to approximately 46% of all migrants in developing countries as of 2000 and accounting for almost 47 out of every 100 migrants living outside their countries of origin, as they migrate with the hope of better life conditions, sustenance for families especially their children, or to escape political

turmoil and other unfavourable life concerns (ILO, 2003, Kofman & Raghuram, 2012; Morrison, Schiff & Sjöblom, 2008). Akhtar (1999) maintains that women adapt better to immigration, and their adjustment is more grounded and satisfactory, because they are more inclined to share their emotional experiences and thus receive more psychological support from their native counterparts than men; and because it is the case that motherhood transcends ethnic and national boundaries, which enables immigrant mothers to obtain information and assistance from local mothers. According to Akhtar (1999, p. 30), a woman's greater sense of commitment to relationships, her "nesting instinct" and greater capacity for contentment, also lead to acceptance and better adjustment in the new country. Nonetheless, studies have found migration to be more common amongst males than amongst females; a difference that may be attributed to the restricted geographic movement of women, and in some instances the women's informal caregiver obligation (Wojczewski et al., 2015). A common finding of 30-40 years of family migration studies worldwide is that such migration primarily benefits the careers of men in couples, but generally damages women's careers (Amcoff, & Niedomysl, 2015). The traditional patriarchal social understandings, particularly the Chinese and African saying that "when you are married to a chicken, you follow the chicken" (Li & Findlay, 1999, p.143), encourages women to prioritise their marriage over their careers. The aforementioned saying is believed to depict a very submissive role socialised to and played by women or wives. Significantly, African women value their fertility, motherhood and wifedom roles, which challenge them to protect their marriage at whatever cost, even if it means deskilling. However, in African migration history, male migrants were prohibited from bringing spouses and dependents to mines, an action perceived by Ramphela (1993) as characteristic of gender discrimination, oppression, and a threat to the very women's fertility, motherhood, and wifedom. Moreover, the prohibition of family migration has been alleged to have contributed immensely to the intensity of the HIV epidemic in Sub-Saharan



Africa, and studies have identified the link between migration and mines as being at the epicentre of the spread of HIV (Deane, Parkhurst & Johnston, 2010; Mekgwe, 2008; IOM, 2010). Chisale and Buffel (2014, p. 288) concur as they argue that “migration increases married couples” vulnerability to HIV infections, and threatens the lives of their children.

In recent years, migration into South Africa is understood to be the result of the lure of a thriving economy, a strong health system, good housing, and a stable democracy (Lekogo, 2006; Neocosmos, 2010; Reitzes, 1993). A search for scarce skills in science, mathematics, engineering, and other technical fields attracted holders of such skills to apply for a quota work permit, now known as the critical skills work visa (Chisale, 2015). The aforementioned work permits attracted many people from across the world and particularly across the African continent, to migrate into South Africa for economic purposes. The majority of the respondents to the call for scarce skills are males, as most African countries, like many industrialised countries’ education systems, prepare boys for scientific, engineering and technical careers, with special focus on mathematics and Science subjects, while girls are trained in home economics, arts, nursing, and education careers (McAdoo & Were, 1996, p.139). Though countries are increasingly encouraging girls to take up science, mathematics, engineering, and other technical subjects, it is clear that the field of science, mathematics, as well as other technical and engineering fields, are still predominantly male-dominated in most African countries, including South Africa (Chisale, 2014).

The call by South Africa for professional people in the field of science, mathematics, and engineering, therefore, attracts men more than it does women, and the corresponding permits or visas are mainly issued to male migrants (Chisale, 2014). Moreover, the majority of international professionals who are more likely to be married are male, where one can infer that the majority of spouses of the international professionals would tend to be female, and immigration scholarship has shown that husbands are less likely to follow

wives as dependents to another country due to the patriarchal organisation of families in most societies (Pessar, 2008; Purkayastha, 2005). Against that background, women become the marginalised migrant, and the use of the gender-inclusive term “spouse” and “dependent” in the migration policy development and implementation applies mainly to wives and children, who are the dependents of the principal holder of the work visa, who is mainly the husband or father (Chisale, 2014). From the foregoing discussion, the decision to migrate does not seem to be something that is taken overnight, as there are several variables riding the final decision to change locations over such long distances. A few prompts that set the ball rolling for migration have been touched on in this section. More factors influencing the decision to migrate will be further reviewed in the proceeding section.

### **2.3 Factors influencing the decision to embark on an immigration journey**

Migration applies to the life journey and developmental processes of individuals, families, and generations, and is embedded in the sociocultural processes and historical contexts of the places of origin and destinations (King, 2002, p. 101). It occurs for various reasons and its determinants vary from country to country and even within a country; they are also dependent on socio-economic, demographic and cultural factors. While high unemployment rates, low income, high population growth, unequal distribution of land, demand for higher schooling, previous migration patterns and displeasure with housing have all been identified as the prominent determinants of rural out-migration; war, political instability, famine, and environmental challenges also push individuals out of one place, to seek refuge in another (Billsborrow et al., 1987; Nabi, 1992; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Sekhar, 1993; Singh & Yadava, 1981; Yadava, 1988). Both internal and international migrations have also been traced back to complex economic and social factors, but the overriding driver is the migrants’ search for greater economic well-being. While it is

recognised that economic, social and political factors are central in the formation of the desire to migrate, these factors alone are unable to explain the migratory decisions of many (Thompson, 2017). Hence, the need to consider the socio-cultural and economic contexts, components of the migration experience, such as social networks, socioeconomic status, as well as individual sociodemographic factors, such as age and gender (Rogler, 1994). In addition, the role and position the migrant held in society, the motivation for immigration, legal migration status and the selection of the new country are amongst important pre-migration factors considered (Berry, 1997, p. 15; Johnson, 2007, p. 1430; Kristal-Andersson, 2000, p. 19; Van Coller, 2002, pp. 21-22). In the case of the accompanying spouse, they are uprooted from well-established interpersonal and other support networks and planted into a completely different and probably strange system altogether, where everything about them changes through acculturation. Development can stimulate migration, both internal and international, particularly when improvements in communication, transportation, and income raise people's expectations and enhance their desire and ability to migrate (SID, 2002). Furthermore, the perception of a gloomy economic future has been cited to trigger an outflow of emigrants, both male and female, as do both systemic and macro factors, such as the state of the national economy, and individual or micro factors, such as gender-specific stages in the life-cycle (Tevera & Chikanda, 2005; Gaidzanwa, 1997).

Various other factors also exist that shape the decision to migrate and make migration more or less possible; and these can be classified into categories: historical, political, or economic (Todaro, 1997). Political instability resulting from conflicts is believed to be a strong determinant of migration in the region (Afolayan, 2001; Crisp, 2006). As such, an unpredictable and volatile political backdrop characterised by dictatorial administrations that often intimidate students, intellectuals and union leaders, spur the mass exodus of professionals and others to other countries and regions in addition to loss

of state capacity, the fluctuating effects of structural adjustment programmes, and human insecurity have also prompted migratory movements (Adekanye, 1998). People may also fundamentally migrate once they are unable to fulfill their ambitions within the prevailing structures in their locality. Doghramji (1999) maintains that the best time to immigrate is when one is old and transition for the older person occurs in the context of a stable cultural, religious and social identity, which allows some refurbishment, without altering the foundations of the ego.

Public amenities such as roads, public transport, schools, banks, shopping malls, recreation, and healthcare facilities and social services are crucial issues for immigrant settlement. Most studies on immigrant housing in industrial nations have focused on individuals and households from the lower socioeconomic strata of society (Johnston, Trlin, Henderson & North (2006).2005). However, skilled, professional and business immigrants also have to adapt to a new housing system, and may have little official or family assistance available in the new country (Johnston et al., 2005). According to Johnston et al. (2005, p. 402), owning a house assists with integration into the host society, and is facilitated by a higher socioeconomic status and education level. Cultural background can affect a person's housing experience and how he or she responds to the new environment (Johnston et al., 2005).

Environmental factors may influence the migration process and these can be categorised into biological, physical and contextual factors. Immigration can include exposure to infectious diseases, such as malaria or tuberculosis, and nutritional imbalances can accentuate the vulnerability to autoimmune and psychosomatic disorders, whereas environmental conditions such as floods, droughts, and famine can play a role in the decision to migrate (Afolayan, 2001; Akhtar, 1999). The country of origin and the host country can differ considerably with regard to physical factors, such as climate, seasons, landscape, wildlife, pollution levels, as well as exposure to natural disasters, for instance,

earthquakes and tsunamis (Todaro, 1969). Aspects between sending and destination countries ranging from economic disparities, widening gaps between labour shortage in high-income countries and labour surplus in low-income countries; to the inability to provide workers with decent employment opportunities and living standards, as well as a decline in real wages in addition to high unemployment and underemployment rates in sending countries, may all contribute to the decision to migrate (Todaro, 1969).

Certain macro characteristics of the country of origin can also influence gender-specific migration tendencies (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). These characteristics can interact with gender relations and the position of women in the sending society and in turn affect decisions about who moves and when; and may also include: the state of the economy (agrarian, industrial, level of development); the types of economies present within various communities (i.e., all developed, mixed agrarian/industrial, some subsistence horticulturalists); the level of displacement triggered by economic changes and shifts in production technologies; land tenure laws; labour market conditions and conditions of work (wage levels, benefits); the ability of the economy to provide employment and the type of jobs available (number of industries); the ability of the national government to provide related infrastructure (education, job training); the geographic location of the country and the language(s) of the sending society; the relation and integration of the national economy into the global economy; the supply and demand conditions for the factors of production in sending and related receiving communities; and the presence or absence of established migration systems with other areas (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). According to Hagan and Ebaugh (2003) migrants rely on their spiritual beliefs when they have little control over a situation and the risks are high. The spiritual beliefs, in turn, influence various stages of the immigration process, including decision making, preparation, arrival, settlement and establishment of transnational networks (Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003). Spiritual resources, such as church attendance and religious practices,

including prayer and the reading of sacred literature, can guide the decision to migrate and provide a sense of protection, as well as the psychological resilience to endure and find meaning in the hardships of migration (Aranda, 2008; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003).

Multiple factors result in the migration of women. These include complex interactions among economic, social, familial, and political factors, as well as denial of access to education, employment, and healthcare and the lack of respect for basic human rights. As in many societies, women are marginalised from such rights, and migration to more economically and educationally open societies can often help improve their personal situations and employment opportunities (De Leon Siantz, 2013). However, gender relations and hierarchies within the family context affect the migration of women, because it is usually within the family that female subordination to male authority plays itself out. The family may define and assign the roles of women, which may, in turn, determine the latter's relative motivation and incentive to migrate, and controls the distribution of resources and information that can support, discourage, or even prevent migration (Sibanda, 2001).

The interaction of women's roles, status, and age within a particular socio-cultural context may also result in a migratory probability, and can also affect the ability of women to migrate. According to the United Nations report on women and migration (UN, 2006), the impact of women's status and roles on their propensity to migrate must be considered at the individual, familial, and societal levels. Individual factors include age, birth order, race/ethnicity, urban/rural origins, marital status (single, married, divorced, widowed), reproductive status (children or no children), role in the family (wife, daughter, mother), position in family (authoritative or subordinate), educational status, occupational skills/training, labour force experience, and class position. Family factors include size, age/sex composition, life-cycle stage, structure (nuclear, extended or blended), status (single parent or both parents), and class standing (Satzewich, 2015). Societal factors

include those community norms and cultural values that determine whether or not women can migrate and, if they can, how (i.e., labour or family reunification) and with whom (alone or with family). In other words, the culture of the sending society determines the likelihood of women in various positions migrating. In this sense, a woman's position in the sending community does not only influence her ability to autonomously decide to migrate and to access the resources necessary to do so, but also the opportunity she has to migrate at the point when the decision is being made. Moreover, multiple explanations may be put forward for the migration of women. Women may migrate for economic reasons in response to male unemployment, limited livelihood opportunities at origin and labour market policies that discourage women from working (Adepoju, 2004; Bakewell, 2007; GCIM, 2005; ILO, 2011; Kabeer, 2007; Mendola, 2008; OECD, 2004; Phalane, 2010; Piper, 2006; Razavi, Arza, Braunstein, Cook & Goulding, 2012; UNFPA, 2006). Although economic factors are not always the main reason, they constitute one of the most important reasons behind female migration. Women may seek to emigrate in order to escape unemployment, poverty, low wages, or limited economic opportunities. In addition, poverty and inequality between men and women, as well as access to information, are powerful factors influencing the decision for women to migrate (Schmidt, 1988; 1990; Djamba, 2003).

Female migration is also motivated by social factors, comprising surveillance by communities and patriarchal traditions that limit opportunity and freedom and a significant number of women still migrate as wives because in many countries; wherein the case of domestic violence, they risk losing their residency rights if they decide to leave their spouses. Rapid population and labour force growth, unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, breakdown of government rooted in precarious democratisation processes, persistent economic decline, retrenchment of public sector workers in response to structural adjustment measures, poverty and environmental deterioration may influence

the decision to move (Barnes, 1992; Cockerton, 2002; Schmidt, 1988; 1990; UN, 2004). Abysmally low commodity prices, along with unstable and lowly paid jobs, help explain why migration persists (Findley et al., 1995; UN, 1996); so is political instability resulting from conflicts a strong determinant of migration in the region (Crisp, 2006). Further external factors are also relevant, especially the broader international trends of globalisation, regional integration, network formation, political transformation and the entry of multinational corporations in search of cheap labour. Successive political and economic crises have also triggered migration flows to new destinations that have no prior links – historical, political or economic – to the countries of emigration (Tevera & Chikanda, 2005; Gaidzanwa, 1997). As various crises intensified, migratory outflows have increased in both size and effect. The perception of a dismal economic future has triggered an outflow of emigrants, both male, and female (Adepoju, 2008; Geiger, Pécoud, 2010).

Other factors that encourage female migration include changing gender roles in countries of origin, the rise in female education, the development of gender-specific economic niches, the expansion in the service economy and export-oriented industrialisation, driven by foreign direct investment [FDI] (De Haan, 2000; Gaye & Jha, 2011; Pyle, 2006; Spaan & van Moppes, 2006; Sassen, 2000; UNRISD, 2005). The migration of women is also facilitated by gender-selective policies in some developed countries. However, there are instances where the migration of women is typically unrelated to career advancement and skill acquisition, and there is evidence to suggest that a significant number of migrant women possess skills and qualifications often not recognised or unneeded in the receiving country, as well as types of work that they eventually perform. In fact, further studies indicate that migration involves deskilling for some groups of women (IOM, 2009; Pessar, 2008).

Factors influencing migration decision-making are varied and numerous. These range from economic, social to political factors, amongst others, and have been the topic



under review in this section. While economic factors seem to stand out as the major driver of migration; apart from economic motives, women also migrate for non-economic reasons (Kim, 2010; United Nations, 2006). As such, some women's migration is associational, while others migrate for education, marriage, family reunification, or to escape oppressive family relationships and unhappy marriages (Gamburd, 2000; Pearson, 2000; Horgan, 2001; Jolly & Reeves, 2005; ILO, 2011). This is notwithstanding some of the factors that have facilitated migration, which could have had an impact (positive or negative) on migrants; particularly on female accompanying migrant spouses. The following section will review literature pertaining to the effect of migration.

## **2.4 Effects (positive and negative) of migration**

Migration involves movement from one socio-economic system to another, exposing immigrants to a new hierarchical distribution of power, privilege, and prestige, which has major effects on occupational, employment and socioeconomic status, as well as social class (Kohn et al, as cited in Rogler, 1994). International migration may affect the demographic, economic, social and political structures of both sending countries and destination countries (Meares, 2007). It also may have a far-reaching effect on the life and well-being of immigrants and their families.

Economic factors, such as gross national product per capita, income distribution, structural transformation, as well as the human development index, play a part in emigration dynamics (Afolayan, 2001). While migration may kick start occupational integration and participation at levels consistent with pre-migration training and employment permit incorporation into larger networks of social relationships, today's immigrants arrive at a time of widespread economic insecurity and a paucity of employment prospects, and may become targets for national hostility and discrimination owing to institutional systems that can result in unemployment, underemployment, and

financial hardship (Rogler, 1994). Stripped of the right to belong and to have a sense of existential meaningfulness, this creates the illusion of a temporary or partial presence in the host country, subject to ongoing scrutiny by the natives to determine the legitimacy of presence and personhood (Sayad, 2002). In times of societal distress, this double absence or conditional presence can be reinterpreted as the enemy within, with resultant harassment, rejection, or even deportation (Sayad, 2002). Park, as cited in Pedraza-Bailey (1990) refers to the subject of the human condition of living simultaneously in two cultures, without fully belonging in either, as 'the marginal man'; often regarded as an outcast and stranger, this is a cultural duality that may also increase a person's emotional awareness and creativity. Sayad (2002) believes that emigration does not only cause rips in the fabric of the society of origin, but it also signifies pre-existing fractures of the core structures that used to provide a sense of coherence in this society. Oboler (2006) adds that in some instances, the host country plays a major role in this disintegration process, and concludes transnational immigration to be a drama in which the immigrant is caught up with and enacts societal history, 'on the move', as it were.

Immigration involves a certain amount of culture shock and the consequent confusion and anxiety challenge the newcomer's psychological stability (Akhtar, 1999). Moreover, mourning over the losses inherent in immigration, coupled with culture shock, cause a serious disruption in the individual's identity, and this discontinuity of identity arises because the immigrant can no longer rely on the affirmation and validation of the home environment to sustain it (Akhtar, 1999). Cultural identity may also be challenged by labels assigned by the host society, such as minority, alien, refugee, or immigrant (Alvarez, 2005). The severity of the threats to an individual's identity is analogous to the severity of concomitant mourning for what has been lost (Ward & Styles, 2007). Integration into a new cultural setting is painstakingly hard work and is the culmination of successive and complementary steps in a developmental process where the predominant feelings are

intense pain for all that was left behind or lost, deep-rooted loneliness, fear of the unknown, and helplessness (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). The resulting pain of separation may be experienced as a depressive mood, or feelings of persecution; where the departure condemns the person to be a refugee or exile, who is no longer loved and is being expelled from home that manifests in most immigrants experiencing a mixture of anxiety, sadness, pain, and longing, despite having a sense of hope and expectation nonetheless (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

For many, emigration may present a rollercoaster of emotions, initially experienced as a sense of emotional numbness, but when the reality that they are living in a foreign country amongst strangers sets in, a profound sense of loss and disbelief ensues, eliciting a shock wave of emotions (Harrison & Nortje, 2000). The country of one's birth has a special meaning, because it provides one's first experiences of the physical environment, social relationships and one's sense of self; and involves profound losses, such as loss of control, security, competence, familiarity, social status, an internal sense of harmony, cultural roots and historical continuity (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). According to Winnicott (2007), the physical and cultural transitions of immigration, as well as the loss of the containment provided by the homeland, deprive the person of a sense of safety and connectedness to others. Immigrants lose their familiar patterns of being and relating to people (Marlin, 2005), and are required to relinquish parts of the self to facilitate integration in the host society (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). This loss of one's 'inner compass' may lead to feelings of anxiety, bitterness, and anger, as well as losing a sense of purpose and direction in life (Tannenbaum, 2007). The new country presents an unfamiliar landscape, new food, strange expressions, different political concerns, and unknown disasters, as well as heroes (Akhtar, 1999).

Splitting of the self occurs in response to external changes, where the immigrant is as if triangulated between the idealised country of origin and the devalued new culture,

and as a result loses the sense of continuity or self-sameness, consistency and coherence, until a synthesis of these two self-presentations develops over time (Akhtar, 1999; Ward & Styles, 2007). Immigrants may also experience “separation guilt” or “survivor’s guilt”, especially when emigrating from socioeconomically disadvantaged and politically unstable countries, a lack of retrospective idealisation of the homeland that deprives the person of a buffer against the frustrations of life in the new state (Akhtar, 1999, p. 83). Pathological mourning may also result from persecutory guilt, resulting in somatisation, melancholy or psychosis (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

While women find social networking easier than men, they may be more capable of tolerating the stress and pain of immigration (Harrison & Nortje, 2000). However, if they are resentful about immigrating, pine for friends and family back home, and make little effort to integrate, they may find the immigration blues (Harrison & Nortje, 2000) harder to endure than their husbands. Immigrants may feel that they have died in the eyes of those with whom they had close and longstanding bonds, because attempts at ongoing contact may be ignored or rebuffed, or practical support may suddenly be withdrawn creating feelings of abandonment, betrayal, and humiliation; and emigrants may start to doubt their perception of reality in terms of the reliability of sociocultural support and the quality of their interpersonal relationships (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). If trusted bonds with family and valued friends in the home country prove to be so fragile, the immigrant becomes sceptical and may be reluctant to make an effort to build relationships with co-nationals or people from other cultural groups in the adopted country.

Immigration may trigger childhood feelings of frustration and exclusion as the members of the host community exhibit bonds with each other and share a language, memories, experiences and knowledge of daily life from which the immigrant feels excluded and displaced from the world that was left behind, and is still regarded as a foreigner by the new society (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). According to Winnicott (1999),

home is where we come from, then again, the immigrant may end up without a stable home anywhere, but feeling at home and having family and friends in many places (Akhtar, 1999). The fear of losing established structures and familiarity with prescribed rules for social behaviour may give rise to feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, loneliness, and alienation; and individuals with a predisposition for loneliness will find that their problems become exacerbated during migration, because the migratory experience accentuates feelings of estrangement and isolation (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Klein, as cited in Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Owing to the fact that the immigrant loses most of the roles he or she played in the community of origin as a member of a profession, the workforce or a circle of friends (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989), moving to a new country can disrupt his or her sense of continuity, confirmation and consistency, which poses a threat to their identity (Walsh & Shulman, 2007). Being unemployed, accepting a lower-paid job or doing tedious work, such as cleaning homes just to make ends meet, can be devastating to the ego, and place huge demands on the inner strength of the individual (Harrison & Nortje, 2000). Immigrants may also have to relinquish their native language in favour of a new language, as they live in two linguistic worlds and having to converse in a language other than one's mother tongue is said to be tiring; a new language learnt in later life does not have the emotional connotation of languages acquired during childhood (Akhtar, 1999, p. 98).

Migration can induce anxieties, trigger psychotic aspects of personality on the basis of the person's inner disposition, the discontinuity of context, breakdown in communication, can produce an identity crisis because of catastrophic changes, and can lead to disintegration and dissolution of the self and a blurring of boundaries (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Although the development of psychopathology represents extreme situations, one should be cognisant that migration may promote the emergence of latent pathology in individuals who are particularly fragile, and may trigger the development of

more serious disorders. The new country may represent an unfamiliar context that may not provide adequate support and containment, and as a result, the initial anxiety and communication difficulties are intensified because the person must confront a new language, unfamiliar customs, and behaviour (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Migrants who feel that their decision to migrate is not entirely voluntary often experience inner turmoil, apprehension, guilt, anxiety, or that nobody cares about their fate and the experience of being uprooted can have a negative impact on the subsequent phases (Gonsalves, 1992).

Migration is the result of comparing conditions at home to possibly better opportunities abroad, weighing up the costs and advantages of such a move. Well-known economic drivers of migration include differences in opportunities between origin and destination countries in terms of, *inter alia*, income, employment opportunities and cost of living (Péridy, 2010). Today, women account for close to half of migrants and migration is often considered a driver of growth and an important route out of poverty, with a significant positive impact on people's livelihoods and wellbeing (Anh, 2003; UNDESA, 2013). According to Jolly and Reeves (2005) migration has the potential to deconstruct gender roles by providing new opportunities and improving women's lives by transforming oppressive gender relations. Furthermore, migration can contribute to gender equality and female empowerment by providing migrant women with income, status, autonomy, freedom and the self-esteem that comes with employment (Caritas, 2012). Women may also become more assertive, as they see more opportunities opening up before them in a new country, which could expose them to new ideas and social norms that can promote their rights and enable them to participate more fully in society (Caritas, 2012). It can also have a positive influence on achieving greater equality in their country of origin, through the transmission of ideas and international immigrant women's cultural transitions can also

bring opportunities such as women's engagement in interculturalisation and the subsequent development of a new identity (Caritas, 2012).

Whereas migration may create opportunities for female migrants, gender norms prevalent in many countries as well as the institutional failure to address discrimination may create vulnerabilities, and are amongst the root causes of women's lack of decision-making power – all of which have particular consequences for female migrants (O'Neil, Fleury & Foresti, 2016). The nature of discrimination may include racism, sexism, and xenophobia, or combinations thereof, an example of which could be racialised sexism. For instance, Lalita, an Indian female physician in a health centre in a foreign land was half the time assumed to be a receptionist or secretary by clients upon meeting her, while in yet other instances, clients confused her for a nurse; experiences that are non-existent in her home country (Pillari, 2005).

The greater the difference between the country of origin and the host country, the more challenging it is for the immigrant to adapt, for instance, moving from a socio-centric (collectivist) to an egocentric (individualistic) society (Akhtar, 1999). Sociocultural differences between societies include dress, food, language, music, humour, political ideologies, levels of autonomy and self-assertion, subjective experience of time and space, as well as sexuality and communication amongst the sexes and generations. Superficial similarities between cultures do not preclude psychological difficulties because the losses and disruption experienced by "invisible immigrants" are more subtle and disguised, which makes them harder to acknowledge and manage (Akhtar, 1999, p. 21). The ethnic attitudes, attitudes to immigration and cultural diversity, as well as support networks in the host country, affect the adjustment process (Berry, 1997). Cultural identity is a tapestry of meaning based on shared values, moral and ethical codes, attitudes, customs, beliefs, and rituals. It involves implicit rules and agreements for behaviour, and provides a sense of self-worth and self-esteem. For instance, the degree to which the body

is exposed, especially in public, differs between cultures, and traditional clothing like the hijab worn by Muslim women can appear oppressive and restrictive to Western societies (Akhtar, 1999).

From the literature on migrant women, it is clear that female migrants are subject to a double vulnerability; being both female and a migrant (Tse & Liew, 2004). Immigrant women are vulnerable to rape, being deported and separated from their children, among other hurdles; domestic abuse and more likely to experience partner violence; and their partner dependent financial as well as visa status makes them less likely to report abuse (Neuman, 2010; Raj & Silverman, 2003). Moreover, Timur (2000) has emphasised the negative experiences of women migrants, outlining various forms of associated psychopathology, such as depression. It is established that women are more prone to higher levels of psychosomatic illness than men (Furnham & Shiekh, 1993; Berry & Sam, 1997). Anti-foreigner sentiments or discrimination against migrants can overtly or tacitly increase the migrant women's vulnerability and latent discrimination, privileging natives over foreigners in job recruitment; while explicit acts of foreigner prejudice also function as barriers. This is in line with McWhirter (1991), who argues that perceived discrimination can act as a barrier for migrants to engaging in assertive behaviours, where a sense of self-confidence is necessary for authentic adaptation. Carrasquillo and Shea (2000) found that migrant women are discriminated against when not awarded legal work and residency status. They are left with no choice but to accept low-paying jobs. The subsequent loss of status to women migrants exposes them to the risk of a general loss of status, where they experience the reduced ability to exercise personal control over their own lives since they cannot acquire material and social resources (Gutierrez, 1990). The psychological wellbeing of migrant women is also compromised by host country language difficulties, their dependent status, and the blurriness or non-existence of legal rights.



Although immigration brings opportunities, there are also several other risks (Choudhry, 2001). Al-Issa and Tousignant (1997) site goal striving, loss of occupational status and cultural shock as risks that contribute to stress among immigrants. Maraj (1996), in his research, identifies that occupational dislocation has a greater effect than economic impact does on foreign-educated professional immigrants. It has been frequently observed in relation to gender differences in migratory motivation that women are primarily driven by family considerations in taking the decision to migrate, while men are mainly propelled by economic motivations (Zlotnik, 1995; He & Gober, 2003). Nonetheless, labour migration still presents as the chief motive for migration for the majority of migrants generally understood to be driven by differences in returns to labour, or expected returns across markets (Lucas, 2005; Bauer & Zimmerman, 1998).

Deskilling has also been advanced as one of the risks of migration that may overpower the latter's benefits. The IOM (2012), Raghuram (2004), Raghuram and Kofman (2004) and Rogler (1994) are amongst numerous studies that describe the deskilling and disempowering of women by migration. Additionally, the IOM report (2012) reviews the literature on the reasons for the deskilling of female migrants, which according to the report, is a result of the economic policies of both the host and the sending country. Accordingly, Man's (2004, p. 145) study on the deskilling of Chinese immigrant women in Canada reveals that the country's neoliberal policies, labour market, employment practices which require "Canadian experience", restrictive professional accreditation processes, and the lack of recognition of immigrant women's foreign credentials and work experience, disadvantage Chinese immigrant women and limit their chances of career-relevant professional engagements. This indicates that receiving countries have their own bureaucratic measures to protect their citizens. However, citizen protective measures are instituted in gender-insensitive ways, where migrant men somehow seem to be easily absorbed into the receiving countries' employment systems.

An accompanying spouse might have to bear burdens they did not normally have to carry back home, where they are perceived to have all the time and capacity to do so. Demands for the trailing spouse may include stressors resulting from the once-off events like the move abroad; strains in the form of ongoing unresolved tensions resulting from stressors that manifest over time, such as giving up one's job/career, changed family routines, children starting new schools, and changes in financial status; and the daily hassles of having to deal with locals in a foreign language (Glanz, Williams & Hoeksema, 2001). Additionally, abandonment of a spouse's career, altered financial status, a change in relationship dynamics, and the loss of social support networks are cited as other factors contributory to marital stress (Glanz, Williams & Hoeksema, 2001). Harvey (1997) and Cole (2011) found unresolved dual-career issues to negatively influence the adjustment cycle for the trailing spouse. Abandoning or interrupting a spouse's career leads to a loss of power, identity and self-worth, which may have spill over effects to other family members; discontinuity of trailing spouses career leading to family and marital stress; and causing disruption to family income (Brown, 2008). Another of the main sources of marital stress is the principal migrant's long working hours, which creates marital tension as well as loneliness and isolation on the part of the accompanying spouse (McNulty, 2012). Hence, immigration can either reconfirm the couple bond due to an increased reliance on each other for social and psychological support, or it can place a strain on a relationship that may lead to separation or even divorce (McNulty, 2012).

While accompanying migrant status supposedly spells doom and gloom for most spouses, some women have managed against all odds to use the migration to their benefit by using time at home to pursue careers. However, migration and immigration are complementary processes plagued with challenges, especially for the accompanying spouse. On that note, the ensuing discussion mirrors the way in which accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse.

## **2.5 How accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse**

Most researchers view adaptation following migration as a multistage (Hener, Weller, & Shor, 1997, p. 252), “U-shaped” process (Lysgaard, 1955, as cited in Sussman, 2002, p. 6), where immigrants initially experience feelings of elation, followed by an extended period of distress and crisis (Sluzki, 1999) that gradually improves as they adjust to the new society (Leherer, as cited in Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999, pp. 125-126). Pernice and Brook (1996) do not endorse an initial distress-free period, followed by a mental health crisis, but suggest an alternative pattern, where immigrants progress through periods of distress, and experience improvement in mental health over time. Khawaja and Mason (2008) found that South African immigrants in Australia experienced more distress during the first year of their stay than did those who had been living in Australia for more than three years. In contrast, Ward and Kennedy (1994) found that migrants who decided to return to their homeland experienced low satisfaction at the beginning and end of their stay in the host country, with a period of higher satisfaction in the middle. In the initial stages of adaptation to the new country, pre-migration defence mechanisms temporarily sustain the psychological balance of immigrants and make it possible for them to master the challenges of orientating, learning and adapting to a new environment (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006).

The migrant is in the overcompensation or honeymoon phase (Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999), which is characterised by heightened task-oriented efficiency; a sense of curiosity, adventure and freedom to explore the new environment and opportunities; coupled with anxious optimism or even excitement that could last from a few weeks to a year (Hulewat, 1996; Mirsky & Peretz, 2006; Van Coller, 2002). There is a narrow focus of attention on practical matters to ensure that the basic needs for physiological survival are met, such as securing housing and employment and finding schools for the children.

Migrants have a sense of achievement as they master new challenges. There is a tendency to view cultural differences as old-fashioned or fascinating (Gonsalves, 1992), to ignore frustrations. This as well as to cling to the customs of the country of origin as a protective shield against the dissonance that results from a mismatch between their culture-bound expectations and the new environment, which may threaten their sense of reality (Sluzki, 1979; Reyneke, 2004). Marital disputes may result from different spousal expectations of the new country, child-rearing practices, gender role changes, or role reversals (Gonsalves, 1992).

The relative calmness and containment of this moratorium (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989) eventually crumble in the face of the full implication of immigration; the culture shock (Oberg, 1960, as cited in Hener et al., 1997); the daily hassles (Hener et al., 1997); the realities of living in a new country; and the lack of familiar sources of support (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). Cognitive distortions are no longer effective, and during this “confrontation” (Gonsalves, 1992, p. 385), “rebound” or “disenchantment” (Hener et al., 1997, pp. 126, 247) phase, the migrant experiences confusion, disorientation, disappointment, disconnectedness, anxiety and helplessness, which evoke frustration, irritation and anger towards the devalued new country, as well as a sense of loneliness and longing for the idealised, homeland and the “old” self (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006, p.53). In an attempt to recapture what they have lost, the immigrant keeps up ties to the homeland; withdraws from the host society (Hener et al., 1997); favours relationships with other immigrants; or travels back for a visit to the homeland (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). For some, this tangible step assists with separation from the homeland as they realise that the past cannot be recreated, and what was lost cannot be recouped (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). The immigrant has to surrender the dream of going home as a viable option and enters the renunciation (Shin, 1999), or letting-go phase. The migrant now enters a phase of mourning of what has been left behind, relying on coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills, and

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learning new behaviour to accommodate the norms and expectations of the host society (Hener et al., 1997). However, if the tempo or extent of changes exceeds the person's capacity to cope, overwhelming tension and conflict during this crisis or disintegration phase may result in medical or psychiatric disorders, family violence, substance abuse, or behavioural and identity problems (Berry, 1997). Cumulative stress may lead to extended periods of destabilisation and crisis (Gonsalves, 1992; Hener, Weller, & Shor, 1997; Sluzki, 1979). According to Gonsalves (1992), decompensation can occur anywhere from a few weeks to many years after arrival and may be triggered by personal problems that were already present in the homeland, failures in personal adaptation, family disintegration, environmental isolation, and identity or existential crisis. The person attempts to reshape his or her reality in an effort to achieve harmony with the new environment while maintaining continuity in terms of personal identity (Sluzki, 1979).

The geographical distance from the safety of the motherland causes conflicts and fears regarding dependence-independence needs from childhood and adolescence (based on similar separation-individuation processes) to resurface, and provides new opportunities to rework and resolve aspects of the previous environment and identity; reconcile them with external losses; and develop a more balanced view of the home and host countries (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). The person enters an ongoing, open-ended phase of exploration, learning, adaptation, and resolution, where an intrapsychic reorganisation occurs simultaneously with the integration of interpersonal elements from the host country, to develop a more mature self-concept and undergo lasting personality changes (Gonsalves, 1992; Mirsky & Peretz, 2006). Immigrants become more accepting and tolerant towards cultural differences; their self-esteem and confidence grow; they feel more in control of their lives, and their productivity and involvement in the host society increase.

Most people are unaware to what extent their individual identity is shaped by cultural norms, but their cultural identity becomes more prominent when the person moves to another country and encounters different values, behaviours, and ways of thinking (Sussman, 2002). Immigrants, according to Sussman (2002), have to be flexible enough to achieve a balance between the comfort of their home culture and effectiveness, as required by host country members. A threat to identity occurs when personal efforts or social pressure to incorporate new elements into the identity structure are contradictory, incompatible, or in conflict with the principles of distinctiveness, continuity, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). The literature on female migration generally focuses on two broad aspects of status that can change as a result of the migration process. The first is the position of migrant women within their families. For some women, migration may mean an increase in social mobility, economic independence, and relative autonomy. This is especially true if women's moves are accompanied by increased participation in the labour market. New economic and social responsibilities may change the distribution of power within the family, leading to greater authority and participation in household decision-making, and control over the family's resources. These may also cause positive shifts in the relationship between immigrant women and their husbands and children (Boyd, & Grieco, 2003).

In many developing countries, migration is interlinked with masculinity, in the sense that it allows men to fulfill their role as household providers (Bastia, 2012; Agesa & Kim, 2001). On account of their dependent status, the migration of women is believed to occur in a family context. Married women have to negotiate their migration at various levels in the family: first with their husbands; and then with members of the extended family (Jacobsen & Levin, 2000; McGregor, 2006; Bastia, 2012). Due to intra-household power inequalities, women are expected to defer to male power by consulting their husbands before making a decision. A man, on the other hand, can often make decisions that

disregard the wishes of his wife (Mumtaz & Aysha, 1982). The decision of males to migrate is uncontested by members of the household and indeed assumed as normal behaviour, while the decision of married women to migrate is often censored (Posel, 2003; Hoang, 2009). Overall, married women have limited agency in their husbands' decision to migrate or their own migration (Chant, 1992).

Female migration flows may obscure the reality that a significant number of women are in fact professionals who have chosen to devalue their qualifications as a temporary measure to gain entry to the labour force. They are compelled to take domestic work, waitressing and other menial tasks with the hope that they can someday utilise their credentials for more appropriate jobs; a phenomenon that has been described no more as brain drain, but as brain waste (Forbes, 2003). Domestic work worldwide is an unregulated sector of the labour market, where no labour laws and standards for it exist (Chammartin, 2006); women are therefore at high risk of being exploited and/or badly treated in such jobs (Caritas, 2008). It is also defined as a dead-end from the perspective of labour mobility, as it does not provide specific skills on the job, does not open the way for other occupations, and rarely allows the continuation of formal education. It can also involve interminable work hours (10-12 working hours a day with very few rest days); abuse by employers; instability due to informal employment; lack of monitoring of work-place conditions; no or little social security protection or access to legal and health services; restrictions to mobility and communications; no legal redress (Philippine, 2008); and it can become an obstacle to the formation or consolidation of own families for women (Lipszyc, 2004). These variables often create the social isolation of most domestic helpers, and their inability to integrate effectively with the receiving country that can have a serious psychological impact on women over time (Basu & Rajbhandary, 2006). Professional accreditation barriers and language difficulties can also lead to devaluation or devalorisation of actual merit and experience, as well as racial discrimination; cultural and

systemic barriers to care and legal protection; social isolation, and a lack of participation in community life. Studies have reported that the psychosocial impact of non-accreditation leads to erosion of skills, loss of technical idiom, and diminishing confidence in the migrants' capabilities (Canadian Task Force on Mental Health, 1988, p. 33).

The way in which women are defined at entry may also affect other social rights and entitlements, including the capacity to gain legal citizenship speedily, to access language-training classes, to obtain job training, and to access income security programmes. For this reason, studies of immigrant women argue that women more often than men are denied full citizenship; that is, the full civil, political, and social rights and responsibilities that normally come with membership in society (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Racial, birthplace and gender-based hierarchies that exist in countries of destination are important, and influence the incorporation of women and men migrants into the labour market (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Women may have different experiences than men, because they are frequently segregated into traditional "female" occupations, such as domestic work, childcare, or garment manufacturing. Even highly skilled immigrant workers may have different experiences based on their gender (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Lower wages of immigrants have also been cited by researchers (Lianos, 2004; Cholezas & Tsakloglou, 2008). The gender hierarchies that affect all women in general also handicap immigrant women in particular, influencing job opportunities, work environment, and wages vis-à-vis their male counterparts. In the receiving country, migration may also alter the status and gender relations of men and women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). New economic roles and new responsibilities affect spousal relationships, in some instances leading to considerable negotiations and resistance to change by both men and women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Studies have examined the alteration in marital power and the process of negotiation, not only for immigrant couples but also in cases where one partner is still living in the origin country (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).



While migration can provide new opportunities for women on their own, or jointly with their spouses to improve their lives, escape oppressive social relations, and support children and other family members who are left behind, it also can expose them to new vulnerabilities resulting from their precarious legal status, abusive working conditions, and health risks (UNRISD, 2005). Migrant women are triply disadvantaged by race/ethnicity; their status as non-nationals; and gender inequalities (Piper, 2005). Gender disparities are deeply rooted in the values of the home culture, especially those cultures in which males are valued more highly than females (Woods, 2009). From birth, the meaning of being born female shapes the remainder of a girl's life, depending on the culture and country of birth, diversity that exists among every subgroup of migrant women, where the transition experience from home to sometimes very different host locations cannot be overlooked (De Leon Siantz, 2013). A life span perspective and the experiences perceived to be related to the age of migration should span from infancy to old age. Work experience and work environment must be considered, as well as the marginalisation that can occur in the new settings in which migrant females find themselves. Each component provides a unique insight into the understanding of women's response to accompanying spouse status providing a more holistic approach (De Leon Siantz, 2013).

The impact of migration is complex, affecting those who migrate as well as their spouses. The effect of migration involves broader issues of access to healthcare services as health status, which may be further compromised by the stress of adjusting to a new country and the experience of violence and sexual exploitation (De Leon Siantz, 2013). A migrant woman's mental and physical health may be affected by certain working environments, abusive employers, and domestic violence (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Research has also suggested that women experience higher levels of stress than men because they receive less assistance with personal and job-related problems than do men at each stage of a three-stage decision-making process: the initial decision to move; their

choice of destination; choice of property or specific location within that destination; as well as migration by all ages in search of a better quality of life or a rural idyll (Cloke & Milbourne, 1992; Halliday & Coombes, 1995); where migrants are in search of 'a radically new (often self-sufficient) lifestyle' (Mitchell, 2004, p. 24). Migrant motivations have the potential to over-generalise and even mislead what is, in fact, a complex decision-making process by the individual migrant, which has been acknowledged by some commentators. Bolton and Chalkley's (1990) study, for example, divided the decision to move into three distinct phases, with the reasons given at each phase found to be notably different. Bijker, Haartsen, and Strijker (2012) similarly separate the reasons for leaving the previous residence from those for the choice of destination. By contrast, Williams and Jobes (1990) found a strong association between the migrants' reasons for moving and their choice of destination. The relationship between migration and life course stage has long been established (Rossi, 1955; Bures, 1997), with Bailey et al. (2004) highlighting the interconnections between migration and different aspects of a person's life (for example, education, employment, family formation); and it has been shown that migration decisions have both their own dynamism and their own rather specific contexts. The decision to migrate is found to involve a complex interplay of factors and considerations relating to different aspects of the couple's life (family, work, financial, health), which on occasions necessitated a compromise by both or one of the partners (Stockdale et al., 2013; Fielding, 2012, p. 124). In particular, it is the interplay between 'financial planning', 'financial compromise' and 'locational compromise', which is found to be most important (Fielding, 2012, p. 124). Disentangling the overall decision into a series of decisions taken at different stages in the migration process, and utilising the migrants' voices, has shed considerable light on these individual influences and considerations. It also demonstrates the value of taking a life course perspective in migration research (Stockdale, 2014).

South Africa's undisputed ability to draw skilled and unskilled migrants, particularly in a post-apartheid context, has been highlighted in various studies. However, the bulk of the studies undertaken have been limited to unskilled immigrants, such as farmworkers (Kriger, 2010; Sisulu, Moyo & Tshuma, 2007). There appear to be limited studies that examine the experiences of skilled immigrants in SA in this context. Furthermore, there are none that focus specifically on immigrants accompanying spouses whose experiences in the country include a complex and frustrating process of acquiring documentation to legally enter the labour market; difficulty in acquiring job security; xenophobic attitudes by natives; and workplace exploitation; amongst other challenges (Sisulu, Moyo & Tshuma, 2007). The accompanying migrants' experiences expose their vulnerability, in particular, their attempts to meet their family responsibilities as these previously played a critical role in the household; and are eager to earn a living (Mawadza, 2008; Rutherford, 2010; Kriger, 2010).

The literature in this section describes some of the experiences of migrants in broader contexts, as well as females, accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa. Migration experiences vary between migrants, and they may mean different things to different people. For some accompanying spouses, it can mean fulfillment of dreams, but for others, it could mean having to live in the shadow of the principle migrant and having to eventually come to terms with whatever little achievement may come their way. The migrants' experiences could also be a result of legislation concerns; hence the proceeding section reviews the experiences of accompanying migrant spouses in light of legislation.

## **2.6 How accompanying status influences one's sense of justice, security and self, and how that translates into immigration legislation**

Immigration is a complex psychological and sociocultural process, where selective immigration policies are used by most receiving countries to limit the number of legal immigrants, as well as to regulate the quality of workers to protect their own socio-

economic development (Afolayan, 2001). The welfare of workers is enhanced by ensuring that overseas employees are recruited by licensed recruitment agencies and assisted by reputable immigration consultants (Afolayan, 2001). These organisations can help families to negotiate the bureaucratic hurdles of government systems, certifying documentation and providing interpretation and translation services (Cordero-Guzmán, 2005; Rogler, 1994). They can also serve as an advocate for ethnic groups by articulating their social service needs and concerns to policymakers, and by managing the flow of resources from the metropolitan to the community level (Cordero-Guzmán, 2005).

International migration is a contentious issue and has gained currency in academic discourses, as well as social and political movements (Carletto & De Brauw, 2007; Bloch, 2009; Vertovec, 2009; Van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2011). Many countries are opposed to mass immigration and have adopted policies to reduce unrestricted migration while allowing specialised labour to fill sector-specific needs. By instituting rigid migration categories that offer permanent residence to a few and render many others temporary; for the accompanying migrant, the hope for a better quality of life and a prosperous future are expectations that don't always come true, however (Comas-Díaz, 2013). The United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, for example, use a selective skills-based criterion in the admission of migrants and charge exorbitant fees for work permits. In addition to these constraints, people's ability to migrate is limited by social network constraints, prohibitive relocation costs and non-transferability of human capital (Becker, 1962; Carling, 2002; Hatton & Williamson, 2002; Konseiga, 2007; Vogler & Rotte, 2000; Zaiceva & Zimmermann, 2008). Additionally, even tougher immigration systems are being developed in the Global North with reduced rights to work and welfare, compared to continuing welfare protections for UK 'nationals' that inhibit their entry into the low-wage economy despite migrants, especially new arrivals, being seen as harder workers, more

loyal and reliable; prepared to work longer hours due to their lack of choice, and the large volume of available labour at the low end of the labour market (MacKenzie & Forde, 2009).

Opposition to migration in destination countries derives from perceived fear of overcrowding, labour and housing competition, overloading of the welfare system and threats to national identities (van der Velde & Van Naerssen, 2011). In addition, trade unions in developed countries are opposed to a regime of unrestricted labour mobility, fearing job losses and a perceived corresponding decline in wages. According to the UN (2010), many governments seek to manage migration by restricting instances of family reunification. For example, family members of temporary migrants are denied entry visas and work permits in half of all developing countries, and a third of developed countries. National policies of the countries of origin can influence migration through prohibitive, selective, permissive, promotional, or expulsive rules of exit that may affect men and women migrants differently (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). While some sending countries have employed so-called conditions in their policies to protect women from exploitation that in essence prevents the women from actively participating in labour migration, immigration laws and regulations of the country of destination may also influence the migration of women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). These policies can influence the ability of women to migrate in a variety of ways. Initially, the immigration policies of numerous receiving states implicitly assume a dependent status for women and an independent migrant status for men. Accordingly, women are often classified by their relation to men with whom they migrate that is, in the status of a wife; notwithstanding their own independent status (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Subsequent to implicitly defining immigrant women as dependent and men as independent, such migration policies place women in a domestic and sedentary role, rather than a market role, which could, in turn, reinforce the social vulnerability of migrant women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). The implication of defining migrant females and males as dependent and independent respectively, further exposes the female migrant,

as the policies separate the right to work from the right to reside, where women who are non-work permit holders may be employed illegally. Moreover, customary sex roles and stereotypical images regarding the place of women in society can influence the type of work for which migrant female labour is engaged (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

As many governments continue tightening migration controls, the scene for the exploitation of those most desperate is set. Such developments for accompanying migrant women may mean the invocation of amplified vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, as migrant rights are at risk and compromised all around, that is, in countries of origin, as well as those of transit, and destination. Whereas existing UN and ILO conventions pledge protection for women migrants, they operate in an uneven and dispersed fashion (ILO, 1998, 2002). There are instances where their successful application to women migrants may not be apparent when the focus is on the single variable of accompanying migration status. The immigration policy of the host country does not always offer equal conditions to male and female migrants, as the rights of female migrants may be dependent on the rights of other family members. Grieco and Boyd (1998) show that gender stereotypes in the receiving country often lead to a situation where the options for migrant women are restricted to traditionally female occupations, which typically come with poor wages, low occupational status, and bad working conditions. The post-migration experiences of men and women are also shaped by gender roles and hierarchies, as well as by the relations between the sexes. As a result, women often end up in a multiply disadvantaged position following migration, due to their status as migrants; because they are women; and because of their position as job seekers in a gender-discriminating labour market (ILO, 1998, 2002). Sadly, being a legal immigrant does not necessarily protect international women from discrimination and anti-immigration laws. Studies have shown that many migrants to South Africa have little legal or employment protection, and hardly any rights (Crush, 2001).

The search by South Africa for scarce skills that contribute to the economic development of the country attracted many people around the world, particularly Africa, to migrate to this country for economic purposes. Among those who responded to the call for scarce skills are married men who migrate with their wives, who do not qualify to apply for a scarce skills visa (Chisale, 2014). The latter have a special label or status now: they are 'accompanying immigrants'. Consequently, they will often find themselves in an inferior position to those around them, who hold the passport of the country in which they live. Whatever the circumstances in which they travel, those who become migrants typically move in a new, unfamiliar, and less secure world (Chisale, 2014). Whether they have entered with an authorisation or whether they are undocumented, migrants will generally find their rights diminished in comparison with the citizens of their country of residence. The degree to which those rights are violated, and the degree to which migrants are excluded from legal protection or redress, varies widely from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. A legal migrant may face workplace violence or sub-standard working conditions; a lack of labour rights protection; and maybe fearful of claiming legal protection because a supervisor threatens dismissal and subsequent loss of a permit (Migration and International Human Rights Law [MIHR], 2014).

South African immigration regulations also affect wives of migrants, particularly career-wives who choose to join their husbands during migration. The regulations are gender-biased and overlook the legacies of colonialism that encouraged boys to study science and mathematics and girls to study Arts subjects. They frequently restrict the employment rights of accompanying migrants, perhaps absolutely, or in terms of the number of hours they can work. The result is that employability means different things to lead and accompanying migrants, and these differences are both gender and age-related (Kofman, 2004). South Africa has struggled in its efforts to redefine its immigration policy, which under apartheid rule was a naked instrument of racial domination, where the official

definition of an immigrant was that he or she had to be able to assimilate into the white population (Crush, 2008). Prior to 1991, there was no proper definition for an immigrant, and clearly Africans weren't recognised as immigrants, but rather as a source of cheap migrant labour; this is a legacy that the post-apartheid legislature had to build a new immigration policy upon, which is in no uncertain terms a rather challenging task (Crush, 1999).

As has been observed on many occasions, legislation that deals with issues of migration in South Africa is founded on notions of exclusion and control, as well as on the assumption that people wish to abuse the system, and those entering the country are perceived as unwilling to contribute to economic growth and the prosperity of the nation; they are assumed to come to South Africa merely to take, and not to provide anything in return (Crush, 1999). Accordingly, the idea behind the legislation is to defend 'Fortress South Africa' against 'hordes of immigrants', where police officers and officials from the Department of Home Affairs are being given excessive powers over extremely vulnerable people to the extent that bribery, extortion, and corruption do not only become possible, but indeed regular practices (Neocosmos, 2008, p. 589). What comes through from an assessment of pre- and post-apartheid legislation is the restrictionist method of managing migrants that enter South Africa. The draft 1963 Aliens Control Act, No. 95 of 1991, amended twice in the post-apartheid era in 1995 and 1996, respectively, was in itself highly exclusionary and employed draconian measures with which to deal with migrants (DHA, 2007). Through the act, many border restrictions to entry were created, and migrants were segregated according to skill level, and restrictions went as far as targeting specific nationalities, thus showing obvious racist undertones (Barthel, James, Scott & Demir, 2016). The Aliens Control Act, No. 95 of 1991 and the Immigration Act, No. 13 of 2002; although having been drafted at very different times in South Africa's history, both possess a very exclusionary voice; with the Aliens Act (1991) being seen as more



exclusionary (Barthel, James, Scott & Demir, 2016). The struggles in drafting the more recent policy have been apparent with the Immigration Act, 2002 only being taken into proper effect in 2005 (Barthel, James, Scott & Demir, 2016).

The new immigration policy was meant to come across as being less draconian and more inclusive than the previous policies dealing with immigration. However, it seems that the new policy continues with much of the same ideals of control and exclusion and numerous human rights groups have noted serious deficiencies in both the act itself and its implementation (Flynn & Cannon, 2009). The government framed immigration policy reform primarily as an issue of control and exclusion, rather than as a management and development opportunity, hampering its efforts to move beyond the structure inherited from the apartheid era; while, there has been a clear departure from the exploitative series of past acts, namely Immigrants Regulation Act 1913; The Immigration Quota Act 1930; The Aliens Act of 1937 (Crush, 2008). Studies have revealed that the South African immigration policy does not necessarily align itself with the international, regional and national instruments that promote and protect gender equality, despite being signatory thereof.

Women are often the first responders in a crisis, and whether en route or in camps, in home countries or destination countries, they play a crucial role in caring for, sustaining and rebuilding their communities (UN General Assembly, 2016). Nonetheless, migrant women's needs, priorities, and voices are often missing from policies designed to protect and assist them. Male and female migrants may be treated differently and may experience resettlement in contrary ways once in the destination country. Hence, integration outcomes may be primarily dependent on the impact of entry status and the ability to settle; patterns of assimilation into the labour market; and the impact migration may have on the status. If immigration policy determines the entry status of migrants, entry status, in turn, often determines residency and employment rights (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Against this

background, entry status is more likely to handicap female migrants than male migrants, because residency and employment rights, as well as other related entitlements, often vary by gender (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Since migrant women are often viewed by receiving states as dependents, their rights may become legally dependent, sometimes precariously so; depending on the migration and residency status of other family members; in this case, that of their spouse (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). This may affect the ability of migrant women to obtain those rights and entitlements in their own right. South Africa, a preferred destination for various categories of migrants given its attractive economy, in implementing these immigration reforms, the post-apartheid South African government has been reinforcing anti-immigration policies that have a certain impact; from human rights abuse, incitement of violence to xenophobia (Raimundo, 2009).

Post-apartheid South Africa faces a shortage of skilled and professional human resources necessitating the sourcing of expertise and professionals abroad (DHA, 2007; Department of Labour of South Africa, 2007). This, in turn, necessitated the amendment of the country's immigration regulations in 2004 and 2014, respectively, to accommodate a search for scarce skills from other countries. As a result of the 2004 and 2014 amendments, different categories of work permits, such as the quota, general, exceptional skills, and intra-company transfer were ushered in (DHA, 2007, 2014a). The introduction of these work permits attracted multitudes from across the world for economic purposes; and predominantly across Africa. However, the immigration policy is highly restrictive on issuing work permits to migrants with skills in occupations presumed to already have sufficient South African citizens to meet the country's economic and development needs (Chisale, 2015). While the invitation to apply for much-needed scarce skills seems open for all, the majority of those who meet the requirements of the critical skills permits or visas are mainly male migrants (Chisale, 2015). Thus, while the 2002 immigration Act's amended regulations in 2004 and 2014 respectively allow families to migrate together, the

family members who do not hold skills classified as scarce in South Africa are not allowed to apply for a work visa; rather, they can only apply for a relative permit or spouse permit (Chisale, 2015). If the accompanying migrants aspire to work, spouses of principal work permit holders can only apply for a general work permit after they get a job offer. The latter seldom materialises because of the administrative barriers of the permit among them; the prospective employer being obliged to comply with an array of other related requirements. For instance, the employer needs to prove that they first conducted a reasonable and thorough search for a suitably qualified and experienced citizen or permanent resident equivalent to the applicant's credentials (DHA, 2014b). A not-so-friendly process to prospective employers, hence some companies avoid engaging such individuals outright. Against such a background, despite so-called career-wives' level of education, many of them who join their husbands in South Africa end up limited to domestic spheres as housewives, where their education and capabilities are of no use to the socio-economic and development of a country that only requires their husbands' skills. Consequently, such women may venture into domestic work, waitressing, or vending, though the spouse permit prohibits any work or form of business (IOM, 2013; Lerner, Kertes, & Zilber, 2005; Rogler, 1994). Studies indicate that migrant women always look for things to do in foreign countries in order to contribute to the family's income because in their countries of origin they were used to being self-reliant and taking care of themselves and their children (Terborg-Penn, 1996, p. 218).

According to Terborg-Penn (1996, p. 218), African women always develop survival strategies and encourage self-reliance through female networks. The legacy of colonialism that pushed them into art and home economics subjects taught them to develop survival strategies that boost their resourcefulness. However, women's resourcefulness is not acknowledged by the social order. The social order constructs differences, in interpreting men as "assertive and professional and women as emotional, motherly and weak" (Kaitesi,

2014, p. 98). Studies confirm that the migration of women is more likely to be linked to the occupations of their husbands than to their own, due to the gendered social systems and structures that favour men in education and employment opportunities (Halfacree & Boyle, 1999). The patriarchal nature of labour migration has influenced some countries, particularly the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries' migration policies, to be used to protect traditional gender roles. This reflects that in Africa, women's educational achievements and occupational achievements are still undermined. A wife is referred to as a 'tied migrant' (Li & Findlay, 1999, p 143) and if skilled and professional, this so-called tied migrant is at risk of de-skilling.

Gender concerns are very much evident in the migration policy of the SADC countries and are a result of the neo-liberal agenda adopted by many governments in the 1980s. The migration policies of certain SADC countries lack an egalitarian gender position, by explicitly producing and reproducing what their colonial masters introduced (Chisale, 2015). The regulations use a gender-inclusive language, but practically undermine women's educational achievements. The problem of South African immigration regulations is the gap that exists between theory and practice (Chisale, 2015). This gap does not affect women from other countries alone, but it also affects South African women (Chisale, 2015), where educated women experience the consequences of gender norms, such as unequal division of labour, discrimination in terms of employment practices and wage discrimination (Department of Women, 2015). Colonial gender constructions are still active in the employment sector and migration sector of many African countries. Though so much has been done to fight gender inequality, immigration regulations push this process backward, by ignoring the colonial legacies of education; and "career-wives" are more greatly affected because the decision to migrate is influenced by a husband's career (Halfacree & Boyle, 1999, p. 8).

Much research on migrant workers in vulnerable employment has concentrated on the constrained position of certain groups of migrants, as categorised by immigration status (Anderson, Ruhs, Rogaly & Spencer, 2006; McKay, Jefferys, Paraksevpoulou & Keles, 2012; Valentine, 2010), nationality or sector (Kagan et al., 2011; Pai, 2008). A discourse of precarity has been used in relation to particular social groups and subjects as a defining condition or status of exceptional or unacceptable insecurity and suffering. O'Neill (2011, p. 10) highlights the way in which the UN protocol on trafficking describes a position of vulnerability, as restrictions placed on both documented and undocumented migrants can contribute to lack of freedom in severe labour exploitation (Scullion et al., 2014) as both illegal and legal migrants are immobilised in the job market by the operation of borders and dependence on employers (Garcés-Mascareñas, 2012). Clement, Mathieu, Prus and Uckardesier (2009) argue more generally that systems that exclude certain groups of migrants from the right to work or access to social security leave them vulnerable not only to precarious employment but also to precarious unemployment, where a combination of factors may push them into the informal and thus unregulated economy to find an income (Community Links and Refugee Council, 2011). As Goldring and Landolt (2011) suggest in their work in Canada, the legacy of periods spent out of work or working whilst undocumented can create tracks out of which it is difficult to shift (Lewis, Dwyer, Hodgkinson, & Waite, 2015). There are concerns regarding the welfare and rights of migrants (De Haan, 2000; International Trade Union Confederation [ITUC], 2010; Manik, 2005), where their qualifications are not immediately recognised or transferable with ease, and there is a tiresome, costly process to have their qualifications accredited by SAQA, which adds to their vulnerability, leading to abuse and exploitation in their employment (Chanda, 2010) if they get any. For those who have managed to secure some form of desirable employment, their pursuit of a decent livelihood is frequently thwarted by either poor remuneration or numerous delays in salary payments, which could precipitate

economic stress. Aspects of economic life that are potential stressors for employees and their families consists of both objective and subjective components regarding employment and income (Probst, 2005).

Studies have shown that women are economically and socially dependent on men to “sweat even blood so as to keep their patriarchal marriages” (Moyo, 2005, p. 63). Moreover, economic dependence on men forces women to concede patriarchal domination that places them in culturally-construed confinements that can foster their mistreatment. Thus, one could attribute the rise in gender-based violence cases recorded in the South African Police files to the voiceless, vulnerable and unrecognised wife or career-wife of a migrant worker who is forced by the immigration regulations to economically and socially be dependent on their spouse. The preceding discussion clearly depicts the South African immigration policy as one that enforces a masculine culture. The spousal visa ties a female spouse to her husband, who has the power vested in him by the immigration policy to control everything she does. It further reinforces male dominance in marriage, where a wife is expected to concede to her husband in every instance. Accompanying migrant spouse status can be a daunting space one finds oneself in and as such the challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face will be reviewed in the proceeding section.

## **2.7 Challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face**

A person who decides to emigrate often elicits varying responses from those who are left behind: some congratulate, encourage or envy the person; while others dissuade, oppose and criticise the person; and yet others feel bewildered, depressed or anxious (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Leaving one’s home country may be seen as a form of betrayal, rather than merely responding to new opportunities in the global market. Friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues may share this sentiment, regarding emigrants as

deserters or traitors, and may resort to emotional blackmail, such as subtle reminders of their age, vulnerability, or ill health in an effort to manipulate the prospective emigrant to stay (Harrison & Nortje, 2000).

A major challenge that may confront the immigrant is how to find a place in the new community, acquire a new social position, and regain the previously held professional status (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Moreover, the migrant may be regarded as an unwelcome intruder or invader, who deprives the natives of economic opportunities and scarce life resources, resulting in prejudice, discrimination, hostility, and xenophobia (Akhtar, 1999). Being an “outsider” or a “stranger”, who is regarded as an unequal member of society without social support, the immigrant feels small, powerless, and subordinate, and senses that he or she faces a bleak future (Nikelly, 2004, p. 185). Immigrant women by and large encounter various adversities and transitional stressors that are known to accompany changes in their cultural framework. The stressors, in turn, may induce anger, which, if expressed in a maladaptive manner, has been identified as a precursor to various detrimental physical and psychological health outcomes (Bongard & al’Absi, 2005; Thomas & Atakan, 1993; Thomas & Jefferson, 1996; Bagdasarov & Edmondson, 2013).

The undervaluing of women’s labour and restrictions placed on their right to work makes many migrant women invisible. Consequently, migrant women have been overlooked in migration studies, where their socioeconomic contributions and unique experiences have also been ignored, based on the assumption of male dominance in migration trends (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Traditionally, female migrant status has been associated with their role and status within the family as children and is defined in relationship to their male spouses as adults in many home countries (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Accordingly, migration can render women susceptible to both stress and anxiety, due to the loss of and separation from their conventional home, as well as familiar social, and cultural environments. There exists a dearth of research pertaining to gender, health,

and well-being among migrant women around the subject generally, save for established migrant explanations of in-migration (Fielding, 2012, p. 126).

In societies where migration increases contact between different countries and their inhabitants, new existential challenges and transcultural dialogue between different groups and subgroups gains importance (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Given the formative role that women play in countries of destination and their important role in formative childcare, they have a great influence on the openness of new generations to other cultures — especially considering the kind of relationships they establish with the local population and with other migrants (De Leon Siantz, 2013). However, the woman as a spouse has the most difficult role of any family member. Whereas their male counterparts have the organisation and job structure that continue from the home to the destination country, and children have the continuity and routine of school, spouses often leave behind many of the most important aspects of their lives, including friends, relatives and meaningful activities (De Leon Siantz, 2013). The challenges of adjusting successfully are therefore both different and greater for the accompanying spouse, who plays a key role during the transition in terms of her willingness to leave everything and go; inception; adjustment and performance of the principle migrant (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010). While immigrant women do interact with the host society, such interaction can be challenging, since most individuals, regardless of their reasons for immigration, social class, ethnicity, nationality, creed, or race, encounter stress during their cultural transition and adjustment. Undoubtedly, this is true for international women when it comes to their professional status, many of whom confront multiple forms of discrimination.

Since the status of women is usually linked to their role and status within the family and is defined in relationship to their male partners, migration can place women in situations, where they experience stress and anxiety due to the loss of their traditional social entourage and environment (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Their social integration in new



settings may be equally limited by their initial lack of education and occupational experience (De Leon Siantz, 2013). The higher vulnerability of women to sexual abuse and violence also places them at risk of STDs, including HIV, and a range of post-traumatic stress disorders associated with sexual violence (Carballo, Grocutt & Hadzihasanovic, 1996). Their reproductive health needs often go unnoticed and unprotected, even in well-organised refugee and migrant situations, and the insensitivity of health staff to the needs of women is often more pronounced in refugee and migrant contexts than it is in general (Carballo et al., 1996). Health monitoring of women in all migration-related situations has to be given greater priority. Similarly, much more attention at a health policy level is called for if the rights of women refugees and migrants are to be protected, and their contribution to health and social development is to be acknowledged and promoted (Carballo et al., 1996).

After migration, women, in particular, may face the risks of physical and sexual violence, social and labour market discrimination and trafficking. Women from poor environments who have experienced lack of opportunity and violence are likely to become easy targets for traffickers, who promise them a richer economic and social future abroad, whilst luring them into forced labour such as prostitution, sweat-shops, and poor domestic work (Piper, 2003; UNFPA & International Migration Policy Programme, 2004, p. 44; Vargas-Lundius, Lanly, Villarreal & Osorio, 2008). Cultural gender roles and fear of deportation prevent many immigrant women from reporting partner abuse (Quiroja & Flores-Ortiz, 2000). Sadly, this phenomenon can occur regardless of educational level, social class, creed, and or national origin. As participants in the labour market, migrant women contribute to the social and economic welfare of their families, countries of origin and destination (Anja & Spehar, 2010). Hitherto migrant women's role in migration processes and their experiences were not written about in early migration literature (Kofman, Phizacklea, Parvati & Sales, 2000; Lutz, 2008), where, in the event that women

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migrated, their migration was classed as associational, or for family reunification (Piper, 2003; Dannecker & Sieveking, 2009). The perception of women as dependents was also supported by the 1949 ILO's conceptualisation of a migrant worker's family as his wife and minor children (ILO, 1999).

Whereas historical research studies of migration show that some women travelled independently (Dannecker & Sieveking, 2009), in other cases where the reason for initial migration was associational, some women subsequently joined the labour force after migrating (Chant, 2003; Kofman, 1999; Morokvasic, 1984; Yinger, 2006). Nevertheless, men and women have unequal power, which causes differences in their migration behaviour. The migration decision itself is gendered and is affected by gender power relations, gender roles, hierarchies and resources (Biao, 2007; Radel & Schmook, 2009; United Nations, 2006). Gender determines access to information, social networks, migration opportunities and outcomes (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; De la Brière, De Janvry, Sadoulet & Lambert, 2002; Jolly & Reeves, 2005; Morrison et al., 2008; Pfeiffer & Taylor, 2007; Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005; UNGASS, 2004; UN-INSTRAW, 2007). Therefore, a gender-specific analysis of migration allows for differentiated documentation of the diverse forms of migration and experiences of men and women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003, p. 6; Jolly & Reeves, 2005; Pfeiffer, Richter, Fletcher & Taylor, 2005; 2006; United Nations, 2006). While a gender analysis has made women visible in migration streams the feminisation of migration has exposed several issues about the migration of women that need to be addressed (IOM, 2005a; Lipszyc, 2004).

A particular challenge for female migrants may be access to appropriate and affordable social, legal, and health-care services. Both short and long-term health risks challenge the wellbeing of many female migrants, who are particularly vulnerable to abuse and violence (IOM, 2005a; Lipszyc, 2004). Many migrant women and girls do not access health and social services, due to the high cost, or due to language or cultural barriers, as

they lack information about entitlements; and those who are in an irregular situation may be afraid to seek healthcare information and services, in fear of deportation. As a result, untreated minor conditions may worsen into serious illnesses. Of particular concern are the many women and girls who may fall prey to traffickers and are afraid to seek medical treatment, including reproductive health care or legal services. Consequently, female migrants are often disproportionately affected by reproductive ill-health (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

The feminisation of migration has exposed the many challenges faced by migrant women. Men relative to women have the requisite labour skills that enable them to have better-paying jobs, due to gendered access to education and gender segmented labour markets (Boyd, 2006; Deshingkar, 2004; UNAIDS, 2012, p. 3; Vargas-Lundius, Lanly, Villarreal & Osorio, 2008; Worku, 2013). Even where men and women have the same qualifications and skills, there are gender differentials in access to employment, whereas pessimistic studies, on the other hand, suggest that migration of women may, in fact, perpetuate pre-existing gender inequalities (Tolstokorova, 2010; UN, 2006; UN-INSTRAW, 2006, p. 6). Values, religions and moral codes, even modes of thinking, may also differ. They may have a different appearance than inhabitants of the host country and be forced to see, remember, question and compare the old with the new. A long, difficult and sometimes painful psychological process of questioning oneself and one's life, lifestyle and values begins, which may be experienced differently (Tolstokorova, 2010; UN, 2006; UN-INSTRAW, 2006, p. 6). This conscious or unconscious state of questioning can lead to positive development and change, and integration of the two worlds. However, if the worlds cannot be combined, this can lead to a conflict and incongruity ridden identity. Since the accompanying migrants neither belong in the host nor home country, they may suffer social exclusion, which according to Timotijevic & Breakwell (2000) implies the

shutting out of one person by another, leading to constrained or denial of access to both material and social space.

Labelling and victimhood labels ascribed to migrants result not only in describing them but also in creating identities that hosts find convenient and appropriate (Hetherington, 2003). Thus, labelling helps in creating and re-creating a world that confirms and supports a particular way of thinking and imagining of the “self” and the “other” (Zetter, 2007). At the same time, the host population projects itself as the opposite of the negative “other”, (the migrant) and through the juxtaposition of the bad other and the good self, the host population appears to be the victim of the migration process. Claims of victimhood are in turn used in justifying any negative treatment of migrants (Crush, 1999, Maharaj & Rajkumar, 1997). Collective victimhood then appears as an ‘organising metaphor’ around which supposed victims organise and justify their actions (Confino, 2005, pp. 49-50; Fanon, 1967; Mamdani, 2001). A 1998 Human Rights Watch report states that a significant number of South Africans regard strangers, especially those from non- SADC countries – more specifically, those from Francophone and West Africa – as a threat (Crush, 2001, p. 22; Wagner, 2002, p. 17). Moreover, Crush (2001, pp 6, 22) and Wagner (2002, p. 14) remark that migrants express disappointment, anger, and indignation about their treatment by South Africans, particularly Black South Africans. Wagner (2002, p. 14) further argues that ‘disappointment’ is a “residual effect of the disjuncture between the imagination... and lived social relations”. However, South Africa seems to present a unique situation in the sense that as a group or individually, mobile skilled or professional Africans defy official migration categories that may lead to hostility and tension among the receiving population creating a situation where strangers are described in terms of ‘ethnicity’ or ‘race’. In turn, this may lead to xenophobia, racism, stereotyping and intolerance (Castles & Miller, 1998, p. 10; United Nations, 2001, p. 5; Wagner, 2002, p. 12). From the foregoing discussion, accompanying migrant status can

be burdensome, and could lead to both stress and dejection. However, humans have always been resourceful, and they almost always make plans to come out of situations stronger. Thus, the following section discusses literature pertaining to coping strategies accompanying migrant spouses can employ to survive.

## **2.8 Strategies deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status**

Until the 1980s, migration literature was dominated by economics and labour market outcomes (Sam & Berry, 2006; Timur, 2000). According to Winnicott (1989), the ability to separate from and let go of what is familiar is the most important characteristic of emotional maturity, and developing a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for becoming integrated into a new country, as well as for maintaining a sense of identity. The person who is able to tolerate being alone is in a better position to deal with the losses of emigration and being regarded as an outsider during the early stages of settling into a new environment (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Coping skills include communication and social skills, coping styles, problem-solving ability, psychological hardiness, self-esteem and perceived control over one's life (Abbott, 1997). Other intervening factors are social resources, such as family, the ethnic community, support groups and access to services (Albee, 1997). Some may sentimentally seek out the foods of their own country in the international section of supermarkets, while others may take refuge in familiar food to ease anxiety, eat with co-nationals as a type of memory rite, or eat compulsively in private in an attempt to fill the void of what has been lost (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). In the immediate post-migration period, dissociative mechanisms or splitting, such as idealising the host society and devaluing the home country, or vice versa, provide temporary protection against intolerable emotions and hopelessness in the face of overwhelming loss (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Existing physical health problems, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse or other psychopathology pose a risk for successful adaptation, while language proficiency (Johnson, 2007), optimism, subjective wellbeing, life satisfaction (Davydov, Stewart, Ritchie & Chaudieue, 2010) interpersonal trust (Nesdale et al., as cited in Kristal-Andersson, 2000), and an existential, evaluative worldview (Koltko-Rivera, 2004) promote a positive settlement experience in the host society. Post-migration factors, such as social support, interaction with, and the attitude of the receiving society can modulate immigrants' level of distress (Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999). If there is a marked difference between the physical characteristics and body image of the immigrant and that of the majority of the population in the adoptive country, acceptance by the host society is slower and can lead to discrimination and a sense of inferiority and shame for the immigrant (Akhtar, 1999).

Allowing themselves to mourn enables immigrants to slowly start incorporating elements of the new culture, and the interface between the inner and outer worlds becomes more permeable (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). A migrant individual's reaction to the migration-related changes is largely determined by personal, social, cultural, and economic resources. Immigrants use an identity reconstruction process, which depends on the way they define their identity, in an attempt to re-establish continuity in their self-identity narrative (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). Maintaining a sense of self-control despite social influences and restrictions can help the person to maintain self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). Being part of a minority group can enhance the migrant's perception of distinctiveness, but the way people derive their sense of distinctiveness will depend on the contents and subjective meaning that an identity category holds for an individual, and it may be developmentally, culturally, contextually and historically specific (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). To survive the assault on their identity, migrants must re-invent themselves, nevertheless, and Ward and Styles (2007)

caution that the residual emotional tether to the human and nonhuman elements of the homeland will never be completely severed. During this process of identity reconceptualisation, threats to the identity are partially managed, but not eliminated, and many threats to the viability of the identity become chronic (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000).

Sayad (2002) believes that the emigrant is destined to continue being present, even when he is absent, and never being totally present where he is physically present. In the immigrant's host country, the country of origin and cultural background of the emigrant are often discounted as superfluous cultural baggage (Oboler, 2006). Oboler (2006) posits that social status and acceptance depend on the extent to which the emigrant's past can be "forgiven and forgotten" (p. 123), and swept under the carpet, coupled with the immigrant's ability to be perceived as an "empty slate" (p. 122) in the new society. In the societal hierarchy, immigrants are often assigned to a labour-market position of dispensable foreigners without a relevant or valid past, with the result that their presence and future in the host society become a disrupted or disjointed narrative. There is a tendency to: view cultural differences as "quaint" or "fascinating" (Gonsalves, 1992, p. 384); as well as to ignore frustrations and to cling to the customs of the country of origin as a protective shield against the dissonance that results from a mismatch between their culture-bound expectations and the new environment, which may threaten an immigrant's sense of reality (Sluzki, 1979). Positive adjustment is made through culture learning and culture-relinquishing at a personal and social level, while psychological adaptation involves responding to their status by making relatively stable psychological changes (Berry, 2006). The constructive aspects of migration experience and migrant's positive adjustment and resilience in the host countries have started to be the focus of research (Abuzahra, 2004; Kramer & Bala, 2004).

While limited host language skills, safety and security concerns, in addition to experiences of loss of relationships, support networks, status, familiar environment

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present as challenges, endeavouring towards developing the type of resilience that manifests in attainment of power and control in response to changes could buffer migrants against those challenges, so too would striving towards psychological empowerment, negotiating changes, finding opportunities, and ultimately achieving one's goals (Berry, 2006b; Fitzsimons & Fuller, 2002). Acquisition of skills that may not have been accomplished in a different setting bringing to the fore resilient reintegration, which according to Richardson (2002), is "a coping mechanism that results in growth, knowledge and self- understanding, and increased strength of resilient qualities" (p. 310). Research has indicated that religious involvement improves life satisfaction, by lowering psychological distress, and decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety, in addition to lessening the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse and dependence, and other high-risk behaviours (Aranda, 2008). Religion is also believed to establish a supportive network and provide opportunities for social interaction that can offer sources of comfort and affirmation as spiritual and religious groups assist the settlement of new migrants by providing opportunities for religious practice and interaction with more established residents, who can link them to various social networks that can provide guidance and practical assistance, such as employment and housing, as well as health services (Aranda, 2008; Hagan & Ebaugh, 2003). However, integration into host societies has its fair share of challenges, given the perceptions of migrants of some individuals.

Sociocultural adaptation relies on social skills, and refers to the ability to interact effectively with the host society to fit into the new culture, and to manage daily problems relating to family life, work, and school; hence developing a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health and well-being, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context, is essential (Berry, 1997). Stressful circumstances deplete a person's resource pool, which makes it more difficult to manage additional stressors that tax his or her resources (Krohne, 2001). Moreover, stress can have an



adverse effect on health, owing to changes in physiological processes; it can worsen existing medical conditions; increase the likelihood of maladaptive behaviours and lifestyle choices and subjective symptomatology; and result in either overuse or underuse of the healthcare system (Farley, Galves, Dickinson, & Diaz Perez, 2005). Resources for coping with stress include economic adaptation, that is, the degree to which satisfying and gainful work is obtained; and physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual or philosophical domains, all of which are stress-coping mechanisms that can modify the impact that stress has on health, and are defined as deliberate and conscious cognitive, emotional and behavioural efforts to control the stress response and adapt to stressful conditions (Aycan & Berry, 1997; Kamy, 1997; Vogel & Romano, as cited in Farley et al., 2005).

Black (1997) suggests that personality factors, such as social orientation, willingness to communicate, collaborative conflict resolution and the creation of stability zones can affect adjustment. Kasic, Mannetti, and Sam (2006) found that self-monitoring, which is regarded as a personality trait, facilitated the sociocultural and psychological adaptation of immigrants. Persons high in self-monitoring are sensitive to social cues, which allow them to interpret social situations, modify their behaviour to suit the demands of the context, and to learn new behaviour (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). They are more likely to initiate conversations with strangers to establish interpersonal relationships, and to obtain information to increase their knowledge and behavioural repertoire (Kasic, Mannetti, & Sam, 2006). Coping strategies and styles may also include defence mechanisms, such as repression and intellectualisation (Krohne, 2001). According to Lazarus and Folkman, as cited in Walsh (2002), emotion-focused or problem-focused coping is another microanalytic state approach, where the choice of coping option depends on the context at a particular time, in addition to identifying specific coping strategies, such as distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escape-avoidance, planned problem-solving, positive reappraisal and

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confrontive coping-being in a state of coping when they try to reduce the impact of their loss and suffering; taking action, facing responsibilities and dealing with difficulties and problems calmly and effectively.

Currently, coping responses can be divided into the following four categories: active coping (problem-focused or task-based); avoidance-based coping (denial, self-distraction or substance abuse); emotion-focused coping; and social or instrumental support (Farley et al., 2005). The particular strategy used may depend on the personal relevance and perceived level of control over a stressor, properties of a stressor, such as novelty, duration, and predictability, as well as self-attributions, such as causality (Bennett, Rigby & Boshoff, 1997). The person who uses problem-focused strategies endeavour to change the environment or his or her own behaviour, while those who choose emotion-focused strategies, such as distancing, change the personal meaning of the event without altering the actual conditions (Lazarus, as cited in Donnelly, 2002). According to Farley et al. (2005), active coping styles, emphasising social support and cognitive and emotional management strategies, such as humour, acceptance and resignation, religion and positive reframing, are associated with lower perceived stress and better health outcomes among Mexican immigrants. Beiser and Edwards (1994) found that for the refugees in their study, focusing their energies on the present, rather than ruminating on the past, or building expectations of the future, provided a buffer against stress, assisted postmigration adaptation and lessened the risk of depression. Avoidant coping, such as denial, substance abuse, behavioural disengagement, self-distraction and self-blame, and emotion-focused coping, have been associated with higher levels of perceived stress, and poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Farley et al., 2005). Migrants generally view themselves as courageous, creative, resourceful, strong and resilient. Hence, Firkin, Dupuis & Meares (2004) conclude that you have to be "hard-nosed" (p. 24) and "thick-skinned" (p. 24), and have to remain focused and confident, obtain support, persevere,

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and find a way to make things work (p. 26). Immigration can be extremely stressful, and the intensity of stress and the effectiveness of coping mechanisms affect both physical and psychological well-being (Farley et al., 2005). The psychological impact of social stress, such as depression due to perceived discrimination, can be significantly mediated by personal coping behaviours (Noh & Kaspar, 2003).

Coping efficacy can also be determined by the nature of the stressor, personal resources, cultural influences, and social contexts (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Immigrants from different cultural, ethnic and national backgrounds may thus face different stressors, and the perceived stress, with varying coping strategies and health-related quality of life between groups (Farley et al., 2005). Members of collectivistic cultures with strong attachments to traditional ethnic values and group identification tend to prefer passive, emotion-focused coping approaches, and receiving social support from members of their ethnic community may provide a buffer against emotional distress (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). However, recurrent use of emotion-focused coping, such as passive acceptance and emotional distraction, may intensify the mental health impact of perceived discrimination, particularly in those who lack sufficient cultural community support (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Immigrants from more individualistic societies or better-aculturated individuals generally find problem-focused coping styles – such as confrontation or taking formal action – to be more effective in reducing the influence of discrimination-related stressors (Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Noh and Kaspar (2003) suggest that when empowered with sufficient social resources, members of diverse ethnic or racial minority groups are more likely to confront discrimination, irrespective of their cultural background, but that interventions that do not involve changes to their social contexts are unlikely to be successful.

Emotional intelligence as a coping mechanism refers to the ability to perceive, assimilate, understand and manage one's own emotions, as well those of others; and is related to sociocultural adjustment (Jhutti, 2007). Tacit knowledge, which constitutes a

major part of practical intelligence, is not explicitly taught or verbalised, but is necessary for individuals to successfully manage themselves and others, to solve problems and make decisions, as well as to adapt to novel environments (Wagner & Sternberg, 1997). Individual differences in practical intelligence and tacit knowledge determine the extent to which immigrants can take full advantage of available opportunities for successful adaptation and career success in a new country (Nevo & Chawarski, 1997). Seeking help from other people, social integration, the ability to adjust to new situations, willingness to compromise, and patience, are significant indices for immigration success (Nevo & Chawarski, 1997). Similarly, learning the new language prior to immigration (Scott & Scott, as cited in Nevo & Chawarski, 1997), acquiring information about occupational conditions in the new country prior to immigration, and appropriate social activity correlates positively with successful adaptation after immigration (Nevo & Chawarski, 1997). The Chinese word for crisis consists of two symbols, namely “danger” and “opportunity” (Walsh, 1996, p. 7). Likewise, many individuals believe that something positive can result from adversity, and families have reported that weathering a crisis brought them closer, strengthening their relationships (Stinnett et al., as cited in Walsh, 1996). Various protective resources modify and moderate the relationship between stressors and psychological outcomes, such as a sense of coherence, which is the belief that the world is comprehensible, manageable, and meaningful (Antonovsky, 1979; Hawley & DeHaan, 1996), high self-esteem and self-efficacy (Rutter, 1987), optimism (Scheier & Carver, 1985), competence (Kobasa, 1996), resilience (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007) and hardiness (Kobasa, 1979). Genetic, biological, psychological, family, community, social and environmental processes may interact in an adaptive trade-off between tolerance and sensitivity to stress (Cameron, Ungar & Liebenberg, 2007).

Resilience may be an innate trait and may develop through individual adaptation to adversity and disruption or through external influences, such as the quality of perceived

social support or public health services (Davydov et al., 2010). The following three approaches to resilience have been suggested: harm-reduction factors, such as positive emotions that can mitigate risk factors or accelerate recovery; protective factors, such as stress management, which decrease the probability of pathology; and mental health promotion factors that actively enhance psychological well-being (Hoge et al., 2004; Goodman, Patel & Leon, 2010). Resiliency mechanisms may offer protection or promote mental wellbeing. These include cognitive flexibility, such as a positive explanatory style, reappraisal and acceptance; social attachment and social behaviours, such as altruism; a positive self-concept and effective self-regulation of emotions; positive emotions such as optimism and humour; the capacity to convert traumatic helplessness into learnt helpfulness; existential meaning through religion or spirituality; social support, including positive role models; an active coping style, such as confronting a stressor; stress inoculation and the capacity to recover from negative events; and the capacity to accommodate new trauma-related information positively (Davydov, et al, 2010). A resilience approach to the challenges of migration involves a shift in focus from a deficit model (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996), where the focus is on the pathology of distressed and traumatised individuals and families, to that of a strength-based, regenerative model, where conflict and change are viewed as an integral part of life (Falicov, as cited in Walsh, 1996); and where competencies and resources are mobilised to meet challenges during different developmental stages (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007). Walsh (1996, p. 7) emphasises the fact that resilience does not imply rugged invulnerability, and “breezing through” a crisis unmoved and unscathed, but is forged by weathering the storms of adversity and integrating this into the tapestry of individual and family identity and moving forward with their lives. Resilient individuals have a repertoire of coping skills to manage or transform stressful situations, to “bounce back” (Walsh, 1996, p. 7) after adversity, and to emerge from the experience scarred, but strengthened, with the capacity to “work well,

play well, and love well" (Werner & Smith, as cited in Walsh, 1996, pp. 2-3). They endure and thrive, and develop long-term patterns of mastery and competence (Hawley & DeHaan, 1996). Since they view change as inevitable, challenging and manageable, they are less likely to perceive situations as stressful (Walsh, 1996).

Psychological hardiness is another coping strategy associated with an internal sense of control over the outcome of life events and hardships; involvement and commitment to life's activities; as well as viewing change as a challenge instead of a threat (Kobasa, as cited in Walsh, 1996). The belief of hardy individuals that they can control or influence what happens to them enhances their coping skills, as well as their sense of mastery and self-efficacy, which leads to an active orientation to adjustment and managing stressful situations, because these life events are interpreted in the context of a meaningful life plan (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007). Involvement in the activities of daily life minimises feelings of alienation and viewing life as a challenge allows exploration of the new environment and provides sources of support (Beiser & Edwards, 1994). Hardiness and resilience encourage the taking of calculated risks, tolerance in uncertainty, confidence about one's ability to master adversity, adopting a long-term perspective, and forward planning (Beiser & Edwards, 1994). The availability of community resources, social networks, religious and other group affiliations, and a family's ability to utilise them are also essential for family resilience because these offer financial or practical assistance, social support, and a sense of connectedness. Thus, resilience can therefore also be forged by friends and neighbours in the social environment (Walsh, 1996). Kanya (1997) found spiritual well-being for African immigrants in the United States of America, was significantly related to hardiness, self-esteem, and overall coping resources, as well as lower stress levels; a finding that supports literature suggesting that religious beliefs constitute a vital coping resource for immigrants.

According to Cordero-Guzmán (2005), community-based, non-profit organisations play a vital role in the social, cultural, political and economic adaptation and integration of immigrants during all phases of the immigration process, as they often fill key service gaps and play a vital role in a number of areas of the migration process, for example: recruiting immigrants and assisting with the immigration process; the maintenance of ties and connections to communities in the countries of origin; the development, management and maintenance of networks in the host society; the orientation and provision of social services and programmes to immigrant children and families to assist with adaptation and integration; helping to maintain customs, traditions and norms of the countries of origin; building community resources in terms of knowledge, services and information; articulating community needs and representation in politics and policymaking; and public education and information regarding immigrant. They may also render specific services for particular subgroups in migrant communities, such as children and youth, senior citizens, women, and gay and lesbian clients (Cordero-Guzmán, 2005). A key function of mental health and social services is to educate and help immigrants and refugees from diverse cultures to understand the cultural norms and practices of their new environment, as well as to educate mainstream providers about immigrants' traditional cultural practices (Pumariiega, Rothe & Pumariiega, 2005) involvement. Community-based organisations also play a vital role in assisting the socioeconomic adaptation and incorporation of immigrants by providing a variety of social services and community programmes advising immigrants about the benefits they for which they are eligible, providing assistance with establishing small business educational services, such as English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), workforce training and employment, food and nutrition services, housing services, day-care services, and transportation assistance (Cordero-Guzmán, 2005). Work including volunteer work at community-based organisations may also allow people to feel that they have a place in society, where being allowed to use their creative

abilities has restorative benefits in terms of the losses of migration (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Some countries that are interested in attracting immigrants, and are aware of the importance of meeting their needs, make concerted efforts to create positive, welcoming conditions (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Pseudo-communities, as well as sponsors and hosts, can be helpful in welcoming newcomers, but require assistance to be effective in bridging cultural gaps (Ritsner & Ponizovsky, 1999). To enable families to manage stressful situations, support efforts ought to involve the family, support networks, and larger systems, in order to build the community connections that most families have lost. Multi-family psycho-educational and self-help groups are particularly appropriate to promoting family resilience, as they can provide useful information, coping strategies and social support for families in crisis (Walsh, 1996). Social support groups can also enrich life by validating shared feelings and reaffirming mutual experiences (Nikelly, 2004). Individuals who migrate at an advanced age can achieve a sense of integrity and coherence by retrospectively reviewing their psychosocial development, and can make sense of their new existence by looking at what they have accomplished, instead of longing for what is forever lost, and hence create closure during their life spans (Nikelly, 2004). Reminiscing and recounting their life stories in group sessions could provide the benefit of shared recollections, the realisations that they are not alone in their feelings of loss and dislocation, and gaining the strength and hope that social integration is achievable later on in life (Nikelly, 2004, p. 196). Ethnic communities provide vital social support because they offer a means of maintaining cultural heritage and building bridges with the multicultural environment of the host society (Akhtar, 1999, p. 151). These communities can provide a framework by means of which to receive newcomers and facilitate adaptation by promoting integration through language training and hosting programmes, support heritage language programmes, and the celebration of cultural



diversity in communities and schools (Beiser & Edwards, 1994). Immigrant groups, associations, and clubs concerned with promoting social, economic and political ties through connections and activities between immigrants from particular countries or regions of origin, may be organised around community events, cultural heritage programmes, community economic development, and conflict resolution (Cordero-Guzmán, 2005).

As immigrants are often career-oriented and have left their home countries with aspirations of improved economic well-being, enhanced opportunities or greater political freedom (Ogbu, 1990), the psychological process of adjusting to new social, cultural and political conditions can lead to severe frustration if their expectations are not fulfilled (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Involvement in mentoring programmes or running community organisations may afford migrants opportunities to express their need to influence others and be recognised by society (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Immigration is a disruptive experience that can generate a crisis of meaning, which threatens the identity and personal integration, but the tension that results from this challenge can provide the impetus for reconstruction or reorganisation of a person's life story (Walsh, 1996). Psychotherapy can be a useful tool to explore narratives of adversity and resilience that can help the person maintain a sense of coherence and integrity (Walsh, 1996). Migration poses a critical developmental challenge, owing to a "profound ecological disruption and uprooting of meanings" (Walsh, 1996, p. 6). The cumulative effect of multiple stressors, losses and dislocations can overwhelm coping efforts and contribute to family violence, fragmentation, or disintegration (Walsh, 1996, p. 6). A critical event or disruptive transition, according to Reiss (1981), can cause a major shift in a family's belief system, which has an impact on their immediate reorganisation and long-term adaptation.

## 2.9 Conclusion

Based on the literature reviewed, migration is a complex phenomenon, that is undertaken by various people for various reasons at different life stages, and the decision to migrate rests on several aspects of life. In some instances, it means trade-offs, while in others, it could be equated to a struggle against all odds, having to recover afterwards. Whichever way one takes it, being repositioned from what you are used to always calls for adjustments, hence the need to cope. This section examined how migrants cope with being in a foreign land and having a new identity, namely that of being an immigrant. While several factors influence the decision to move, economic, historical, political and sociocultural factors are amongst the major drivers of migration. International migration is mostly driven by economic factors, and it requires quite some adjustment on the part of the immigrants, as they start a completely different life to what they are used to. Every aspect of their lives changes, and this new life in a foreign land could be equated to rebirth, where they even have to learn a new language, apart from having to adapt to a totally new lifestyle. The aim of this study is to examine the lived experiences of females from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses to South Africa. Against that background, literature pertaining to migration, in general, was reviewed. This was followed by a review of the factors that influence migration, the effect of migration, migration experiences and challenges, in addition to migration in the face of the legislation. The chapter was wrapped up with a close look at the coping strategies migrants employ to survive the rugged migration journey, to come out stronger on the other side. The proceeding chapter will explore the epistemology underpinning the accompanying spouse status phenomenon and its applicability to different accompanying spouse contexts and experiences under study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EPISTEMOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

Accompanying spouses are amongst the many categories of people who cross international boundaries and live abroad; conversely, they are seldom included in immigration literature that concentrates on low-income, low-skilled workers moving to post-industrialised countries; raising questions as to how their experiences ought to be conceptualised. The purpose of this study is to tell the story of female accompanying migrant spouses from other African countries in South Africa, and how accompanying migrant status affects their social and emotional well-being. This research is approached from a social constructivist epistemological perspective, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the personal perceptions and meaning attributions made by the individual participants. A constructivist model is particularly relevant to this study, where the experience of accompanying immigrants is told from women's own perspective or view. The reality of participants holding back their stories come out in their own way of expression: stories told through the conversation with the researcher. The focus is more on the content, or description, of each participant. Social constructionism, as a stance for this study, will be discussed in detail. Nonetheless, before the discussion ensues, the definition of epistemology will be explored. This will be followed by a brief discussion of both previous and emergent epistemologies, such as modernism and post-modernism.

#### **3.2 Epistemology**

The concept of epistemology is believed to originally be a philosophical notion that referred to a set of analytical and critical techniques that defined boundaries for the process of knowing; the study of the necessary limits and other characteristics of the process of knowing, thinking, and deciding; and is derived from two Greek words,

'epistème' meaning knowledge, and 'logos' meaning reasoning (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Botha, 1988; Vorster, 2003). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) posit that epistemology asks how one knows the world, what the relationship between the inquirer and the known is and that every epistemology, which implies an ethical or moral stance towards the world, and the self of the researcher. Postmodernists prefer to view the self as a medium for the social world (Kvale, 1997). The postmodernists prefer to say: "We communicate, therefore I am", as opposed to the Cartesian notion "I think, therefore I am" (Gergen, 1985, p. 268). The self in postmodern theory is, accordingly, regarded in terms of an ongoing process as "continually constructed and reconstructed in particular relationships over time" (Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 78). Thus, epistemology, according to Auerwald (1985, p. 1), is the study or theory of nature and the grounds of knowledge, or the theory of knowledge, the latter comprising information and its abstract expression in spoken or written words, based on thinking about thinking. Put differently, epistemology refers to the study of how we know what we know.

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) epistemology "specifies the nature of the relationship between the [knower] and what can be known" (p.6). It focuses on the assumptions that underlie a particular framework and on whether the knowledge claims made by the theory are logically consistent with its own assumptions (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). In other words, one could refer to epistemology as being a belief system that has been internalised and allows one to construct a personal reality. Our personal theories, according to Becvar and Becvar (1996), are informed within a social context, through the interchange of ideas. For the purposes of this study, therefore, epistemology is understood to be the framework that will inform the researcher's knowing, reality, and decisions. A postmodern epistemological stance, in particular, social constructionism, informs the approach taken in this study.

### **3.3 Modernism**

Modernist epistemology, also known as Newtonian epistemology, rests on the belief that knowledge can be obtained objectively and known universally, namely that scientific research is an objective, logical and empirical activity, and scientists should adhere to specific logical and empirical procedures (Lyddon & Weill, 1997; Lynch, 1997; Neuman, 1999). It is within this modernistic epistemology that scientists and philosophers such as Aristotle, Descartes and Newton shared a form of thinking in which they believed there may be a true nature of things out there; a true reality that ought to be investigated and understood (Fourie, 1998). Modernism supports the notion that we are surrounded by a stable and unchanging reality, and that as researchers, we can objectively come to know and measure this reality by employing scientific research strategies that control and manipulate variables found in this reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Moreover, it assumes that the world is controllable, understandable and predictable and that there can only be one truth, one reality, which can be generalised across contexts (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). In their pursuit of understanding and ultimately controlling reality, modernistic thinkers ascribe to three fundamental beliefs, namely: linear causality, reductionism, and neutral objectivity (Fourie, 1998).

#### **3.3.1 Linear causality**

The assumption underlying modernist thinking implies cause and effect, whereby one event is believed to cause another, and holds that a particular 'new behaviour' or outside 'correction' (or cause) will result in a predictable outcome (or effect) (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Mouton & Marias, 1990). In other words, there is a belief that one part or element causes the other, implying that should one be able to answer the question, that of why, then they will be able to solve the prevailing problem (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). Nevertheless, in order to respond to the question of why, one often needs

to trace the sequences of past events, which could lead to a better understanding of particular outcomes in the present.

### **3.3.2 Reductionism**

According to Efran, Lukens, & Lukens (1990)

Reductionistic explanations attempt to condense and encapsulate still greater living patterns. In the mental health field, such condensations erroneously amplify the determinative importance of particular incidents over the everyday drift, yielding a false picture. In life as it is lived, all successive moments "count" – not just the special few that are embroidered into our narrative tapestry (p. 92).

This assumption points to the Newtonian notion that reality is separate from us, and can be reduced to its smallest components, to uncover the laws according to which the world operates. This means that an observed object or phenomenon needs to be broken up into its constituent parts in order to measure, understand and rebuild it (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Schwartzman & Simon, 1998). In other words, an object or phenomenon can be observed objectively by means of experimentation, and the results of these observations can thus be measured quantitatively (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Mouton & Marias, 1990).

The aim of reductionism, therefore is to ultimately understand the whole (Schwartzman & Simon, 1998) and to "uncover the laws according to which the world operates" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 4) based on the assumption that this procedure will lead one (researchers and/or observers of phenomena) to those absolute truths about the reality that needs to be discovered (Becvar & Becvar, 2000). Once this reality is discovered, one is able to make certain conclusions and predictions about human

behaviour, and ultimately will be able to gain total control and bring about change in a particular direction. To illustrate the above, if, for instance, anxiety is understood to be related to multiple conflicts within a person at numerous developmental levels (Sadock & Sadock, 2003, p. 593), it can be broken up into various conflicts, and traced back to the different developmental stages of a person's past. Following the identification of the constituent parts, it is therefore believed that researchers can then conclude that particular events and sequences of events (such as loss of a parent at a young age or an abusive parent), may lead to particular inner conflicts, which will again lead to anxious feelings and corresponding behaviours. Hence, once anxiety has been understood in those contexts, an intervention can then be instituted to effect change in a particular direction. In different studies, for instance, it has been observed that impairments to attention and behaviour in children with ADHD frequently manifest only in certain situations (usually school); whereas on the contrary, when such children are immersed in a stimulating activity, they are virtually indistinguishable from their undiagnosed peers (Du Plessis & Strydom, 1999; Rafalovich, 2005; Reid, 1996). One can see the importance of local context then since the deviant behaviour acts as a signal of "discordance" in the system in which it is rooted (Kugelmass, 1987, p. 19).

### **3.3.3 Neutral objectivity**

The assumption of neutral objectivity refers to the belief that there is an absolute, objective reality that exists out there, which can be objectively observed and analysed by an outside observer, without the observer influencing it, and that one can and should observe phenomena objectively (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). This denotes the observer stands detached from that which is being observed or researched and does not exercise any influence over it whatsoever; there is an objective stance to observation and/or research that is believed to lead the observer to finding or seeing, that which is

believed to be the ultimate truth (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Fourie, 1998). Basically, the neutral objectivity belief holds that a "single, stable and knowable reality" does exist (Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 76).

Since modernism was considered the most 'scientific' and accepted approach to conducting research, researchers in the human sciences attempted to incorporate the principles of logical and empirical methods into their work (Doan, 1997). Over time, however, it became apparent that people differed in their views of what the ultimate reality and truth is, and that many feasible interpretations could be arrived at, all of which were attained through empirical scientific investigation methods and empirical observation (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Doan, 1997; Rapmund, 2005). Researchers were confronted with multiple truths, all of which had a sufficient scientific basis for being accepted as the truth (Doan, 1997). Given the impression that modernism tends to stick to the notion of a single truth, postmodernism appears to have been a more viable method of inquiry for psychology. This will be discussed briefly in the proceeding section.

### **3.4 Postmodernism**

Postmodernity came about at the height of arguments pertaining to the perception that knowledge could systematically be acquired, and that the idea of truth was a matter of perspective, based on the impression that perspectives are the result of a social interchange (Kvale, 1992). Thus, postmodernism, according to Gergen (1985), became the avenue through which the engagement of persons and their ideas within a context, that is, a person being a participant in the construction of meanings, would provide an alternative idea or perspective. Postmodern views may be characterised by a loss of belief in an objective world, and the notion of the nonexistence of a single true reality, while the focus is placed on the social and linguistic construction of a reality that is mindful of different perspectives. From a postmodernist perspective the implication could be that



what is understood to be reality is not a precise impression of what is out there, but rather, is socially or communally constructed, and therefore subjective. Similarly, the conceptualisation of reality as a multiverse of meanings created in dynamic social exchange introduces one to some multiple separate universes that include a diversity of meanings of the world. Within this framework, there are no 'real' external entities, only communicating and languaging individuals, where reality is subjective (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Thus, through the interactive process of language, people connect and construct their shared views of truth. Language is relevant, and the construction of specific aspects of reality relies on its social construction and linguistic elements, where the negotiation of meaning is defined within a context; and individuals may have different interpretations or definitions of a phenomenon, and may not necessarily share the same truth (Doan, 1997). While postmodernism claims that all stories are equally valid and coherent, one needs to be wary of a truth that claims to be the only truth, as postmodernity is much more complex, where there is a difference between saying no singular perspective is sufficient to stand on its own and saying that all perspectives are valid (Doan, 1997).

Postmodernism is an expansive term used for a range of different approaches; believed to have emerged as an alternative form of inquiry among theoreticians and scholars across disciplines, who are exploring alternative conceptions and descriptions in the midst of questioning the supposed certainty, the metanarrative, and the methods and practices of modernism in traditional science, literature, history, art and the human sciences (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Doan, 1997; Sey, 2006; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). It is based on the premise that no one true reality exists and that realities that people inhabit – rather than what they are 'given' – are instead socially constituted, and thus may vary quite dramatically across cultures (or subcultures), time and context (Neimeyer, 2001). While postmodernists acknowledge the existence of multiple realities, they also believe that all realities are not equally valid, and feel strongly that some

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accounts of reality are not respectful of difference, gender, ethnicity, race, or religion (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Doan, 1997). Moreover, the notion that believing is seeing implies a belief that reality is created, as opposed to being discovered, and holds our language and the various meanings around phenomena to be fundamental (Becvar & Becvar, 2000).

The postmodernist assumes that there are many truths created within the context of a person's social and historical background, as well as their experiences. Berger and Luckman (1976) state that "among the multiple realities, there is one that presents itself as the reality par excellence - the reality of everyday life (which) always appears as a zone of lucidity behind which there is a background of darkness" (p. 153). There doesn't seem to exist a single, true story or reality; instead we share the knowledge we have with other people, which means that our reality of everyday life is shared. Thus, with the research participants here, several realities are at play in their lives, and sharing their life stories in this study could mean sharing their knowledge with the researcher. However, postmodernism questions persons previously known as knowledgeable, along with their notions of knowledge; their assumptions about reality, knowledge, and truth that have dominated the modern era and were once unquestionable (Becvar & Becvar, 2000; Lyddon & Weill, 1997). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) we live and create reality based on our own "unique combinations of heredity, experiences, and perceptions", where each person's reality is valid, and therefore, we must admit that we "live in a multi-verse of many equally valid observer-dependent realities" (p. 85).

Post-modernism infers a similar experience, bringing about numerous varied accounts, descriptions, as well as meanings, where the explanation or interpretation thereof is based on our subjective experience (Lynch, 1997). Post-modernism, therefore, refutes the belief in an objective world, then rejects the notion that knowledge can be generalized; that is, it is universal and objective (Lynch, 1997; Neuman, 1999). Post-

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modernists furthermore believe that when people are treated with the kind of objectivity endorsed by the modernist perspective, they are regarded as objects, which dehumanises their experiences and ignores the specific meanings of the individual person (Becvar & Becvar, 2006). Within the postmodern paradigm, both the research participant and the researcher are regarded as being subjectively involved in the process of searching for meaning and obtaining a greater understanding of experiences (Doan, 1997). In other words, post-modernism seeks to demystify the social world through infiltrating its surface appearances, to reveal its internal hidden structure, while focusing on the interrelationship of context, linguistic and social constructions of reality, and the self in a network of relations (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Neuman, 1999). Put slightly differently, post-modern researchers work from a backdrop of discovery, where the subjective and social worlds of scientists as humans, with their own particular pasts, values, and beliefs, are taken into account and attempt to gain insight into the interrelationships of individuals and their contexts by 'deconstructing' established notions, beliefs, and experiences and reconstructing them in a new way; all of which is done in the context of meaningful conversation, where the researcher and research participant share their understanding of experiences and knowledge (Rapmund, 2005; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Post-modern research is further intended to inspire others, to evoke a response, and to arouse curiosity (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Its value lies in telling one's story, that may stimulate experiences within its readers, or those that encounter it, thereby growing and building practical knowledge that is socially useful (Neuman, 1999).

### **3.4.1 The role of Language**

As mentioned earlier, an epistemology guides the researcher in terms of the nature of their relationship with others, and in terms of what can be known and understood. It is therefore imperative to have a sound epistemological understanding of one's own role in

the research process, both when conducting research, as well as when formulating a research design. Against a postmodernist background, this study endeavours to shed light on the construction of meanings around accompanying spouse status, through narrative experiences as described by the participants interviewed, as postmodernism invites other, often marginalised voices to be heard alongside those of the dominant western discourses that value certainty (Doan, 1997). Post-modernism is closely linked with a social constructionist epistemology, and the latter is explored in the following section. According to Gergen (1985), the process of understanding from a constructionist position is not automatically driven by the forces of nature; instead, it may be the result of an active, co-operative enterprise of persons in relationship. Furthermore, a person's verbal accounts are not viewed as the external expression of their internal cognitive processes, but rather as an expression of relationships among persons (Lyddon & Weill, 1997). From this perspective, knowledge is located in the social processes of symbolic interaction and exchange, rather than in the minds of individuals (Hoffman, 1990; Lyddon & Weill, 1997, p. 79). It is therefore important for social constructionists that the reality co-constructed in a system by a researcher fits in with the members in the system and their unique reality (Fourie, 1998). Social constructionists emphasise the role that language plays in the context of social interaction. Moreover, it is believed that, within the realm of language, we perceive, make meaning, adapt and influence the world through language as it is expressed in cultural norms and values, and thus create our own reality (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Accordingly, the human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988).

Within the postmodern paradigm, researchers look at how reality is constructed socially, as well as linguistically (Kvale, 1994). That which we believe, or the knowledge which we live by, is believed to be "an expression of the language, values, and beliefs of the particular communities and contexts" in which we live (Lynch 1997, p. 353). It,

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therefore, seems natural to believe that the self, too, can be shaped by the community or context in which we live. Researchers therefore both remain aware of multiple accounts of reality and guard against enforcing their own account of reality on the research context. Watts (1972, as cited in Higgins, 2008), declares that because we think in terms of languages and images invented by others, our experienced emotions and private thoughts are not really our own. Thus, the language and images we have of our world are given to us by society (p.94). Looking from the postmodern stance, the basic assumption is that people have equally valid perceptions, and that there is no single correct account of reality.

Language, according to social constructionism, is believed to play an important role in constructing reality. Specifically, social constructionism postulates that reality is constructed through a social process characterised by mutual agreement between people on the nature of reality, whereby shared meanings, beliefs, and values are attained (Brown & Augusta Scott, 2007; Young & Collin, 2004). By shifting their focus to language, social constructionists recognised the important role of language in shaping social reality (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007; Fourie, 1994). As stated by Corey (2001), this perspective holds that reality is based on the use of language and that both language and reality are largely a function of the situations in which people live. In this light, Anderson, and Goolishian (1995, p 184) state that we live with each other in a world of conversational narrative, and we understand ourselves and others through changing stories and self-descriptions. A reality, according to this epistemological stance, is thus believed to "exist within the conversations between the knower and known" (Jankowski, Clark & Ivey, 2000, p. 242). In their interaction, the knower and the known hold an interdependent attitude towards one another, whilst co-constructing their common reality in a mutually reciprocal manner, as they respond to one another and find a common language (Jankowski et al., 2000).

Social constructionism holds that human beings make sense of the world and generate meaning through the use of language. We live with each other in a world of conversational narrative and understand ourselves and others through evolving stories and self-descriptions, which is why social constructionist methods encourage individuals to tell their own stories, while at the same time, acknowledging the social nature of human life (Hart, 1995). Language and the strategic use thereof is the powerful force that shapes social realities, and it is through language that these realities are transmitted from one generation to the next through a system of shared meanings, known as culture. It is this idea of the communal production of social reality that forms the foundation of social constructionist epistemology; that different realities are created by means of a social process of shared meanings, that then also implies the probability of multiple and contextually-informed realities (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Both social constructionism and postmodernism are concerned with meaning generated from lived experience. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p. 149), "language helps to construct reality." It is through our interactions and conversations with others, in other words, through language, that individuals come to know their world. Thus, our language directs us in how we see the world and assists us in generating the meaning we attach to our experiences (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Language is essential in the negotiation of understanding, where the study of knowledge becomes the study of the active use of language in human behaviour (Gergen, 1992).

Language is, however, not unbiased, and can have different meanings for different people, in addition to the meaning of words and actions being contextually bound against an inherited social background (Shotter, 1993). However, constructionist research is not in the first place about language per se, but about interpreting the social world as a kind of language; a system of meanings and practices that construct reality. Just as our routine talk helps to create and maintain the world we live in, so too with images (e.g., a cell phone

advertisement) or day-to-day actions (e.g., a doctor placing a stethoscope on a patient's chest, or a lecturer marking an exam) (Terre Blanche, Derrheim & Painter, 2006). A hospital building as an example could also be read as some kind of language. While the immediate function of the hospital is simply to provide a space for the treatment of sick people, it is also telling us certain things about the world of illness and disease, by looking at the way in which hospital space is divided and utilised. We can also reflect on the world of medicine and observe the world that treats different illnesses separately (the Oncology Ward here, Psychiatry over there), a world in which individual privacy is at issue (single rooms for those who can afford them) and a world where sick people are expected to remain in bed, with very little provision for other activities (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). In this regard, a medical voice could be another example that can be seen as the dominant means through which conversations about a condition occur in society. Therefore, our thinking and responding to the condition may be strongly influenced and even subjugated by the notions held by the medical voice's account of reality. The language amongst people is therefore considered important in the process of shaping realities.

### **3.4.2 The role of the social context**

The way in which a person perceives or makes sense of their world is informed by their interaction with the social and cultural context (Dean & Rhodes, 1998). The contexts we find ourselves in are filled with systems of signs and symbols in the form of representations of reality, practices, and physical arrangements. These systems provide a framework by which we understand objects and practices, as well as who we are and what we should do (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2004). Imperative to social constructionist beliefs is the fact that social communities and settings in which people live create particular attitudes and meanings for them to live by (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Moreover,

social constructionists believe that when a situation occurs in which a number of observers agree with each other about their observations they are said to have, come to a co-construction of reality (Fourie, 1998). In other words, when a group of people come together and agree on a particular set of rules or norms according to which all need to live, this may be said to be a socially constructed reality. Such a group's reasoning and decision-making process may, in turn, be coloured by historical and community beliefs. The laws governing a country may also be considered an example of a socially constructed norm or reality. According to Owen (1992), social constructionism is the claim and standpoint that the content of our consciousness, and the mode of relating we have to others, is inculcated by our culture and society; all the metaphysical qualities we take for granted are learned from others around us. Such socially agreed upon or constructed norms often come about to protect the reality of the majority and such norms can find shape on various levels in society.

Socially constructed family norms or socially constructed professional norms that often mutually influence each other within a larger societal context may also exist. Social constructionists further draw attention to the fact that through socially shared constructions, human meanings emerge, and these meanings need to be the focus in psychology (Durrheim, 1997, p. 175). Meaning is therefore generated in context, and as no two contexts are the same, meaning is not static. Furthermore, since meanings are developed through social interaction, the generation of new meanings is possible through the interactions and the relationships we hold with one another (Gergen, 1985). The possibility that realities can be shifted through interactions between individuals highlights the notion that reality is co-created between people in relation to each other within a particular context (Gergen, 1985). Emphasis is placed on understanding shifts from the individual to the process of co-constructing understanding (Henning, 2005). Thus, the aim for a researcher would, therefore, be to locate meaning in and understanding of how ideas



and attitudes are developed over time within a social, community context (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). For this study, and through conversing with accompanying migrant spouses, the researcher may, therefore, gain a better understanding of what accompanying migrant spouse status entails for each of the participants, and what bearing it has on them in their specific life contexts. From a social constructionist standpoint, the mind is seen as a social construct and a person's beliefs, memories, and thoughts are understood as largely socially constituted phenomena (Lyddon & Weill, 1997).

According to White (2001), as cited in Herrick & Morrison (2010), social constructionism focuses on the notion that knowledge is power. Therefore, what the culture or the society specifies can greatly impact on people's lives (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Social constructionists further point out that dominant voices or accounts of reality often exist within communities and in society as a whole which fail to accommodate differences amongst people, their different voices, or differences in knowledge (Rapmund & Moore, 2000). Doan (1997, p. 130) refers to these dominant voices as powerful "Grand Narratives" which "are supported by the weight of numbers, tradition, and firmly entrenched power structures" in a community. White and Epston (1990, p. 400) agree "that the particular meanings we impose on behaviour are dictated and organised by whatever 'dominating analogies or interpretive frameworks' are currently available". These dominant voices often propose and even advocate a specific norm or way of being. According to Owen (1995), social constructionists see relationships between people as either conforming to or failing to fit such proposed or idealised ways of relating to others. Doan (1997, p. 130) argues that "people are communities of selves, and that each person contains a multitude of voices with varying points of view." It is within both the postmodern and social constructionist spirit to respect such multiple selves, meanings, and contexts (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). These different voices and unique experiences can often be silenced by the dominant voices and beliefs within society.

Therefore, social constructionist researchers aim to give voice to those who may experience a sense of voicelessness in the face of dominant beliefs. It is during such conversations that new meanings and understandings about particular phenomena (which are often believed by the dominant voices to be fully understood) can emerge. In this framework, it, therefore, becomes possible to take a critical look at the "status quo, values, political arrangements, and power relations" existent in a particular societal context (Rosen, 1997 as cited in, cited in Nikelly, 2004, p. 79). This refers to the social constructionists' fundamental belief that whatever we believe about the world stems from societal context, and is locked up in our conversations with each other (Berger & Luckman, 1991; Hoffman, 1990).

### **3.5 Constructionism and Social constructionism**

Two of the processes through which reality is said to be constructed, namely constructivism and social constructionism, find some theorists tending to use the term constructivism as an umbrella term for both constructivism as well as social constructionism. Conversely, the terms constructivism and social constructionism tend to be used interchangeably and subsumed under the generic term 'constructivism' (Charmaz, 2006; Rapmund & Moore, 2000). Nonetheless, some definitive differences between the two have been noted and these will be briefly discussed below. Constructivism according to Macliam (2009), is the way individuals create their own realities; whereas social constructionism has a social rather than an individual focus. While constructionism is believed to be founded on relations, and sustains the role of the individual in the social construction of realities (Cojocaru, 2005; Cojocaru, 2013), constructionists view knowledge and truth as created not discovered by the mind, knowledge as created by the interactions of individuals within society, which is central to constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). Constructivism proposes that each individual mentally

constructs their world of experience through cognitive processes where meanings are created, negotiated, sustained, and modified (Schwandt, 2003; Young & Colin, 2004). Thus, when the two schools of thought are taken together, a reality is held to be created by the observer.

### **3.5.1 Constructionism**

Although from a constructivist perspective, there are no absolute truths or realities, merely interpretations, individuals are at liberty to attribute meaning to their observations in addition to drawing their own unique conclusions about the world. The constructivist model offers an alternative way of thinking to the modernistic view and is therefore consistent with postmodernism. Instead of relating to the cause of a problem, constructivists are more concerned about the meanings attached to problems (Hoffman, 1985). From a constructivist standpoint, an observer assigns meaning, colours the reality to that which they perceive, thus a great deal of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences, (Gergen 1985; Rapmund & Moore, 2000), which implies the lens through which the observer observes or colours the reality that they see. Fourie (1998) concurs as he posits that, according to constructivism, what we observe "is at least partially constructed by us" (p. 16). Consequently, the constructivist perspective rejects the notion that a single 'true' interpretation of reality exists (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997), whilst allowing people to form their own perceptions of reality. In this way, different people can construct their realities, which also implies that the same event or experience can be constructed differently by others, and differently by the same person at different times. Constructivists emphasise the importance of normative or ideational structures, as well as material structures, in defining the meaning and identity of an individual (Adler, 1997). According to constructivists, human beings interpret the material environment. For example, the international system of security and defence consists of

territories, populations, weapons, and other physical assets. The important thing, though, is how these material resources are conceived, organised, and used in international security. In addition, constructivists stress intersubjective beliefs such as ideas, conceptions, and assumptions (Jackson & Sorenson, 2003). Norms and shared beliefs in constructionism are understood to constitute actors' identities and interests, such as the way people conceive themselves in their relation with others. Constructivists concentrate on the social identities and interests of actors. Social identities and interests are not fixed, but relative and relational (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003), and the latter are based on the social identities of actors. Constructivist analysis redefines the concepts of roles, rules, identity, and ideas considerably departing from the rational choice conceptualisations. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will attempt to comprehend the participants' worlds from their own perspective, and interpret such views accordingly.

As Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2004) explain, constructionism holds that the human life-world is fundamentally constituted in language, and that language itself should, therefore, be the object of study. Thus, constructionism does not treat language as if it were neutral and transparent, or as a route to underlying realities, but rather, language helps to construct reality. The constructivist's paradigm falls short of the typical postmodern perspective, where it holds that "if a narrative works in a particular context" (Doan, 1997, p. 130) then "all accounts of reality are equally valid" (p.131) yet, there seems to be no single true story or reality (Doan, 1997; Gergen, 1985). Reality from a postmodern viewpoint is considered to be socially constructed, which means there is no singular social truth, but rather many multiple realities and stories. Constructivism adheres therefore to a belief in multiple realities, which is consistent with the underlying principle of postmodernism. In a constructivist spirit, every person's perception of reality is seen as equal to any other person's perception of reality, provided these perceptions of reality fit within a particular context (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Doan, 1997). Of equal

importance is the idea that people live and understand their living through socially constructed narrative realities that give meaning to and organise their experiences (Speed, 1991). However, the constructivist notion that all accounts of reality are equally valid seems to contradict the postmodern belief, which argues that all perceptions of reality are not equally valid (Gergen, 1985). Postmodernists ascribe to this belief, as they recognise that some accounts of reality tend to disregard, disrespect, and often subjugate other accounts of reality (Doan, 1997). In addition, the constructivist approach fails to recognise that the larger or dominant social reality may greatly shape the manner in which meaning is created and reality is constructed (Held, 1990). It is this need for the inclusion of the role that the social and cultural context plays in the manner that a person perceives reality (Dean & Rhodes, 1998) that led to the postmodern theoretical stance known as 'social constructionism'. Social constructionism will thus be explored in the proceeding section.

### **3.5.2 Social constructionism**

The origins of social constructionism can be traced in part to an interpretivist approach to thinking with a general focus on the process by which meanings are created, negotiated, sustained and modified (Schwandt, 2003). Proponents share the goal of understanding the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it. Social constructionism came about as a response to a need for the inclusion of the role that the social and cultural context plays in a person's perception of reality (Dean & Rhodes, 1998). It has a long history, as both a theoretical perspective, as well as a methodological orientation (Moses & Knutsen, 2007; Weinberg, 2008; 2014). Moreover, it is a theoretical stance that falls under the philosophical umbrella of post-modernism that holds that human beings make sense of the world differently and acknowledges that more than one reality or account of reality exists (Coale, 1994; Galbin, 2014). Becvar and Becvar

(2006) concur as they argue that in social constructionist perspective, reality is viewed as co-constructed amongst interacting individuals in particular contexts and considers that since no two individuals have similar experiences, each co-constructed reality is different from any other. Given the preceding argument, one could thus say social constructionism accepts as true the existence of multiple realities, and probably multiple truths. Participants in the current study each experience a different reality within which they do life, interact with others and with the researcher; as a collective co-create a unique reality.

Social constructionism is a contemporary approach within psychology and psychotherapy, which falls under the umbrella of postmodern philosophy. As was highlighted in the preceding section, social constructionism and constructivism both acknowledge the existence of more than one reality or account of reality. Nevertheless, social constructionism takes the effects of a larger social and cultural context into account and concurs with postmodernism that all accounts or perceptions of reality are not equally valid. Anxiety, for example, can, therefore, be viewed in many different ways, but its meanings are influenced by our social and cultural contexts (Owen, 1995). Social constructionists, according to McLeod (1997), hold several tenets among them; the rejection of the traditional positivistic approaches to knowledge that are fundamentally not reflexive in nature. They take a critical viewpoint in relation to taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world, which are seen as reinforcing the interests of dominant social groups (McLeod, 1997). Social constructionists also maintain the belief that the way we understand the world is a product of a historical process of interaction and negotiation between groups of people (McLeod, 1997). Furthermore, they uphold the notion that the goal of research and scholarship is not to produce knowledge that is fixed and universally valid, but to open up an appreciation of what is possible, in addition to representing a movement toward redefining psychological constructs as socially

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constructed processes that are not intrinsic to the individual, but produced by social discourse (McLeod, 1997).

Gergen and Gergen (2012) concur, as they sum up four important fundamentals of the social constructionist perspective as follows: the belief that what we know of the world is determined by the conceptual and linguistic categories we possess to define it; the idea that concepts and categories by which the world is comprehended are social artifacts – products of historically situated interchanges among people; and the view that the degree to which a particular belief or understanding is sustained across time is not fundamentally dependent on its empirical validity, but on the notions of social processes and the view that descriptions and explanations of the world are of critical significance in social life, as they are integrally intertwined with the full range of activities in which people engage. In their view, from a social constructionist approach; meanings are socially constructed via the coordination of people in their various encounters; hence, always fluid and dynamic.

Among the distinguishing principles of social constructionism are the notions that: human beings generate meaning through the use of language; the broader patterns of meaning are encoded in language and consequently focus on the interpretation of the social world verbally, with a system of meanings and practices facilitating the construction of individual realities (Becvar & Becvar, 2006; Coale, 1994; Dean & Rhodes, 1998; Gergen & Davis, 1985; McNamee & Gergen, 1995; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Thus, what one knows of the world is determined by the conceptual and linguistic categories they possess to define it. Moreover, from a social constructionist standpoint, we live with each other and understand ourselves and others in a world of conversational narrative, where individuals are encouraged to tell their own stories, while at the same time acknowledging the social nature of human life (Anderson & Goolishian, 1988). Conversely, social constructionists believe that when a situation occurs in which a number of observers agree with each other about their observations, they are said to have come to a co-construction

of reality (Fourie, 1998; von Glasersfeld, 1988). For this study, accompanying migrant spouses through in-depth interviews tell their stories, while co-constructing their individual realities of their immigration status with the researcher, whose other identity is that of an accompanying migrant spouse.

A social constructionist perspective is particularly interested "in accounts that honour and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual in addition to looking at how these accounts can be respected within a particular system" (Doan, 1997, p. 131). Lynch (1997) supports the view that many different accounts, descriptions, and meanings are possible regarding the same event or experience, and that there is no single correct explanation or interpretation for any given event or phenomena. The notion of the nonexistence of one correct interpretation or explanation lends itself well to an investigation into participants' varied experiences, as it takes into account the interplay of various viewpoints and perspectives that form part of a larger context of meaning generation. Social constructionists thus challenge the dominant beliefs or stories that tend to dictate single accounts of reality, as they believe such dominant belief systems to form the context for the development of problems, and often tend to pathologise those who do not fit into the ascribed or expected norms (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996; Rapmund & Moore, 2000).

Migration may entail both losses and gains, where the individual loses the independence and connections in the home country and gains a new status in the host country. However, the losses of leaving one's home country may result in further losses in a host country, as the immigrant particularly accompanying immigrant may find themselves out of employment, without their support network, and not a single thing attached to their name. The losses could give rise to problems and alteration in behaviour, which in some instances may even negatively impact normal functioning as they are faced with realities and truths that were either not perceived, or apparent prior to the decision to



move. Every person attaches meaning to their observation, and interprets the world from their own unique point of view, meaning being the product of the prevailing cultural frame of social, linguistic, discursive, and symbolic practices (Cojocaru, & Bragaru, 2012). The assumption is that each person makes sense of their own world in terms of one's own unique perspective. The individual's capacity to construct his/her own understanding of the world is connected with thinking, and with the fact that the individual is able to construct, while the mutual aim of researcher and respondent is thus to co-create a reality in which the focus falls on the respondent's "subjective experiential world" (Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 92; Galbin, 2014; Gergen & Gergen, 2012).

In attempting to make sense of the social world, social constructionists view knowledge as constructed; as opposed to created. Society is viewed as existing both as a subjective and objective reality (Andrews, 2012). Meaning is shared, thereby constituting a taken-for-granted reality. A social world is believed to involve thoughts, beliefs, ideas, concepts, languages, discourses, signs, as well as signals and people make a social world, which is meaningful in their minds. In other words, at the heart of constructivist work is that the social environment defines who we are, and our identities as social beings (Fearon & Wendt, 2003; Karacasulu & Uzgoren, 2007). Social constructivism concerns itself with asking how and why questions, above anything else, and is based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning (Wendt, 1999). Therefore, it is understood that members of society create the properties of the world and meaning for themselves through their interactions. Human agents construct social reality and reproduce it on their daily practices (Risse, 2005). Moreover, normative or ideational structures do not exist independently from the social environment.

Constructivists focus both on differences among people, and how relations are formed by means of collective social institutions (Jackson & Sorenson, 2003). Social constructionism accepts that there is an objective reality, and is concerned with how

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knowledge is constructed and understood. It places huge emphasis on everyday interactions between people, and how they use language to construct their reality guided by the social constructionist epistemology; the assumption that knowledge of reality is subjectively determined and socially constructed, and that reality cannot be understood independently of its different actors (Crossan, 2003; Husserl, 1965; Mutch, 2005; Orlikowski & Baroundi, 1991). Both individuals and groups of people interpret reality based on their beliefs and value systems, their memories, experiences as well as their expectations (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998). In essence "social constructionism highlights the social, historical, and collective nature of human consciousness" (Durrheim, 1997, p. 175), and focuses on social interpretation as well as the intersubjective influence of language, family, and culture (Gergen, 1985). Two important fundamentals in social constructionism are the role that the specific societal context in which people interact plays, along with the language use that takes place between them, as has been highlighted.

### **3.5.2.1 Social constructionism in practice**

True to the postmodern spirit, social constructionists are interested "in accounts that honour and respect the community of voices inherent in each individual and how these accounts can be respected within a particular system" (Doan, 1997, p. 131). In practice, social constructionists also aim to help those whose stories have gone wrong or do not work for them anymore, as well as those families whose "stories are in collision" (Doan, 1997, p. 131). Moreover, they recognise the links between persons' stories (Parry, 1995), whilst bearing in mind that one story cannot be prioritised at the expense of others without affecting relationships negatively. They ultimately aim to deconstruct stories that tend to dominate others, which in turn allows for the discovery of alternative voices (Dickerson & Zimmerman, 1996). Coale (2000) posits that participants tend to discuss the dominant

discourses of their lives and further proposes that the problematic realities which are represented by these discourses can be 'deconstructed' and new realities be 'reconstructed' or co-constructed by the researcher and participant to elicit new meaning. This practice also aids in externalising the problem, as opposed to looking for it inside the person, which allows the person to escape the domination of "oppressive domains of knowledge" (Doan, 1997, p. 131). In this manner, a space may be created for participants to have a voice and to tell their story in conversation with the researcher. Equally important to the social constructionist belief is the notion that the researcher prefers "stories based on a person's lived experience", rather than on "expert knowledge", which allows "for the experience of personal agency" (Doan, 1997, p.130). The mutual aim of the researcher and research participant is thus to co-create a reality in which the focus falls on the latter's "subjective experiential world" (Gale & Long, in Becvar & Becvar, 2000, p. 92).

The present study focused on female accompanying migrant spouses' lived experiences, as well as their constructions of the accompanying spouse status, with emphasis on human experience, instead of claiming to be the truth or purveyor of expert knowledge. Through participants' own descriptions, my intention is to be informed by other epistemologies; yet not with any intention to challenge studies already undertaken, but rather to highlight the wealth of their experiences; information that may have been lost in previous studies in their pursuit of scientific 'truth'. The assumption is that the participants and I each hold our own unique ways of perceiving and creating a reality based on our different cultures, social environments, and personal experiences. In addition, we both bring our own understandings of accompanying spouse status into the research context. Through conversation, we are then able to: exchange our understandings and re-evaluate any predetermined notions; question underlying beliefs and assumptions; and, co-create new meanings and understandings of accompanying migrant spouse status. The social constructionist notion of multiple realities is brought forth in this research in the expression

of each participant's experience and the meaning that each creates from her experiences. Each story is distinctively entrenched in a particular context, that contributes to shaping each participant's perceptions, and what being an accompanying migrant spouse entails. The differences and similarities in the stories may give the participants equal authority with other 'expert' stories and highlight the presence of multiple views of reality through careful selection of a suitable research paradigm.

### **3.5.2.2 Applying social constructionism to this study**

Following from the preceding discussion, it is clear that a social constructionist stance allows for new meanings to evolve within interactions between people (Hoffman, 1990). It is, therefore, the researcher's aim during this study to be in a conversational space with persons who have been constructed by a larger societal discourse (for example by immigration authorities and legislation) as accompanying migrant spouses, or who construct themselves as such, and to explore their subjective unique life stories with them. Hoffman (1990), against a social constructionist background, views people's experiences as stories that people have agreed to tell themselves, which may then be interconnected with the participants' subjective meanings and language use around their existence. As a researcher working from a social constructionist standpoint, one needs to be wary of enforcing their own account of reality on the research participants. Rather, their primary aim should be to engage in conversations with the persons, as an exchange of realities occurs. That way, the researcher and participants each have both a voice and an opportunity to enhance their realities with elements of the other's reality. A space will be created in which the reality and the voice of a person who constructs themselves as accompanying spouse may be heard. In addition, amid these interactions, the researcher will engage in conversations with the participants in their different spaces and states of wellbeing while at the same time both researcher and participant may learn from each

other's constructions of accompanying spouse, and coming to a co-created reality about their status.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

An individual's decision to migrate is situated in his/her entire biography and is made in the context of the individual migrant's past, present, and projected future. Any migration decision is unavoidably an expression of a person's self (Fielding, 1992). The choices people make throughout their life courses, including their choices to migrate or not to migrate, are therefore often socially referenced and involve their understanding of social norms and cultural practices (Evans, 1993). This chapter entailed a discussion of social constructionism as the theoretical framework for this study. However, a preamble to the discussion was a discussion of epistemology to put the study in context. This was followed by a brief overview of modernity as a background to postmodernity. The latter was explored to mirror the social constructionist paradigm used to better understand the study. A brief comparison of social construction and constructivism was undertaken; following which a discussion of the social constructionist approach ensued. Postmodernism, in essence, presents the possibility that more than one perception may be probable and therefore holds the impression that various realities or accounts of reality do exist. Moreover, postmodernism aims to liberate older often rigid ways of thinking about the world and enhance it by opening up possibilities for additional meanings and perceptions. According to Durrheim (1997), it is this acknowledgment of the unpredictability of human behaviour by many postmodernist thinkers that seems to have allowed a sense of respect for the unique experiences of persons in an unpredictable and ever-changing world. This awareness for another's unique experience refers to the fundamental belief shared by postmodern thinkers, namely that no one true reality exists.

The post-modern paradigm had a widespread effect on scientific thinking, especially in the realm of human sciences, such as psychology.

Social constructionism and constructivism are some of the post-modern movements that contribute to a critical reflection regarding the state and nature of scientific knowledge, as well as questioning the scientific observer's role in constructing knowledge. Social constructionists have an interest in personal stories, yet are cognisant of the fact that preponderant narratives in the larger society may override individual experiences. Key to the social constructionist approach are the views that the world is experienced by different individuals as an objective reality and that they make sense of the world through language. From the preceding discussion, a social constructionist position inherently allows for new meanings to be crafted within interactions amongst individuals. The proponents of social constructionism share the goal of understanding the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it. For the purpose of this study, the researcher attempts to comprehend the participants' worlds from their own perspective, and interpret such views accordingly. The process of co-constructing a mutual reality between researcher and participant may hold the key to unlocking the life stories of the latter. Hence, a social constructionist inquiry was perceived as the most suitable lens through which the lived experiences of accompanying migrant spouses could be explored, while mutually interacting with the participants throughout this study. It is, therefore, the researcher's aim during this study to be in dialogue with the participants who have been constructed by a larger societal discourse (for instance immigration officials and legislature) as being accompanying spouses; where the participants also construct themselves as such, so as to explore their unique lived life stories. What ensues in the next chapter is an outline of the research methods employed to execute the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents an explanation of the research methodology and a description of the approach I used to address the research problem to answer the research questions. The paradigm that influenced the choice of the research design, how the sample was selected, will also be outlined. Moreover, a discussion of the research data collection methods utilised, issues of validity and reliability for this thesis, as well as ethical considerations will be undertaken. The chapter closes with a discussion of how data analysis procedures were applied, in addition to outlining the stages in the research process.

Research methodology refers to the practical methods used by the researcher and focuses on how the research should be planned and executed. According to Mouton and Marias (1999), the epistemological meaning of the word 'methodology' is interpreted as "the logic of implementing scientific methods in the study" (p. 15). Thus, methodology refers to the underlying logic of the research constructed to answer epistemological questions pertaining to what knowledge is, how knowledge is acquired, and how one can know if something is true, that is, "our chart to navigate the social world" (Castles, 2012, p. 7). A research methodology also reflects upon philosophical stance, as well as the social and ethical foundations underlying a study, and guides the progression of a research project (Neuman, 2003). While the terms methodology and methods are often used interchangeably as though they mean the same thing, they are different, have different purposes, and ought to be addressed separately (Losoncz, 2017, p. 84). While methodology is primarily about the rationality of the research, methods, on the other hand, are "the tools of our trade" -the specific techniques used to collect and analyse data such

as interviews and life-histories” (Castles, 2012, p. 18). The choice of a particular methodology implies a particular type of logic. The type of reasoning used in this study is inductive, with an attempt to come up with explanations for the migrants’ perceptions of accompanying migrant spouse status and their life experiences in South Africa. While the assumption of this approach is that there is not a single objective reality awaiting discovery, on the other hand, participants make and interpret their multiple realities through the day to day interactions. The study was conducted in light of the social constructivist framework and involved in-depth interviews with eight female accompanying spouses, whose experiences were explored.

## **4.2 Research design**

A research design, according to De Vos (2002), is defined “as all the decisions a researcher makes in planning the study” (p. 271). Cresswell (1998) concurs as he defines research design as “the entire process of research from conceptualising [sic] a problem to writing the narrative” (p. 271). A research design aims to plan and structure the data collection and analysis. This includes the exact techniques that will be used, such as the type of sampling, sampling techniques, method of inquiry and method of analysing the material. In scientific research, two distinct methodological approaches are available, namely quantitative, and qualitative. Nevertheless, qualitative research and quantitative research are not mutually exclusive (Van Maanen, 1979). The quantitative approach is generally formalised, controlled and usually has a testable hypothesis, while the procedures of the qualitative method, on the other hand, are not distinctively formalised, but rather are “spontaneous and fortuitous” (Mouton & Marias, 1990, p. 160).

Whereas differences between quantitative and qualitative studies are often overstated and generalised, these two approaches differ considerably. Most previous studies on accompanying spouses have collected only quantitative data on adjustment



(Ali, Van der Zee et al., 2003; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Caligiuri, Hyland et al., 1998; Copeland, 2003; 2004; Copeland & Norell, 2002; De Verthelyi, 1995; Takeuchi & Hannon, 1996). Quantitative studies typically test those factors previously identified to affect adjustment, particularly cross-cultural communication, social support, and satisfaction in the host country. However, quantitative data cannot generate detailed views of research participants' migration experiences or their attitudes towards migration. Hence, there is a need to complement data collected by questionnaires with that collected by in-depth interviews. This study complements such quantitative data, with qualitative data garnered via in-depth interviews, a useful data collection technique to uncover factors such as integration into social networks and changes in identity (Beaverstock, 2002; Cole, 2009; Nash, 1969; Haour-Knipe, 2001; Willis & Yeoh, 2002; Yeoh & Willis, 2005). The current study adopted a qualitative approach and is best suited for a social constructionist perspective. The former is outlined in detail in the proceeding section. The planning and execution of the research were considered from the underlying principles of the social constructionist perspective.

Qualitative research, according to Strauss and Corbin (2015, p. 17), can be defined as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification”. As a research method, qualitative research allows the researcher to understand how participants experience migration and accompanying migrant spouse status in addition to enabling the researcher to become involved with the concepts and becoming part of the research just like the participants. Thus, according to Mouton and Marias (1990), “concepts and constructs are meaningful words” (p. 160) that can be analysed and interpreted in many ways. Sloan and Bowe (2014) posit that qualitative methodologies seek to depict a world in which reality is socially constructed, complex and dynamic. Consequently, qualitative methodological approaches

tend to be based on recognition of the subjective, experiential life-world of human beings and a description of their experiences in-depth (p. 4).

Owing to the in-depth nature of the enquiry undertaken in this study, a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design that focuses on the analysis of lived experiences of eight women accompanying their migrant spouses was considered appropriate, according to a post-modern constructivist philosophy of science, which concerns how individuals construct meaning and their interpretation as they engage with their own world (Burns, Grove & Grey, 2013; Creswell, 2013; 2014; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2016). In addition, a qualitative research approach focuses on researching "...into an experience..." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). It would be difficult to gauge the meaning of experiences and functionality of the accompanying migrant women by conducting a quantitative investigation, as the very details and nuances of the individuals' experiences, which are needed to construct a clearer understanding of participants' stories, would remain largely hidden by the researcher's attempts to generalise and globalise his/her findings (James & Owens, 2005; Owens, Shute, & Slee, 2000a, b).

A design that is qualitative in nature is preferred, since it requires no hard and fixed steps to adhere to, unlike traditional quantitative research methods that seem too restrictive to capture complexities, and do not allow for an in-depth description of interactional patterns and processes (De Vos, 2002). Additionally, a quantitative approach does not lend itself to allowing personal accounts and personal experiences to surface, but instead, it determines the researcher's choice. On the contrary, in qualitative research design, choices and actions determine the decision. Furthermore, the qualitative approach allows the context of the participants' status to be taken into account, and for the underlying grand narratives and societal discourses to be explored. The chosen research design also facilitates for awareness to be raised, and leads to personal growth in both the researcher and participants.

A qualitative research design is consistent with the theoretical framework of this study as outlined in a previous section, and the planning and execution of the research were considered from the underlying principles of this perspective. The social constructionist perspective enables the researcher to enter into the participants' worlds and together with the women, co-create new meanings and understandings of their status for both the participants and the researcher. As opposed to a quantitative study, which would quantify the results, this study, with its aims of generating information from the participants themselves, suits a qualitative research approach. A qualitative methodology allows for an inquiry into the personal stories and meanings of the accompanying immigrants and is less concerned with generalising findings to a larger population (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). It is mainly for this reason that a qualitative research design has been selected, as it allows the participating women to recount their stories, and in the process, construct and re-construct their realities with the researcher. Moreover, the selected research design allows for awareness to be raised and leads to personal growth in both the researcher as well as the participants. Subjective realities and meanings are shared and new realities and meaning-making become possible when the researcher and the participants join in storytelling and co-creating more beneficial and empowering stories. This constitutes an approach that does indeed allow rich and meaningful experiences to emerge.

The research questions on the study are exploratory, hence, I chose to undertake a qualitative study of accompanying migrant spouses; in which case, the wife was the accompanying spouse. Overall, migrants – particularly married women migrants – can be classified as an obscure social group. I adopted a qualitative research approach, which allows research participants to be studied within their social context by looking beyond observable behaviours, in order to develop insights into beliefs, value systems, and meanings ascribed to experiences (Hammell, 2002). Additionally, adopting such an

approach is believed to be best suited for a social constructionist study and it allows the researcher to capture meanings, experiences, emotions, and opinions (Maxwell, 2013). Previous studies on emigrant spouses have gathered purely quantitative data (Ali, Van der Zee et al., 2003; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Caligiuri, Phillips, Lazarova, Tarique, & Bürgi, 2001; Copeland, 2003; Copeland, 2004; Copeland & Norell, 2002; De Verthelyi, 1995; Takeuchi & Hannon, 1996). The flexibility of qualitative research allows for modifying interview instruments as necessary when new data and concepts emerge with data collection in in-depth one-on-one interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Fetterman, 1989; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Patton, 1990). A qualitative research design was preferred, allowing for a detailed investigation of the complex phenomenon of immigration, by exploring the different ways research participants conceptualised their migration experiences, as well as an interpretative analysis of data obtained from their immigration accounts (Van Coller, 2002, p. 42).

A qualitative approach provided the space to address the complexity and multidimensionality of the numerous points in the immigration journey, the factors that influenced the process, and an interpretation of the lived experiences of participants (Stiles, 1993). According to Jack, as cited in Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012, p. 381), qualitative research findings have instrumental, conceptual, and symbolic value, as they may affect clinical, service or policy decisions, and provide new insights into a particular issue. In the current study, involving participants in constructing interpretations allowed for a deeper and broader understanding of the immigration experience, and the results could be used to further the interests and well-being of the African migrant community in South Africa.

Notwithstanding my own experiences as an accompanying immigrant spouse, the participants as individuals and female accompanying spouses, in particular, were regarded as experts in their own experiences and processes. This design views the

participants as co-researchers, where the researcher is not the expert, but rather a learner, and the participants are the experts. It involves identifying and discussing themes and patterns unique to each individual participant, as well as common to accompanying immigrants at large. The themes will offer insight into the processes involved, which shape these experiences. It is hoped that the research design will provide the participants with the opportunity to gain a different understanding of their status, and highlight alternative possibilities and options, which are perhaps effective in bringing about positive shifts.

### **4.3 Study Population**

Migration research is particularly different from other forms of research in the sense that the populations involved are usually not fully known. The sampling frames are almost absent; and if at all present, may be inaccurate. The fact that traditional data gathering procedures may seem offensive, inappropriate, and insensitive adds to the complexity of migration research. The research methods in such studies would, as a result, need to ensure sensitivity, and in some instances, creativity on the part of the researcher, so they can access research participants who may not be readily up to being heard or known. The overly sensitive nature of migration research and prospective participants validates pleas for innovative context-based research methods atypical to the circumstances confronting migration researchers, particularly in Africa (Berriene & de Haas, 2012). The population of this study was accompanying migrant individuals from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa.

### **4.4 Study Sample**

Following from the research design, the data collection process for this thesis was set at a target sample of 12 accompanying spouses, through purposeful sampling; a sampling technique where the researcher deliberately opts to include the main representative characteristics or distinctive features of the general population, so as to

identify and select appropriate, unique, information-rich cases for the purpose of the study (De Vos, Delport, Fouché, & Strydom, 2011; Palinkas et al., 2013). Moreover, Stiles (1999, p. 99) posits that when selecting participants for qualitative studies, the emphasis ought to be placed more on informative examples of phenomena in contrast to a representative sample of a population. In earlier studies on international spouses, women's groups and international schools have been a major source of sample recruitment (Ali, Van der Zee et al., 2003; James, et al., 2004; Yeoh & Willis, 2005). Given the lack of formal records on the individual professional emigrant population, random sampling was deemed not to be feasible.

The main advantage of purposive sampling is that one can possibly better ensure a cross-section of the population in a small sample (Black, & Stephens, 1989). However, due to challenges encountered in locating prospective respondents for the in-depth, unstructured interviews, I subsequently incorporated non-random snowball sampling to identify and locate participants. According to Atkinson and Flint (2001), snowball sampling can be used to gain entry to and recruit dispersed and difficult-to-locate population sub-groups. Potential interviewees were also identified through chain referrals supplied by contacts (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003); a type of sampling that reduces the data collection costs associated with hidden populations. In order to reduce selection bias, I used multiple entry points to start the snowball. This is desirable so as to reduce bias by drawing information from diverse networks (Manski, 2000; Schmalzbauer, 2004). It allowed the inclusion in the sample of people with different socioeconomic characteristics and experiences. In the end, however, I was only able to interview a small sample of eight women. While a small sample makes it difficult to generalise findings to a larger population, a smaller sample size would suffice for deeper analysis if one wants to provide meaning and analyses of people's lives, processes, and beliefs. An adequate sample size would thus be one that according to Sandelowski (1995, p. 183) "permits – by virtue of not

being too large – the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the hallmark of all qualitative inquiry and that results in – by virtue of not being too small – a new and richly textured understanding of experience.” The sample for this study thus comprised eight women accompanying their immigrant spouses, and who have been resident in the country for at least three years; drawn through purposive sampling and snowballing, based on the judgment of the researcher regarding participants that are representative of the study (Brink, 2009).

The inclusion/exclusion criteria were considered on the basis of the participants being female migrant spouses, accompanying their male immigrant spouses and/or have accepted others' (for example legal and immigration professionals') constructions as such; having lived in South Africa for at least three years, from whom the researcher would have obtained “negotiated consent” both verbal and written; with the participants to willingly share and express their life experiences as accompanying immigrant spouses with the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 384). At the start of the research process, I used my own as well as family networks to initiate the sample. With the help of the family, I drew up a list of potential interview participants known to us who met the research criteria. Recruiting participants from one's social network has been noted to reduce interview refusal rates among potential interviewees (Cornelius, 1982, p. 392). Once identified, potential interviewees were contacted and invited to participate in the research. From my family networks, contact details for five potential participants were provided, three of whom I could contact directly, and two indirectly. I got my second lead from a prospective participant from my network, who I was sure would participate, but did not quite fit all the inclusion criteria. She then suggested the names of two people with characteristics I was looking for, one of whom put me in touch with the eighth participant. That way, I was able to recruit from different areas and to include in the sample of people from different backgrounds. Upon the first contact, I explained the purpose and requirements of the

research, as well as the determinants of who could take part. Research participants were selected based on an inclusion criterion, which I defined before I started fieldwork.

#### **4.5 Demographic profile of participants**

The objective was to select participants who varied in terms of age, country of origin, socioeconomic status, and length of stay in South Africa. While attempts were made to select a sample that would be representative of migrant spouses from across the continent, the diversity of the sample was dependent on the availability and willingness of participants in South Africa's Gauteng region for easy access. The research sample broadly comprised participants from four African countries namely: Malawi, Nigeria, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, with the latter being the largest source country. All participants had been in South Africa for at least three years, and their ages ranged from their late thirties to their early fifties. A brief description of the eight accompanying migrant spouses (A full demographic profile of whom is included in Table 1) was as follows:

Soon after she got married, Mt, 38, moved from Zambia about 10 years ago to join her Zimbabwean born husband, who was already working in South Africa. She worked part-time, and had just completed a Master's teaching degree at the time of migration, had no children, but was now a mother of two daughters. In South Africa, Mt worked part-time as a volunteer, initially, and stopped work upon arrival of their first child. She has been a stay-at-home mom since then, and at the time of the interview, but was studying towards a doctorate at a local university. Cathy, aged 45, had been married for about fourteen years at the time of the interview. At home, she held a Bachelor's degree and was a reservations manager with an international company. She had emigrated from Nigeria to accompany her husband, who had been transferred to South Africa in 2011, and who had been living in South Africa for seven years. Linah, aged 46, emigrated from Zimbabwe with two of her three children to accompany her husband in 2007. Pre-migration, she held



a teaching qualification and was a high school teacher for over 15 years. She is a stay-at-home mom and had been living in South Africa for 10 years at the time of the interview. Thoko, 43 years of age, had been married to her husband for eight years and had two children at initial migration from Zimbabwe to Zambia. She later moved to South Africa to accompany her husband, who had been reassigned to the country in 2008, with three children. Prior to emigrating, Thoko was a high school teacher and ran a taxi business on the side. The family had emigrated from Zambia and been living in South Africa for about 10 years.

Forty-one-year-old Grace has three children, two of whom were born in South Africa, has been living in South Africa for 10 years as a stay-at-home mom. She was a bar clerk in Zimbabwe, before accompanying her husband abroad in 2007. Chris, aged 53, has been married for 20 years and has three children. She and her family emigrated from Malawi in 2011, following her husband landing a job at a local learning institution, and have been living in South Africa for almost seven years. At home, Chris was a high school teacher for more than 15 years and holds a Food security diploma. She is a stay-at-home mom at the time of the interview. Faith, 44 years of age had been married for nine years at initial migration to Nigeria from Zimbabwe in 2008, with their two children. Soon thereafter, they went back to Zimbabwe and had to move to the DRC, Kinshasa briefly, this time without their children, who were placed in boarding school. They went back to Zimbabwe and immediately afterward, relocated to Botswana for a short while, before emigrating to South Africa four years before the interview. Prior to migrating to Nigeria, Faith held a diploma in banking and worked in the banking sector, where she had risen through the ranks to managerial level. She has since been a stay-at-home mom, and at the time of the interview, she had been living in South Africa for four years. Now 36, Riley was newly married when she emigrated from Zimbabwe in 2007 to join her newly wedded husband, has been living in South Africa for nearly 11 years at the time of the interview,

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and has two daughters. Riley worked as a pharmacist assistant prior to migrating to South Africa and is now a stay-at-home mom.

**Table1. Demographic profile of participants**

Spouse	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Pseudonym	Mt	Cathy	Lina	Thoko	Grace	Chris	Faith	Gift
Age at immigration	28	38	36	36	33	46	42	29
Age at interview	38	45	46	46	44	53	46	39
Year of migration	2008	2011	2007	2008	2007	2011	2014	2008
Years in South Africa	10	7	11	10	11	7	4	10
Education level at immigration	Master's in Education	Bachelors	Bachelors	Diploma in Education	Secretarial certificate	Diploma Food security	Banking Diploma	IT Qualification
Education level at interview	PhD Pending	Bachelor's	M Dvt studies	Masters Pending	Bachelor of Commerce	Diploma Food security	Honours Banking	Honors Social Work
Employment Status at immigration	Ministry part time/ studying	Manager Travel	High school Teacher	High school Teacher	Bar Clerk	High school Teacher	Manager Banking	Pharmacist Assistant
Employment status at interview	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom	Stay-at-home mom
Immigration Visa	Permanent Residency	Visitor's visa short stay	Permanent Residency	Visitor's visa accompanying	Visitor's visa accompanying	Permanent Residency	Visitor's visa accompanying	Permanent Residency
Children*	2**	2*	2* 1**	2* 1***	1* 2**	3*	2*	2**
Religious affiliation	Presbyterian	Pentecostal	Methodist	Assemblies of God	Methodist	Methodist	Assemblies of God	Pentecostal

#### Key

In home country\*

In South Africa\*\*

Neither in the home country nor in South Africa\*\*\*

## 4.6 Data collection

Data for the thesis was collected through individual, face-to-face, unstructured, and in-depth interviews, which prove a useful data collection technique to uncover factors such as integration into the host communities, social networks, changes in identity and relationships (Beaverstock, 2002; Cole, 2009; Haour-Knipe, 2001; Nash, 1969; Willis & Yeoh, 2002; Yeoh & Willis, 2005); phenomena that can often be challenging to self-assess; besides this aspect however, self-reporting questionnaires do not allow

researchers to perceive the in-depth relationships possible through qualitative data collection procedures (Rosenberg, 1965). One critical advantage of any in-depth research is “the ability to make it a descriptive manageable task, then expand it to regain your perspective” (Wolcott, 1995, p. 79). In qualitative research, the information collection process entails the researcher gaining access to participants, stating how the data will be collected and what techniques and procedures will be used. It also involves setting up dates and times to gather information (Mouton & Marais, 1990).

The method of inquiry for this study was individual interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) with eight women from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa. Each participant shared their life story, in the form of a conversation about the lived experiences of accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa. De Vos (2002) defines a qualitative interview as “attempts to understand the world from the participant’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of people’s experiences [and] to uncover their lived world to scientific explanations” (p. 292). The interview is also viewed as the most commonly used source of data for a constructionist approach. There are many types of interviews in qualitative studies, and an unstructured interview, also known as in-depth interview, was deemed best suited, as it is a “flexible tool” in conducting research, thus, it was ideal as the “main vehicle” to collect data for the current study (Breakwell, Hammond & Fife-Shaw, 1995, p. 230; De Vos, 2002). The researcher engages in a “fluid and changing” as well as “constructed” relationship with the participants as s/he attempts to understand each participant’s point of view, by conversing with them in a space that is deemed comfortable for the participants (De Vos, 2002, p. 299). Thus, the meanings created in the interview will be considered as “co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee”; and the co-constructed meanings in turn regarded as “products of a larger social system” (De Vos, 2002, p. 153; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). In-depth interviewing is a successful mode of obtaining large amounts of rich meaningful

information (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Thus, in-depth inquiries or unstructured one-to-one interviews are considered “a conversation with a purpose” (De Vos, 2002, p. 298), and are therefore useful to understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of those experiences. In-depth interviewing is not conducted to acquire answers, to test hypotheses, or to evaluate information. On the contrary, the in-depth inquiry allows the researcher to encourage the participants to talk about their perceptions, beliefs, and experiences, whilst telling their stories so that she can understand the participants.

Face-to-face interviews can collect richer data than telephone interviews because this medium of data collection permits interaction between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviewer is able to read facial expressions and body language, make eye contact with the interviewee, and hear changes in tone of voice (Panteli, 2002; Robert & Dennis, 2005). By comparison, while it may be possible to pick out changes in voice tones during telephone interviews, the interviewer cannot detect visual and non-verbal cues. A disadvantage of face-to-face interviews, though, is that some of those interviewed face-to-face may be tempted to give responses that are socially desirable but may not necessarily be truthful (Kreuter, Presser & Tourangeau, 2008). This can be attributed to interviewer or interviewee effects, which can range from visual and non-verbal cues given by the interviewer or interviewee, to the status differences between the interviewer and the interviewee (Selwyn & Robson, 1998). The data collection introduction was a platform by means of which to assure research participants that the information they disclosed would be treated with the strictest confidentiality and anonymity. Moreover, to allay any other concerns, they might have regarding the research process, participants were encouraged to ask questions or seek clarification at any time during the interview. Thereafter, consent forms were given for participants to sign, and to be retained by the interviewer.

#### **4.6.1 Pretesting**

Cooper & Schindler (2006) encourage the pretesting of the research instruments before the actual research process begins, as this enhances the validity of research data. Once pre-testing of the research instruments has been done, the researcher can correct weaknesses and ambiguities, as well as estimate the duration of each interview (Stake, 1995, p. 65; Maxwell, 2013). In view of this, the guiding questions on the interview guide were pretested on two accompanying spouse migrants, who were asked to comment on the design, wording, and sequencing of the questions. This was done so as to ascertain whether questions effectively collected data that would enable me to answer the research questions, while at the same time enabling me to practice and test whether the interview processes-introduction, questioning, and interview recording would take place smoothly (Finn, Elliot-White & Walton, 2000). I was guided by the migration literature and the objectives of the thesis to formulate interview guiding and probing questions. With participant consent, the interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were taken. In the research for the thesis, I complemented data collected using questionnaires for demographic information, as well as in-depth interviews, conducted with the same participants directly after they had completed collecting the demographic data. I chose unstructured or in-depth interviews because they enabled me to capture views, thoughts, opinions, and experiences of research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 16). Giving participants an opportunity to talk about issues they considered important encouraged them to share their thoughts and feelings about migration with me (Seidman, 1991, p. 7). Interviews can yield unexpected and insightful information, thereby giving a new perspective to the research that had not initially been considered (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2003).

Prior to the interviews with each participant, basic biographical information, for example, their age and profession among other things were requested. According to Walsham (2006), starting with non-consequential issues at the start of the interviews positively affects the interview process. To this end, at the beginning of each interview, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the research and the interview. This helped to create a casual atmosphere and to build a positive rapport with each of the interviewees, which is critical if one needs to subsequently actively engage the participants (Arksey & Knight, 1999, p. 101). Provisionally, one hour long appointments were booked for the inquiry. However, due to the sensitive nature of the subject, I was aware that some participants may not necessarily work within the specified time. I thus evaluated each setting, taking into cognisance any sensitivity that may arise. The participant's names and places mentioned were changed so as to ensure anonymity.

The unstructured interviews or conversations created a platform for the participants to recount their stories. Although the conversations were mostly unstructured to allow for spontaneity in telling their stories, the researcher at times guided the narratives in a manner that allowed the interview process to cover the life stages of each participant's life story. The researcher also felt it necessary at times to ask questions guided by her own understanding, or experience of accompanying migrant spouse status. Such questions were asked purely for the purposes of in-depth inquiry and further exploration of a topic with each participant. Probing questions were open-ended and exploratory in nature, in order to obtain information from the perspective of the participants. The interviews were audio-recorded, with each participant's consent and no specific time limit was imposed. The participants were also requested to reflect on their experiences of the research process, and these reflections would form part of the data to be analysed. Eight accompanying migrant female spouses were interviewed in addition to being encouraged to provide the information they deemed difficult to express verbally as naïve sketches

(Giorgi, 2009). For the interviews I used a protocol (available on request) I developed and pre-tested; which explored different themes based on expectations for and preparation before the relocation, continuity/discontinuity of life, exposure to and interfacing with receiving communities in addition to satisfaction with life in a foreign land. Interview sites were selected in consultation with each of the respondents. In general, locations that made the interviewees comfortable, which allowed for uninterrupted and open discussion were preferred. All but two of the interviews took place in the interviewees' homes, where they felt comfortable, where the atmosphere was usually quiet, and where I had an opportunity to see the environment in which they lived.

All except two interviews varied between 45 minutes and an hour. Nonetheless, the interviews were kept flexible to allow for a natural flow of the conversation between the researcher and the research participants. Altogether eight unstructured interviews were conducted (Astedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994; Kvale, & Brinkmann, 2009). Through the interviews, I collected data according to the protocol, and also encouraged open responses in addition to probing to elicit more in-depth information. As I was within a similar age range to that of most participants and had lived in South Africa for many years as an accompanying spouse migrant, most of the participants felt very comfortable answering the questions posed. Many of the spouses were willing to share much more information than I asked them for, describing their experiences and eloquently analysing their situations. They were more than willing to share their complaints, their inner feelings, and for many, telling their stories was a form of release. It was, according to these women, almost always the first time anyone had taken the trouble to ascertain their perspectives regarding accompanying spouse status.

#### **4.6.2 Validity and Reliability**

Reliability and validity are concepts that are used to assess the quality of research data. Patton (2002) states that reliability and validity are two areas that ought to concern the researcher when a study is being designed (p. 601). In qualitative inquiry, reliability, dependability (Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Golafshani, 2003) or procedural trustworthiness refers to the repeatability of observations or data and contributes to the reader's understanding of a situation (Stiles, 1993, p. 601). Guba and Lincoln (1994) concur, and argue that qualitative research results are deep-seated in the unique content and context of observations, which cannot be replicated by another researcher.

#### **Validity**

Typically, validity refers to “the truth and correctness of a statement”, whereas, in social science, it refers to “whether a method measures what it is intended to measure” (Kvale, 1995, p. 3). According to Jankowski et al. (2000), validity focuses on the degree to which the researcher’s “preconceived ideas and assumptions force data into pre-existing categories and theoretical frameworks” (p. 242). Jankowski et al. (2000), posit that a major concern in research validity is a researcher’s pre-existing sense of the subject of study or the exposure the researcher may have to the phenomenon being studied, since it may colour the study. However, there are various methods that may be used to combat validity fears. Kvale (1995) assumes that the understanding of validity begins in the lived world and daily language, where issues of reliable witnesses, of valid documents and arguments, are part of the social interaction. Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, the focus is on interpretation and conciliation of the meaning of the lived world, and knowledge “communication between two persons” (Kvale, 1995, p. 23).

Validity is often described in terms of construct validity, and external validity (Yin, 2003), where construct validity refers to the rigour with which the study was undertaken in



terms of the extent to which the study measured what it claims to investigate. In the study, construct validity was achieved through data and methods triangulation. The thesis used questionnaires, unstructured in-depth interviews, and co analysis, thereby providing opportunities to cross-check the data (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, & Sechrest, 1965). Consequently, research questions were answered and reviewed from different perspectives (Long, 2007). Such methodological pluralism increased validity and the degree of confidence in the results. Thus, collecting the same data in different ways and analysing from different angles improved the validity of research findings (Ghauri, Gronhaug & Kristianslund, 1995, p. 93). Furthermore, this approach to data collection enabled me to minimise incidents of selective or deceptive reporting of migration experiences that may occur due to social desirability bias. As a result, I was able to validate accounts given by cross-checking them with accounts given in the face-to-face accounts with an independent co-analyst (Cornelius, 1982, p. 24). This technique allowed me to identify inconsistencies in responses given, and account for them wherever possible.

External validity, on the other hand, refers to whether results can be generalised, and generalisability refers to the probability that patterns observed in the phenomenon under investigation in the sample will be present in the population from which the sample was drawn (Sapsford, 1999). However, Walsh and Downe (2006, p. 117) suggest that instead of being excessively concerned about the absence of generalisability in qualitative research, emphasis should rather be placed on integrity, transparency, and transferability, so as to understand and explain the phenomenon in comparable settings. The researcher should, therefore, specify the conditions under which the phenomenon was studied, so as to enable other practitioners to determine whether a given theory applies to their setting (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 15). In this study, I used a small non-probability sample, and the small sample size limited the ability to generalise the results. However, the thesis

yielded important insights and ideas about migration decision-making in married-couple households and their impacts on spousal relationships. Respondent validation improves the validity of research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Some interview responses were read back to participants in instances where I wanted to ascertain whether the notes I had taken captured their viewpoints. Respondents were also free to ask questions relating to the research at any time, during or even after interviews.

Validity, according to Cresswell (2014), is affected by the researcher's perception of the validity in the study and one's choice of paradigm assumption. Consequently, researchers develop or adopt their own concepts that they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Trustworthiness to discover the truth is defensible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and "establishes confidence in the findings", according to Golafshani (2003, p. 602). Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research approach to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe & Neville, 2014). Triangulation involves collecting material in as many different ways, and from as many different data sources as possible to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena (Patton, 1999; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002), in an effort to improve the validity and reliability of research (De Vos, 2002; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The act of triangulation gives the researcher reason to be confident in her results, and it can help to uncover a deviant dimension of a given phenomenon. Bracketing is another method used to ensure validity and refers to "making preconceived ideas explicitly known beforehand" (Jankowski et al., 2000, p. 242). Bracketing basically requires the researcher to temporarily forget about everything he or she knows and feels about the phenomenon, and to simply listen to what the phenomenon is telling the researcher (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 140). Social constructionism has amalgamated bracketing and self-reflexivity and named it a 'not knowing' stance to validity

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in research. The word 'stance' refers to the researcher's values, beliefs, and assumptions about herself, her participant and the research. A "non-knowing" stance is a collaborative style, in which the researcher can relate to the participants, and seek to understand the participant's experience of death and bereavement, through learning from and about the participant. The researcher will adopt a "non-knowing" approach and will create an arena for the experience of death and bereavement of the three-woman participants to come to the fore (Jankowski et al., 2000).

## **Reliability**

Reliability refers to the extent to which data collection techniques and data analysis procedures minimise errors of measurement and bias. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002), reliability can be defined as "the degree to which the results of a research are repeatable" (p. 63) and refers to the "dependability of a measuring instrument" (p. 88). From a positivist perspective, the world and reality are believed to be stable and unchanging, and the symbolic system, such as language and numbers, can be objectively and accurately measured. If the study is reliable, then the same set of results will be achieved in repeated replications of the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). To achieve reliability, data collection procedures, when repeated, should consistently yield the same results and conclusions on different occasions, assuming that the phenomenon of interest remains unchanged (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005, p. 257; Kvale, 1996; Schwenk, 1985; Yin, 2003). To ensure the reliability of data in this thesis, methods of data collection are explained in detail (Walsham, 1995) and an audit trail of the research process has been maintained in the form of digital recordings of the interviews, handwritten notes of interviewees responses to questions on the interview guides, and a field diary. However, Golafshani (2003) states that the concept of reliability could be considered to be "misleading" and even "irrelevant" in qualitative research (p. 601). Instead of using the

concepts of reliability and validity as criteria in qualitative research, one should use terms that are more appropriate to qualitative paradigms. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that terms such as, credibility, neutrality or confirmability, consistency or dependability, and applicability or transferability, are more suited for qualitative research; the most suitable term being dependability, which strongly corresponds to the notion of 'reliability' in quantitative research. According to Seale (1999), the term 'dependability' is on a par with 'consistency' or 'reliability' in qualitative research. The consistency of information can be achieved "when the steps of the research are verified through the examination of such items as raw data, data reduction products, and process notes" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601).

Qualitative researchers believe that social phenomena depend on the context within which they occur and that the meaning of what is being researched depends on the specific situation in which the person finds themselves (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Social constructionists examine a changing reality and don't expect to find the same results when a study is repeated. In a social constructionist study, researchers expect individuals, organisations, and groups to behave differently, and to have various opinions in contexts that are always changing. Thus, instead of using reliability as a criterion in qualitative research, dependability would be more applicable. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) dependability is defined as "the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did" and can be achieved through "rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in and developed out of contextual interaction" (p. 64). This implies that the context in which phenomena occur is an important factor in qualitative research, and since contexts can and do change, interpretations would, therefore, vary too.

Ideally, an in-depth inquiry should be conducted without a researcher having prior information or experiences of the phenomena being researched. However, it is difficult for

the researcher to remain neutral since she concedes that she has previous experience of being an accompanying migrant spouse herself. She thus acknowledges that her own ideas and concepts and the construction of concepts between her and participants whilst conducting the in-depth inquiry may influence the analysis of the narratives. Nonetheless, human interaction is based on a culturally derived structure, where meanings are shared (De Vos, 2002, p. 298). From a social constructionist perspective, it is inevitable that the researcher and her participants will mutually influence each other's realities (Gergen, 1985), and will, therefore, co-construct a shared reality. The researcher informed the participants that she has prior knowledge of accompanying spouse status and the experiences thereof, but that she has no intention of enforcing her personal ideas or meanings onto them. Her aim is to co-construct a new reality or shared meaning on accompanying spouse status as well as the experiences thereof, and she hopes to gain a better understanding of their personal experiences. Moreover, raw data core analysis was also undertaken by an independent researcher to ensure dependability. From the onset of the fieldwork, I ensured that research participants were aware that interview summaries were available on-demand for verification of authenticity (Bryman, 2008; Krueger & Casey, 2000). Throughout the interview process, and guided by questions on the interview protocol, notes were taken against each question and response.

#### **4.7 Ethics and Human Subjects Issues**

An important factor in qualitative research is the careful consideration of potential ethical concerns, as ethical issues can be pervasive and complex for researchers, where equally, data should never be acquired to people's detriment (Strydom, 2005). By the same token, the need to uphold ethical principles such as informed consent and voluntary participation, privacy, anonymity as well as the possibility of feedback on key research findings upon conclusion of the research with human participants cannot be

overemphasised (Kruger, De Vos, Fouché & Venter, 2005). Ethical dilemmas usually arise when there is conflict in moral standards or values. The researcher needs to be cognisant of three ethical principles, namely autonomy, non-maleficence, and beneficence, according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002). Autonomy requires the researcher to respect the independence of the research participant, and accordingly, needs to acquire informed consent from them. The principle of non-maleficence calls for the researcher to ensure that no harm befalls the participant. Beneficence entails the researcher designing their study in a way that benefits the participant and society at large. In this study, the researcher purposed to achieve all three principle requirements, in addition to following the ethical guidelines of responsibility to research participants, confidentiality and competence (Becvar & Becvar, 2006 pp. 304-308; Rosnow & Rosenthal, 1996, pp. 62-64; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, pp. 66-69).

The ethical context for this study was based on following prescribed ethical guidelines for collecting data, including the researcher's self-identification, assuring research participants' anonymity and confidentiality; and protecting participants from harm; showing responsibility and treating each participant with courtesy, respect and professionalism by seeking and obtaining written informed consent when collecting and processing information (Jankowski & Van Selm, 2001; Walsh & Downe, 2006). Every respondent was notified in advance about the date and time of the interview (Finn, Elliot-White & Walton, 2000) in addition to being allowed to choose the location of the interview. At the start of each interview, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the interview. Moreover, I undertook to inform each participant about the nature of the study, clearly explaining the aims as well as purposes of the research in detail; study procedures, what is expected of them in the research, actual and potential benefit to various stakeholders, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time without any consequences to all prospective participants, who in this case were

accompanying migrant spouses at the initial contact. Thus, I gave research participants information about the research so as to enable them to make an informed decision to participate or not to participate in the research (Bryman, 2004, p. 540). There was no intended deception in the research study as each participant was simply asked to give an account of their own personal stories of their experience as accompanying migrant spouses. Participants were only asked to give information relevant to the topic in an attempt to safeguard their privacy (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Participants were afforded an opportunity to ask questions prior to consenting to participate in the study. Written informed consent was sought from the participants to take part in the research and be audiotaped during the interviews. Ethical clearance for the research to undertake the study was also sought and obtained from the Psychology Department in the College of Human Sciences at the University of South Africa (UNISA) (Available on request). Set ethical guidelines for collecting data including researcher's self-identification, pledging research participants' anonymity, and confidentiality when collecting and processing information were followed (Jankowski & Van Selm, 2001).

Maintaining the confidentiality of all personal information and interview data is of paramount importance in obtaining positive and accurate responses to the questions, as well as upholding ethical research standards. The researcher, therefore, made a concerted effort to protect the welfare and identity of the participants and reassured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality. Consequently, this ensures that all responses remain confidential and that all information is reliable for testing and evaluation purposes, and that the potential effectiveness of the study was not compromised by falsified data. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, chosen pseudonyms were used in the study report, while demographic data remained unaltered and raw data that the researcher received from each participant, as well as their personal details, were securely stored. In addition, confidentiality for this study was ensured by assigning a code number

to each participant, separating cover sheets containing names from all data, and entering only code numbers into the database.

The researcher did not foresee potential and/or overt harm to the participants and/or their families. It was determined that they would not suffer any harm as a direct consequence of taking part in the research and they were invited to communicate any confidential or sensitive information separately. However, the researcher is aware that the telling of their stories may well cause emotional distress for some participants, and they would be treated with empathy, honesty, respect, and transparency (Walsh & Downe, 2006). Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002) advise the researcher to be 'attentive' in areas of deep emotional experiences during an in-depth inquiry, asserting that the interview could "take a life of its own", and could become like a "psychotherapy sermon" (p. 387). Against that background, in the event that participants might need some kind of psychological assistance as a result of their participation in the research, they were informed of the availability of assistance and that the contact details of the organisation would be provided. The voluntary nature of participation was also emphasised to participants, where they were told that, with no consequences whatsoever, they would be free to withdraw it at any point they felt they no longer wanted to take part in the research. The researcher also ensured participants felt comfortable with the level of exploration and conversation at all times during the in-depth inquiry. The researcher's ethical integrity is important to the quality of the knowledge produced; thus, ethical requirements were adhered to (Kvale, 1995).

The identification of prospective participants commenced by drawing up a list of those likely to meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria. These were contacted individually telephonically, by email or face-to-face, depending on proximity at the point of contact to find out about their availability, and/or willingness to participate in the study. At the start of each interview, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the interview, in addition



to telling the interviewees that participation was voluntary and that they could terminate the interview at any time if they so desired. Moreover, participants were assured that the information they gave would not be shared with their spouses and that in the final published thesis, no individual would be identified by name. Thus, I gave research participants information about the research to enable them to make an informed decision to participate or not to participate in the research. Every respondent was notified in advance about the date and time of the interview and was at liberty to choose the location of the interview as most convenient and comfortable to them. All respondents were allowed to talk without hindrance. Before conducting the interview, I asked participants to read and sign the informed consent form. Interviews were digitally recorded with research participants' permission.

#### **4.8 Role of researcher**

In this study, I would be considered to have been a situated researcher, which is an important aspect of qualitative research. Situatedness describes the researcher's involvement in the research setting (Given, 2008). In terms of bias, the need to embark on this research journey stemmed from my own lived experience as an accompanying immigrant spouse in South Africa. Being a migrant professional woman striving to make my place in a new culture and a new job market with very little success for years, I personally encountered some difficult transitions. I experienced a huge disparity between the government's agenda to attract skilled immigrants to fill labour market gaps and immigration legislation governing accompanying spouse employment. My endeavours in a different culture, environment and labour market, had thus far proved to be more daunting than I had anticipated or even imagined. It birthed a sense of curiosity and wonder in me, which motivated me to explore the predicaments of my accompanying immigrant spouse counterparts. The similarity of my context with that of the research

participants facilitated my engagement in the inquiry as a reflexive researcher, in addition to my quest to derive meaning from the lived experiences of my participants. According to Usher (1997) the context of a researcher is an indispensable part of the research, and cannot be isolated from the research process - 'biases', ineliminably part of us, which can be recognized [sic] but not willed away; the marks of the trajectory of our desires and emotional investments in the research exercise" (p. 33). Throughout the research journey, I constantly remained mindful of my own preconceptions and beliefs as a situated researcher, being mindful to bracket my own experiences and perceptions, while exploring the lived experiences of the study participants. While my situatedness was the impetus for this study, I ascertained that it did not cause me to change the perceptions of the study participants. Instead, I used my background as an accompanying immigrant woman to develop rapport and empathy with my research participants, which facilitated reflecting upon their lived experiences.

The role of the researcher during the interview process was not to intervene or control, but rather to be a neutral, supportive observer, who provided a safe space for participants to describe their experiences, emotions, responses, interpretations and meanings verbal and nonverbally without being unduly influenced by researcher perceptions. Establishing rapport with the research participants was facilitated by contacting them telephonically to discuss the aims of the research project, and to address any concerns they may have had. Patton (2002, p. 600) argues that quantitative researchers ought to "embrace their role and involvement as research instruments" in the research process, while qualitative researchers are, however, cautioned that because data analysis is filtered through the lens of their past experience and assumptions, the credibility and trustworthiness of a study rests squarely on their shoulders. As the post-modernist approach implies, the nature and grounds of knowledge are value-loaded, where critical self-reflection is painstakingly crucial for the researcher (Gergen, 1992, p. 133

24). Through narrative inquiry, the researcher was able to enter and experience the world of the accompanying migrant spouses, to give a voice to the lives of “the otherwise unheard” (Gergen, 2009b, p. 236) in a foreign land. The researcher’s personal knowledge and experience of being an African accompanying immigrant in South Africa allowed an empathetic understanding of the participants’ experiences (Stiles, 1993, p. 595). Establishing a context of trust, reassurance, and support for the participants to tell their stories was also aided by conducting the interviews in their home environment and alternative familiar environment of their choice, and spending time getting to know each other initially before commencing the interviews. The researcher shared some demographic aspects of her own immigration journey, in addition to what triggered her to conduct such a study, a potential source of researcher bias; which one has to guard against because it could potentially compromise the reliability and validity of the study. Researcher bias in qualitative research is unavoidable, and a lack of awareness of the researcher’s expectations, preconceptions, values, and theoretical paradigm is important because it could influence the results (Maione, 1997; Stiles, 1993, p. 602). Moreover, Walsh and Downe (2006, p. 116) assert that complete detachment is unrealistic, because researchers still approach research with preconceptions, based on previous experience and interest in a topic. Against that, Stiles (1993, pp. 602-607) proposes good practice guidelines to improve the reliability of qualitative research, such as disclosure of the researcher’s theoretical orientation, internal processes and engagement with participants, stipulating the social and cultural context of the study, asking questions that elicit stories rather than explanations, immersion in research material, and grounding the analysis process in narrative texts.

## 4.9 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis entails a process of meaning-making out of the data in order to explore the meanings of the lived experiences of participants (Creswell, 2013, p. 79; Rapley, 2011). It is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; an analysis according to Marshall and Rossman (1990, p. 111) that entails "...the ways in which the researcher moves from a description of what is the case to an explanation of why what is the case is the case". Moreover, information analysis is the process of bringing "order structure and meaning to the heap of collected data" (De Vos, 2002, p. 340). Data analysis for this study was done by means of thematic analysis, a methodology that values the discovery of meaning through interpretation. Thematic analysis was used to break up text to reveal the most prominent patterns or themes in data texts at different levels of abstraction (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 391).

Thematic analysis as a method in qualitative research is used to identify key terms and themes in the text, to state themes within the data, to code and categorise them, and finally, to interpret the information with the aim of revealing various themes in texts (Braun & Clarke, 2006). An advantage of thematic analysis is its flexibility, and thus it is not always fixed or "orderly" (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 140). As such, research participants could act as collaborators, provide in-depth descriptions of the entire data set, and highlight similarities as well as differences across data sets, which could generate new insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 83, 97). Thematic analysis may also allow for the social and psychological interpretation of data, in addition to providing informative results to the general public and for policy advancement (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97). Thematic analysis is also valuable since it can "summarize [sic] key features of a large body of data and offer a thick description of the data set" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 97).

In the thesis, a participant's response to a given question is derived from a combination of interview notes and tape-based analysis (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech

& Zoran, 2009). Through analysis of the data collected from in-depth interviews, the study examined accompanying spouses' motivations to move, the cultural and lifestyle space between their lives before and after relocation, the communities into which they integrate, and the changes that they experienced to their sense of self after the relocation. Data on socio-demographic and contextual characteristics of research participants were also collected, an approach that allows researchers to compare variations between cases (Seale, 2000). Summaries of the participants' biographies were compiled at the interview sites and all the participants selected pseudonyms used to assure anonymity. Following the data collection, the audiotaped individual interview data were listened to a number of times and were meticulously and painstakingly transcribed verbatim by the researcher to maintain confidentiality. Analysing information from a qualitative approach does not usually follow rigid rules. Nonetheless, Braun and Clarke (2007), as well as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006), propose guidelines for analysis, which the researcher followed. However, it should be borne in mind that the steps should not be viewed as a linear model, where one cannot proceed to the next phase without completing the prior phase correctly; but rather, that analysis is a recursive process (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Hence, analysis encompasses the following stages: familiarisation and immersion, coding, inducing themes, elaboration and reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, as well as interpretation and producing the report.

During the familiarisation and immersion stage, the researcher gains detailed knowledge of the interview data. As is common to all forms of qualitative analysis, the researcher immerses themselves in, and becomes intimately familiar with their raw data; reading and re-reading the unanalysed data, as well as listening to audio-recorded data as necessary, and taking note of any initial analytic observations until she is completely familiar with the data. Transcribing one's own audio raw data presents the researcher with the opportunity to familiarise herself with and reflect on the data collected (Braun & Clark,

2006; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Coding is both a method of data reduction as well as an analytic process and as such, codes capture both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. De Vos (2002, p. 326) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim, (2002, p. 143) concur, and describe coding as part of the analysis that breaks down “a body of data (text-domain) into “discrete parts and categories” and examines the “similarities and differences” between them with a view to later clustering the ‘bits’ of coded material under the code heading and further analysing them both as a cluster and in relation to other clusters. It involves generating concise labels for important features of the data that are applicable to the wider research question guiding the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Every data item is coded and all codes, as well as relevant data extracts, are collated to conclude the coding phase. Fundamentally, whilst coding,” the researcher marks sections of the data, such as phrases, lines ideas, and events, as being interesting or relevant to the phenomenon being studied inclusively, and looks for as many potential themes/patterns as possible” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Coding individual extracts may fit into more than one theme, and thus an extract may be “uncoded, coded once or coded many times as relevant” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89) Extracts are grouped together under a specific heading or theme and are then further analysed in relation to other headings. Where the data does not fit within the coding scheme, the latter will be changed since a coding scheme must be designed to give the most insight into the subject under study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

The process of generating succinct tags for key features of the data may be referred to as an exercise of inducing themes, with a theme being a comprehensible and meaningful pattern in the data, as relevant to the research question. The researcher, in this stage, analyses the different codes and sorts them into possible themes in addition to looking at the relationship between the codes and between the themes. It is in this phase that some codes may evolve into major themes, while others may become sub-themes

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 90). According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002, p. 143), the researcher will think in terms of “processes, functions, tensions, and contradictions” and will endeavour not to “summarise” the content. It is essential for the researcher to “play around” with various themes and take into account that the themes obtained from her data will be directly related to the original research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 143). Put differently, searching for themes as an active process may be equated to coding to identify similarity in the data. However, themes are not concealed in the data awaiting to be revealed by the valiant researcher, but rather, the researcher constructs themes then completes the phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme (Clarke & Braun, 2013).

Elaboration and reviewing themes involve checking that the themes work in relation to both the coded extracts, as well as the full data-set. Themes of the research are examined through a process of “elaboration”, which entails the researcher exploring each theme in great detail, to “capture the finer nuances” they did not initially capture (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002, p. 144). The researcher should keep revisiting, appraising and refining her coded data extracts and assessing whether they are adequate. This could result in the researcher’s original coding system being altered and/or enlarged to cater for the new “nuances” - thus, elaboration essentially means one must continuously engage in coding, elaborating and recoding until no further new insights appear to emerge (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002. p. 91). Once the coded themes form a “coherent pattern”, the researcher will move on to the next phase of defining and naming the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). Defining and naming themes requires the researcher to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme, asking what story a theme tells, and how that theme fits into the overall story about the data, identifying the essence of each theme and constructing a concise and informative name for each theme (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Once an appropriate thematic map has been developed, the researcher defines and refines the

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themes. The actual meaning of each theme and the meaning of all the themes together will be identified and analysed. It is at this stage that themes may develop subthemes, which may give structure to a large or intricate theme; the given titles of which will then be reconsidered for the final analysis.

Writing up is an integral element of the analytic process in thematic analysis, as well as in most qualitative enquiry. It involves weaving together the analytic narrative and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and contextualising it in relation to existing literature (Clarke & Braun, 2013). As a final step, a written description of the subject of study will be expanded using the 'thematic categories' drawn out from the analysis in the form of a concise, explicit "account of the story the data tell – within and across the themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Moreover, in this final stage, the researcher will also "reflect on her own role" in the data collection and interpretation creation (p. 93). Categories and themes can be derived inductively or deductively. In the former, themes emerge from the data as in grounded theory while in the latter, a research analysis is theory-driven, that is to say, data is fitted into predetermined categories and themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Weber, 1990). Such themes and categories could have been identified before or during the data collection process. During the familiarisation stage, the researcher gains detailed knowledge of the interview data. For this study, familiarisation with the data was achieved by reading the data and listening to the digital recordings of the interviews numerous times, which began during interviews and note-taking. That way the researcher becomes immersed in the data and identifies key issues and themes. Transcribing audio interview recordings advanced the familiarisation process. It was vital that I familiarised myself with the interview data soon after collection to improve the quality of subsequent interviews and to understand from respondents' perspectives their understanding of issues to which I sought answers. Through intervals between interviews, I continuously listened to interview audio



recordings, in addition to studying interview transcripts and the notes taken down during the interviews. The continued engagement with the data was possible because interviews were not conducted daily. Identification and recording of recurrent concerns and themes pertaining to migration, factors influencing the decision to move, the experience of being an accompanying migrant, what and how participants felt about their status, and levels of satisfaction with their relationships and the status quo were undertaken. Such data could provide a better understanding of several aspects of migration, its determinants, and decisions (Lundholm, Garvill, Malmberg & Westin, 2004).

Accordingly, the thesis used a theme-based analysis, where texts were broken up to reveal prominent patterns in data; conceptions were compared, and grouped together into categories on the basis of similarities and differences in thematic networks to facilitate interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387; Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 7). Data were thematically coded, compared, and analysed across cases. A preliminary coding framework was drawn, and revised as recurrent, and/or significant themes were identified from the data texts, based on the core theoretical assumptions that guided the aims and questions of the study (Attride-Stirling, 2001, pp. 390-391, 402; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 4). Data were also grouped according to themes and categories analysed to come up with a broad picture of specific issues with the aim of identifying common themes and patterns (Bernard, 2000, p. 419). Text segments were assigned to as many codes as possible to facilitate the identification of patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). Where it was deemed necessary, direct quotes were used to support the analysis. According to Patton (1990, p. 78), quotations are used in qualitative data analysis, because they capture respondents' emotions, thoughts, their experiences, and basic perceptions. Extracts of data for each coding category were examined for correspondences in meaning and to extract basic themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79; Stiles, 1993, p. 605). The latter were defined, named and

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refined by repeatedly comparing the similarities, differences, and inconsistencies in each code, and between groups of related codes across all participant narratives (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92; Petty et al., 2012, pp. 378-379).

Through analysis of data collected from the in-depth interviews, the study examined accompanying spouses' motivations to move, the lifestyle distance between their lives before and after migration, and the changes that they experienced to their sense of self after the relocation. This was based on the core theoretical assumptions that guided the research aims and questions, since a theoretical thematic analysis as a method for analysing textual data, employing established techniques in qualitative studies can be usefully supported by and presented as thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). Thematic networks are web-like illustrations (networks) that summarise the main themes constituting a piece of text (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386). Applying thematic networks is basically a means of organising a thematic analysis of qualitative data. While thematic analyses seek to extract salient themes in a text at different levels, thematic networks aim to aid the structuring and depiction of these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387). Thematic networks were used to symbolise the low order (most basic), middle-order (organising) and super-ordinate (global) themes, in addition to illustrating the non-hierarchical relationship between these themes grouped on theoretical grounds, as well as the results of narrative text analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388, 389). Deriving from the study questions and aims, thematic networks were constructed. These included factors that influence the immigration process, the effect (positive and negative) migration has on participants' well-being, challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face, as well as what strategies are employed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status to facilitate fulfilling settlement.

The aim of this study was to explore and describe the lived experiences of female accompanying immigrants through identifying the factors that influence participants' decision to migrate; describing what effect migration has on their well-being, as well as what coping strategies are employed to facilitate fulfilling settlement. Against that background, the analysis of data began in earnest at the point of coding the transcripts of the audio tape-recorded in-depth individual interviews. Thematic networks were used as a tool for the description and interpretation of underlying patterns in the transcribed narrative texts (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 393). Codes were derived based on specific theoretical interests regarding the social construction of accompanying spouse status, and recurrent issues in participant narratives regarding their migration experiences as accompanying migrant spouses. By combing the transcripts, the most salient constructs in the individual women's stories were identified and shaped into a finite set of codes to facilitate the identification of patterns and themes that were discrete enough to avoid redundancy, and global enough to be meaningful (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 394; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89; Stiles, 1993, p. 605). As recurrent issues were identified from the data in the narrative texts, the initial code list was revised and used for data reduction by dividing the text into manageable and meaningful extracts, such as sentences or phrases, and to classify and group text segments from the entire data set according to these codes (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 394; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 4). Moreover, themes were defined, named and refined by continuously comparing the similarities, differences and inconsistencies in each code and between sets of related codes in the data set (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92; Petty et al., 2012, pp. 378-379). Thematic analysis was conducted across all participant data by collating the basic themes per coding category that were extracted from all the data sets, and more organising themes were construed, from which global themes that formed the core of three different thematic networks were derived (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388).

#### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter commenced with a brief outline of the concept methodology. The research design was provided, as was a discussion of the research methods fully given. A justification of the in-depth inquiry as the best method used to collect the information from the participants was also stated. It was established that a qualitative methodology was most suitable for the current research study since it fits in well with the social constructionist framework. The basic principles of qualitative research were indicated and explained. It was mentioned too that qualitative research focuses on the personal stories of individuals: their thoughts and feelings and alternative truths. In essence, social constructionists don't subscribe to the existence of a singular truth or reality. The terms validity and reliability were also classified from a social constructionist research perspective, as well as how dependability can be achieved through rich and detailed descriptions. An account of how thematic analysis is a suitable method to analyse and interpret data collected was given in detail. An explanation of the importance of ethical considerations and values were highlighted. The themes extracted across all participant narratives will be presented in the proceeding results chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESEARCH RESULTS**

#### **5.1 Chapter overview**

This chapter presents the research findings from data collected through in-depth interviews with female accompanying immigrants from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa. The study sought to explore in-depth, as well as to describe how migrant accompanying spouse status is lived and understood by those experiencing it, its effects on them as well as the coping strategies they deploy in reaction to their own status. Probing and guiding questions were designed to specifically tap into information that responds to the research questions, to address the questions of what factors influenced the decision to move as an accompanying spouse; what effect (positive and negative) migration has had on the participants; the challenges of holding accompanying spouse status, what ways accompanying spouse status influenced one's sense of justice, security and self, and how that translates into everyday life in addition to what strategies are deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status. Background premigration information to the study will be outlined before delving into the outcomes of the interviews.

#### **Background information**

It was the intention of the researcher to involve 12 participants (female accompanying migrants). However, one prospective participant seemed not to understand the concept interview, as she constantly asked if she would be able to answer the questions. Despite trying on numerous occasions; to explain what the interview and interview process entailed, and reassuring her that she had nothing to worry about, as there was no right or wrong answer about their narrative, they kind of agreed, but booking for an appointment for the interview proved otherwise. She couldn't make it any other day

except a Sunday, which wouldn't work for both of us, more so for her, because she spends most of the day at church. Against that background, I decided to retreat. As a researcher, I am cognisant of the ethical principles of autonomy and non-maleficence. Another potential participant was excited about the research. However, after the first contact, subsequent calls to give them more information and eventually set up a date for the interview went cold. I took this as voluntary withdrawal. Another of the prospective participants had to relocate to the United Kingdom before the interview could be conducted. We kept in touch and hoped we would do a telephonic interview, but this resulted in another voluntary withdrawal. Two others were consulted, but they didn't quite meet the inclusion/exclusion criteria. They both are accompanying their spouses, but one had only been in the country to stay for just over a year, while prior to staying in South Africa, she would come and go. The other came some time ago, now has permanent residence, and is working in the same field she was in before migration.

The final participant cohort in the study, therefore, comprised eight female accompanying immigrant spouses, one each from Nigeria, Malawi, and Zambia, while the remaining five were from Zimbabwe. Of the five Zimbabweans, two had been to other countries accompanying their husbands prior to accompanying them (husbands) to South Africa. An outline of the sample and its demographic characteristics were presented in a previous section. Two of the participants immigrated in their late-twenties, soon after they got married, and had no children at the time, another in the same age category, in their second year of marriage with one child, while the rest moved in their thirties with at least two children each. The latter were well-established and educated career women, who were well settled in their home countries, that left their home countries to join their husbands in South Africa for various reasons. What follows are presentations of text extracts of the salient themes that were identified. These will comprise verbatim excerpts from the raw data, as well as thematic networks (discussed in detail in a previous section)

aimed at augmenting the structuring and depiction of these themes that will precede each theme segment. However, extracts should be interpreted with caution as, according to Becvar and Becvar (2006), all aspects of individual experience can only be seen from the point of view of the participant who has experienced the circumstances. Maturana and Varella (1993) concur, having indicated that the construction of reality of each individual is based on the understanding and interaction with his/her surrounding environment. It should be noted that the same examples of verbatim accounts might be repeated in different themes, since similar events or experiences may be interrelated in different occurrences. An overview of the themes is presented in Table 2 below as a thematic map.

**Table 2. Thematic Map**

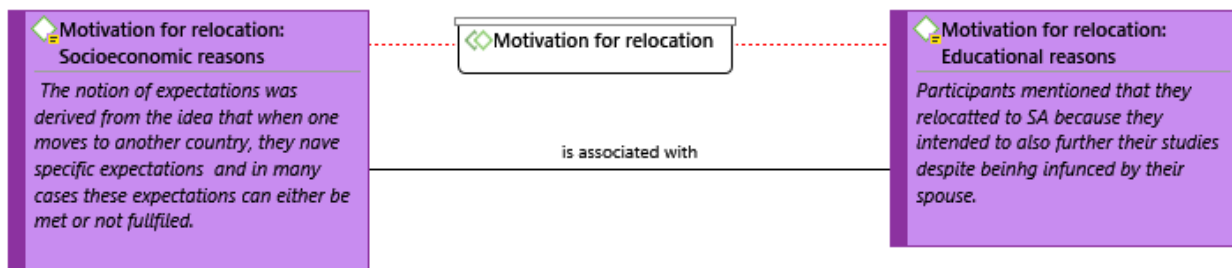
Motivation to relocate	Power relations and dynamics	Accompanying spouse status	Challenges	Meaning	Adaptation	Coping Mechanism
Educational reasons	Relying on husband's income	Lack of employment	Balancing work, studies and social roles	Demeaning status and self-esteem: loss of the self	Cultural and language diversity	Available social and emotional support
Socioeconomic reasons	Decision to move by spouse	Fear and uncertainty about future	Obtaining permit and visa	Feeling as a burden towards spouse	Financial constraints, adjustments and affordability	Preoccupation with formal education
Other better life prospects	Forced to leave career/studies and all	Lack of personal safety and security	Psychological and physiological problems/wellbeing	Frustration and Helplessness	Travelling	Recreational activities
		Public services discrimination	Sense of Isolation	Future aspirations		Religiosity and spirituality
		Unfair justice system and regulations	Cultural norms and expectations: Voicelessness and submission	Life satisfaction with spouse		Coping with new identity: unplanned housewife/home exec identity
		Being Voiceless		Sense of dependence and independence		
				Sense of responsibility and advocacy		

## **5.2. Motivation to relocate**

It is widely acknowledged that most people the world over do not move far from their place of birth, and several less still leave their motherlands for life abroad. Hence, when couples are presented with the opportunity, where undeniably in many cases the obligation to relocate abroad is for job reasons, it is understandable that some do not relish the opportunity. Rather, when the situation presents itself, couples engage it and make decisions. The participants in this study are people who decided, for various reasons, to follow their spouses abroad every so often, putting their careers on hold, isolating themselves from family and friends and agreeing to live a domesticated life in a strange culture, where many experience difficulties communicating with the recipient society. It was necessary to examine why these educated, professional women would still agree to become accompanying spouses and, seemingly, revert to the breadwinner and domestic housewife. Were they the victim of gendered social expectations where they trailed their husbands, or are they using the opportunity to become a willing accompanying spouse to liberate themselves from some of the gendered societal expectations that have persevered even in the post-feminist era? While the motivation to leave one's country of origin varies from one individual to another, educational and socioeconomic reasons proliferated in this study, where for some, improved job prospects provided the main motivation for their relocation. Meanwhile, other participants cited their intentions to further their studies as being the main reason why they agreed to relocate to SA, notwithstanding being influenced by their spouse, as indicated in Figure 5.1 below.



**Figure 5.1 Motivation to relocate**



### 5.2.1 Educational reasons

The common motivation of furthering study prospects emerged from a number of participant narratives, as outlined below:

#### Spouse 1

*I was just completing my MA my Masters uuum degree. I had to continue with my studies whilst here. [...] and then the other motivation, uum, for, for, for, my wanting to study was for it to increase my prospects for, for, for, employment so at least it would open a, a broader range of uuhm jobs that I could apply for; because you cannot develop yourself in that particular area and for me it was one of the decisions that I had to take to go and study instead; because I thought maybe it was going to be a lot easier for me to get a study permit as opposed to getting a work aaa [...] So in a way that was a motivator for me starting my, my, my studies.*

#### Spouse 6

*Yeah, because of course the plan was; when I come, I will do school. It was I planned that I would be doing school, I wanted iii to do the first degree of development studies here.*

## Spouse 7

*In Nigeria [...] yeah that's when I actually continued with my honours [...] you just have to study get your degree sit there back at home. [...] so, I just said ahh maybe let me just [sighs] pursue the studies.*

### 5.2.2 Socioeconomic factors and related life aspects

Socioeconomic reasons and expectations of a better quality of life, better resources, and their availability, as well as marriage commitments, were also cited as reasons why some of the participants had to relocate. In this regard, marriage commitment as a socioeconomic factor amongst other factors, as well as motivation for relocation, also emerged from certain participant narratives.

## Spouse 1

*Ummm, maybe what I wanted was uumm, to get a job and umm, I'd hoped that uum, coming here I was going to get maybe even better opportunities than back home in terms of working. So that's basically that was [...] that was my motivation [...] even just the just the maybe the quality of schools [...] they have a very well-equipped library, they've more resources than back home. So, in a way that has really been advantageous, because of uum... at least there's a lot of resources and not just the library, but also if you look at, uum, internet access. Really here i, i, in South Africa internet access is is cheaper, it's, it's faster; it's cheaper, and so that has made it a lot easier for me.*

## Spouse 2

*My husband was transferred... First, I wanted to come because my husband was coming and then I believed that as life was good for me back home, it would even*

*be better when I get here [...] and then uum, generally there are more resources here than back home, yeah.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Because of economic hardship in Zimbabwe, my husband decided to look for a job in SA. Then he got a job 2006 [...] he was to and from. We are married so here and there we need to be together. In my mind, I thought 'no, I got my qualification, I will just scatter around my my papers and search for work as a qualified teacher with a degree'; I just thought it was gonna be very easy.*

### **Spouse 5**

*I just heard that it was [...] it's a beautiful country (SA) because life was; the life there was not easy. Yoh! Sometimes you have your money, but you find some not [...] you could not find somewhere to rent, or you find somewhere which you cannot afford. I was a bar cashier [...] that money was not enough for leisure. I was not satisfied, because mostly the p salaries you would get get what you [...] food you want, you get the clothes you want, but no progress of life you see. If there is no money you can't plan as such but I go for weekends out. In Zimbabwe it was not, you had to budget.*

### **Spouse 6**

*When we were thinking of coming here, uuh my husband who secured a job right away at home, because he was working, and he did the interview right back home whilst he was still having a job; uuh to give/be the lecture at Wits. So of course, I had to think about it, as thinking of the consequences of staying; of leaving the job. Initially what made us to move is just the work for my husband that he had already secured a job and the, in fact, the [...] his position that he came here. Yeah, and it*

*couldn't have been difficult because the resources were there [...] they are advanced, uuh transport wise it's also it's advanced here.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*I came to to South Africa, and I was so eager you know to join the job market, look for a job, start working. I actually thought I would get a job easily as well.*

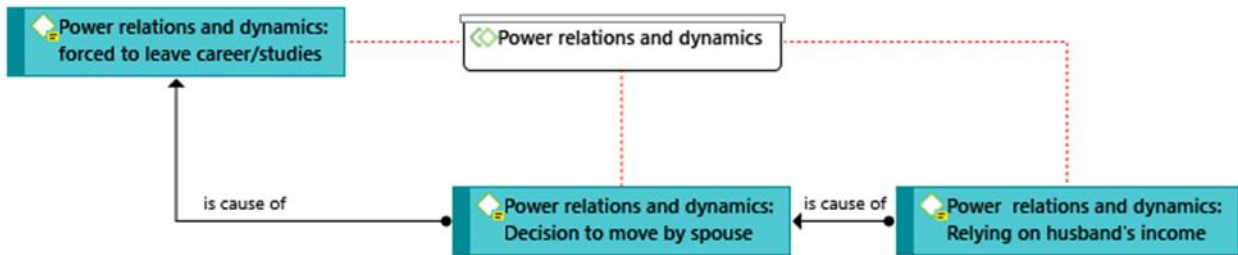
#### **Spouse 8**

*Uuh, what made me come migrate to South Africa it was marriage, cause my husband came here to South Africa to find a job, as you know the state of our country it was really bad around 2008. Say, 'you know what, life would be better if he is working; I'm working and it's a big country and there's opportunities. In Zimbabwe it wasn't satisfactory because that was going to work, you come back home, the money that you are getting paid is not even enough for you to go in a shop to buy bread, go to work, transport money to go to work, and there was no not even transport in the first place. I had I had no choice because my country wasn't going so well; so, I had to choose to come here.*

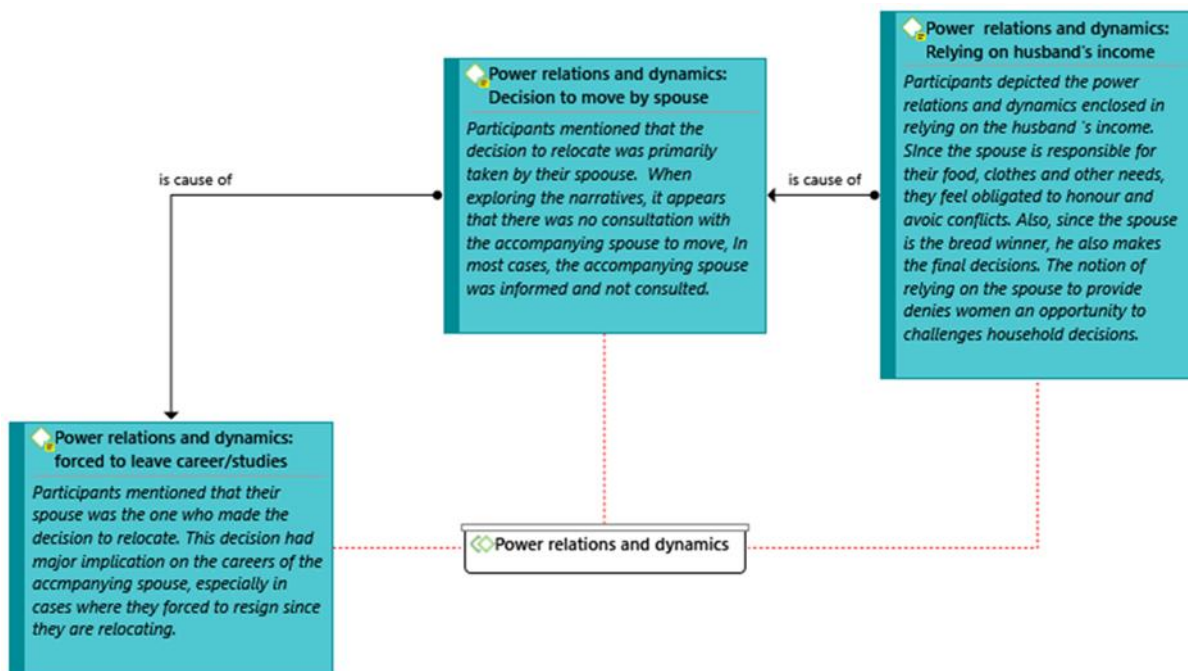
### **5.3 Power relations and dynamics**

From the participant narratives, power relations and dynamics emerged amongst the major themes, with the most common subthemes centred around traditional marriage and/family norms and commitments as the major contributors to their decisions to immigrate as reflected in Figure 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 below.

**Figure 5.2. 1 Power relations and dynamics**



**Figure 5.2.2 Power relations and dynamics**



Participants who had been married for long before migration paint pictures of the existence or the availability of some kind of choice and free will regarding the decision to move. However, the data reveals otherwise, where the male spouse comes across as having the upper hand in every respect. While the majority of the respondents cited some level of choice, where an improvement in their quality of living had influenced their decision to move, for most of the participants their narratives depicted uneven power relations as having come into play, as depicted in the participant narratives that follow.

### 5.3.1 Decision to move

Participants reveal how the decision to move was primarily taken by their spouse. An exploration of their narratives appears to paint a picture of the migration journey at a point where there was not much consultation with the accompanying spouse before the final decision to move. Where consultation did take place at inception, it appeared that it was announced, rather than discussed, with no regard for how they felt or possible negative consequences, as is evident in the following extracts from the participant accounts.

#### Spouse 2

*My husband was transferred [...] No choice: I had to relocate.*

#### Spouse 3

*I was teaching then, uuu, 2000 and, aah, end of 2006, we came for holidays here in SA me and the kids. I had two kids then. We came in December and then little did I know that my husband has made his mind. He had looked for school places for our two kids, I didn't know. I had only come for the holiday, only to be told in January that I'm looking for uniforms for my kids, and, eeee, I, eee, was like, 'how haa, so should I leave my kids or not'; and sh ..., 'just ...it is up to you and surely being a mother you cannot leave your kids...' Had no choice but to quit my job in Zimbabwe and to stay with my kids. It was very difficult a very difficult decision to make, but I had to do it for the sake of my family.*

#### Spouse 4

*Oh, it's like I came here in 2008. My husband was, eee, employed by um, by a, a construction company here in South Africa, so we were we had to live in Zambia because he was a manager for that branch in Zambia. So, when we we had to*

*come here when he was transferred to here, so [...] it was more like eeeh, you know when you [...] things are out of hand.*

## **Spouse 6**

*Initially I was working, I'm a teacher by profession, so of course, I had to think about it as thinking of the consequences of staying, of leaving the job and saying 'ok what do I do?'. So of course, by then, he had a good job, and later in fact there where he was working, he was working under the NGO, which w..., which is called UNC, University of North Carolina, which have got projects in Malawi, and he was one of the topmost people there and they were [...] and at the same period of time when he was doing the interview, there were also some fellow positions which he was supposed to apply and be promoted; but he said no, I think I'm done with this. I am going to academics because that's what he was praying for. So, for him, it was a chance he wanted to do something that would give him satisfaction. So, we said any, anyway, you can go for it; so, after he did the interview then he was given the job, saying you can start on 1st November; so, there we are; but he came first. We were left behind; he came here on the 31st of of October and started work on 1st of November. Yeah, sooo uuuh, we joined him on 10th of December 2011. Only that for him, he wanted to be in an academic uuh situation which give him satisfaction. He wanted to do a different thing say like being the academic and teach and see people be, uuuh, moving. He did his Ph.D. in Ireland, so he had just come from Ireland before we came in 20, thir 20—8, we stayed in Ireland for we joined him when he was finishing his school.*

## **Spouse 7**

*My husband told me, 'you know what? I've been given this assignment to go to Nigeria and the thing is I move around with my family.' I didn't want that but I had no option at the end of the day, I just had to agree. So, I had to leave my job, go with him to Nigeria [...] it was like I am forced to.*

### **5.3.2 Forced to leave career/studies**

The study participants cited their spouse as the one solely responsible for the decision to relocate, a decision that had major implications on the careers of the accompanying spouse, especially in cases where the latter were given no option but to resign. Such dynamics are evident in participant narratives quoted hereunder:

## **Spouse 1**

*I was studying, and I had a part-time job. Yes, so I had to resign from my job. Uum, when I left Zambia, I was almost completing my Master's programme. I was a, b, career-driven person you know. I think for me, my career was I think the way I came in without, uuh, umm, a paradigm shift, and realising that I cannot do these things the way I would've done them, if maybe I was not studying; or if I was back home; so I've, I've I had to realign my expectation of what and what I cannot do.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I was doing my dream job, so I was satisfied. [Even] Before I finished varsity there was a job waiting for me and I'd done interviews and I'd gotten a job and they were waiting for me to finish varsity. I was a reservation and ticketing supervisor for Virgin Atlantic, very satisfied [...] my husband was transferred. I wanted to come because my husband was coming. No choice I had to relocate, none really.*



### Spouse 3

*I was teaching then, uuu, 2000, and, aah, end of 2006 we came for holidays here in SA; me and the kids. I had two kids, then we came in December and then little did I know that my husband has made his mind he had looked for school places for our two kids. I didn't know, I had only come for the holiday only to be told in January that I'm looking for uniforms for my kids, and, and, eeee, I, eee, was, like how, haa, 'so should I leave my kids or not?' and sh, just 'it is up to you and surely being a mother you cannot leave your kids?' Had no choice but to quit my job in Zimbabwe, and to stay with my kids. In my mind, I thought 'no, I got my qualification, I will just scatter around my, my papers and search for work as a qualified teacher with a degree'. I just thought it was gonna be very easy... uum so I re... that's how I resigned, and I had to send my resignation by po... by the email, yeah, it was very difficult a very difficult decision to, to make; but I had to do it for the sake of my family. I was a teacher working already, but there 2007 ai(I) was there fulltime housewife, the experience that I have never dreamt of.*

### Spouse 4

*In Zimbabwe, I was a teacher. A high school teacher, eee, even though the money was not enough, it would make you feel you are doing something earning a living. So, I, you, you suffer, because even my children my last born. My son he is like he was asking mommy 'why are you not working, you can't just be sitting around. So, I say talk to your sister, I used to be a...w. A working I was a teacher working for a long time. My girl is going into university next year, boy's in university, me I realised I will pick w... up with my career later on, because we are even planning on going back home and for surely, eeeh, even if we go back home there would*

*say I had the most, eee, enjoyable time in South Africa; because I managed to study.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*I was a bar cashier. We migrated here in 2000...7. My husband came in Mm, May and I, I had to follow on June. It was not in our plan; you see; I was not I was not part... I am not agreeing, at first, because I didn't want to leave my homeland; and also, it was not easy to st... to stay with the in-laws; because I had that previous experience. He migrated to Germany for 14 months not long [...] oh five months [...] soon after the wedding. It was not easy for me to stay, myself, and now I said yoh, now it now it starting again. You want to leave me with your parents; no, no, not this time.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*Yeah, sooo... uuuh... we joined him on 10th of December 2011. We come here, I retired. You know, being busy up and down, been having your own work coming home and you do. So, when we came here, just staying at home, it was so tough. I did I have a diploma in... ahh... Food Nutrition Livelihood and Security apart from being a teacher. So yeah, I achieved my diploma and in fact, uu... I was pursuing planning to pursue my first degree right there at home [sighs] [...] anyway, but anyway, I think I the first time was so sad; hey, I was depressed.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*My husband had been offered a job in Nigeria so that time like for me after school I went, I, umm, I did a diploma in banking; I was already working in the banking sector anyway; then I went on to do business administration with Unisa. I also did uhmm... Honours in Business administration; as well so like I was working for*

*Zimbank then. I had a very good job like it was a supervisory post. By then, I had moved from from Zimbank to Kingdom Bank, like I would just go supervise like check on [...] procedures in all our branches, like maybe interview the manager, just do surprise checks on management and all. So, it was quite a good job, but then he told me, you know what, you have to just leave your job and we have to relocate to Nigeria. I didn't want that, but I had no option at the end of the day. So, I just thought shou... I had to just leave my job and go with him. I remember meeting a certain lady she is Nigerian, and she told me I could have chances to move into the banking sector there. So, I was really hungry for this post I said [...] the like she said with your qualifications your experience it will be so easy to just get a job; but maybe it will be starting like as an assistant manager or maybe management; I said, 'ahh, it's fine'. I went to my husband like my when my husband came home, I told him 'you know what, ahh I think we heaven opened up for me. There is chance of getting a job and it will be a management post, so I am really excited about it.' [...] My husband switched; says, 'you know what I won't allow you to to work in Nigeria like in any bank you just have to be at home I am providing for everything'. Uuuh, like yeah, the package for him was quite good, but for me, it was something else; but then you can't, you know, you can't continue to argue at the end of the day as a wife you submit so you just let it be. Then he was told they were pulling out of Nigeria, and they had; he had to go back to, to, to Zimbabwe, or maybe South Africa. Like, I got so excited, because I thought urgh, maybe South Africa. Zi, yeah, South Africa is like Zimbabwe, or even it's Zimbabwe chances will be high that I will start working again.*

*So yeah, we, we, we relocated; and this time instead of going to South Africa; we had to go back to Zimbabwe. Yeah, then I tried to like, I was I, I immediately started searching for employment; I applied for jobs like at Bank ABC, some other banks*

*like quite a lot of banks, I just sent my CVs. I was called for several interviews, but the thing www they would just say to me, 'you know what, you are overqualified we need a...' like at, at, at, I think it was at Bank ABC, they needed a customer service intern. I can't remember bank... yeah, I went for that interview as well, it was the same story; they needed a bank teller; and I told them 'you know what, I can do it, just allow me to get into the system'. They said, 'no we will call you when we have a managerial post.' Then the next thing you are resigning from your job you are going. Then I said I am tired of looking for jobs like the economy in Zimbabwe was sort of shaky, so I said 'no, let me just start buying and selling'. My husband also doesn't like someone who travels to South Africa to buy things, you know, he doesn't like that; so he said, 'if you have got a way of getting those things here then its fine, you can get into the selling business you can't travel there you know I don't like a wife who just goes everywhere'.*

*Yeah, so I had to sit ahh at home; then I decided to sell Table Charm products at least they would bring them right at your doorstep, but in no time my husband had to [...] initially it was ahm, Kinshasa, uhh, DRC. So, he says to me, it was the usual story when he travels, we have to go together; but I said, 'who can I start to sell these products to?' and also, I don't think that time Table Charm was in Kinshasa. So, it was a bit difficult we had to send our kids to boarding obviously because this travelling business was really affecting people in Zimbabwe, so had to travel between Kinshasa [...] just to make sure when the kids are on holiday, I am with them.*

*Yeah, uhm, yeah, my business wa... no was now being affected negatively; because, like I didn't have time to look for more customers; I didn't have time to be there to receive the goods. Yeah, so it meant like, slowly that path was closing down on me again. Then, yeah, he relocated to to Zimbabwe; I was excited about*

*it, but then in no time he had to -oo go to Botswana briefly, then he had travelled he was told to ... he he was given an assignment in South Africa. I had always loved South Africa, so I said it was ok, so he came to South Africa. We were told as usual; we move as a family. But when you stay at home, excuse me, there's this thing of wanting, mmm... that extra cash.*

### **Spouse 8**

*I was, eeh, a, uum... a pharmacist assistant, and stock controller; you know in Zimbabwe, you used to do anything, then I ended up doing a job in being a pharmacy assistant [...] because my country wasn't going so well, so I had to choose to come here.*

### **5.3.3 Relying on husband's income**

Participants portrayed the power relations of the reliance on a husband's income. Since their spouse is responsible for their food, clothes, and other needs, they feel obligated to honour them and avoid conflict, where the breadwinner makes the final decisions. This is related in what follows:

### **Spouse 1**

*I was studying, and then also relying on, on, on, just my husband's umm... income; I cannot say, it was not in my, it's, it's, actually in uhm; it's in my husband's name. In a sense that, on accompanying spouse permit you cannot work according to the laws of the country; and so in a way you are financially dependent on your spouse; and so when certain decisions are being made, even not just in the, in the confines of your home; but even exs ss extended families when there're projects that's supposed to be done when the things that need a financial input; uuuum, it robs your voice, because you cannot be as expressive as you would if you were financially independent, because now you become more of a dependent on your*

*spouse; not saying that it's a bad thing, but uum it limits some of uuum, the things that you do if you were financially stable. Yeah, but now when I came in the picture, he had more responsibility and he could not be as supportive as he was before. Now, because you're as much his dependent as the other person because the person who is supposed to provide with... so, so, it was for me for the children for the home and even elsewhere. So that's basically that was that was my motivation, but then, umm, since I came, since I started studying, one of uhm, the frustration was the issue of, umm, with relying on one income, you know.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I had three surgeries. My husband had medical aid, so was able to cater for it, but once, at one point it was exhausted; and then they told my husband there is no point, since we don't discharge, you leave with the painkillers. I couldn't do... there was no money to pay for it.*

## **Spouse 3**

*My husband had to actually give me money to go, to, to, to, for me to go, to, to, be able to go to work.*

## **Spouse 4**

*So economically, you rely so much on your husband. In Zimbabwe I was a teacher, a high school teacher, eeheh, even though the money was not enough it would make you feel you are doing something; earning a living. So, I, you, you, suffer; because even my children, my last born, my son; he is like, he, he, is turning 11 this year, he was asking 'mommy, why are you not working?' Now you have to rely again on the husband.*

### **Spouse 6**

*You know, w—e, you, he was receiving the salary in dollars, was I was also, ahh yes - in here in Rands, and the lower salary, aah, as I've already said, being now a housewife; where you hardly have any income depending upon the husband. Aaah, you had your own account, where the money was coming in; and at this point time you are like, you want to buy something, but you can't because you have got nothing. Regardless, being a wife is saying that money is for us, but still, we don't run [...] practically, yeah, it's not. Yes, so it was very hard for me.*

### **Spouse 7**

*Immediately my husband switched, says, you know, what I won't allow you to to work; you just have to be at home, I am providing for everything; but for me, it was something else. You are not used to this sort of begging lifestyle; you just want to go there do your things. [...] not you, but now, when you are seated at home you have no option. You have to be saying for tomatoes, please, can I have money for tomatoes, please can I have money for pads, and you know, it's an awkward situation. But when you stay at home, excuse me, there's this thing of wanting, mmm... that extra cash.*

### **Spouse 8**

*You can't do anything, you've got limits. You are not independent; remember if you are going to a bank, and you want to withdraw the minimum or a hundred rand minimum, it just rings to somebody else's phone to say... it's like you are controlled, you have to use... someone has to see how much you have used from his account, not your account; what did you buy, where did you buy it, and what time; so you not independent and someone is watching you.*

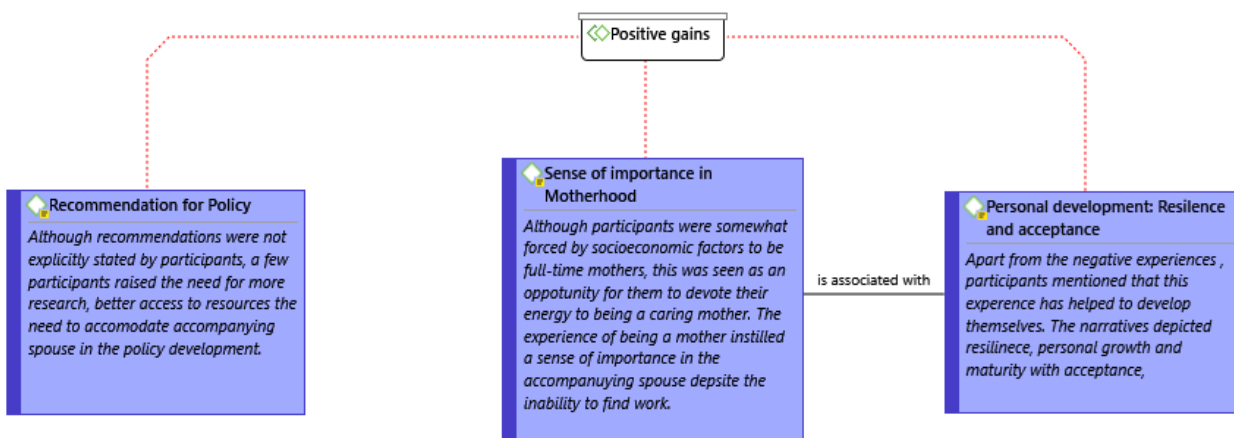
## 5.4 Effects of migration

Migration can have both positive and negative impacts on those experiencing it. While participants expressed challenges as a result of their immigration status, some positive spins were also recorded alongside and Figure 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 below displays briefly the subthemes.

**Figure 5.3. 1 Effects of migration**



**Figure 5.3. 2 Effects of migration**



### 5.4.1 Sense of importance in Motherhood

Though some participants seem to have been somewhat forced by socioeconomic factors to become fulltime mothers, this was perceived by others as an opportunity for them to devote their energy to being a caring mother, an experience that instilled a sense



of importance in the accompanying spouse; despite the inability to find gainful work. This is portrayed in their narratives that follow.

### **Spouse 1**

*I decided just to take up a part-time job, so I started working with Campus Crusade for Christ, but more on a voluntary basis. But, when my daughter was born in 2009, she had a lot of difficulties, and so I thought like, ugh, 'why hire somebody to look after my child when I can stay home full time and look after her?' And so that's how I decided to be a fulltime stay-at-home mom, and uuum, and for, and I had to forego my part-time. So afterwards, then I realised, 'like you know what? The best thing for me was just to have kids. Uuum, have another child because I've been, we have been intending to have only two kids and then also just look after her. In way in terms of uum working, in terms of studying and so what I decided to do was that, uum, since I wanted, uum, flexible time to look after my younger daughter, I opted to go to school and mainly the main motivation was the issue of like, 'ok, with studying I could control my time, and uum at the same time look after my, my, my daughter'; because I saw within my circles some moms even resigning from work to be stay-at-home moms, you know, but because back home, most people who are stay-at-home moms is because maybe maybe they can't find a job; or maybe they have not been to college; that was my conception of a stay-at-home mom, but when I came here I realised there are certain moms who are able to put their careers on hold in order to be uuh, with their families, so, uhm, for the sake of my CV, at least it will show like ok at least I've had the privilege of ok, I'm looking after the kids and everything else, but at least it will show some kind of advancement in terms of uum, uum, um, my career projection. So, in a way, that was a motivator for me starting my, my, my studies. Yeah, I'm not saying that it's all gloomy, but for*

*me, like in my case, I said it has it has taught me to appreciate my time with the kids. Certain times we over dedicate our roles as mothers to the family.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*... great opportunity and you at the end, you end up being a good mother, because you won't be that stressed; that depressed.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*I was staying home, and without the work permit, you get the job which you are not qualified, which you are less qualified for, and we end up comparing. I see that keeping our children is a better thing to do, and also to just be useful in the house to be a useful mother; but me, it's a positive thing, because Uhm, I have a future for my children. It's a great achievement and also my children are going to school is a positive.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*You know, being busy up and down, been having your own work coming home and you do. So, when we came here, just staying at home, it was so tough; for the first time I'm here to do the full-time helper job, I have to be happy with this. I think having sitting myself not working, and come here I've learnt a lot of being a mother, and it is much, much, much more to be a mother; and just be there for your children, I could sit with her [daughter] talk with her, pray together, with her and that made her life even to go much better.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*They tell you your salary is not its less than 3000, you imagine having to drive all the way there, and also you need someone to be picking your kids, to and from school,*

*maybe you www... because you will be working awkward hours, you will need someone to be at home taking care of them. So now, you think is it really worth it I mean [...] I would rather sit at home.*

#### **Spouse 8**

*I think being a mother, am in control. When I'm not there, they feel. So yeah, a wife and the mother.*

#### **5.4.2 Personal development: Resilience and acceptance**

Apart from the negative experiences, participants mentioned that this experience has helped them develop themselves. Their narratives depicted resilience, personal growth, and maturity with acceptance.

#### **Spouse 1**

*Uhm, you know, when, when I came to this country, I think that in a way has helped me, so I don't judge myself harshly; if I fail to attain certain things or meet certain deadlines. Yeah, you get to respect other people's time, and also knowing that, uuh, people have got an option of saying 'yes' or 'no', you know; so in a way that has opened up my mind to, to, to being sensitive, and not take even my friends or family for granted; because they also have use for their time. I think it's the issue of uuhhm... first and foremost, it the issue of understanding the phase that I'm in at the moment.*

#### **Spouse 2**

*So, that's the way I see it, and I've chosen not to think about it; not to worry about it, because even worrying doesn't solve anything. I've been able to go above that above and beyond; that because I've grown to understand that people make*

*decisions, whether you feel hostility towards them, or not, it doesn't change the way things are. Yeah, so I've come to accept the way life is, what I've told myself: I want to better myself.*

### **Spouse 3**

*So, we might take it, yes, eeh, now we are still alive, we can actually like I'm saying now, the light is beginning to shine, but yes, I was saying the age the what but there is some light. Now I'm mature, I know where and where is, but look at that person, she was left in that situation, of having that accompanying spouse; you can't do anything. I can say now, it's much better even though I'm looking forward to to get somewhere, but some, haa... it's much better now, yeah; I can associate with many people, you know, there is something in me that always tells me given the opportunity I can, I can bring change somewhere somehow.*

### **Spouse 4**

*It's up to me now, after I have endured that, I need also to move on, yeah. You also see the positives that you say, ah wow, I had a wonderful time in South Africa, up to now I am so grateful. You, umm... but at first, when you are frustrated, you don't realise that I learn to appreciate it, and yeah, and be thankful.*

### **Spouse 6**

*[sighs] ...anyway, but anyway, I think I the first time was so sad. hey. I was depressed, but later on, after giving myself before the eyes of God, I learnt to let go and embrace the new environment; my new environment, that lord had given me; and because of that. I see the past as a past, and I've learnt I've grown even much more in my decision-making as a mother [laughs] as a wife, as wife, as a mother; and I've learnt to let go some of the things more especially the lord has been dealing*

*with me, but because of this situation, I've grown much, I've matured as a human being; and I don't; was the time the Lord was dealing with me; so eish, it has really built up my Christian life, and I've matured a lot, a lot; cause I was a short tempered person, I could sta-----y angry without speaking to anyone just being in my own cocoon; but through this, the Lord has really helped me, and I've learnt to let go; and I've learnt, I've learnt, to remain silent when I need to, be silent, and learnt to speak when I need to speak, learn to listen when somebody is speaking, listen, and to listen more.*

#### **5.4.3 Decision to become a full-time mother**

One of the aspects mentioned by participants as the reason to become a full-time mother, in addition to being socially constructed as a "housewife", emanated from the participants feeling they would rather channel energy towards being a mother, rather than struggle with other life challenges.

##### **Spouse 1**

*When my, my daughter was born in 20... 09, she had a lot of difficulties, and so I thought, like, ugh, why hire somebody to look after my child when I can stay home fulltime and look after her? And so that's how I decided to be a fulltime stay-at-home mom, and uuum, and, and, and for, and I had to forego my part-time. So afterwards, then I realised, like, you know, what the best thing for me was just to have kids, uuu, have another child; because I've been, we have been intending to have only two kids, and then also just look after her. I way, in terms of, uum, working in terms of studying, and so what I decided to do was, that uum, since I wanted, uuh, flexible time to look after my younger daughter; I opted to go to school, and mainly the main motivation was the issue of like, ok, with studying I could control my time; and uuh at the same time look after my, my, my, daughter because I saw*

*within my circles some moms even resigning from work to be stay-at-home mom; you know, but because back home most people who are stay-at-home moms is because maybe, maybe they can't find a job or maybe they have not been to college, that was my conception of a stay-at-home mom, but when I came here, I realised there are certain moms who are able to put their careers on hold in order to be uuh with their families. Back home we raise children as a... as as a collective and then, but here a parent has to be hands-on. and so that's of one thing that I appreciate, is that it changed my focus to say, like you know, 'what life has to be it should be'; a balance between a career and also and so in terms of satisfaction, it has helped in terms that it has taught me to devote more time to my family.*

## **Spouse 6**

*But aa, after seeing the trends, got the kids, I realised that it was a purpose that God had made me to come here, join my husband, just to be a full time helper for him; and I've learnt a lot, because I could see my children growing up, having time, praying for them.*

### **5.4.4 Dealing with new identities of motherhood/housewife/home executive**

There is certain neglect of, or disregard for the accompanying spouse's career and education, where career goals appear to be secondary to those of their male spouse. What is intriguing in this regard is the sense of disconnect that accompanying spouses have to deal with trying to regain their former identity, making it difficult for them to be satisfied. Although they found some meaning and sense of accomplishment in being mothers, there is some disjuncture between who they used to be, and what they are trying to be. In other words, there is a lack of a sense of fulfillment and a need for preoccupation with formal education as a coping mechanism.

### **Spouse 1**

*So, you're happy that you're with your family, it's intact, but then it impacts on uum the other aspects; you being an independent woman, and also the issue is it also brings in frustration. You know, that you are competent enough to go to work.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Yeah sure, yeah, the experience is not good. Do you know, yee, besides my situation, I've got a friend, she actually passed on, and, and to think of it, I think I really strongly believe if it wasn't for accompanying spouse permit, this woman could have been alive today. Yes, the husband passed on in 2010. She was on accompanying what spouse, she couldn't work, but a very much qualified from university, and a very much qualified person, who could actually—could have umm, secured a very good job; but during that time, when the husband died to process the permits to change the permits it was difficult [...] and she went into depression, and she got into depression and died.*

### **Spouse 6**

*Initially, I was working, I'm a teacher by profession, we come here, I retired. Yeah, but after coming here [bursts out laughing] now the new chapter the new story begins. You know, being busy up and down, been having your own work coming home and you do [...] so when we came here, just staying at home, it was so tough for the first time. Yeah, because of course, the plan was when I come, I will do school. It was, I planned that I would be doing school, but when we came here after seeing the hustles of fees and saying the children should go to school, paying for school fees and, and was also beginning for school; so to also be paying school fees for myself as a wife, it was so tough, in the sense that we couldn't make the*

*ends meet at the end of the day. Coming from home, where we had two salaries, and it was home finding tings, it wasn't difficult, we were, ah, in terms of food, we had cultivating all by ourselves; so at certain point it was very tough, but by and by, later on, we said 'no I think because we prayed for this this let's not be hard on ourselves, let's see what God has planned for us' and ahh the two girls who were left back home, in other words, we were like managing two homes; because two kids were still home, and we had one, so otherwise our minds were divided, because we were like, now, we really know what is going on. Of course, we had we have got families back home, but uuh it's sort [...] difficult yeah, it's so difficult. You know we; you; he was receiving the salary in dollars, I was I was also [...] ahh yes, in here in Rands, and the lower salary you can imagine that and we had to aah rent, and you know the rents here they are very expensive. The landlord would wake up in the morning and say, I'm adjusting my [laughs] We are adjusting our rents [...] the rentals, so you can't argue, you can't argue, I have got no choice.*

#### **5.4.5 Recommendation for Policy**

Although recommendations were not explicitly stated by most participants, a few reiterated the need for more research, better access to resources, the need to review policies to accommodate and or make concessions for accompanying spouses in policy development.

#### **Spouse 3**

*I don't know, but if I was to recommend something, I think they should also take into consideration the qualification of a person if a person is capable to be employed, if a person was employed somehow in a, professionally, I think they should also consider.*



#### **Spouse 4**

*Yeah, it's because you, you... a wi, a, a wife with qualifications they would have to sit at home; while they don't even want to consider it, it, it, it's unjust. It's unjust because if the husband is, let's say earning, not enough, you know, it will be so... too stressful... too much.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*They don't, they don't even consider; they don't just care for your needs. You are not that important if you are a foreigner, and you don't have a permit and you even if have plans your plans squished, you can't think further, because you have a hindrance. They must treat us as normal people, and I'm not allowed to work under accompanying spouse.*

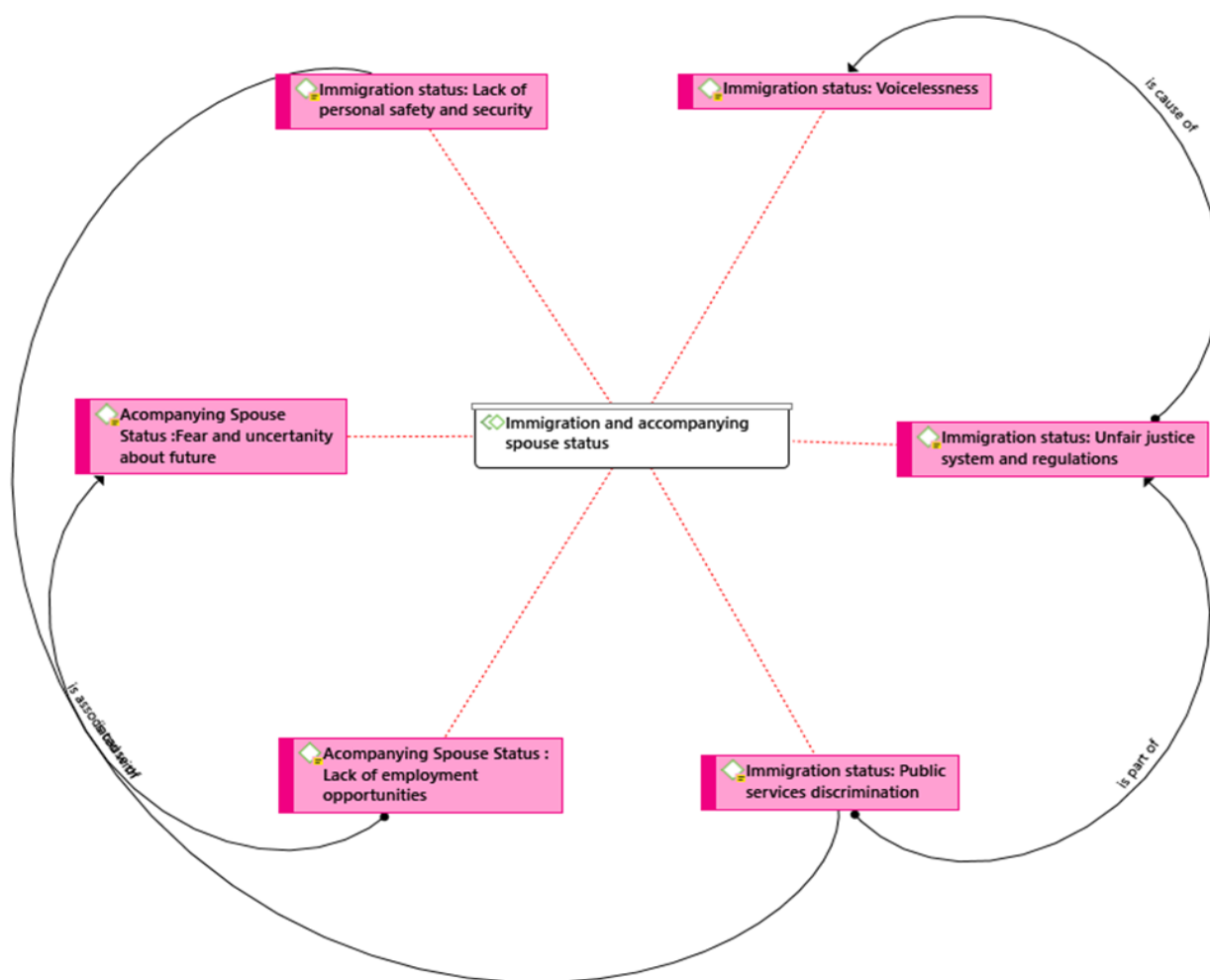
#### **Spouse 7**

*But when you stay at home, excuse me, there's this thing of wanting... mmm, that extra cash.*

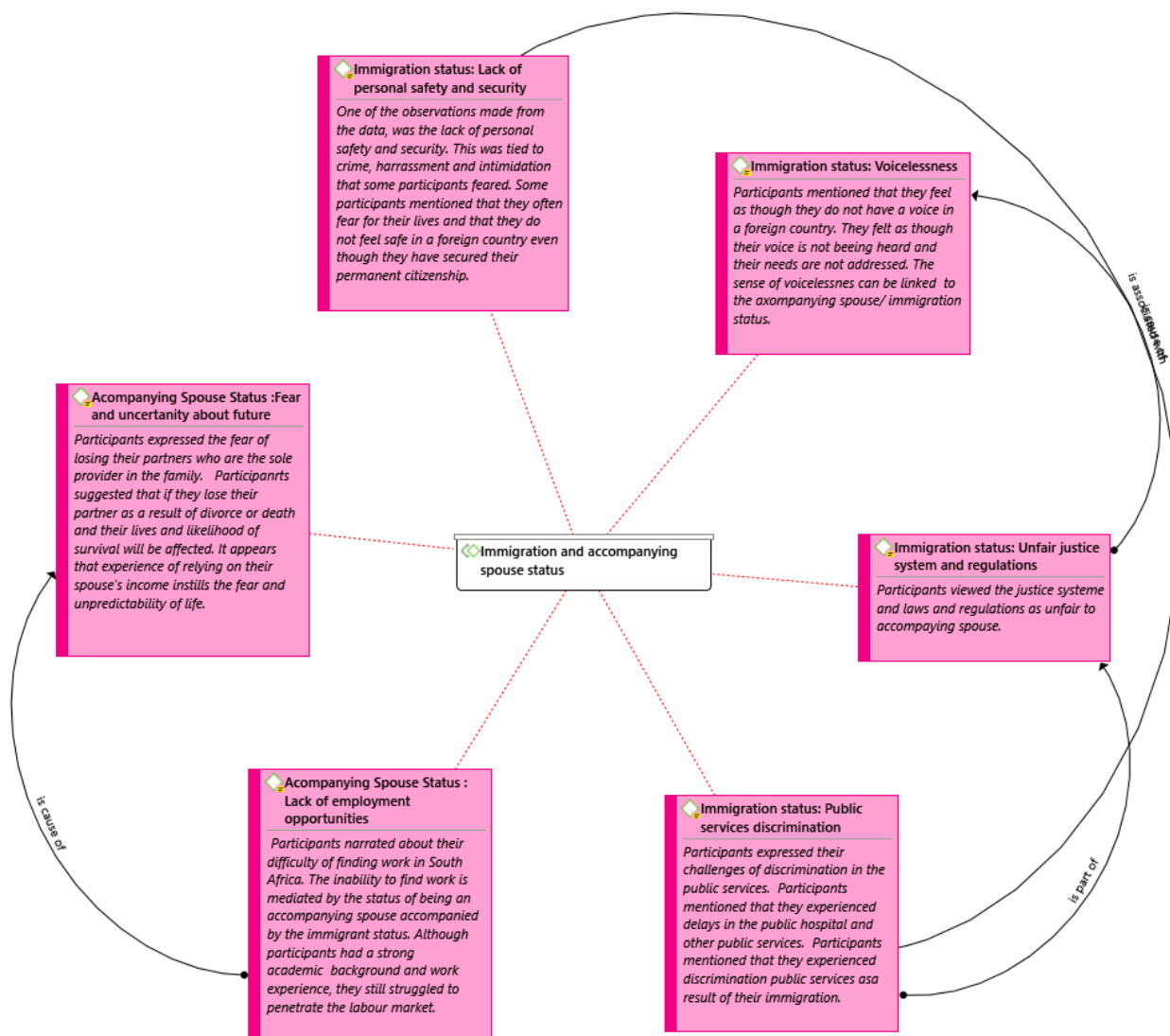
### **5.5 How accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse**

Experience as an accompanying spouse can be an interesting, exciting experience, and yet can also be a frustrating, disempowering experience. The experiences of the accompanying spouse will be reviewed in-depth in the proceeding section. Preceding this is a presentation below first of the subthemes (Figure 5.4.1 and 5.4.2), and then a summary of how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse.

Figure 5.4. 1 Accompanying immigrant status



**Figure 5.4. 2 Accompanying immigrant status**



### 5.5.1 Lack of employment opportunities

While all participants for this study were legally resident in South Africa based on their immigration status (i.e. accompanying spouse on a work permit), the women are dependents of the principle permit holder, and they do not have the right to work, even for a limited number of hours. They do try to find work, regardless, and either face the reality of the restrictions brought about by their status; or are settling for whatever is available, regardless of their qualification or skillset. Although participants had a strong academic background and work experience, they still struggled to penetrate the labour market,

owing to their accompanying spouse status. Participants recounted their difficulty and inability to find work in South Africa (and elsewhere for some) as mediated by the status of being an accompanying spouse. Spouse 2, 3, and 4, respectively, are such examples.

## **Spouse 2**

*...nothing, I can't do anything. I applied to several companies; one said to me, 'well sorry, we cannot employ you because your permit says accompanying spouse,' I didn't know, so I applied to another company. They interviewed me, everything is fine, and they said to me you have to, because of your documents we cannot pay you a graduate salary; and the third, another, a third one, that I remember I had to relief someone, a pregnant lady. They were short-staffed and I was just to relief her for four months. Everything is fine, everything went well, interview went well. The HR manager called me two, two days later, and said she's sorry that eem, I have 'accompanying spouse'. I said 'what has it got to do with it? I'm not going to be on the payroll, right?', then she said she is sorry, she could not help me. So, it's been, it's been like that, with rejection, after rejection, after rejection, and rejection [...] won't actually select you, send me an email "we are sorry because of the volume of the candidates that came for the interview ..." and this is a job I have done for seven years so you cannot tell me that I did not excel during the interview. So, it's like, yeah, so that has been it some call you in a polite way and let you know others will send you an email, and that's the end of it. So I stopped looking, because it was frustrating, it was, if there're people whose hearts are not strong, they will go into depression, because it doesn't make sense you are having someone who is qualified for a job and cannot give that person, because they have a particular kind of permit, which is, eeh, imposed, on you by the law.*

### Spouse 3

*I became serious job hunting, and at some point, I was called for an interview in some school in Randburg, and that interview I did very well; but on submission of my papers, they realised I got this accompanying spouse permit and they couldn't, mm, they couldn't offer me the job, I was heartbroken. I tried to change my permit but mmy, my job was not on the what, what do they call it - the critical skills, ski, skills, I think, ee, my, my subject area is not on that list; so I couldn't change my permit, I was stuck like that couldn't get a job, basically, because of this permit, and ee-yeah, I had to stay home for the first time in my life, ever since I---, ee, I, my school, my high school. I had never stayed at home; it was high school; straight to college; to varsity; in the classroom; there I was a teacher – working already. I couldn't just sit with my [laughs] brains just to sit it was difficult you know; le – you are, if you have got to do something, you have acquired educationally, you can't just put that to, to no use. 2009, mm, nine, there was the, a time I got some, uum, some work somewhere; it was, it was a bit awkward, like but if you are in that situation you take anything so, o ahh, yeah, then came 20-10; I got some work somewhere for six months; yeah, as a facilitator; it didn't take me anywhere, yeah, it was something good for me, because at first I could wake up looking forward to the next day, let me say, I could wake up, yeah, 'today I am going to work at least' it was better, so it didn't last for long. Anyway, because of this thing, the permit, they again, eeh, said they needed a permit to take to some South Africans because they they were forced to, to empower South Africans than [...] and the fact that my permit didn't allow me to work was another, mmm issue... so six months I had to stop [...] the job issue was a problem. I couldn't yet find the job because of this thing. I've got a friend, she actually passed on and and to think of it, I think I really*

*strongly believe if it wasn't for accompanying spouse permit. this woman could have been alive today. She was on accompanying, what? Spouse? she couldn't work, but a very much qualified from university, and a very much qualified person who could actually could have... umm... secured a very good job; but during that time, when the husband died, to process the permits to change the permits it was difficult [...] and she went into depression, and she got into depression, and died.*

### **Spouse 5**

*From 2008, I didn't do anything, I was staying home, and without the work permit, you get the job which you are not qualified, which you are less qualified for; and we end up comparing, see that, keeping our children is a better thing to do, and I'm not allowed to work under accompanying spouse.*

### **Spouse 7**

*My husband told me, you know, what I've been given, this assignment to go to Nigeria; when I went to Nigeria, it was difficult to penetrate the job market there but at least there was a chance of getting a job. When you send those CVs, there is no response, because you don't have a work permit. There's a part I don't know these days because I have given up where they tell you they want your work permit number; you don't have the working permit number. I don't mind starting anywhere, I know I will rise. So, they told me, you know what? When we when they came to South Africa, it was ok for them, because I'm sure they have got work permits. They learnt in South Africa, so it was easy for them to join the the banking sector, but for me because of BEE, they no longer just employ foreigners, just like that. Up to now, it's not there, so, huh, it was a major blow a major setback. I thought of trying Table Charm, but like, when you look at prices in the shops, you think, will I really grow in*

*my business, and make money? It seems like, as I see it, besides Zimbabwe, because in Zimbabwe when you had your qualifications, you would penetrate the job market easily. This sitting at home thing is not me, now because of the economy, maybe, it's a bit difficult. You just sit. You know, like you were saying, there are times when you sit there and you cry, because you staying at home is not your portion; you don't want it but you can't go out there to penetrate the market the job market. Like also this BEE thing it, sh... it has really crushed our spirits or my spirit. Like, there is a time when I said, you know what, I'll just go out there, try get a job anywhere, even if it means in a shop. Get something to occupy myself with. I said, 'you know what? It's better for me to be a receptionist', but now they tell you, 'your salary is not its less than 3000'. Because, like I was thinking, you have your qualifications, but they are just packed. Because like right now if you think of just saying, 'ok, let me just try and go and look for a job, and start working there, is some guilt conscience in you because you know you are qualified. Uhm, like at home, it was easy to penetrate the job market, like I've said. As long as you have got your papers, you'd just penetrate so easily. In South Africa, it's a bit different; like somehow for foreigners, but you just that thought of, just, you know thinking you are not going to work, really makes you feel unworthy. If you are a woman, it means your career path is now [laughs] reaching its doom, because like it's not easy at all to penetrate the job market. They are so used to you being, you know, working; the expectations are high, they want the same things that you used to give them when you were working.*

## **Spouse 8**

*I started living here, and I didn't have much actually, I had my IT degree, but then looking for a job, and then you don't have papers, because whenever you apply for*

*a job, you are asked: 'do you have an ID, do you how many years have you have you got experience'; yet you immigrated, it's not like you immigrated; you don't even have 10 years or above experience. Most of us are not working immigrants [...] anything, just, you know, and any job. I can't get a job, that's another thing as well, cause yea, I think that's more, most of the challenges.*

### **5.5.2 Fear and uncertainty about future**

Some participants expressed the fear of losing their partners who are the sole provider for the family. Participants submitted that if they were to lose their partner as a result of divorce or death, their lives and the likelihood of survival would be adversely affected. It appears that the experience of relying on their spouse's income intensifies the fear and unpredictability of life. Accordingly:

#### **Spouse 1**

*...and also, the issue of insecurity it breeds a lot of insecurity, when you ha, when you have like, in my own experience, the time that my husband gets very sick, honestly. Like [whispers] I'm in a foreign country; what happens if he dies; how am I going to take care of his kids; am I going to go back home; and if I go back home; people have, have they know coping mechanisms, because there're certain things that shock me when I go home. How do you do everything, how do you do this? So now, if something happens to him, where do I start from? And so, in a way that breeds insecurity, it, it, it, breeds fear, you know. You know like this last time, my husband called me, is like, I'm in an accident, and I'll be like [whispers] how bad is it, maybe he doesn't want to tell me, because it's over the phone, and you know, and now you start to think, 'the kids, what am I going to do with? Where do I start from? Even if I stay in this family, in this country, where do I start?'*



### **Spouse 3**

*...and it dawned on me if my husband was to die; with that accompanying spouse – I'm, I will be doomed.*

### **Spouse 4**

*She doesn't know that the the life [...] because you find out that you leave a husband who is a breadwinner, you probably left behind parents, or whoever, that rely on you.*

### **Spouse 8**

*Well, it makes you insecure, it's like, what if my marriage doesn't work? And you'd have nothing. You are not working, you know, sometimes, some men they change you are in a different country. What if he changes, and I've left my work at home, here I am. I, I'm not working; I've got his spouse papers, visa, that means it has to be cancelled if he says that I'm not with her anymore; so, you might ...yeah, imagine if he says 'no, we are not working'. So, in marriage you know these years people, they just get married for the sake of it. Yeah, now I'm supposed to go back home. That was something, that's something, 'cause it's like we, we, he has been working, yeah, you know, people in South Africa, what if he has changed as well? Uhm.*

### **5.5.3 Lack of personal safety and security**

Another of the observations made from the data was the lack of personal safety and security. This was tied to crime, harassment, and intimidation that some participants feared. Certain participants mentioned that they often fear for their lives and that they do not feel safe in a foreign country, even though they have secured permanent citizenship.

## **Spouse 1**

*As opposed to back home, and so that's one thing that is really that makes me anxious because I've to make sure like ok are the doors locked you know, I have to, I can't just go to any place any time. I've, I'm mindful, how secure is this place; and also, I'm, uum, I also fear for the safety of my, if my children. In terms of uuhhm, like you hear a lot of armed robbery, you hear of molestation. Not saying that those things are not there back home, but the rate at which they happen here is more alarming. So that really, issues of safety for me, for my family, is very... it's, it's something of concern.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I was ready to kill anybody who touched my children. I could hear my son shouting, 'Mommy!' Yeah, and walking and going to buy medication for my son whereby two boys approached me [...] so, I'm always very careful because here you are restricted, you don't want to go out and get robbed, because I've been robbed. Always very careful, so it's like, we restricted by area. [...] oh, I'm not a night person, eight o'clock, I'm in, but you see, from 6 am, eight, everything, I have to do, the crime was high.*

## **Spouse 7**

*I can just start from there, and rise, then they said, 'aha, I don't think it will be possible for us to to to take you, because the thing is if we employ you the moment you get some other job elsewhere, you run away.' So, I said, mmm, 'I, I, I will stay, I will stay put at Bank ABC, so just allow me to ge, to get into the system'. They said 'no, you know, what after all we are going to have some other posts so we will call you.'*

## Spouse 8

*I was scared, even walking out here. you know the stories of South Africa. I didn't even travel much. You know, police used to say, 'give us your ID', 'cause you have to go move with your ID every time and they would harass you even if you have the real ID. But still, you can see that then they want me to have have papers. They don't even believe you and then even when they look at your papers, they will tell you, 'oh, you are a newbie (mafikizolo) you just arrived yesterday' so, still they want to harass you. I was violated and you know what happened I'd just gone out the road for a tuck to the nearest shopping centre. This is my area, I live here, I'm supposed to feel free, but then no-one if the police actually that are doing that doing that to me, then where else do I find my security, when the people who are supposed to be taking care of me and protecting me are the ones that are harassing me? You cannot say this man harassed me when I am talking to the police, and they will tell you 'ugh and who are you? Are you from Zimbabwe? Ugh, you've just arrived', then they just don't even look at the person who has been harassing you.*

### 5.5.4 Public services discrimination

Some participants expressed challenges of discrimination encountered in public spaces, while others mentioned that they experienced delays in the public hospitals, and other public facilities, as a result of their immigration status. However, some did report positive experiences in certain public facilities though.

## Spouse 1

*In terms of the education facilities, they've been very, they've been very good; and very understanding, and very embracing, but with the health, again, it has been, and it has been; it has been a mixture of good and bad; because I've had an*

*experience of, uum, delivering both of my kids in a public hospital, and that's where I faced most kind of discrimination in terms of, like, in this country, where some instruction was given in local languages, and if you come up and say, 'ok what did you say?' They say, 'it's not my problem, you don't have to force me to speak English, I'm not a white person; and things like that; and for me that's where the most frustration was, because like when my, se, youngest daughter was born, she, she was put in the blue light, she had to be in the incubator for some time and maybe the nurses and health personnel in that, uuh, that place really were very, very unwelcoming, you know, and uumm, they'd say mean things, you know, like, uum, you're wasting taxpayers' money on people who, who, who, who don't want to go back to their home; we are giving them so much work, instead of just attending to a few; now there are lots of people in hospitals, because they live in our country, and so on, and this is the way that they would speak to other foreigners; you know, and I think that's where I faced the most discrimination and hate, but at the same time, maybe in that health sector, there are others who are extremely good, who would treat and talk to you as a person; because now, this thing, jobs that are just reserved for South Africans.*

## **Spouse 2**

*The hospitals yes, I've had them, I had three surgeries. Like we applied for a school, and they said we have to pay the full year's fees. Th, they told us the fees for the whole year on my husband's salary, just because we are foreigners. They specified it there because we are foreigners: surely the experience was not nice.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Yeah, the the cousin, sister, had no real papers; like real, real papers. Sho to get to the desk to register that she needed eem attention it was a nightmare. Yeah, to the extent that we had to wait almost the whole day—only someone came I don't know who was this someone who just-like felt sympathetic to us. The lady just say 'ok, can you go?' So, they just examined her, so-euh, I think in the public places I think it's hectic when you are a foreigner. Yea they don't-not; they don't treat us nice. Like, you are supposed to speak the native language, of which in many cases I can't speak. I try hard, but I can't, and they are not happy with that, especially the taxi drivers. Yeah, in the taxi the, they feel like we don't want to be part of them, and yet surely, it's a challenge.*

### **Spouse 5**

*It's like the foreign if you are a foreigner, the treatment is different. Or if even you would face harassment, you suffer. At one time, I was not even allowed to have a Learner's license, because I am "accompanying the spouse".*

### **Spouse 6**

*I've been to private hospital, I've never used a public, no. ... that are not, well, I've been to hospitals, and also, I was really pained. If you are a foreigner, you don't get the same treatment as locals.*

### **Spouse 7**

*Very close person like she was expecting, she called me in the middle of the night and told me: 'I've been sent to some hospital,' I can't remember the name, maybe when I think of it, I'll tell you, but somewhere close to Randburg. I am told the child*

*had already died. That one was a very painful experience to her, and even for for me as well, because, like, she was even saying that because you are a foreigner, you don't get the same treatment as locals, unless if maybe they could be a private hospital; but for that one, I actually, she lost her baby had to go pick her up after they did that, when they rushed to operate her. She was operated she they cleaned, you know they cleaned the womb, and all; but then it was very unfair, because I, I actually thought if she was a local, she would have gotten treatment immediately, and the child would have been alive, or they probably would have operated her, and taken the baby out. She suffered until, the, she said she was just put there on a stretcher or bed, and she was told, 'ha we will work on you later', and that was it until the following morning at 11 am. So, that one was very traumatic, and I also felt foreigners are not treated fairly.*

#### **5.5.5 Being Voiceless**

Participants reiterated that they feel as though they do not have a voice in a foreign country. They felt as though their voice is not being heard and their needs are not addressed. The sense of being voiceless can be linked to the accompanying spouse/immigration status.

#### **Spouse 1**

*For me, yeah, I think the the other thing is, uuh, is it uuh, in a way, it robs you of your voice. So in a way, it robs you of your of your voice; that's one of umm, that's one of uuum, maybe that's one of my experiences; that I found because you cannot talk much, because your pocket also has to speak, so in a way it limits you in in that particular in that particular area. There is a home there and so you find that now even you now as a spouse right in that situation, you cannot say much. You know, so, so, in, in a way, as I said, it robs your voice; and the African context*

*the perception of a wife in an African context doesn't even help at all, because now everyone sees you as a dependent. What you can say and what you cannot say, because even your, your livelihood, even your status in the country is dependent on, on this person.*

### **Spouse 2**

*I have to, I cannot do anything without consulting him.*

### **Spouse 3**

*We came for holidays here in SA, me and the kids, I had two kids, then we came in December; and then little did I know that my husband has made his mind, he had looked fo-or school places for our two kids; I didn't know I had only come for the holiday, only to be told in January that I'm looking for uniforms for my kids and and, eeee, I, eee, was ss like, 'how, haa, so should I s leave my kids or not?' and sh, just 'it is up to you and surely being a mother you cannot leave your kids?' Had no choice.*

### **Spouse 5**

*Because you are, eehm, you just followed your husband.*

### **5.5.6 Unfair justice system and regulations**

How accompanying spouse status influences one's sense of justice, security and self, and how that translates into immigration legislation were explored. Participants felt the justice system, laws and regulations were unfair to and failed the accompanying spouses.

## Spouse 1

*In a sense, that on accompanying spouse permit, you cannot work according to the laws of the country, and so in a way you are financially dependent on your spouse, and so when certain decisions are being made; even not just in the, in the confines of your home; but even ex, extended families when there're projects that's supposed to be done when the things that need a financial input; uuum it robs your voice, because you cannot be as expressive as you would if you were financially independent. Even in terms of my independent decisions, you know, because if if they say both spouses are working, and again here, it's different; you're not working, not because you cannot work, nnn, not because you you you don't have the skills and the competences to work; but then you're limited because the law does not allow you to work, and yeah, the law has come to affect, you bef, bef, because of yo, your status. So, you're happy that you're with your family, it's intact, but then it impacts on, uum, the other aspects: you being an independent woman, and also the issue is, it also brings in frustration. You know that you are competent enough to go to work, you know that you've got the skills to go and work, and you know, when you're starting your career, you have projections: you would project to say, maybe in five years' time, I'll be [...] I'd want to achieve this, in terms of my career.*

## Spouse 2

*This, we, the spouse, we need to support our husbands... anyone, I'm sorry to say this, but when you say that you're friendly to the foreigners is this the way [...] They [prospective accompanying immigrants] should investigate; they should check the rules; they should check the requirements; they should check everything; food health, facilities, resources, education; read about what are their*



*interests, when it comes to foreign nationals; what do they see as taboo, what do they see as norm? They should go do a thorough research, they should, so that if they say, 'I have decided not to go', it will be a decision they have made.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Yeah, sure, yeah, the experience is not good. Do you know, yee, besides my situation I've got a friend, she actually passed on, and and to think of it I think I really strongly believe if it wasn't for accompanying spouse permit, this woman could have been alive today; yes, the husband passed on in 2010. She was on accompanying what spouse she couldn't work, but a very much qualified from university and a very much qualified person who could actually – could have, umm secured a very good job but during that time when the husband died to process the permits to change the permits it was difficult [...] I remember someone came in as a good Samaritan and they put a wro... totally wrong permits in; yeah yes, and imagine she was coming from home thinking she will come and now fine it's all sorted I can now find a job [...] and she went into depression, and she got into depression and died. I don't know, but if... wa... I was to recommend something; I think they should also take into consideration the qualification of a person. If a person is capable to be employed if a person was employed somehow in a... professionally I think they should also consider.*

### **Spouse 4**

*Yeah, it's because you a, wi, a, a, wife, with qualifications; they would have to sit at home while they don't even want to consider it, it, it, it's unjust. It's unjust because if the husband is, let's say earning, not enough, you know, it will be so, too stre... too much.*

### **Spouse 5**

*They don't they don't even consider; they don't just care for your needs. You are not that important if you are a foreigner, and you don't have a permit, and you even if have plans, your plans squished; you can't think further, because you have a hindrance. They must treat us as normal people, and I'm not allowed to work under accompanying spouse.*

### **Spouse 6**

*Like also, this BEE thing, it sh... it has really crushed our spirits or my spirit. Specifically, uhm [...] to go through all that process [...] it's not worth it. Like, there is a time when I said, you know, what I'll just go out there, try get a job anywhere, even if it means in a shop, get something to occupy myself with. I tried to go... there is a certain orthodontist. I said, 'you know what, it's better for me to be a receptionist'; but now they tell you 'your salary is not, it's less than 3000'. Drive all the way, and also you need someone to be picking your kids, to and from school maybe, you; because you will be working awkward hours, you will need someone to be at home taking care of them. So now you think is it really worth it, I am, I would rather sit at home.*

### **Spouse 7**

*You are not really free. The country is lovely, but for foreigners, freedom is limited. I wish they would do something about it, even if it means allowing you some hours just a few hours to work. I think they should do something about it, but, because you don't have cash, you can't report anywhere, because you are a foreigner.*

## Spouse 8

*I can't open a bank account. You know, police used to say, give us your ID, cause you have to go move with your ID every time; and they would harass you, even if you have the real... but still, you can see that then they want me to have have papers. They don't even believe you and then even when they look at your papers, they will tell you, 'oh, you are a newbie (mafikizolo) you just arrived yesterday' so, still they want to harass you. I was violated and you know what happened I'd just gone out the road for a tuck to the nearest shopping centre. This is my area, I live here, I'm supposed to feel free, but then no-one if the police actually that are doing that doing that to me, then where else do I find my security, when the people who are supposed to be taking care of me and protecting me are the ones that are harassing me? You cannot say this man harassed me when I am talking to the police, and they will tell you 'ugh, and who are you? Are you from Zimbabwe? Ugh, you've just arrived', then they just don't even look at the person who has been harassing you.*

### **5.6 Challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face**

The study sought to investigate the challenges female migrants holding accompanying spouse status face and the recurrent subthemes are presented below in Figure 5.5.1 and fleshed out in Figure 5.5.2, followed by the actual participant experiences.

Figure 5.5.1 Challenges

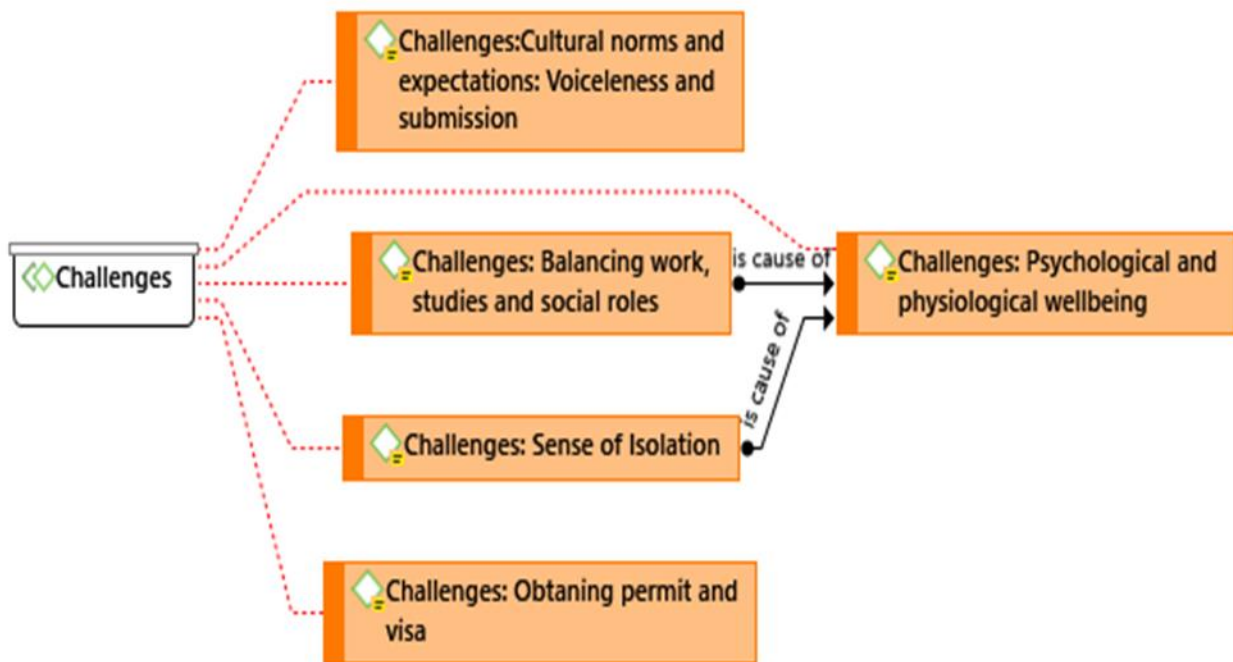
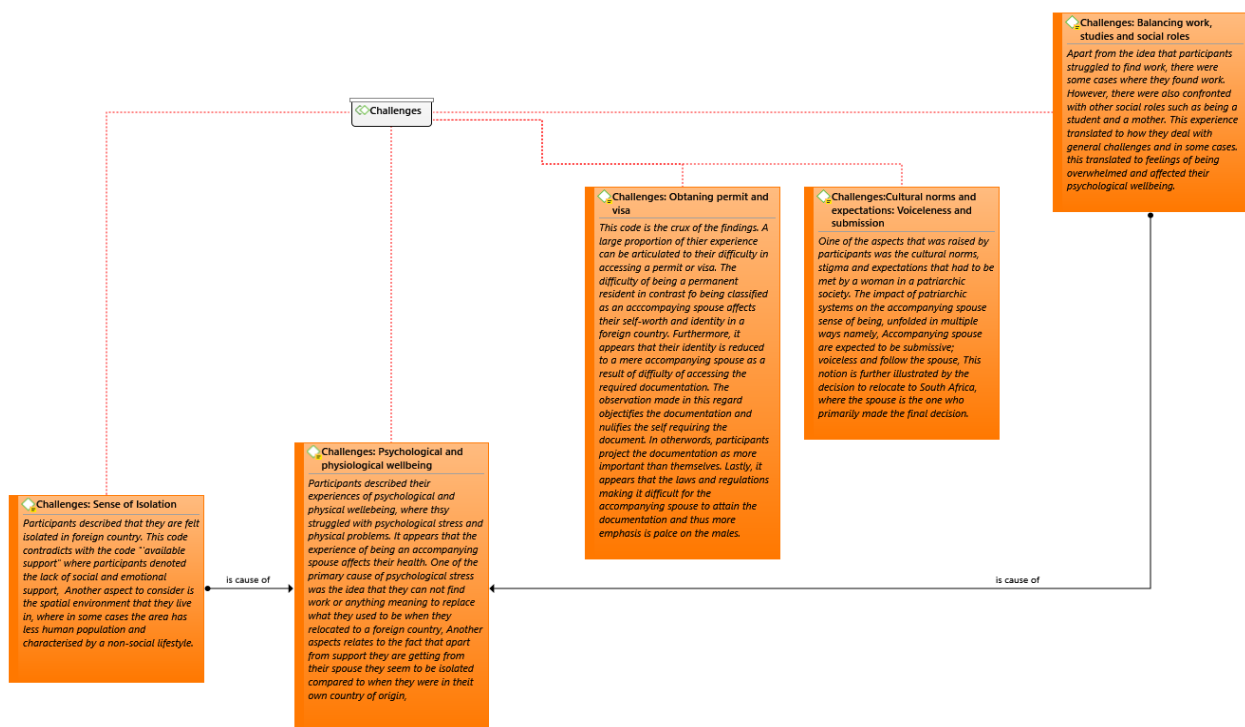


Figure 5.5. 2 Challenges



### 5.6.1 Balancing work, studies, and social roles

Apart from the notion that participants struggled to find work, there were some cases where they did find some work, with merely short-lived relief. However, they were also confronted with other social roles, such as being a student and a mother, experiences that translated to how they dealt with general challenges, and in some cases translating into feelings of being overwhelmed. In yet other cases, the challenges spiralled into affecting their psychological wellbeing.

#### Spouse 1

*In terms of supervisors and all that, it, it made me, it has made me be in school longer than I expected; and the longer you are in school, the more expensive it becomes, and then, uum, and also maybe I, had also underestimated, uum, the workload in my studies and so being away from home, I don't have that family support system that I would otherwise have back home. I think certain times I've not really been as effective as I would want, in terms of managing my home, in terms of cleaning, in terms of devoting more time to my kids, because the limited time that I have, I have to balance it between being there for the kids, taking care of my home, and also being a wife, and so those dynamics and also being uu maybe like devoting to my religious uuum... to my religion, so really, that has been a constraint; and in a way, at times, it brings in burnout, you know, and yea, and especially that I do most of my studies at night; during the day, I'm constantly tired, and so that also, uuh, just uum... increases the pressure in terms of completing my tasks, and things like that. And also trying to, to, to in terms of ummm... in terms of my standards, or my expectation on how I can run my home, you know, so instead of always, like, ok, having big meals... at times you just have a snack over lunch, and then maybe make a big meal during the night, so there are a lot of adjustments*

*that we've been able to do, in terms of uuh... how oo how I how our home is now operating. I think, I can't, I think it has really been the issue of juggling, and so I've, because of that, it's, it's difficult for me to say, I'm in control of this area because really, I haven't found a proper balance. It's an issue of compromising in one area and then [...] So the time that I devote time to this and have to compromise in something else. So, in terms of satisfaction, I don't think I'm not very, very satisfied, because school has really been taking a huge chunk... uuh... of my time.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*So, I, you, you suffer, because even my children, my last born, my son, he [...] was asking, mommy, why are you not working? You can't just be sitting around [...] He cannot understand it. He also sees me the way he his father is saying that; because I... o... when your husband is seeing you like that, you are nothing. I was studying, eeeh... up to Masters's level... eeh, I was supposed to do my dissertation this year; but because of these affairs, which were coming, I... it confuse me, so I dropped.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*In Nigeria, there was also a problem of, you know, so much traffic, so you'd find you had little time to actually concentrate on your studies; because you had to take the kids to school, but, before you know it, you have to take them back home. Like, there is a time when I said, you know, what I'll just go out there, try get a job anywhere, even if it means in a shop, get something to occupy myself with. I tried to go... there is a certain orthodontist. I said, 'you know what, it's better for me to be a receptionist'; but now they tell you 'your salary is not, it's less than 3000'. Drive all the way, and also you need someone to be picking your kids, to and from school maybe, you; because you will be working awkward hours, you will need someone*

*to be at home taking care of them. So now you think is it really worth it, I am, I would rather sit at home.*

### **Spouse 8**

*I tried looking for a job but then I realised, you know, what maybe I should study, That's, that's when I began to study for my social work degree, and so I was fulltime, because she was going to school; I'll have to fetch her from school at one, the then I would study during the day, and during the night as well, and then yeah, everything went well, until it was my 4th year, yes, when I had my second-born.*

### **5.6.2 Obtaining permit and work visa**

This code represents the crux of the findings. A large proportion of participant experiences can be attributed to their difficulty in accessing a permit or work visa. The difficulty of being a permanent resident in contrast to being classified as an accompanying spouse affects one's sense of self-worth and identity in a foreign country. Furthermore, it appears that women's identity is reduced to a mere dependent spouse as a result of the difficulty of accessing the required documentation that enables them to take up appropriate gainful employment. The observation made in this regard objectifies the documentation for the women and nullifies the self. In other words, participants project the documentation as more important than themselves. Besides, it appears that the laws and regulations make it difficult for the accompanying spouse to attain the documentation and thus render them inferior, placing more emphasis on the males.

### **Spouse 1**

*And so, even when I was looking for a job, most of them wanted someone maybe who already had a work permit; and yet at Home Affairs they they wanted one to produce a letter of offer and so that's where that's where the problem was so*

*how do I get, uhm... a letter of offer, when they first want a work permit and how do I get a work permit? Because I thought, maybe it was going to be a lot easier for me to get a study permit, as opposed to getting a work... a a a, a work permit. And so, in, in, in a way, my studying... I saw my studying as an advancement in towards my career. So instead of just saying, ok, what were you doing if say you have to apply for a job in future? You would be like, what were you doing this, this period you know.*

## **Spouse 2**

*It was the most difficult and excruciating process ever. The question is, how long it took you it took me days before I could even get to the door of the embassy with my children, queuing every morning took me days to get to the door. If you entered it was fine, but it took me days to get to the door, because after when I eventually got to the door, I submitted my documents weeks after they told me that there are documents missing; it was crazy at a point, I, I couldn't take my children there anymore, because I felt every time I go, I had to pull them from school, because they only work during school days. Because you have to be there before they open. If not, you can as well forget it, because they get to be a point where a certain point will tell you that you have to come tomorrow the next day the same process. I can't remember how long... or, or two. But sometimes it takes weeks, yeah. I don't remember how long, but it's quite a while, but sometimes it takes weeks. It [the experience] never gave me [any idea of what lay ahead] because I've, n I've, I've... I was desperately needing to join my husband, so i it never occurred to me that you know any of that was going to be a problem it never occurred to me. That they [children] kept on asking, 'mom, when will we go...' 'Just wait... So soon...' And and we have men who have muscles who are pushing their way forward what*



*will you do. You know, the same experience I had here when eeh before the that we had to go to Randburg, pushing we had to just get in... You don't go with them [children] they think you are lying that [you have children] and then we stayed the whole morning... My, my children really had a bad time. We left at 3 pm yeah... [there are these agents who have] piles [of passports] and they are attended to faster than you. Now when we eventually got in and had to get the next invitation to stay it took one and a half years before mine was issued, the children had theirs issued almost immediately; mine took one and a half years. How can you travel? You can't travel! You cannot move around, and when they eventually issued it, they gave me one year. The second time, it took slightly over a year, and they gave me nine months! [laughs] It gets interesting. I said to myself, is it just me, or are there other women who suffer this way. So, it's not. It's not been easy at all, to have, eeeh, documents to stay in a country where you have no visa to even progress.*

### **Spouse 3**

*And the fact that my permit didn't allow me to work was another, mmm, issue, so six months I had to stop.*

### **Spouse 4**

*He is there, he manages to, to, to get permits, but me, I couldn't you know you have come here you put children young children in schools It to those days; it would it was easy because it w---a..., I think it took about four-five months; the company was doing it for us.*

### **Spouse 5**

*It was not difficult, but the difficulty is what they didn't give me; instead of giving me an accompanying visa, they had to give me a visitor's visa, which gave me trouble here, now, because I was supposed to obtain for the accompanying spouse. It's still the same because I applied for the permanent res in 2000. It's now – about, 2013, 2013, up to now, I am still waiting for the permanent res; and without the work permit, you get the job, which you are not qualified, which you are less qualified for. Also, the challenge of getting a permanent res; my husband, we applied same day with my husband, but my he got his two years ago. I'm still waiting for mine, that's the challenge so far. You phone and they are saying it's on final stage you phone they say on final stage, up to now, it's still on final stage; and they say, if you cross the border, you are done for; so that's stressful.*

### **Spouse 6**

*Uuuh... I think it was easy because the school was involved the school was involved so we were given the uuh motivation letter from the school so for us to get so it wasn't a problem.*

### **Spouse 7**

*That was a major setback, so we decided to go the route of applying for permanent residence; surprising enough, my kid my daughter got her PR; my, in less than two months, he had gotten his PR; but for me, up to now, it's not there, so, huh, it was a major blow; a major setback.*

## Spouse 8

*First, we got the visa, ooh we, for me I had to use my money, which I was working to get a visa for the first time, I came yeah, cause we needed to have R2000 [in travellers' cheques] so I had to save. Travellers' cheques, yes, so had to save from the money that I was working, and then that's what I used to come for the first time.*

### 5.6.3 Psychological and physiological wellbeing

Participants described their experiences of psychological and physical well-being, where they struggled with psychological stress and physical problems. It appears that the experience of being an accompanying spouse affects their health. One noted the primary causes of psychological stress to have been the idea that they cannot find work or anything meaningful to replace what they used to be, prior to their relocation to a foreign country, where another of the aspects relates to the fact that, apart from the support they are getting from their spouse, they seem to be isolated compared to when they were in their own country of origin.

## Spouse 1

*Mentality, I don't think so, because even when I'm sleeping, my mind would be active; thinking about how I'm going to juggle things, you know, how do I help with homework, and doing this, and so in terms of mentally, I don't think really, uhh I'm really as healthy as I should be. In terms of phy... physical; because and sometimes I have fatigue, it may affect you negatively, and also the issue of insecurity; it breeds a lot of insecurity when you ha... when you have like in my own experience, the time that my husband gets very sick, honestly. Like [whispers] I'm in a foreign country, what happens if he dies, how am I going to take care of his kids, am I going to go back home and if I go back home" People have, have they know coping*

*mechanisms. because there're certain things that shock me when I go home. How do you do everything, how do you do this? So now. if something happens to him. where do I start from? And so, in a way that breeds insecurity, it, it, it breeds fear, you know. You know, like, this last time my husband called me, is like, I'm in an accident, and I'll be like [whispers] how bad is it? Maybe he doesn't want to tell me, because it's over the phone, and you know, and now you start to think: 'the kids, what am I going to do with, where do I start from, even if I stay in this family, in this country where do I start?'*

## **Spouse 2**

*Because it was frustrating, it was if there're, there're people whose hearts are not strong, they will go into depression. It's, uuum, at first initially it didn't seat well because now you have to make so many changes and it affects everybody, not just me, not just my husband the children as well [...] Exactly so at first it was not easy and it affected my health that's... and and it affected my health. I never stayed without a job, never. Now you have to cut down even beyond the barest minimum, so it's it was challenging; it was traumatic; it was depressing. [...] to be able to overcome all the issues of not working for seven years, but it's not easy; so I had to keep my life busy and did the work, so I am doing something: if I'm not cleaning; I'm scrubbing; I'm jumping; I'm running; if I'm not flying; I just keep my mind busy. Oh, my word, there was a time I was talking to myself – to the walls. And my husband came back, he was just there, 'I'm ok, what's wrong what happened?' He said, 'you were talking to the wall', I said 'no, I wasn't' he kept quiet, you know, subconsciously again I resume my talk again. He said no, this is not right. So, what he did to take that out every now and again, he'd give me a call. He just wants to know, how I am, ok? It was really bad, and my children noticed it.*

### Spouse 3

*I was a teacher working already, but there 2007 I was there fulltime, housewife; the experience that I have never dreamt of. I was, was devastated; I was soo much depressed, to tell the truth, and, it put me in a, about very awkward situation. Should I leave my family and go back to Zimbabwe? Should I divorce this whole thing, and take my kids back? But looking at it all again, it was like taking my kids back to Zimbabwe, the economic hardships; and to divorce, that was for what? And yeah, I had no choice, I have to stay as a fulltime housewife, with no maid to help me in the household chores, it's very difficult, you are not used to that. So, my life was so very miserable, to, to, to say the the truth, I didn't like it. I never planned anything of that nature in my life, but, but there I was stuck in the-e midst of things; it was not nice, and it's not even nice to think about anyway. It's only that I'm here, doing this interview, but to rewind all that, it's not it was not it was is not a good experience. It's ahh uhh I I at some point, I actually go to the hospital; I actually went to the hospital and sick; they just advised me to live a normal life and I asked, 'what do you mean?' and the they said 'ee, try to be content with what you have' and I knew exactly; for me to, to, to, to take that or to, to swallow that, I, I it was difficult; because what was, ee, ee disturbing me; I couldn't tell anyone, surely what was disturbing me was. That was not me; yes, so at some point, yes; I got the message from the hospital [sighs] Yeah. I actually had problems. Ulcers, and to the point, that I could just, I mean, like, fell down or whatever, it was serious, and I really knew for sure that it was depression; maybe because even my efficiency at home my [sighs] communication with the kids; my what it was, just down my system was just down. You know that kind of life, yeah, I could tell it was depression. I didn't want to see people, didn't want to associate with anyone, especially my friends,*

*whom I knew were working, nothing is changing. So; and people are trying to give you hope, and life and what; but to you, it's all. That self-esteem you don't have, uuumm, you feel you can't you, you, you are sooo, like I don't know; even disabled, people are, I think, they are even much better, because they have, and there you are --- I --I just sit there.*

*Yeah, sure, yeah, the experience is not good; do you know yee...; besides my situation, I've got a friend. She actually passed on, and and to think of it, I think I really strongly believe if it wasn't for accompanying spouse permit this woman could have been alive today. She was on 'accompanying'... what? 'spouse'; she couldn't work, but a very much qualified from university and a very much qualified person who could actually—could have, umm, secured a very good job, but during that time, when the husband died, to process the permits to change the permits, it was difficult; and she got into depression and died. I'm telling you that's serious, I don't know, but i i it's it actually impacts a lot people's lives. [...] people are depressed; people are suffering; and you know, it's not right; yeah.... I... I... went through that experience, and it was not right; the kids are out there; they are suffering.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*... because now your social life is affected; you don't know anyone around and also, when you are at your lowest, that's when you face most problems; I think because you wouldn't have... uuu... learnt how you go around; how to adapt, how to adjust. Eeh, yeah, even the husband, you find out that you are angry at him for no reason.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*You are done for; so that's stressful... uummm, and in society, you lose your esteem.*

## Spouse 6

*[Sighs] Anyway, but anyway, I think I the first time was so sad, hey. I was depressed, cause at a certain point I could lock myself and start crying. Yeah, but, and I remember this other day, my husband would find me; the eyes are swollen, what's wrong with you? and I couldn't disclose. I was a short-tempered person, I could sta-----y angry without speaking to anyone; just being in my own cocoon.*

## Spouse 7

*I sat there, and cried; and, and, and ... thought and did all sorts of things, but it didn't change anything. You just sit, you know; like you were saying. There are times when you sit there, and you cry because staying at home is not your portion. You don't want it, but you can't go out there to penetrate the market; the job market. Like also, this BEE thing ... it... eish..., it has really crushed our spirits; or my spirit. At the end of the day, we discover, you develop some diseases - high blood pressure, you know even. It's true yeah, because, before you know it, stress is continuing to grow in you.*

## Spouse 8

*I am fi... healthy. I'm healthy, you try to exercise.*

### 5.6.4 Sense of Isolation

Participants described how they felt isolated in a foreign country. This code contradicts with the code "available support", where participants denoted the lack of social and emotional support. Another aspect to consider is the spatial environment that they live in, wherein some cases, the area has less human population; and is characterised by a non-social lifestyle.

## Spouse 1

*I had also underestimated, uum... the workload in my studies; and so being away from home, I don't have that family support system; that I would otherwise have back home, you know, so I'm supposed to be with the kids 24/7; and so when the kids are sick; when the kids are on holiday; all that... uuhm; affects my, my, my progress... and so maybe if I would have, maybe it's the... maybe say more finances; it would be easy to hire somebody to help, in terms of looking after the kids; or if maybe I had relatives around some of the weekends; or some of the days when I would be extremely busy; it would be easy for me maybe to ask for external help, in terms of uum, looking after uuum, the children. So in terms of uum, social orientation, I think that's where the major thing and, I, I was coming from a place where I... had a very big and strong uhm... uhm... ss... support group through friends; and through family, and so when I came here, I had to start making new friends, and it, you know, there are a lot of social dynamics, you know; and so, uum... I don't have as many friends as I used to do back home, but at least I've had the privilege of having some... a few good friends; and so one thing about studying again is when you have few friends and you are studying it means you don't devote as much time to them as, as, as you would want to, you know. If if you were not studying, and so that in a way brings in isolation, because already the the the circle of friends is limited, and then coupled with the being busy with school, it even diminish diminishes the more; because you don't have time to really nurture relationships as much as you would probably want to.*

*I think it's also the issue of balancing time, you know; as I said, I don't have a very big support system, and so the issue of taking care of the kids, the issue of taking care of the house, the issue of doing my work; and so that in a way can also be be*



*frustrating, because certain times when you need people they distance themselves because [...] and so because back home we raise children as a [...] as, as, a collective; and then but here a parent has to be hands-on and so that's of one thing that I appreciate is that it changed my focus to say, like, you know what life has to be, it should be a balance between a career and also because I'm here, so really, in terms of relationships, it's mainly the ones back... uum... back home. At certain times, you just saying, it's... you just have to be self-centred to say, ok this person is there... there're family is supposed to help.*

### **Spouse 3**

*[...] didn't want to, to, to see them, I had nothing to share with anyone anyway. No-one to talk to, no one to laugh with, that kind of life. Very boring and, mind you, I am just coming in a new country, I didn't know how to start off what to do or what, but there I was I didn't want to meet with anyone.*

### **Spouse 4**

*So, coming here, I, I, I, yeah. It's like you you suffer socially because now your social life is affected, you don't know anyone around; I have to stay with children; and then when we yeah, he got involved with this Zambian. Yes, we are we were very connected because our church is United Methodist. We help all our church members; we're in the community.*

### **Spouse 6**

*And we had one, so otherwise, our minds were divided, because we were like, now, we really know what is going on. Of course, we had we have got families back home, but uuh... it's sort...*

## Spouse 8

*See, living in a complex, you all mind your own business; you don't interact much.*

*Hey, so it's like we all mind our own business.*

### 5.6.5 Cultural norms and expectations: Voicelessness and submission

One of the aspects that were raised by participants was the cultural norms, stigma, and expectations that had to be met by a woman in a patriarchal society. The impact of patriarchal systems on the accompanying spouse's sense of being unfolded in multiple ways, namely; spouses are expected to be submissive; voiceless and follow their male spouse. This notion is further illustrated by the decision to relocate to South Africa, where the latter is the one who primarily made the final decision.

## Spouse 1

*Immediately after our wedding, I came over here; what I think, it's that orientation to say an African woman is supposed to be strong, is supposed to be resilient. She's supposed to, you know [laughing] you're supposed to be resilient until help really is is not something I've been that has even crossed my mind, you know. I, I, [laughs] of course, I need help, but I don't think I can get myself going to seek for help because remember, I think I'm not in the danger zone. For me, yeah, I think the the other thing is, uuh, is it, uuh, in a way, it robs you of your voice, you know? So, so in, in a way... as I said... it robs your voice and the African context the perception of a wife in an African context doesn't even help at all. It robs your independence as well as it robs you, your voice; seeing it deep from the African uuh perception of a woman, the roles and responsibility of a woman, it puts you in a very vulnerable situation; seeing it from a, uum a head male headship dominated household, it can also put a woman on a vulnerable situation; not in terms of abuse*

– of course, in other cases there could be abuse – but somehow it robs you again of your voice, and so it robs you that voice; so mainly when you look at it from the perspective from God's perspective, it really gets to, uum, affect you; it can affect you in a negative way, like as I said, it's difficult to say no in some of the cultures.

#### **Spouse 4**

... Before we came here, he cannot understand it. He also sees me the way he his father, is saying that because I, oh, when your husband is seeing you like that, this Zambian woman had the audacity to even phone me, and sh shout at me that why are you not uuh car... taking care of your husband if he [laughs] I say is an old man, why would I be running after a old man, w... when I have got children to carry? So I would rather take care of my children, because if it was me working I don't know, how I would have re... maybe we would also have treated our men badly; I don't know, but now, from the position of the woman; you would see that some things you swallow, you just go on and forge ahead.

#### **Spouse 5**

We migrated here in 2000... 7; my husband came in Mm... May; and I I had to follow on June. It was not in our plan, you see, I was not I was not part; I am not agreeing at first; because I didn't want to leave my homeland, and also it was not easy to st... to stay with the in-laws, it was not easy for me. And now, I said, yoh now, it, now it is starting again; you want to leave me with your parents, no, no. They are staying in Masvingo; in Harare; but you could feel the punch of them. The pressure to have given my husband, also, because I, I, I couldn't separate for like continue separate; and separate; and separate. So, I didn't want to stay at home, I was just following.

## Spouse 6

I see the past as a past, and I've learnt, I've grown, even much more in my decision-making as a mother, [laughs] as a wife; as wife, as a mother.

## Spouse 7

*My husband told me you know, what I've been given this assignment to go to Nigeria and the thing is, I move around with my family [...] We were told, as usual, we move as a family. My husband switched; says you know what I won't allow you to to work in Nigeria; like in any bank; you just have to be at home. I am providing for everything; uuh, like yeah, the package for him was quite good; but for me, it was something else; but then you can't, you know, you can't continue to argue at the end of the day. As a wife, you submit, so you just let it be. My husband also doesn't like someone who travels to South Africa to buy things; you know, he doesn't like that, so he said, if you have got a way of getting those things here, then it's fine, you can get into the selling business. You can't travel there; you know; I don't like a wife who just goes everywhere. Yeah, so I had to sit ahh, at home, then I decided to join Table Charm. Like, I started to sell Table Charm products, at least they would bring them right at your doorstep. So yeah, and also the fact that as a couple you have to stay put together [...] No, it was like I am forced to.*

## Spouse 8

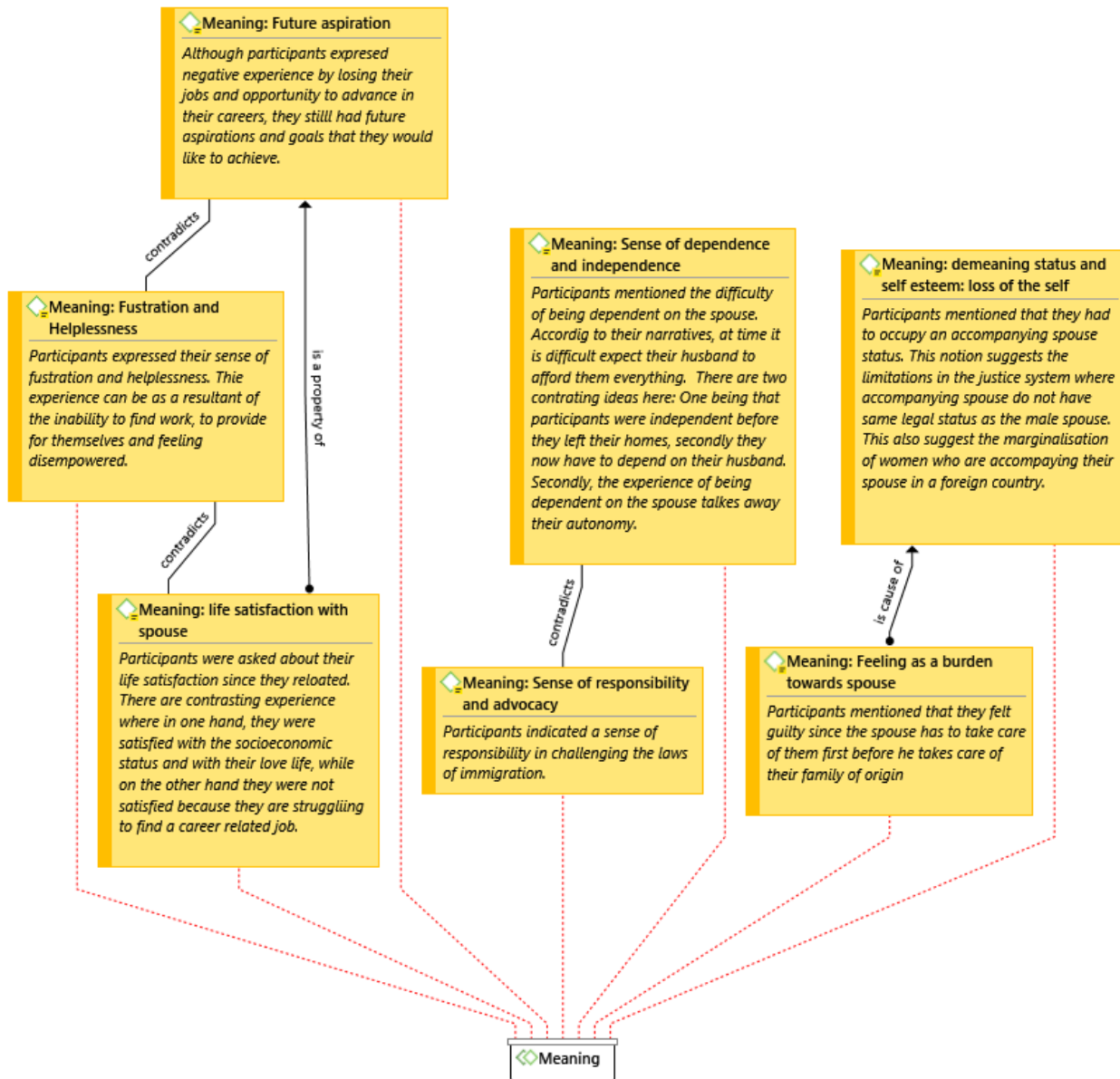
*I came, I went back home, and then when we got married in September... that's when he realised I had to come here to live with my husband; that's when I migrated to South Africa and was, no... uuumm... September; it's, it wasn't September; then in November, we got married; that's when we had our wedding actually, change exchanged vows; what made me come migrate to South Africa it was*

*marriage, cause my husband came here to South Africa; look for a job; as you know the state of our country it was really bad around 2008; so he came here in September. He was still my boyfriend actually [laughs]. So no, he didn't come in September, he came in March 2007. I remember 'cause it was really cold in June. It was his first winter, and I stayed in Zimbabwe, and then we were dating then; so, he used to come from here to come to Zimbabwe to see me every time. Then, uuu, when we got serious in 2008, he realised he has to get married and things were better now; he could afford also to get married as well, 'cause you know, without money, you cannot pay lobola and all that.*

## **5.7 Meaning Making**

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of female migrants from other African countries accompanying their immigrant spouses in South Africa. Faced with a situation where everything seems foreign and, in some cases, this is indeed the case, the lives of the female spouses revolve frequently around the task of meaning-making. Figure 5.6 presents a summary of the subthemes that were derived from the participant narratives in this respect.

**Figure 5.6 Meaning Making**



### 5.7.1 Demeaning status and low/poor self-esteem: loss of the self

Participants reported how they had to bear the brunt of accompanying spouse status, a notion that suggests limitations in the justice system, where the accompanying spouse does not have the same legal status and rights as their male spouse. This also suggests the marginalisation of women who are accompanying their spouse in a foreign country.

### **Spouse 1**

*... But then I realised that, uuum, it was not as easy and straightforward as it was; because I, my permit only allowed me to stay in the country; my husband was on, eem, uuhb, a work permit; but I was on accompanying spouse; uuhm, it's difficult to specify; because certain times, I just go for the sake of visiting. And also, because had brought, I was brought up in ee... in a community where you had to be there physically, of uum, of a spouse, and so on; I think in a way, uhm, being on that, uuhm, accompanying, uum, spouse uuhm, permit; it, it makes you vulnerable. So now if I'm I have this status in a foreign country, where, where, where does that place me?*

### **Spouse 2**

*To stay in a country where you have no visa to even progress, it doesn't really it doesn't say anything; it, uum, there is no confidence in it; how will I, what's the best word to describe what I'm trying to say? You actually feel like a reject.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Aa, I ee, I didn't... enjoy the moment of setting my foot in SA, because that's when I lost my job. I lost who I was; I lost the the qualities; I couldn't you know when you are are a teacher you always feel you can help the next person. I'm, you can impart knowledge to kids, very boring; and mind you, I am just coming in a new country, I didn't know how to start off; what to do, or what and, and now, as I look back, I think it was because I was not going to work. Because I, I always thought was looking down upon me; like I, I felt I was useless in the home, and he would like act as if that was what in my what was in my head. It's because you are not working, it's*

*because yeah, so wha, what can you say when you are not working? That's what I was feeling.*

*You want to be with the family, but at the same time, you have to; y-; to be someone else who you... en... you had never thought you would become that confidence in you is gone; that self-esteem you don't have. Aah, you feel you can't... yo... you are so; like I don't know; even disabled. People are, I think they are even much better; because they have their way to to maneuver, and there you are; I...I just sit there.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*They [confidence levels] were low they mmm fluctuated.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*You are not that important; I can't feel confidence. Confidence come when you are given the opportunity to do so that sometimes they overreact. They must treat us as normal people; you are saying that you are not as equal to your husband, because we can't all be engineers; to tell the... like you didn't achieve anything in life. They start to compare, like, what of now this one yet in my country I could work.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*Uhm, you actually feel ok, at times that self-esteem in you is really put down; that confidence that you had as you grew up; and as you started working and uumm, at times, you feel a bit worthless, though you are not supposed, as a Christian, you are not supposed to, but you just that thought of just, you know, thinking you are not going to work, really makes you feel unworthy. So, you, it's difficult, you can't; you try to explain, you know, what it's; only my husband who's going to work, but it*



*doesn't really make sense to people, because they think you are coming from South Africa.*

### **Spouse 8**

*I'm much confident, I've gained more self-esteem, 'cause it's before; no. I wasn't that person who could actually speak more; I would be an indoor person, but now I could, I can find friends.*

### **5.7.2 Feeling as a burden to spouse**

Participants mentioned feeling a sense of guilt, since the spouse has to take care of them first before he takes care of their family of origin.

### **Spouse 1**

*So, if you look at it from that perspective, some people might even, uuhm... be resentful of you; toward his family; and I faced from a few family members here, who felt a sense of entitlement to say, 'like, ok this person is our brother is our uncle he's supposed to do that for us of which he used to do for them before and now you step in and the fact that you are not contributing to the financial uuumm umm financial thing in the family, it's like now he's assumed responsibility of you'; and so in a way others would feel offended, to say 'like, ok now he's not stepping in as he used to and so this is the person she's now taking him away from us and maybe she's the one telling him not to be supporting us'; because really black tax or red ta, tax the way they call it, as Africans, really it's not just about the nuclear family it's about extended family. There is a home there, is a home, and so you find that now, even you now as a spouse right in that situation you cannot say much, because now everyone sees you as a dependent. If you are an independent woman*

*working, and making your own money, they would be very careful of what they say; they won't see you like the other person your spouse he's doing you a favour.*

#### **Spouse 2**

*It's like you have issues; people are like, you have issues because you are not doing anything. It doesn't really, it doesn't say anything; it, uum, there is no confidence in it, how will I; what's the best word to describe what I'm trying to say? You actually feel like a reject.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*I feel that I am underprivileged.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*I'm like, aah, I think I'll be, ah; it will be better for me to be going home.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*Imagine; and also, you are actually stressing him as well, because salaries in here are generally low.*

### **5.7.3 Frustration and Helplessness**

Participants expressed their sense of frustration and helplessness, experiences attributable to their inability to find, and work, to provide for themselves and their family in addition to feeling disempowered.

#### **Spouse 2**

*You cannot be in a particular place for years, it's not possible. Now you have to cut down even beyond the barest minimum.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Nothing is changing, so – and people are trying to give you hope and life and what; but to you, it's all clear, that the... there is no hope at all; to me, there was no hope. It was not a good experience; aa I would wouldn't want I don't know even if I am to to to meet someone who is gonna get into my shoes, it's unbearable. You want to be with the family, but at the same time, you have to y- to be someone else, who you; en, you had never thought you would become. You feel like, you are so dumb. That self-esteem; you don't have, ah, you feel you can't, yo, yo, you... are so-like I don't know - even disabled people are; I think, they are even much better because they have and there you are; I, I just sit there.*

### **Spouse 5**

*I feel that I am underprivileged because with all the effort you put to go to school; surely, it's not. They don't, they don't even consider; they just don't care; because you are, eehm, you just followed your husband.*

### **Spouse 7**

*You are not used to this sort of begging lifestyle. You just want to go there do your things. Not that you are not giving your husband his position, but you are so used to doing your things. When you are seated at home you have no option, [...] what can you do in South Africa.*

#### **5.7.4 Life satisfaction with spouse**

Participants responded to their life satisfaction, since they relocated to SA with mixed results and contrasting experiences; where, on the one hand, some were satisfied with the socioeconomic status and with their love life, while on the other hand, others were

not satisfied, because they struggled to find a career-related job, much less gainful employment of some kind, due to their accompanying spouse status.

### **Spouse 1**

*Really, in terms of satisfaction. Uum, I'm not very satisfied, because I've not been nurturing them, as much as I would want to, and so I've missed out on important, uum, events in the life of my loved ones; because, because I have to commit to, to, to studying. So, in terms of satisfaction, I don't think I'm not, very, very satisfied; because school has really been taking a huge chunk, uuh, of my time; I'm satisfied in the terms of recreation, I think; there're many more options here.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Yeah, that one; it was no there, was a time when things were not so well; because I, I, always thought was looking down upon me; like, I, I felt I was useless in the home, and he would, like act as if that was what in my what was in my head. Let me say, yes, because our aunty came from Zimbabwe. It's because you are not working, it's because yeah, so wha... what can you say, when you are not working? That's what I was feeling, and I don't know, it was – at some point, our marriage was not nice, yeah specifically; to seat us down, and to try to talk to us; it, it won't help, even if people try to talk; to talk to you; try to look at the other side; when this side is so clear to you, that I am there. You want to be with the family, but at the same time you have to; y... to be someone else, who you, en you had never thought you would become.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*He cannot understand it. He also sees me the way he, his father is saying that because I... o...; when your husband is seeing you like that. My husband had an affair for a long time because he... he realised that I had... I, I, I, was; re you know where you are... you are nothing; and I realised that I will also help a lot of women in those cases, especially the Zimbabweans, because you find out that you fight a fight the husband. Yes, when he realise his mistake he comes back and (laughs), we move on I would say it's; b... it's; it was eeh, rocky [laughs] but working on it.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*I appreciate it.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*Even you can, you can book a ticket now, I can go, so I think he came up to his senses. I think I think this led him to realise she means what she said (S), but without her, I'll be nothing, yeah. I'll be nothing here, so in the morning, so he says, 'ah, ok, forgive me', blah blah; so, I said, 'ok', so I ehm you know. So since that the relationship has been so good, and so, of course, he, we are such a family; that we don't, aah, speak negative things in the presence of our children; and I think that fight, it was so loud that in the morning my firstborn just came to me: 'mommy what was happening last night'. So---o I said nothing, and she said, 'no mom, tell me, I heard you, you were arguing, so you ... of course, the the thing was about her; 'cause as we're getting prepared for her engagement, there were some some other issues that we were supposed to talk about, so I was talking about that; so he was like, 'why didn't you tell me?' I'm like 'now I'm telling you, go!' [continues to laugh]; I'm going you can book the ticket now, I'll be gone tomorrow, I don't have*

*any problem, and g..., mind you, don't think that when I'm going I'm going home, I'll be going for good; He was like, oh, sorry, forgive me, I think I was I lost up my mind. So, I told her, and she was like, so, I he thinks that he can stay for some months without you here; and sometime, that we pass through but as a child of God you need to know that I think this is the devil that was just trying to interrupt us and divide us, but otherwise the relationship has grown with the kids as well.*

### **Spouse 7**

*Yes, and for, for you to say, you know I need to go back to my country, and start looking for something else to do, it means you're, your marriage will crumble.*

### **Spouse 8**

*I'm now satisfied and happily ever married; happily married.*

### **5.7.5 Sense of dependence and independence**

Participants cited the difficulty of being dependent on the spouse in every area of their lives. According to their narratives, at times it is difficult to expect their husbands to afford them everything. However, there are two contrasting ideas here, where, on the one hand, participants were independent before; they left their home countries, and on the other hand, they now have to depend on their husbands in a foreign language. Moreover, the experience of being dependent on the spouse takes away their autonomy.

### **Spouse 1**

*...and uumm, and this is the best that I can be, and possibly be, and I hope to attain that; because I had to also, uumm, be in conversation with my husband [laughs] uumm, it's difficult for me to answer that; uuh, in terms of the issue of independence, it, it also comes with responsibility, because, uum, when*

*when I was back home, I was single, I didn't have any kids; I didn't have as much responsibility, that I; responsibilities that I have now; and so, uuh, it's two different phases in life; and the older you become, the more independent you, you, you get; so, uumm... I can't really say that maybe I'm independent because I came here. I'm more independent, because I came here, but maybe I'm more independent because of responsibilities that come with the phase of life that I'm in [both laugh]; so whether that is forced, or deliberate I don't know but [laughs]; In a sense that on accompanying spouse permit you cannot work according to the laws of the country, and so in a way, you are financially dependent on your spouse, and so when certain decisions are being made, even not just in the in the confines of your home, but even exs... ss... extended families; when there're projects that's supposed to be done; when the things that need a financial input, uuum, it robs your voice; because you cannot be as expressive as you would if you were financially independent. So, in a way, it robs you of your... of your voice; that's one of... uuumm... that's one of uuum... maybe that's one of my experiences that I found. Even in terms of my independent decisions; you know, because if if they say both spouses are working, and again here it's different; you're not working, not because you cannot work; nnn... not because you, you, you don't have the skills... and the competences to work, and yeah; the law has come to affect you bef... bef... because of yo... yo... your status; so you're happy that you're with your family's intact, but then it impacts on, uum, the other aspects; you being an independent woman. Because now, you become more of a dependent on your spouse, not saying that it's a bad thing; but uum, it limits some of uuum, the things that you do if you were financially stable; and that financial independence gives you a voice.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I have to, I cannot do anything without consulting him. [bursts into laughter]*

## **Spouse 5**

*The pressure to have given my husband, also because I, I, I couldn't separate for like continue separate; and separate; and separate; I don't have that independence.*

## **Spouse 6**

*Aah, as I've already said; being now, a housewife where you hardly have any income depending upon the husband. Aaah, you had your own account; where the money was coming in; and at this point time, you are like you want to buy something; but you can't, because you have got nothing. I've grown in different areas, and the relationship was really changed, and he has got saying; because of some situation, you lea... you tend to not agree.*

## **Spouse 7**

*You are not used to this sort of begging lifestyle. You just want to go there do your things. [It's] not you, but now when you are seated at home you have no option; You have to be saying 'for tomatoes, please can I have money for tomatoes!' True! Yeah, ye... like we, we, we are not really saying husbands don't provide, they do. You are given a car, but you can't say – each time – 'fuel, more fuel, please'. So, you would rather have a situation where you are working as well as prov... like bringing the money together.*



### **Spouse 8**

*And you want to withdraw the minimum or a hundred rand minimum; it just rings to somebody else's phone to say [laughs]; it like you are controlled, you have to use... someone has to see how much you have used from his account; not your account: what did you buy? where did you buy it" and what time? so you not independent and someone is watching you.*

#### **5.7.6 Sense of responsibility and advocacy**

Participants indicated a sense of responsibility in challenging the laws of immigration if there were to be availed a platform to do so.

### **Spouse 3**

*You know, there is something in me that always tells me, given the opportunity, I can I can bring one change somewhere; somehow; specially in people's minds, I think I have that in me, that I... if I get there, given the opportunity; I can do something. Sho... yeah... I feel if I get an opportunity to just go back home and do something, I would love to go there home there and do something.*

#### **5.7.7 Future aspiration**

Although participants expressed the negative experiences of losing their jobs, independence, and opportunities to advance in their careers, they still had future aspirations and goals that they were hopeful they would attain.

### **Spouse 1**

*Uum, at the moment; I'm planning on, uumm... of course, I as I was just saying; I was I used to be a career-driven person. So, now, I'm also thinking of going back in terms of, uum... developing myself in my career, and then look for a job*

*pertaining to this, and so what we are working on? Is, ...uuh he's also making a transition from ...uum from formal employment into business; and so, it will really help if he goes like full time in business because that will help in terms of uumm the flexibility uuh uuh of time where like (S. He doesn't have to report to a certain) Mt. To anyone yes (S. Place in a certain time) uuhm that will really help in terms of my career advancement as well so yea it would in a way help in my career advancement because I've devoted all this time to being a stay at home mom so (laughs) it's time for me to make a transition.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*Though I intend to maybe do a bit of volunteering work, there is work to be done. They also d... feed the people with HIV, and so on. So, what I am planning to be, doing, is to volunteer.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*My goal is to have my own company.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*I said 'I'm done with teaching', and apart from apart from doing school, the other option that I was looking for was to do business: buy things from here and sell, send them back home, and find, oh, just find a tender; you buy the the things that they have told you to to to buy [...] on my heart, that regardless of wh... probably if I say I'll do the school; but there's still business, it's on my heart.*

#### **Spouse 8**

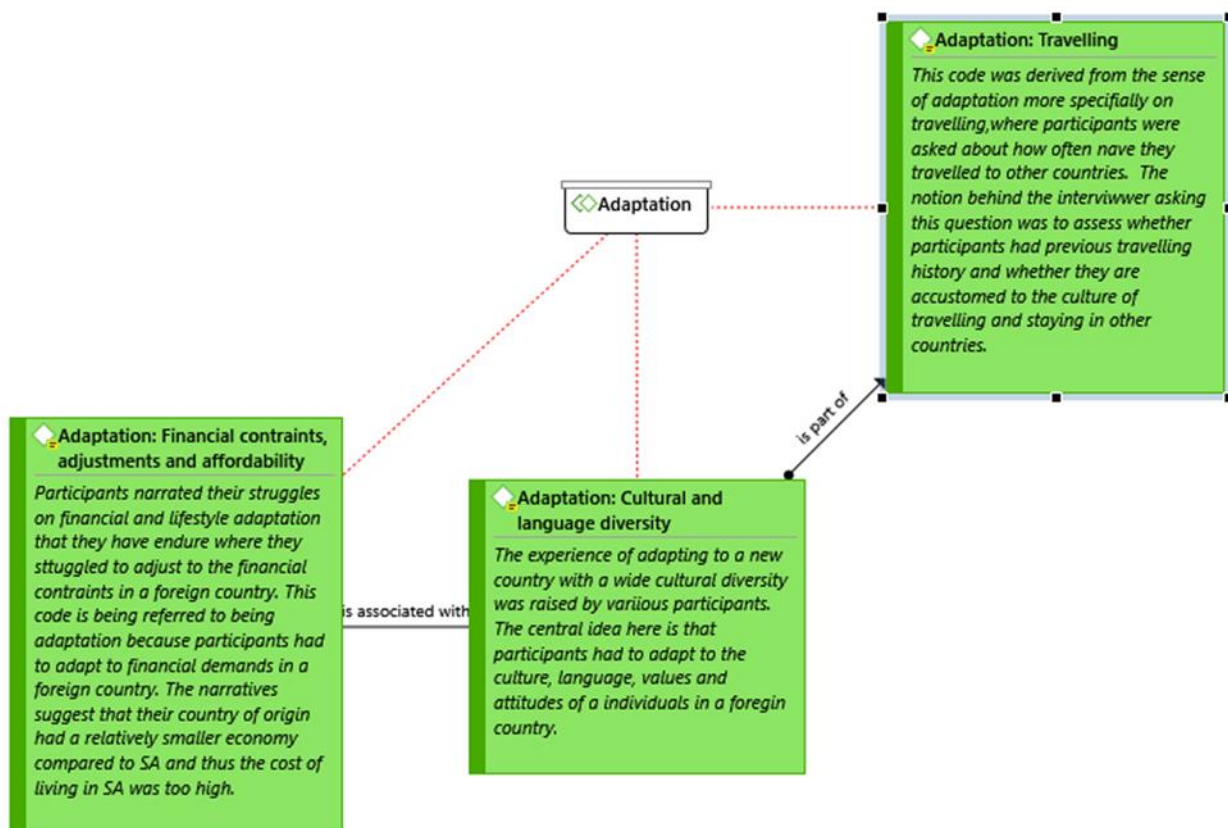
*I wanted to be maybe study nursing; I've been looking at AU, WFP and the other NGOs. I would want to be even internship, or voluntary; I have been searching on*

*the internet, and I've been applying to find work and being independent; you know, even though I know he is working, and you get your own.*

## 5.8 Adaptation

Adaptation to a new environment may be a complex and stressful process, that is aggravated by the need to make changes in status and identity. As each participant is unique, their adjustment to the new situation can be perceived equally differently. Thus, subthemes cultural and language diversity, financial constraints, adjustments, and affordability and travelling were derived from the participant narratives, a summary of which is presented in Figure 5.7. below.

**Figure 5.7 Adaptation**



### 5.8.1 Cultural and language diversity

The experience of adapting to a new country with a wide cultural diversity was raised by various participants. The central idea was that participants had to adapt to a new culture, language, values, and attitudes of individuals in a foreign country. Adaptation which in some instances, posed challenges to the participants.

#### Spouse 1

*That I started now meeting people from different African countries, is somehow different from back home; the issue of language, because you know English is my second language; there are certain times you cannot express as you want in a foreign language; so I found myself using more of English than my home language; because there are very few people around me. who are able to speak to speak my language; and so when I came here, I had to start making new friends; and it you know there are a lot of social dynamics, you know, and so, uum I don't have as many friends as I used to do back home; but at least I've had the privilege of having some a few good friends. And so, and then, the other thing is uum, also the culture here; it's easy to be straightforward with a person, if you are not able to, you can tell a person, and they'll not get take offense but back home it's its there's that culture of like saying yes to everything. Uuumm, in a way, it's it's, it has helped me to be open-minded; to be open-minded and uum, to realise that certain, because when I, when, when, when came things have got to be this way or that way, but now it has opened my mind to realised that, I might not agree with something, but that does not necessarily make it wrong; but because people have different orientation towards life, and so as, in as, opposed to being like uumm, mm, too objective; I've now just opened up my mind, and try to see things from different*

*perspectives; 'cause I grew up in a community where we were almost had the same beliefs; the same values. Alright, and then now, I'm, I'm in a different community, where certain values conflict with the values that, um I was brought up on back home, or some of the beliefs that I've had from back home; and then looking, having a close look at those dynamics, I realise that certain times, things ... So, not really should not be like something is wrong, as what I'd have thought before, but that people just have different views of, of looking at it; so, I'm more open-minded.*

*Frustrations, frustrations are also there, because certain times, you don't, know how to, to react to certain things; for example, issues of funerals right. Like, back home, when someone has a funeral, people would want a lot of people around them, right; but here, when there are funerals, some people would want to be on their own; you have to be invited, they have to be on their own, but within me from my orientation, I'll think like I'm not being there for them in the way that I'm supposed to be, and also because I had brought, I was brought up... in ee... in a community where you had to be there physically. At times, I find that to be conflicting within my heart, because a pr... I would know the person really wants this; so again, it comes back to the issue of uum... being open-minded, to say like: 'ok, how someone might define you, being for th... there for them. Where I come from, could be different from how someone would really define that, so though the inner conflict; constantly, is constantly there.*

## **Spouse 2**

*...because there are so many, we have so many, we have 200 ethnic groups in Nigeria alone; so, you meet with them on a daily basis, and considering the kind of job I had, you meet people of those backgrounds every day. The difference is at home; my neighbour stands shouting greetings like, 'where have you been I have*

*not seen you?’, but here you can stay next door and not see a person for three months and when you just see the person, contact is just ‘hello’ that’s it! I’ve lived in the complex, I haven’t seen the man for six months; when I eventually saw him was going out, but here nobody cares. Like, people who live upstairs the two ends, I don’t know them; if I see them on the road, I will pass them, because I don’t know them.*

### **Spouse 3**

*You can’t come to SA and get to know their languages but look here I am the mother; I am the the fulltime housewife there.*

### **Spouse 6**

*And, mi... and mind you, we had just come from Ireland; so, it means, most of the things were new.*

### **Spouse 7**

*So, I had to go; be there, and it’s like you had to know Ndebele... though I’m not really quite good at it; but most of the people there, they speak Ndebele. Yeah, and also the fact that maybe you can’t speak the languages; maybe it becomes a bit difficult.*

### **Spouse 8**

*There is white, more white people; it’s very rare to find black teachers in the school. I’m, there’s only two one that teaches Zulu; and one she is coloured, that’s all you get there, the rest all white. They speak their own language, you speak your own language, but it would be nice if we interact; you learn each other’s language; you*

*also learn each other's cultures, and so we only know them through reading them, when you are studying, but not one-on-one with people.*

### **5.8.2 Financial constraints, adjustments and affordability**

Participants narrated their struggles with financial and lifestyle adaptation that they had endured, wherein they struggled to adjust to the financial constraints of having to rely on only one income in a foreign country. This code is referred to as adaptation because participants had to adapt to financial demands in a foreign country, make do with the meagre resources available; and eventually make peace with their situations. Most of the participant narratives suggested that their countries of origin had relatively smaller economies compared to that of South Africa, and thus, that the cost of living in South Africa was too high, in sharp contrast.

#### **Spouse 1**

*I don't really feel financially secure, because, uum, in terms of investments, I've no investments, and then also in terms of savings, they are not, it's still something that is not sustainable.*

#### **Spouse 2**

*They wouldn't let me open one, was telling my children: listen, we haven't bought anything new for ourselves, I still dress in my home clothes; because when I go to the market, I look at the clothes and say: 'it is challenging; it is challenging; you can't do anything without having to calculate'; like the Bible will say, calculate on the cost.*

### **Spouse 3**

*Then, 2008, umm, my husband's earnings could only... sss, we could only afford to to, to meet the basic needs, and for me to start schooling, then it was a bit uum... difficult... hee was also trying to advance his workplace; s—o the kids are there in the school; we also found them better schools; so we could not afford, I couldn't go to school; at least that was the only thing that I could do to to keep me going, you know, I couldn't just sit with my [laughs] brains; just to sit, it was difficult you know le; you are.*

### **Spouse 4**

*Your children are no longer going to that private school they are enjoying; they are no longer enjoying the good life; they are enjoying; look at the car I'm driving'. I am even not enjoying any even comfort. We had reached that point, because when I was going to, to, to teach; the salary I was earning was not enough to fill my fuel tank.*

### **Spouse 5**

*I can now afford even eating out.*

### **Spouse 6**

*It was I planned that I would be doing school, but when we came here after seeing the hustles of fees and saying the children should go to school. Paying for school fees, and, and, was also beginning for school; so to also be paying school fees for myself as a wife, it was so tough, in the sense that we couldn't meet the ends meet of the day; and it was home finding things; it wasn't difficult; we were, ah, in terms of food, we had cultivating all by ourselves; so at certain point, it was very tough.*



*And we had one, so otherwise, our minds were divided, because we were like, now, we really know what is going on. Of course, we had, we have got families back home, but uuh its sort... you can imagine that, and we had to aah, rent, and you know, the rents here they are very expensive. [...] we are adjusting our rents the rentals, so you can't argue, I, I, the first is we want to buy groceries; we had to cough the fees; so, I'm like, ok I think, le, let's just see the children fee. Imagine that! So, we now had to start from scratch, buying a bed, buying bedding. I'm telling you, so it was a bad experience, it was a bad experience, yes. We had a hectic, it was so hectic; we, plus, and you understand me, when I'm saying it was a struggle, it was. They didn't pay for transport.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*Surely, like in South Africa, things are becoming expensive, going up every month. Imagine yeah, it has really gone up, it has really gone up; and you can't say, you know, 'please can I have fuel money'.*

#### **Spouse 8**

*You know it's is now expensive as well. Uuuh areas that I feel not in control... financial areas.*

### **5.8.3 Travelling and other phenomena**

This code was derived from the sense of adaptation specific to travelling, where participants were asked about how often they had travelled within and to other countries. This was asked to assess whether participants had previous travel experience and whether they were accustomed to the culture of travelling and residing in environments, other than that to which they were accustomed.

### **Spouse 1**

*No, not, not overseas it was just like maybe just short conferences for a week or so but it wasn't extensive, I wouldn't say it was extensive.*

### **Spouse 2**

*[Travelled] within my home country, a lot, because there is shuttle between Abuja and Lagos, [overseas] 3 times every year. The difference is that at home the kind of weather they have it's very hot.*

### **Spouse 4**

*No, we would also go on holidays once in a while, but not out of not overseas, no. Yeah, it's cooler.*

### **Spouse 5**

*Yoh, a lot [travelling] to rural areas; it was a lot.*

### **Spouse 6**

*We were frequently traveling. [Even overseas], uuh the weather is a little bit, it's more similar, but not much; 'cause it, say for example like in cold season, we don't get much colder.*

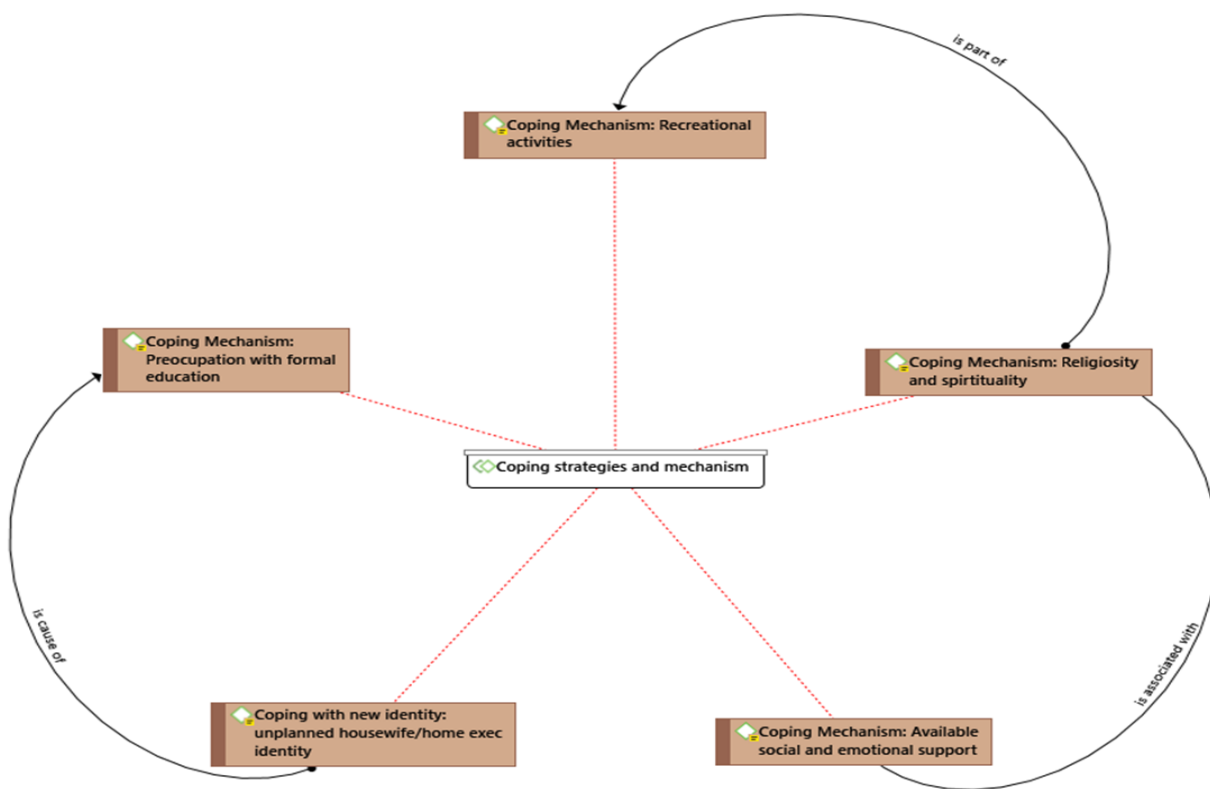
### **Spouse 7**

*Eeh, ah, we used to travel quite a lot. Like, I knew every holiday we would go, maybe to Victoria Falls, Nyanga. Like we just used to travel even to...oo... my husband comes from Mutare, there so we'd go there as well.*

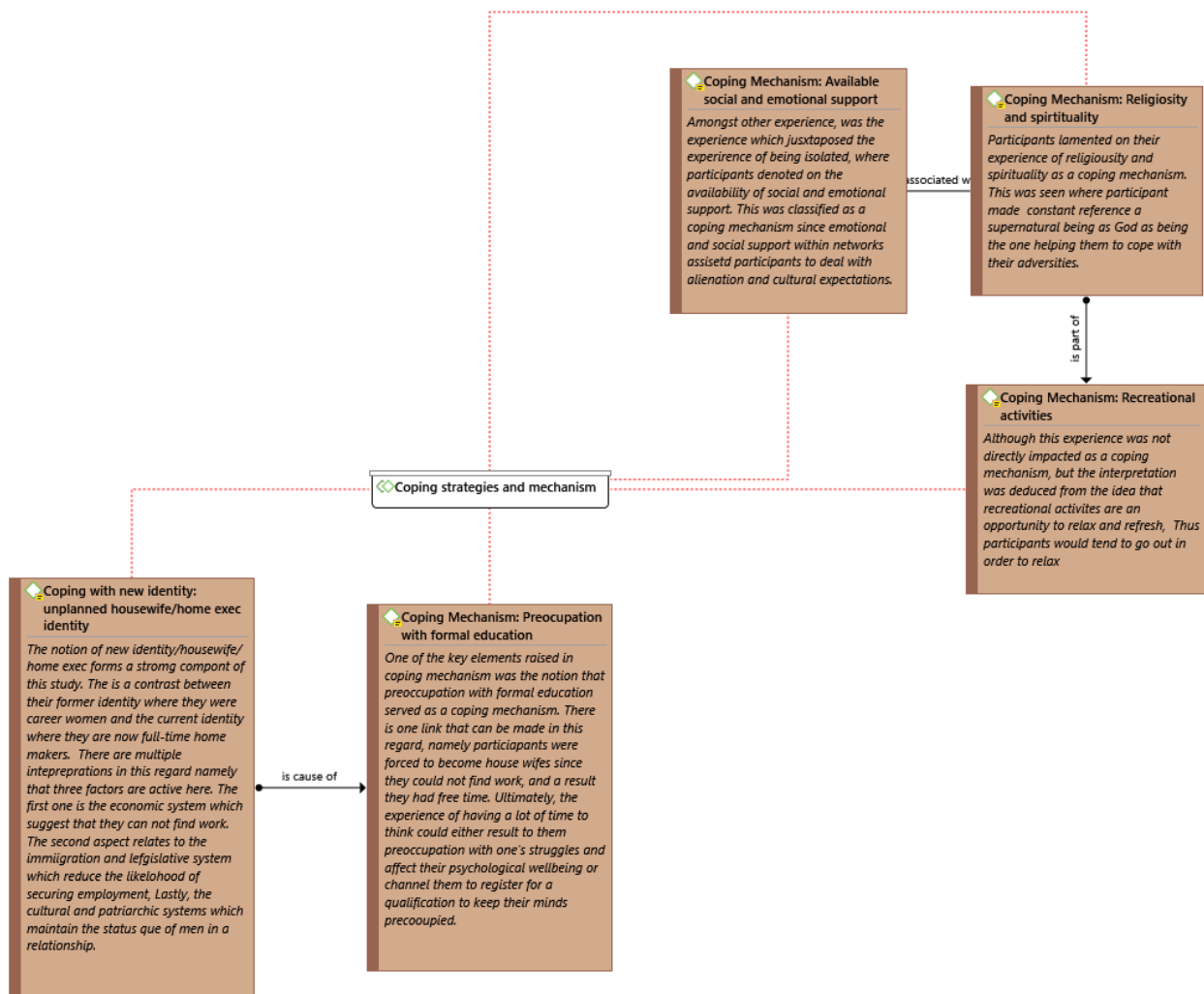
## 5.9 Strategies deployed to cope

Having to juggle such an array of priorities in an unfamiliar environment may require additional skills and substantive adjustment. Such a scenario could be paralleled to the life of the female accompanying a migrant spouse, who had to develop a thick skin to keep their head above water in the face of challenges emanating from their accompanying spouse status. The following: social and emotional support; formal education; embracing a new identity; recreational activities; religiosity and spirituality; are some of the subthemes derived from the participant narratives as coping mechanisms used to navigate life in a foreign land as accompanying migrant spouses (see Figure 5.8.1 and Figure 5.8.28).

**Figure 5.8.1 Coping Mechanism**



**Figure 5.8.2 Coping Mechanism**



## 5.9.1 Available social and emotional support

Amongst other experiences, was the experience that juxtaposed the experience of being isolated, where participants denoted the availability of social and emotional support. This was classified as a coping mechanism since emotional and social support within networks assisted participants to deal with alienation and cultural expectations.

### Spouse 1

*Having, uuum a husband who's very supportive and being open in times that I'm really extremely busy, he's had to take maybe some time... uhm... off from work to*

*fulltime look after the kids; so even his taking of leave days has been strategic; like in times when I'm about like the time I'm defending my prop preparing for the defence of my proposal or in times that maybe I have uum a crunch uum deadline then he'd take his leave days around that time so that I would not have to worry about who is looking after the kids, and what does uum... and what is yea... with the kids. So that is that really has been something that has been very very helpful, and then, in other times, where other times when that does not work; I've scheduled family visits especially from my side in Zambia to fall at around the time when I'm very busy; so I have times when my mother has come to visit at a time when I'm extremely busy; so that she could help in terms of taking care of the kids. And so, I'm, I do most of the work during the night, and having an, uum, an online library at the university has really helped, such that I don't have to always be at school. Like, let's say there is an end of the year function and then uuum... every two years, like at my husband's workplace there's a there's a staff family conference. So that in a way helps families like as an orgas... families of employees in the organisation to really blend. So normally, in terms of extensive time, that's normally after every uum... every other year. I have contact with some people at church. I have one or two friends who'd really come and visit, and I also visit them, but it's more of the quality. At least, I have uuhm... three friends I can really say, I have quality, quality relationships with; and people that I can confide in, and people that I can call on... uum even in a crisis oo... that I can really count on, and maybe some ladies lunches at church, and so on; and then also the issue is also to have a few people, like for example, in my case, my husband and I also have parents that I can rely on, and also I have some friends, two, three friends. Somebody I can just call and say 'please may you come, may you babysit for me, whilst I do this, or telling my husband like, you know what, I think I'm physically tired; I can't do this,*

*and then he chips in to to help me and I've really had a privilege of having a husband who really understands considering that in our African culture the role of the woman. But, uum, we've had an honest conversation about it, and I'm glad that he is someone who is open-minded and uum, he's really been helpful in terms of chipping in; whether be it taking care of the kids, or the house, uu he's really been very helpful; like for example, now I'm going for a data collection; I don't know how long I'm going to be in the field, and he's going to stay home with kids, who are still young, and so finding support and not so much as the quantity of how many is, but having quality support, uum, thing; and also being honest, because people cannot just guess what your needs are, but making your needs known to say, like, you know, what I've reached my threshold, I need help. Yes, and that in a way has really helped, you know, so in a way that has opened up my mind, to, to, to being sensitive, and not take even my friends or family for granted; because they also have use for their time.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I try to meet friends. We talk about things that could help that I've been able to do; so it's not been it has not been easy, but I've been going steadily, because it gives me an idea of what kind of education we having, parenting for the children and how... for my own children, so my neighbour has a phone back home, but hates to use it; she stands and shouts: 'where have you been, we have not seen you, it has been days and we have not seen you'.*

## **Spouse 3**

*Let me say, yes, because our aunty came from Zimbabwe specifically, to seat us down and to try to talk to us. Yeah so, yeah, we had some counselling [...] now the*

*light is beginning to shine, but yes I was saying the age, the what; but there is some light, there is hope now, I'm mature, I know where and where is, but look at that person, she was left in that situation of having that accompanying spouse, you can't do anything; haa, now I'm in; I can say now it's much better even though I'm looking forward to to get somewhere; now, yeah, I can associate with many people [...] and it dawned on me, if my husband was to die with that accompanying spouse, I'm, I will be doomed; so I, I had to take another path, which will allow me, if things rr- get to the worst; like that, I could actually go back home, look for a job in development studies. You can do a lot of things accompanied with my teaching qualifications I, I think; I can do a lot of things.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*...yes, exercise and I'm going to the gym and have gym buddies there, even offer classes. From eight to what do you do, so I go to the gym; for the next two hours I'm in the gym. I come back if I'm preparing food that day, or what, what; where I get busy with what I do. Cousins and a sister, my blood sister, last born, is also here. The football community where my child, because my child plays for a football club, so on Saturdays we are soccer mommies.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*Church activities. I'm not a social person.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*I see the past as a past, and I've learnt, I've grown even much more in my decision-making as a mother, [laughs], as a wife as wife as a mother. I've got my cousin, some relatives some relatives. I've got my cousin who came here sometime back.*

## **Spouse 7**

*Like, ah the the there are friends from church, who, who work in banks. My sister is also here though. [...] maybe visiting some colleagues, some church members.*

## **Spouse 8**

*No, there's no one in here, except cousins, you know, from his grandmother. My sister is very close, 'cause she also comes here, and whenever she comes, she also helps me with, when I have my, like; when I have all my children, she is my mother, she has to come and look after me. I get all my C-sections; all my kids are C-sections. Through schooling, as well, I met other people that also helped, that I go and see and go and interact with. Yea, just join gyms.*

### **5.9.2 Preoccupation with formal education**

One of the key elements raised with regards to coping mechanisms was the notion of preoccupation with formal education, based on readily available free time. Ultimately, the experience of having a lot of time to think could either result in solipsism, which could, in turn, affect their psychological wellbeing; or channel that excess time to constructive use, and register for a qualification to keep their minds preoccupied.

## **Spouse 1**

*In the midst of that, at least one thing that has worked for me; is having, uuum, a husband who's very supportive and being open in times that I'm really extremely busy defending my prop, preparing for the defence of my proposal; or in times that maybe I have, uum, a crunch, uum deadline; then he'd take his leave days around that time so that I would not have to worry about who is looking after the kids, and what does, uum, and what is yeah, with the kids. So that is that really has been something that has been very, very helpful; and then in other times where other*



*times when that does not work, I've scheduled family visits especially from my side in Zambia, to fall at around the time when I'm very busy, so I have times when my mother has come to visit; at a time when I'm extremely busy, so that she could help in terms of taking care of the kids. So really, those are some of the; the ways in which I've been trying to to cope; and also, I realised that during the day, there are a lot of activities to be done, so I've resorted to, to, to doing much of the studying during the night.*

## **Spouse 2**

*I've been able to go above that, above and beyond that. So, I can now look at a situation now, I know this is a no-go area; what else can I do. So that has helped me over the years, t to, b be able to overcome all the issues of not working for seven years, but it's not easy. I refused to employ a maid, so I had to keep my life busy and did the work. So, I am doing something; if I'm not cleaning, I'm scrubbing, I'm jumping, I'm running, If I'm not flying, I just keep my mind busy. Then I do some online courses. It It doesn't amount to anything; it just keeps the mind busy. Yeah, and I play my computer games; because I need to have my...[laughs] every now and again and so all this has really kept me [sane]. Yeah, and I try to meet friends who actually, with like minds. We talk about things that could help; that I've been able to do so, it's not been it has not been easy; but I've been going steadily every day, and I'm still going.*

## **Spouse 3**

*I decided ah, no, aa, with the-e earnings, that were there I can go to school; so I diverted, and I had to do development studies, hoping maybe if we go back to Zimbabwe, aa, I could do something with my new, ah mean, with that new area; So*

*I started my honours in development studies and, yeah, it kept me going and some mem; I mean, some something in me was revived; that I'm still worthy, I can still do something [expression of happiness]. I think by the time you decide, I am staying, get registered with some institution, and do something that keeps your mind occupied, and as you do that, and think, the papers and the time will be moving up; until you get your own permanent residence, and you are you are busy doing something, empowering yourself as well. You get self-esteem, you feel you are doing something empowering yourself, you are not seated at home. So, I think now, I can actually get to sit down with someone. What I realised later was, if I had come and quickly, engaged into studying, it was going to help me much better.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*Yes, you forge ahead, and we also have to be involved in the studying; because when you start studying, it gives you that e... e... you... power; you feel you are doing something, so I was studying, eeheh, up to Masters level; eeheh, I was supposed to do my dissertation this year.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*Thank God, I'm also planning to continue with my studies so that I won't be stressed. I won't be stressed much, because it's not easy to stay at home.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*Find information at the tip of your fingers, so we started doing that.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*I actually continued with my honours, because initially, I had said, what's the use of studying. When you don't you just have to study get your degree, sit there back*

*at home. Yeah, so now, I decided, you know, what may be the only thing for me is to wait for my PR; my husband encouraged me to, to start on Master's, but I was busy thinking, is it really necessary to continue educating myself? Taking more degrees?*

### **Spouse 8**

*I tried looking for a job, but then I realised, you know what, maybe I should study. That's that's when I began to study for my social work degree, and so I was fulltime because she was going to school. I'll have to fetch her from school at one, the then I would study during the day, and during the night as well, and then yeah, everything went well, until it was my 4th year; yes, when I had my second born.*

### **5.9.3 Recreational activities**

Although this experience was not directly denoted as a coping mechanism, I believed it reasonable to infer that recreational activities are an opportunity to relax and refresh. Participants would tend to go out to relax and take their minds off their accompanying spouse status struggles.

### **Spouse 1**

*I am, and in a way, because of that recreation, it makes it a lot easier to entertain the kids than maybe it would have been back home; because the the possibilities here are endless.*

### **Spouse 2**

*It's better home than here...*

#### **Spouse 4**

*N...ice parks; nicer weather, cold, colder, uuhmmm.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*Yeah, there were preschools as such, but I go for weekends out.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*Aaah, we don't have cinemas there. I think it's just one place, but still, we cannot compare with here. In terms of social, but the entertainment, talk of some weddings, and yeah. Mostly, yeah, of course, clubs are there; but being a Christian, we no longer, we are no longer involved in such kind of actives, but there is entertainment there.*

#### **Spouse 8**

*Yeah, restaurants, we do breakfast, but once in a while, we go out and that didn't happen often, back home.*

#### **5.9.4 Religiosity and spirituality**

Participants alluded to their experiences of religiosity and spirituality as coping mechanisms. This was evident in instances in their narratives where participants invoked a supernatural being as their power source to help them cope with their life trajectories and adversities as accompanying migrant spouses.

#### **Spouse 2**

*Yeah, know, when you, like, when you read the Bible; Daniel determined about himself... not to let it affect him.*

#### **Spouse 4**

*I became also ve... eee... very prayerful person; which also helped me, because I otherwise, you will be depressed; you wouldn't look after your children well. We are both very religious, and that what also keeps marriage going and it helps everything we have; you have the joy... ha... the spi... the joy of the Lord is your strength. It's because when you are not very prayerful, the problems they overwhelm you; and and when they overwhelm you, you do stupid decisions.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*I've just learnt to appreciate God on whatever situation. I am a church elder.*

#### **Spouse 6**

*And it was home finding things, it wasn't difficult. We were ah, in terms of food, we had cultivating all by ourselves, so at certain point, it was very tough; but by-and-by, later on, we said, no, I think because we prayed for this, this, let's not be hard on ourselves, let's see what God has planned for us. I had to sit down with the Lord and say, now what is it, now, Lord, that you have brought me here for? But aa... after seeing the trends, got the kids, I realised that it was a purpose that God had made me to come here, join my husband, just to be a full-time helper for him, and I've learnt a lot, because I could see my children growing up, having time praying for them, and even praying for my husband; for such difficult times that he was passing through; because you, the salary that he was getting... he was much, much far behind the one which we were getting at home. Later on, he started doing some consultancies, and also work opening doors; uhh, and we saw the Lord coming up for us; and later on, after I think, was it one year? Doing some uuuh, after the Lord opened some doors for us. The consultancies were able to have some extra*

*income, and at least we were able to go out and buy what we needed; later on, we bought a car. Later on, we were able to maneuver our own lives, and see the Lord helping us.*

*I think the one thing that, that made me even to settle down is after we found the Rivers church; 'cause in the first place, we the first church that we went to; was it was a Nigerian, a Nigerian Church? Redeemed church, because, back home we had, ahh an established children's church. Where we were we were fully involved, and when we came to this side, and seeing that the church that we were going to, there was no children's church, we thought no, we will be losing our child, let's find out a church that is, that will cater for her; so later on, we, we have a friend and family friends, who were by then were staying in Pretoria. I asked her, do you know any... A...Assemblies of God church that...? So, they, ahh, I think you remember, there is Rivers church. Just find out and when we went there.... Ww, after arrival; no, we decided is home. Yeah yeah, so after giving so many messages from there, and which are very practical, 'cause the messages, most of the times were very relevant to our situation, and it made us even to grow much more, and... that's when we realised, I think back home, we were in the comfort zone. Uhm... so 2013 uumm... we moved from the apartment, we were staying in Houghton; we moved from the apartment, and God provided a house in Orange Grove. We moved and go there and still the Lord was so, so faithful, has been so faithful doing the same consultancies. Having ... being a ch... a Christian, we no longer aligned ourselves with the traditional cultures. I've learnt to let go some of the things, more especially, the Lord has been dealing with me and I don't; was the time the Lord was dealing with me. So, eish, it has really built up my Christian life, and I've matured a lot, a lot, cause I was a short-tempered person I could sta...y angry without speaking to anyone; just being in my own cocoon; but through this the Lord has really helped*

*me and I've learnt to let go; and I've learnt, I've learnt to remain silent, when I need to be silent; and learnt to speak when I need to speak, learn to listen; when somebody is speaking, listen; and to listen more, and listen from what God is telling you, to speak, and I think if I was working. Uhm, uuuh so later on, I said, okay. Okay, but the Lord helped, and sometimes that we pass through; but as a child of God, you need to know that I think this is the devil that was just trying to interrupt us, and divide us; but otherwise, the relationship has grown with the kids as well. I think it's just a church thing.*

### **Spouse 7**

*And mm, at times you feel a bit, worthless, though you are not supposed; as a Christian, you are not supposed to. Yeah, like maybe visiting some colleague some church members.*

### **Spouse 8**

*It's more like a, a Seventh Day Adventist; but no, we don't follow a Seventh Day. Yeah, that's what it is; Missionary, because we don't have to be in church, you can all go out to preach. I'm just believing God.*

### **5.9.5 New identity: unplanned housewife/home executive identity**

The notion of a new identity/housewife/home executive forms a strong aspect of this study. There is a contrast between a former identity, where these women were career women, and their current identity, where they become fulltime homemakers. There are multiple interpretations in this regard, namely that three factors are active here. The first is the economic system, which suggests that they cannot find work. The second aspect relates to the immigration and legislative system, which reduces the likelihood of securing employment; and finally, the cultural and patriarchal systems, which maintain the status

quo of men in a relationship, all of which the participants had to come to terms with; and still function under the circumstances.

### **Spouse1**

*Then, physically at least, from time-to-time, at least, I try to by all means; like to exercise, because it helps me be alert, and yeah.*

### **Spouse 2**

*...but because of, you know, who, what we know; and what I know as a Christian. I've been able to go above that above and beyond that. So, I can now look at a situation, now I know this is a no-go area; what else can I do. So that has helped me over the years to be able to overcome all the issues of not working for seven years, but it's not easy. I refused to employ a maid, so I had to keep my life busy and did the work; so, I am doing something, if I'm not cleaning, I'm scrubbing; I'm jumping; I'm running; if I'm not flying; I just keep my mind busy. So, I had to keep my life busy and did the work. I am doing something, if I'm not cleaning, I'm scrubbing; I'm jumping; I'm running; If I'm not flying, I just keep my mind busy; It, it doesn't amount to anything, it just keeps the mind busy.*

### **Spouse 3**

*I was a teacher working already; but there, 2007, I, I was there - fulltime housewife; the experience that I have never dreamt of. I have to stay as a fulltime housewife with no maid to help me in the household chores, it's very difficult; you are not used to that because I, sitting at home for a year is just too much.*



#### **Spouse 4**

*Exec, an honourable title; they say you must be proud to it. Yeah, the young one uuum, as I said, doesn't appreciate; because he see the friends' mommies going to work, 'why is mommy now staying?' Yes, the sister tried to explain that my mommy, mommy, was working when we were at home; I feel like a basket case. They are ... just accept, they think that you are just lazy, because you've got money when they see you driving around. They think that you are the lazy, well looked after, when you are not.*

#### **Spouse 5**

*Like, like, where, where the husband, you; what you are doing, doing? I'm just a housewife.*

#### **Spouse 7**

*Why are you sitting? So, it's difficult you know that that stigma keeps coming even when you travel home.*

#### **Spouse 8**

*I started living here, and I didn't have much, actually. I had my IT degree, but then looking for a job, and then you don't have papers, and all that; so, I basically was a stay-at-home mom. Actually, when she started going to preschool, that means I have to stay at home, I didn't have to do anything.*

### **5.10 Conclusion**

The data collected focused on identifying the factors that influenced participants' decision to migrate; establishing what effect migration has had on participants' well-being, as well as what coping strategies are employed to facilitate fulfilling settlement. There

seems to be a divergence in experiences amongst participants. Whereas some participants mentioned that they were obliged to involuntarily move from their country of origin because they relied on their husband to take care of them, in addition to marriage commitment, other participants cited they had control and influence in the decision to come to South Africa. This observation suggests that power relations between the couple played a role in the decision to move, in other words, the nature of the relationship determined the extent to which power of decision-making is available to the female spouse. This is also supported by cases where participants specifically denote the influence and authoritative nature of the male spouse in deciding on behalf of the accompanying spouse.

There is some level of assumption that can be made, such as the socio-cultural norms, values, and expectations, often mediating decision-making in a household. This experience displaces power in the direction of men, who are supposedly breadwinners. One has to also highlight the inattention to, or disregard of the accompanying spouse's career and education, where there is an apparent double standard. What is intriguing in this regard is the sense of disconnection that accompanying spouses have to deal with in trying to regain their former identity, making it difficult for them to be satisfied with their life. Another observation related to the idea that, although they found some meaning and sense of accomplishment in being mothers, there is some disjuncture between who they used to be, and what they are trying to be; in other words, there is some sense of emptiness, and need to be preoccupied with formal education as a coping mechanism. Vis-à-vis immigration status, mirroring an unfair justice system, those well-educated amongst the participants struggled nonetheless to find work, articulating this experience to the struggles of obtaining a work permit. During coding, one couldn't help but begin to reflect on whether the justice system is failing the accompanying spouse, or whether the accompanying spouse's predicament is a consequence of economic factors. It was

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fascinating that, despite participants having specialised/rare skills, which could contribute immensely to the social capital of the country, they are still treated as second-best to their male counterparts. It almost appears as though an accompanying spouse's education and work experience are not taken into account, and thus their identity is reduced to a single dimension. They are not treated as individuals who can meaningfully contribute to the country's economy.

Nonetheless, reading the narrative of Participant 6, it appears that she has accepted the situation as her narrative expresses resilience. She seems to advocate spirituality and religiosity as having helped her and her family to navigate through the challenges of being an accompanying spouse. However, there appear to be elements of social desirability in her narrative, as she seems to contradict other narratives, where most of the participants speak about marginalisation, as well as being forced to move as a result of marital commitment. This notion is further supported where she expresses that although the decision was motivated by her husband securing a job, she was also involved in the decision-making; when in fact, based on her narrative, hers was simply supporting a decision that was finalised the moment the spouse decided to do the interview and accepted the job offer on his behalf. Thus, migration and its related aspects is a complex phenomenon. In the chapter that follows, evidence extracted from the interviews will be evaluated, in light of the research questions and literature.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION**

This chapter entails a discussion of the research findings, where implications of the results of the study will be discussed in light of the results.

#### **6.1 Motivation to relocate**

Both internal and international migrations have been traced back to complex economic and social factors, but the overriding driver is a migrants' search for greater economic well-being. Whereas it is recognised that economic, social and political factors are central in the formation of the desire to migrate, these factors alone are unable to explain the migratory decisions of many (Thompson, 2017). For this study, the results centred around education, socioeconomic factors, and related life aspects as being the motivations for relocation to South Africa. While some research participants left their home countries in anticipation of a better life, others just had to fit into the reality that presented itself to them upon arrival in the host country, depending on the circumstances surrounding their migration.

The perception of a dismal economic future has triggered an outflow of emigrants, both male, and female (Adepoju, 2008; NMMDP, 2009). Most immigrants into a given country are expected to eventually settle down in the new country and become productive members of society (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Hovey, 2000). Conversely, immigration is a highly individualised experience. The results showed mixed outcomes; as individual as the participants were, the desire to study further or anticipation thereof, and 'the good life', became major factors. However, based on the participant narratives, I would argue that the above-mentioned factors did not necessarily influence the decision to move. Somewhat it was when relocation was inevitable, and the decision to migrate finalised that they probably put things into perspective. Put in another way, they considered the factors

influencing the decision to relocate in retrospect. Given the foregoing deductions, the major motivator was family (including life-cycle stage), or marriage commitment; as most of the participants cited migration soon after they got married; perceived inability to cope without the other spouse; how as a couple they could not afford to stay apart because they would have vowed 'where you go, there will I go, where you will be, there will I be' (Ruth 1:16, New Living Translation); and how the thought of going back to their home country would be tantamount to abandoning the family and marriage for 'no reason' - 'In sickness and in health ... to cleave to each other till death do us part'; given that some of the participants had, in fact, self-actualised and were content with their status, pre-migration (Genesis 24:24; Maslow, 1942; Satzewich, 2015; UN, 2006). Thus, the traditional patriarchal social understandings, particularly the Chinese and African adage that "when you are married to a chicken, you follow the chicken" (Li & Findlay, 1999, p. 143), encourages women to prioritise their marriage over their careers.

The study results do not entirely support previous findings that point to political instability resulting from conflicts and social factors, comprising surveillance by communities and patriarchal traditions limiting to opportunity and freedom, low commodity prices, along with unstable and lowly paid jobs, which all persist as strong determinants of migration (Afolayan, 2001; Crisp, 2006; Findley et al., 1995; Gaidzanwa, 1997; Tevera & Chikanda, 2005; UN, 1996). However, some of the participants' migration might have been indirectly influenced by the political climate, in the sense that their spouse was prompted to initiate migration due to an economic downturn triggered by political instability (Adepoju, 2004; Bakewell, 2007; GCIM, 2005; ILO, 2011; Kabeer, 2007; Mendola, 2008; OECD, 2004; Phalane, 2010; Piper, 2006; Razavi, Arza, Braunstein, Cook & Goulding, 2012; UNFPA, 2006). Consequently, factors influencing each individual's migration journey cannot be looked at in isolation, and further research inclusive of other

accompanying migrants, for example, males and children at various stages of development, would need to be done to provide more information.

### **6.1.1 Power relations and dynamics**

Following from the factors influencing the decision to migrate, the study findings revealed the possible existence of power dynamics in the entire migration process, which seems to be inclined more towards the male spouse. Equally, studies have found migration to be more common with males than it is with females; a difference that may be attributed to the restricted geographic movement of women, and in some instances, a woman's informal obligation as a caregiver (Wojczewski et al., 2015). Moreover, a common finding of years of family migration studies is that such migration primarily benefits the careers of men in couples, but generally damages women's careers (Amcoff, & Niedomysl, 2015).

From the study results, almost all participant narratives were contextualised by the initial driver of their partner's job prospects abroad. There is not much evidence of consultation with the (prospective) accompanying spouse in this regard, nor deliberation over other alternatives. Moreover, the majority of the participants reported having to leave careers spanning years of experience and various stages of growth to follow their spouses' dreams, becoming entirely dependent on their income, where, all other forms of support that could otherwise have been available from family or the accompanying spouses' various networks and groups to which they belonged back home. Undoubtedly, the migration of the accompanying spouses is associational, and/or as passive participants who have to play an often obscure supporting role beside men (Dannecker & Sieveking, 2009; Gamburd, 2000; Gödri, 2006; Horgan, 2001; ILO, 2011; Jolly & Reeves, 2005; Pearson, 2000).

Similarly, due to intra-household power inequalities, women are expected to defer to male power by consulting their husbands before making a decision. A man, on the other hand, can often make decisions that disregard the wishes of his wife and the decision to migrate is uncontested by members of the household as it is assumed to be normal behaviour (Hoang, 2009; Mumtaz & Aysha, 1982; Posel, 2003). Overall, married women have limited agency in their husbands' decision to migrate, or their own migration (Chant, 1992). On account of their dependent status, the migration of women is believed to occur in a family context, where married women have to negotiate their migration at various levels in the family, first with their husbands and then with members of the extended family (Bastia, 2012; Jacobsen & Levin, 2000; McGregor, 2006).

It also emerged from the study findings that the notion of what one's is for both parties does not entirely apply for the accompanying spouse. Participants that had some form of access to their spouse's finances felt excluded, as the access is directly linked to the male spouse, where every transaction is reflected in records their spouse receives. In some instances, the accompanying spouses reported the financial provision by their spouse as not being as readily available as when both have equal power and ownership over the household finances. The accompanied spouses' actions, that is, deciding to migrate, and the subsequent outcome of their accompanying spouses having to leave their jobs to rely solely on the husbands' income, could provide explanations. I would, without any doubt, want to believe that there was no malice in the accompanied spouses' intentions. Their actions may have stemmed from patriarchy, and how they were brought up. For a traditional man, his role is to be responsible for providing for his family, and if he cannot find provisions within the locality, he has to travel far and wide to do so, which may involve the family tagging along, so that whatever little he comes across, the family shares. The wife follows the husband's lead into the unknown without questioning him, even when it means having to leave all the life she has crafted and worked so hard to build. For those

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that believe in Christianity, for example, the man is held to be the head of the household, following from Christ being the head of the Church. Hence, the head of the household makes the decisions on the family's behalf, and all the other constituents of the family follow his lead. Moreover, society upholds men as breadwinners, which in itself puts them in a position of power that results in taking decisions on behalf of their spouse, regardless of the consequences. In many developing countries, migration is interlinked with masculinity, in the sense that it allows men to fulfill their role as household providers (Bastia, 2012; Agesa & Kim, 2001).

Nonetheless, given the strides that communities and people have made and changed in so many ways, I strongly feel the accompanied spouses could have done things in line with the changing times and trends where unlike in the past, women are also now career persons whose careers need to be considered whenever any decision that could affect them is taken. They could at least have presented options to transition or to find some kind of common ground. The use of discernment could also have come in handy for some of the participants whose narratives sounded as though as square pegs, they had been literally forced into round holes and inversely round pegs forced into square holes. Further research that involves picking the minds of the principal migrant spouse could help shed light on what exactly transpired pre and post-migration in terms of decision making and the accompanying spouses' lived experiences.

## **6.2 Effects of migration**

Migration can have both negative and positive effects on different migrant groups. From the results of this study, most participants reported some positive aspects of their migration and status. For some, the fact that they could not be employed in profession-related positions, presented a space where they found satisfaction in devoting their time and energy to being loving mothers and spouses, and round-the-clock mothers, in addition



to being socially constructed as 'housewives'; experiences that inculcated a sense of importance, notwithstanding the inability to secure gainful employment. The study results also presented participants with opportunities for development, as well as growth and maturity in different areas of their lives, which might not have materialised in their home countries.

Whereas some positive effects were reported, the participants also experienced certain negative effects as a result of their immigration status. Some participants reported how frustrating their experiences were and pointed out that people whose hearts were not strong would go into depression, as they had to make so many changes to their lives overall, including having to cut down expenditure even beyond the barest minimum. The results of the study depict no regard or lack of acknowledgment of the participants' education and career, where the fact that they were once professionals seems to drift into obscurity. Laring and Selmer (2010) share that the immigrant experience is perceived to be disruptive and demanding for both parties, more so for the accompanying spouse. The current study further shows that while the emigrant is prospectively migrating to greener pastures, the accompanying spouse often experiences the added stress of leaving their employment and support systems behind, and establishing new connections and resources, reconstructing distal family relationships, and searching for new employment. The contentment with the participants' status, in my opinion, does not come from a place where they have done all they wanted to do with and in their lives to a point of actualisation after migration (Maslow, 1943), but one of resigning to their fate, which some of them have tried really hard to escape for years without success. Thus, today's immigrants arrive at a time of widespread economic insecurity and a paucity of employment prospects and may become targets for national hostility and discrimination, owing to the legislature that can result in unemployment, underemployment, and financial hardship (Rogler, 1994; Wagner, 2002). The accompanying migrant spouses have very little choice but to live with the new

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identities and make life bearable by accepting that they are now only as good as a stay-at-home-mom can or should be. Again, the notion of patriarchy and religious beliefs also played a part in the participants' being content and seemingly happy with their status. In a patriarchal society, the wife stays at home and looks after her family, while the husband goes out to fend for his family. Religious beliefs dictate that the woman ought to submit to her husband. The losses inherent in immigration, coupled with culture shock, cause a serious disruption in the individual's identity, discontinuity in which arises because the immigrant can no longer rely on the affirmation and validation of the home environment to sustain it (Akhtar, 1999).

Some participants also seem to numb the feelings of loss by acting as if they are content with now being full-time housewives, a situation which, for some, takes place after years of being working mothers. Their status as an accompanying spouse could render them as living in between two worlds. Park posits the human condition of living simultaneously in two cultures, without fully belonging in either, as a status of the marginal, that is, of being an outcast and stranger (Park, as cited in Pedraza-Bailey, 1990). Some of the participants appear to express a certain regret, as the respondents expressed the need to make certain that the decision to migrate is a fully informed one, through intense preparation. Stripped of the right to belong and to have a sense of existential meaningfulness, this creates the illusion of a temporary or partial presence in the host country, subject to ongoing scrutiny by the natives to determine the legitimacy of presence and personhood (Sayad, 2002). Probing whether or not the principal spouses ever considered the effect that migration could have on their spouses' status and careers, as well as the new identities that come about through relocation, could go a long way in ensuring the accompanying spouse is aware of what lies ahead from the onset so that they can better prepare themselves for new life after migration.

### **6.3 Accompanying spouse experience**

Limited studies have investigated the spouses' reasons for agreeing to become accompanying spouses, where following one's husband is taken as normative. Given this, it makes sense that research did not engage in examining the processes of deciding to relocate abroad, as it was assumed that wives wielded relatively little exertion of power in decision-making in the marital relationship (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Zvonkovic, Greaves, et al, 1996). From the study findings, some research participants left their home countries in anticipation of a better life, while others had merely to fit into the reality that presented itself to them upon arrival to the destination country, depending on the circumstances surrounding their migration. For some, better job prospects were the main inspiration for their relocation, while yet others cited intentions to further their studies as the main reason why they agreed to relocate to South Africa. This notwithstanding being influenced by their spouse, who responded to the call by South Africa for scarce skills that attracted many people around the world, particularly those from Africa, to migrate for economic purposes with their wives, who did not qualify to apply for a scarce skills visa (Chisale, 2014). However, there are yet other respondents who had not much choice, but merely found themselves in South Africa to stay, and eventually just had to acquire and live with the special label or status: accompanying spouse, and often found themselves in a new, unfamiliar, and less secure world and in an inferior position to the citizens of their host country (Chisale, 2014). Ironically, legislation that deals with issues of migration in South Africa is founded on notions of exclusion and control, assuming that migrants are a drain on resources, rather than a social asset, and those entering the country are erroneously perceived unwilling to contribute to economic growth and the prosperity of the nation (Crush, 1999).

Although migration can provide new opportunities for women on their own or jointly with their spouses to improve their lives, it can also expose them to new vulnerabilities resulting from their immigration status (UNRISD, 2005). Participants reported differential treatment, where one participant, in particular, reported how, at one time, they were not allowed to obtain a Learner's license based on their visa status. The study results also showed how in public hospitals, participants have faced the most discrimination. The nurses and other health personnel were said to have been unwelcoming, expressing their disdain, based in bigotry (Akhtar, 1999). In yet other instances, participants had to wait for extended periods to merely obtain basic service, and there were apparent differences between how they were treated and how the locals were treated at the same public facility. One participant reported how she witnessed an acquaintance in labour being told they had to wait for hours before being attended to, eventually losing her unborn child (Nikelly, 2004, p. 185). Another participant related how, when they applied for a Grade Eight place at a school, they were told they had to pay a full year's fees to secure a place, specifically because they were foreigners, where this constitutes a major challenge that may confront the immigrant in finding a place in the new community (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Various governments strive to regulate immigrant inflows through a laborious family reunification process, or by restricting instances of family re-unification outright (Lawrence & Kearns, 2005; Nash & Trlin, 2006; United Nations, 2010). For example, family members of temporary migrants are denied work permits in half of all developing countries, and a third of developed countries, where South Africa is no exception. From the study results, participants on accompanying spouse permit are prohibited by law from working, which renders them financially dependent on their spouse. The idea behind the legislation proves to be to defend 'Fortress South Africa' against 'hordes' of immigrants (Neocosmos, 2008: 589). After implicitly defining immigrant women as dependent and men as independent, migration policies place women in a domestic and sedentary role rather than a market

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role, which could, in turn, reinforce the social vulnerability of migrant women (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

The implication of defining migrant females and males as dependent and independent respectively further exposes the female migrant as the policies separate the right to work from the right to reside, and where women who are non-work permit holders may be employed illegally. Concomitantly, a participant related how a friend on an accompanying spouse visa couldn't work, despite her university qualifications. When her husband and principal spouse subsequently died, a change of status was so taxing, she passed on two years later, after entering a deep depression. The participant felt this was as a direct result of the visa process. Law enforcement agents do not seem to make life bearable for the accompanying spouse, as they were reported to be continuously harassed and called names, where being a legal immigrant does not necessarily protect international women from discrimination and anti-immigration. Studies have shown that many migrants to South Africa have little legal protection, and hardly any rights (Crush, 2001).

Migrant women have been overlooked in migration studies, where their socioeconomic contributions and unique experiences have also been ignored. This is based on the assumption of male dominance in migration trends, with women accompanying in the traditional roles of wife, daughter, and dependent of male migrants; which leads to their experiences being ignored (De Leon Siantz, 2013). While participants reported finding solace in being with their intact family, they still felt the accompanying spouse status impacts their being independent women in addition to bringing frustration, knowing that they are competent enough to go to work and that they've got the skills to go and work to regain previously held professional status; and that for some, when they started their career, they had projections they wanted to achieve and plans that were quashed (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Immigration is a complex psychological and sociocultural process, where selective immigration policies are used by most receiving countries to limit the number of legal immigrants, and regulate the quality of workers to protect their socio-economic development (Afolayan, 2001). From the study results, accompanying spouse status is restrictive, and the only thing that the visa allows the holder to do is to stay in the country and abandon their career. This could be a real challenge for the families who previously lived off two salaries, and/or attendant benefits. Immigration laws need to consider allowing accompanying immigrants to work even for a stipulated number of hours, as in other countries. By instituting rigid migration categories, that offer permanent residence to a few, and render many others temporary; for the accompanying migrant hoping for a better quality of life and a prosperous future, these are expectations that don't always come true (Comas-Diaz, 2013).

#### **6.4 Challenges**

Immigrant women, by and large, encounter various adversities, where relative to women, men have the requisite labour skills that enable them to have better-paying jobs, due to gendered access to education and gender segmented labour markets (Boyd, 2006; Deshingkar, 2004; UNAIDS, 2012, p. 3; Vargas-Lundius, Lanly, Villarreal & Osorio, 2008; Worku, 2013). Migrant women are disadvantaged by their status as non-nationals, and gender inequalities (Piper, 2005). The study results revealed how accompanying spouse status has affected participants' psychological and physiological well-being, as some participants reported not being fully mentally and physically fit, and often tired. Additionally, participants related how the possibility of dissolution of their marriage, their spouse being incapacitated or even dying while in South Africa, evoked in them fear and anxiety. Traditionally, female migrant status has been associated with their role and status within the family as children and is defined in relationship to their male spouses as adults in many home countries (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Accordingly, migration can render women

susceptible to stress and anxiety, due to the loss. Participants imagined scenarios of themselves and their children having to start over back home, which would now be foreign to them. Since the accompanying migrants neither belong in the host nor home country, they may suffer social exclusion, which according to Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000), implies the shutting out of one person by a group, leading to constrained or denial of access to both material and social space. Some participants also expressed concern over safety for themselves and their families, noting how they continuously have to look over their shoulders, always ensuring they are in a secure environment, and checking and double-checking as to whether they have locked up, and not staying out until late. Moreover, other participants reported discrimination directly or indirectly in public facilities; including, for some, at the hands of law enforcement agents. Thus, the way women are defined at entry may affect other social rights and entitlements, including the capacity to gain legal citizenship speedily, and for this reason, studies of immigrant women argue that women, more often than men, are denied full civil, political, and social rights and responsibilities that normally come with membership in a society (Boyd & Grieco, 2003).

A migrant's immigration status affects the type of job that they can get, wages (as determined by skills level) and occupational mobility (Hill, Lofstrom & Hay, 2010), which is just a sneak peek into the life of an accompanying spouse. Hence, participants reported how, despite being qualified and having vast experience in their areas of expertise, they could not work or secure employment in South Africa, owing to their accompanying spouse status, a condition that they are not aware of at migration, but which comes to light once participants need to do something. Certain participants reported doing rounds of interviews at which they would excel; only to be told that they are overqualified for the job, and if they opt to take the job, a phenomenon known as 'brain waste' (Forbes, 2003). When it comes to the point of finalising the appointment and/contract, the offer falls away due to their visa status, invoking a "U-shaped" process, according to Lysgaard (1955) as

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cited in Sussman (2002, p. 6), where immigrants initially experience feelings of elation, followed by an extended period of distress and crisis.

Incessant rejection has bred frustration, which could lead some migrants to easily slip into depression as a result. The immigrants' health status may be further compromised by the stress of adjusting to a new country (De Leon Siantz, 2013). Moreover, it is posited that migrants experience confusion, disappointment, anxiety, and helplessness; which evokes frustration, irritation, and anger towards the devalued, new country (Mirsky & Peretz, 2006, p.53). Wagner (2002) concurs, and remarks that migrants express disappointment, anger, and indignation at their treatment by South Africans, particularly Black South Africans, with the 'disappointment' being a "residual effect of the disjuncture between the imagination... and the lived social relations" (p. 14). Hence, accompanying spouse status is not for the faint-hearted. While applying for change of status is a possibility; if your skills set is not listed on the critical skills list, getting a work permit remains a pipe dream for the accompanying spouses, as the immigration policy is highly restrictive on issuing work permits to migrants who have skills in occupations presumed to be catered for by a local cohort (Chisale, 2015).

Some participants reported observing that when certain decisions are made, not just within the confines of one's home, but even in extended families, they lack a financial voice. Moreover, some participants were obliged to put their studies on hold due to financial challenges. Participants cited the possibilities of exploitation by prospective/possible employers and had to weigh their options (Sisulu, Moyo & Tshuma, 2007; Trimikliniotis, Gordon & Zondo, 2008). After counting the costs, they felt like all odds were against them, as all the costs were more than the returns based on the fact that they were an accompanying spouse. The accompanying migrants' experiences expose their vulnerability concerning the reconfiguration of their role within their family (Kriger, 2010; Mawadza, 2008; Rutherford, 2010). The perception of a wife in the African context



exacerbates this, where the accompanying spouse is seen as a natural dependent, who ought to have no say in any matter (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; De la Brière, De Janvry, Sadoulet & Lambert, 2002; Jolly & Reeves, 2005; Morrison et al., 2008; Pfeiffer & Taylor, 2007; Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005; UNGASS, 2004; UN-INSTRAW, 2007).

Adjustment challenges are both different and countless for the accompanying spouse, who plays a key role during the transition in terms of her willingness to leave everything and go; contribute to inception, adjustment, and performance of the principle migrant (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010). Notwithstanding being a stay-at-home mom, the accompanying spouse's day can be difficult to account for. That in itself may lead to them underestimating how much time they need to spend doing certain chores or running errands, where they may also end up overcommitting and failing to complete tasks. A respondent reported how they underestimated the time they had at their disposal and the workload tethered to their studies, which resulted in them being in school longer than expected (at greater expense). Other participants felt their household efficiency was compromised. Burnout was reported, where studying at night caused daytime fatigue, which in turn increased pressure in terms of completing tasks. A long, difficult and sometimes painful psychological process of questioning oneself and values could set in, which may be experienced differently by different people (Tolstokorova, 2010; UN, 2006; UN-INSTRAW, 2006). Participants also reported putting themselves under pressure to uphold their standards or expectations where they ended up compromising certain areas of their lives; and feeling like things were spiralling out of control, with dissatisfaction. The fact that they were not working placed some of the participants under pressure, as their children that were conceived post-migration, and do not understand why they are not working (De Leon Siantz, 2013).

Change of status through obtaining a different permit and or work visa could ease the challenges accompanying migrants face. However, it appears the laws and regulations

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governing that process make it difficult for the accompanying spouse to attain documentation; rendering them inferior, and placing more emphasis on the males who would have initially secured a permit as the principal applicant. Participants related how on countless occasions, they had attempted to find work, where a work permit was required as a prerequisite, yet at Home Affairs, to apply for a work permit; one had to produce a letter of offer, which can only be given to a work permit holder. For some, getting the initial visa to come to South Africa was also a long process, and a deterrent (Comas-Diaz, 2013; Crush, 1999). The subsequent applications as accompanying spouse were equally as challenging, as it took over a year before being issued, while only being granted for a year or less. Another participant was issued with a visitors' visa instead of an accompanying spouse visa, which caused additional bureaucratic red tape. A number of the participants had applied for permanent residence permits, and they had been waiting for several years at the time of the interview.

Since the women's status is usually linked to their role and status within the family and is defined in relation to her male partner, migration can place women in situations where they experience stress and anxiety, due to the loss of their traditional social entourage and environment (De Leon Siantz, 2013). The study results revealed that despite being with their nuclear family, participants felt a sense of isolation without their familiar support system. They described the emotional burden of being full-time housewives, including times when the kids were sick, or on holiday, leaving them very little time if any to themselves. The fact that they now only relied on one source of income did not make it any easier, as they could no longer afford to engage a helper. Coming from a place where they had a strong support structure in friends and family, they had to start making new friends, an uphill task with countless new social dynamics. Most participants still didn't have as many friends as they used to back home. Studying for other participants didn't help the situation either, as they couldn't devote as much time to building,

maintaining, and strengthening friendships. Some participants, however, reported self-isolation as a result of accompanying spousal status, and not being able to work. They didn't want to see or associate with anyone, especially those that were working, because they felt they had nothing of substance to share with anyone about their lives.

Two of the research participants reported they relocated to South Africa immediately after their wedding to join their new husbands. Accordingly, women are often classified by their relation to men with whom they migrate that is, as wife; notwithstanding their independent status (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Despite her despondency, one participant reported not having sought help. Participants attributed this shutting off to cultural norms and expectations, where an African woman is supposed to be 'strong and resilient', even when they feel as though they are 'drowning'. The African perception of a wife doesn't even help, as it robs wives of their independence and social voice. Gender disparities are deeply rooted in the values of the home culture, especially those cultures in which males are valued more highly than females (Woods, 2009). Similarly, when looked at from a Christian perspective, the perception of a wife may also negatively affect the woman, as it is difficult to say no in some cultures. One participant reported infidelity and being looked down upon by their spouse, with the latter having a ripple effect on the children, who in turn treated them with contempt. Another participant related how during pre-migration to South Africa, five months after they got married, she had to stay with her in-laws while her husband emigrated overseas. Despite not wanting to move to South Africa, she had very little choice, faced with this possibility. Under the circumstances, the female spouse almost always is the one to compromise, because they are dependent in a manner exacerbated by the spousal visa, on their spouse. Yet another of the participants reported how she had to quit her job to follow her husband, whose job was prone to relocations. She was not allowed by him to work, which violated her sense of self in her career.

Women often end up in multiple disadvantaged positions following migration, due to their status as migrants, because they are women (ILO, 1998, 2002). As many governments continue tightening migration controls, the scene for the exploitation of those most desperate is set. Such developments for accompanying migrant women may mean the invocation of amplified vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, as migrant rights are at risk and compromised all round, in both countries of origin, and destination. Existing UN and ILO conventions pledge protection for women migrants, as they operate in an uneven and dispersed fashion (ILO, 1998, 2002). Grieco and Boyd (1998) demonstrate that gender stereotypes in the receiving country often lead to a situation where the options for migrant women are restricted to that of traditional female occupations, which typically come with poor wages, low occupational status, and bad working conditions.

## **6.5 Meaning-making**

The study focus here is female accompanying migrant spouses' lived experiences, as well as their constructions of the accompanying spouse status; and this is buttressed by the social constructionist stance that permits new meanings to evolve within interactions between people (Hoffman, 1990). As alluded to in an earlier section, I was in a conversation with eight female spouses, who have been constructed by a larger societal discourse (for example by immigration authorities and legislation) as accompanying migrant spouses; and have constructed themselves as such, and explored their subjective unique life stories with them.

From the participants' narratives, accompanying spouse status led to low/poor self-esteem, and in some instances loss of sense of self. The accompanying spouse does not have the same legal status and rights as the principal migrant male spouse, which reduces the accompanying spouse from a career woman to a mere dependent, a reality the latter may only have realised long after arrival in the host country. Participants in their narratives

even questioned their worth in addition to losing their confidence against a backdrop of bearing accompanying spouse status. The way they face rejection from all fronts leaves their 'self' badly battered and bruised. Some reported practically feeling like 'rejects', and regretting ever setting foot in South Africa because that's when they lost their job and gave them their sense of personal identity. In some instances, participants felt like they were torn between a part of them wanting to be with their nuclear family, and yet feeling useless, while yearning to be someone else or their old self. Participants reported a decline in their confidence levels and a lack of sense of validity or importance. Moreover, the study results revealed participants felt they had to endure the difficulty of social stigma, where they additionally felt themselves to be burden and source of stress to their spouse, who had to also take care of the family in their home country, with only one income.

The prohibition from working rendered participants disempowered, feeling helpless and discouraged, unbearable experiences that can be direct results of their inability to provide. For some, the fact that prospective employers did not even remotely consider them as professional migrants, implies those prospective employers just don't care because accompanying spouses just followed their husbands. While some participants were satisfied with their socioeconomic status, as well as their spousal relationship, the majority were not satisfied, because they still have not managed to get back to their career, and felt that studying has taken up substantial amounts of their time, where they were not able to meaningfully engage with their children, and had not been nurturing them as much as they would have wanted to, in addition to having missed out on important milestones.

While some participants have felt like returning home on occasion, their commitment to the family and the time lost have almost always made them think back, falling back on spirituality as their compass. As accompanying spouses, participants felt they have been stripped of their independence and decision-making powers, and were wholly dependent on their spouse, in sharp contrast to their pre-migration selves. Some

participants, however, reported themselves to feel their experiences as accompanying spouses had prepared them to be the voice for prospective accompanying immigrants if they were to be given a platform to speak and voice their concerns. Some participants reported negative experiences that stemmed from accompanying spouse status, while others expressed their hopes coming alive, holding out hope for a bright future, based on plans to grow and study.

## **6.6 Adaptation**

Adaptation to new settings and roles has been reviewed in previous studies (Backstrom, 2010; Buschenfeld, 2009; Coombs, 2007). From the study results, participants related how they had to adapt to the culture of the host country, taking on new roles of domestic responsibility besides loss and related dependence on their spouse, which in turn roused a sense of duty and responsibility. The respondents indicated mixed feelings concerning their adaptation to a diverse society, and the need to adjust in such a variety of different ways. Participants reported how they struggled with having to interact with locals, who spoke in a variety of vernaculars, which they neither knew nor understood. Attempts to communicate in English as common ground were met with strong opposition, as the use of a 'foreign language' came across as a form of imposed superiority. As hard as some of the participants tried to learn the local languages, this was a daunting task as there are 11 official languages and a wide variety of languages spoken in urban centres. While one is cognisant of the country's past, it is unfortunate that most people assume 'black' therefore 'local', and black speaking English is taken to be undermining and a threat to their language and national identities (Van der Velde & van Naerssen, 2011), despite a lack of language diversity amongst some locals. Participants reported that English was a necessary lingua franca amongst other Africans. Nonetheless, a concerted effort has been placed into making new friends, despite the many social dynamics. Some positive cultural

aspects have also been reported, where some reported that South Africans communicated directly, in sharp contrast to some home countries. However, participants have also had to deal with conflicting values and the accompanying frustrations, where for instance, funeral rites differ, mothers may more readily quit their jobs for childcare; and how neighbours lack regular interaction.

The majority of the participants reported extensive travelling experience, including overseas destinations, which might in some way have prepared them for adaptation and life abroad. However, owing to holding accompanying spouse status, participants reported how they had been challenged financially, particularly on a single income. They have had to make huge adjustments in lifestyle, and adapt to the inherent financial demands of life in a foreign land in the face of ever-increasing costs of living. Most of the participants reported feeling financially insecure, as they were unable to invest or save, an untenable situation, being unable to meaningfully provide for their children; while they try to study further, whilst sending their children to good schools. Conversely, one participant still has their plan to study on hold, because the children still needed to go through school; and the financial situation is yet to allow them to start.

## **6.7 Strategies deployed to cope**

From the study findings, coping ran as a theme throughout, maintaining hope and optimism amongst most of the participants, in addition to finding help from different support networks, family and friends and studying (Brann, 2010; Buschenfeld, 2009; Coombs, 2007). Some participants reported having supportive husbands, with whom they have had open conversations, in times that they were swamped and shared some of the responsibilities; with the husbands strategically scheduling their work and time off work around such times. Additionally, some participants reported connecting with friends on a deeper level, and having family around that have been instrumental in helping them cope

with their situations. Visits by those from home countries were as much as possible also tailored to fit into certain peak periods, so they could help participants cope.

All participants reported finding solace in studying at various levels as a major coping mechanism, as it kept them too busy to keep track of time spent waiting for something to happen. Moreover, participants kept themselves busy with household chores as a coping mechanism, even though some did not have much of a choice, because they could not afford to pay a helper. Spending time with friends was another of the coping strategies for some, while for others, club or gym membership were amongst the strategies they deployed to cope. While trying to suppress or contain expressions of emotion, focusing on pragmatic coping styles and feeling the need to appear calm and strong as a coping style could work (Brann, 2010; Buschenfeld, 2009), one participant alluded to the fact that being open and letting significant others know that they were not coping was of paramount importance. Whereas some participants reported resorting to counselling, the majority of the participants attributed their state of wellbeing to spirituality (Kamya, 1997), where they initially made concerted efforts to find spiritual homes that resembled what they had back home; and connecting through prayer. Others have also reported how they've had to take up temporary lower-level job offers, while some were contemplating taking up volunteering within their communities as ways of coping with their situation.

From the study results, all participants were employed pre-migration, and the beginning of their journeys as accompanying spouses rendered them redundant; something that had varying degrees of impact on their well-being. To survive the assault on their identity, migrants must re-invent themselves (Ward & Styles, 2007). Throughout this process of identity reconceptualisation, threats to the identity are partially managed, but not eliminated, and many threats to the viability of the identity become chronic (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). Nonetheless, embracing their new identities of



housewife/home executive or stay-at-home mom seems to have helped them cope; as there is a sense of importance in feeling that they are the person in charge in the home, certain things do not function in their absence, and that they have all the time in the world to raise their children the way they want to, in addition to having time to themselves to pray or rest. The new identities have also been reported to have helped the participants move beyond their challenges-seeing the past as the past and confessing that they have learnt and grown even more in their decision-making as mothers, wives, and as persons. Similarly, Oboler (2006) posits that social status and acceptance depend on the extent to which the emigrant's past can be "forgiven and forgotten" (p. 123), coupled with the immigrant's ability to be perceived as an "empty slate" (p. 122) in the new society.

The following chapter wraps up the study. Limitations of the current research and specific recommendations for further study will be explored.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The chapter concludes the research, opening with a summary of the study. What follows are limitations to the study and suggestions regarding future migration research in particular accompanying migration, and recommendations, in addition to some suggestions for policy formulation being put forward.

#### **7.1 Summary of the Study**

The study sought to explore and describe the lived experiences of accompanying immigrants, particularly women from other African countries, accompanying their immigrant spouses within the sociocultural context of South Africa. Using in-depth interviews, and the migration journeys of eight such women, the majority of whom had families and children premigration were explored. Essentially, the study tried to explore the quality and context of accompanying spouses' migratory journeys. Hence, the major factors that influenced the decision to embark on an immigration journey as an accompanying spouse were: the effect this may have on those who undertake it; the challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face; what ways accompanying spouse status influences one's sense of justice; security and self; and how that translates into everyday life. Strategies deployed to cope with and react to challenges of accompanying migrant spouse status were discussed in light of the literature, in addition to the concepts discussed in previous sections.

The study was a qualitative, exploratory, descriptive and contextual research design with eight women from other African countries, accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa, underpinned by a post-modern social constructivist philosophy. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analysed through thematic analysis to break up text to reveal the most prominent patterns in the data. Moreover, within this concluding

chapter, based on the results obtained, the study will be evaluated in terms of its contributions and limitations in addition to putting forward recommendations for prospective accompanying immigrants, policymakers, and other stakeholders.

## **7.2 Limitations of the present study and suggestions for further research**

Amongst this study's limitations was the small and homogeneous sample of women from only one part of the country, that did not include male accompanying spouses; nor those who were living in other areas of South Africa; or those who had recently emigrated to South Africa. Hence, the research captured a moment in time, where a single participant cohort reflected on their immigration journeys, and therefore may not accurately represent the experiences of all the accompanying migrants, their experiences shortly after arrival or their future settlement outcomes. Studies with more heterogeneous and diverse samples, where an in-depth investigation into the experiences of accompanying migrant male spouses and even children accompanying their parents would be required. Also, research into the long-term adaptation, cultural and language changes, and trans-generational effects of immigration on the later would need to be explored. The results of this research were also based on a small sample of female African immigrants in Gauteng, Johannesburg, which was not representative of all the age, ethnic, language and religious subgroups among other characteristics of the women from other African countries accompanying their immigrant spouses in South Africa. Further research with a larger sample would be required on the experiences of immigrants of other ethnicities and countries of origin, wider age range as well as those with religious affiliations other than Christianity.

As qualitative research is labour- and time-intensive, it was not feasible to use a larger sample size. It is also a 'small study' due to exclusions, thus, only eight participants were studied. Whereas increasing the sample size could have provided more information

about the study, doing so would have been difficult to collect the data with the available resources, as well as within the given period. The narrow homogeneity of the sample means I interviewed exclusively black and heterosexual women, a common limitation of qualitative research's use of small homogenous samples, which tends to preclude women from different social, sexual and ethnic populations (Cannon, Higginbotham, & La Leung, 1988). However, a larger sample that allows more diversity of experiences would have increased the possibility to generalise the findings; a case that was missing in the sample size used for this study. Perhaps the experience of additional participants would have allowed identification of greater meaning and experience. Nonetheless, the data obtained and the stories they contained were fascinating and rich, though there is no expectancy of broad generalisability based on this study. Still, thick descriptive data obtained from the accompanying migrants should enable readers to determine the transferability and applicability of these research findings to their own settings (Petty et al., 2012).

The research participants were only interviewed once due to time constraints; nevertheless, a second meeting with the participants would have provided extra detail and allowed fuller stories to develop. Furthermore, it would have provided an opportunity to obtain a credibility check (Elliot, 1999; Willig, 2013) from the participants themselves. Owing to the intensive and time-consuming nature of the analysis, a smaller sample becomes necessary, and in effect, breadth is sacrificed for depth (Smith & Osborn, 2008). However, I would argue that the types of narratives that were or were not accessed by the women accompanying migrant spouses might provide a different way of understanding these types of experiences. Future directions in accompanying migrant research ought to include a broadening of scope, to include a wider variety of participants, and to include women from different social and cultural groups, male spouses, and even children.

Since the participants in this study had immigrated to South Africa between three and 11 years prior, most of them had achieved some level of emotional distancing from

the difficulties experienced shortly after arrival. Consequently, research with new arrivals during the early stages could provide more insight into their experiences during the “honeymoon” and “crisis” phases. Additional research would be required to explore the long-term cultural changes and adaptation of the immigrants. Whereas all study participants had intact marriages, save for one who reported infidelity at a point in time in the migration journey, further research could be conducted into the reasons and experiences of couples who may have encountered serious marital difficulties, including infidelity, a consideration that has been the focus of very few studies is the experience and psychological responses of loved ones.

While the study targeted women from other African countries accompanying their migrant spouses in South Africa, a destination of choice for a large number of migrant workers from the continent and elsewhere, the research results cannot be generalised to the entire population of all women affected by accompanying migrant spouse status. Moreover, immigration is a highly personal process, and the experience of immigrants may vary from one cohort to another, because of divergent pre-migration experiences, as well as the interactive nature of acculturation between the immigrant and that of the host community. Henceforth, this study’s research results cannot be generalised to all African immigrants in South Africa. Cognisant of these facts, however, the research may serve as a valuable entry point into the consideration of the extent and nature of the challenges associated with being an accompanying migrant spouse. Likewise, it may serve as an initial reference for researchers and stakeholders, who might be interested in researching a larger scale, on the area of psychosocial wellbeing of women accompanying their migrant spouses.

Consistent with the preceding notion is an acknowledgment of the cultural and social forces that shaped the research process, in a way that is unique to this researcher and this set of participants. My relationship with the participants was laden with layers of

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identification, as we each navigated between notions of 'sameness' and 'difference'. As the participants were all black, professionals (in their previous lives), educated and undeniably female; there were a variety of identities to which I could relate. Additionally, there was a notion of a shared identity, which is accompanied by an assumption of shared discourses and ideas. Possibly the shared identities amplified the perception of shared gender and sexual identities thus increasing assumed commonalities. There were instances of interaction between the participants, and I illustrate this impact. The participants would, at times, pause as they spoke, anticipating a particular reaction from me, leaving a statement incomplete, or an exchange of a knowing look and a shared laugh; all implicit indications of the common discourses at play. This impact strongly indicated that there would have been a different outcome if either my participants or I had been of alternative social identities through exploring the various ways in which the social positioning of the researcher and participants interact to produce particular types of knowledge. Archer (2002) conceptualised the identities of each as being multiple; shifting and cutting across boundaries and intersecting, in addition to addressing how the fact that participants found it easier that I was of similar gender and ethnicity, both opened and closed discursive opportunities with which they could explore the topic at hand. Correspondingly, the apparent similarity and differences between the participants and myself inevitably led to specific 'black', 'female' and heteronormative assumptions and discourses. It would be interesting to explore how men and women or even children, talk about and construct their accompanying migrant experiences, as this may lead to further uncovering of the variance in the type of discourses available to men, women, and children during such a life phase.

### 7.3 Recommendations

Post-apartheid South African migration policies and strategies have continued the discriminatory policies of the past when dealing with migrants, particularly those from neighbouring countries. The immigration policy is still restrictive, and in some cases, even considered to maintain an apartheid-style of enforcement. Immigration officers and law enforcement officers still wield a lot of power over foreigners, and there is very little recourse if something happens against foreigners in the country. There is no systematic process by which to document or report injustice and crime, and therefore crimes often go unpunished. The law does not equip a foreign national with any positive rights; only with obligations, and there isn't enough done to ensure that migrants are aware of their rights and how to exercise them in the public domain. If the current system is any different from apartheid past, perpetrators of violations of rights should be brought to book and be properly persecuted and punished with cooperation between states.

From the study, it emerged that there are instances where migrants were either harassed or were victims of abuse of power by law enforcement agents and social service workers. Actions of some law enforcement agents and health personnel as public servants are undermining South Africa's constitution that values equality without regard to a person's creed or status as well as infringing on universal human rights. Training and bringing awareness to these role-players will go a long way in making the life of accompanying migrants a bit more bearable. There is also a need for the implementation of appropriate and effective migration management strategies that do not accentuate the power of the police; curb corruption, and deal with migrant-specific issues. Additionally, there is need for a shift in mindset amongst officials, whose perception of a foreigner is almost always that of a 'black' migrant, and there is largely no distinction between a documented and undocumented migrant with regards to their harsh treatment at the hands of the officials who, more often than not, may come across as insensitive. An enlightened

immigration or police officer, who has all the facts about the different migrant categories through ongoing training, is more likely to treat the accompanying migrants with more respect and understanding. Although there almost always are efforts to draft new employment and migration laws or revising existing ones, more needs to be done to effectively protect the rights, safety, and dignity of immigrants. Governmental, non-governmental and civil society members, including researchers, must play a central role in ensuring unwavering support for the accompanying immigrants. Ultimately, this is about balancing the needs of South Africa as a whole, inclusive of all the people living within the confines of her borders, and legitimately have the right to make the country their home (Thomas, 2011).

South Africa is a signatory to and has adopted almost all the existing international and regional instruments that promote and protect gender equality including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979 which the South African Parliament adopted without reservation. By adopting CEDAW the country through its parliament committed itself to the obligations of the international law, agreeing to take responsibilities against any form of women's oppression and gender discrimination. Conversely, the immigration regulations are in sharp contrast to the purported commitment. CEDAW Article 2 [5,6] condemns discrimination against women in all forms and states that parties should:

5) ...take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization [sic] or enterprise.

6) ...take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices, which constitute discrimination against women (CEDAW, Article 2:5,6).



A proper analysis of the immigration regulations of South Africa and other countries that are signatories to CEDAW against a backdrop of actual migrant women's experiences from this study indicate that migration in these countries is gendered, and discriminates against women's careers and potentials. Article 3 of CEDAW calls on states to:

take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, to guarantee them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men. South Africa has to walk the talk by ensuring migrant rights are upheld and the starting point would be relooking at their immigration laws and making efforts to amend them to ensure the protection of migrants particularly women.

While existing UN and ILO conventions are presumed to provide extensive protection for women migrants, they operate in a fragmented and scattered manner. Moreover, it is sometimes not obvious that they could be fruitfully applied to women migrants when the focus is on the single variable of migration status. Neither of the ILO migrant worker-specific Conventions (Nos 97 and 143) mentions the feminisation of migration or the specific vulnerabilities of female migrants. There is a gap between theory and practice, where the pronouncement and actual implementation by states remains a huge problem common to human rights. Studies have revealed that the most important root causes of non-ratification or non-implementation are a lack of political will (Chisale, 2015). Analyses that identify the innumerable protections that states have already agreed upon that extend to migrant women should serve as a tool for activists seeking to increase the political will to implement those programmes. It is time that ratification is rolled into action, where all states, including South Africa, engage in implementation in real terms.

Hence, South Africa needs to strive towards ratifying or acceding to treaties related to migrant women and their human rights, specifically ICRMW and CEDAW in addition to revising national laws to comply. Moreover, governments of sending countries may also engage destination country governments to safeguard the rights of migrants, particularly female migrants.

The idea that women follow men as a result of the latter obtaining a work permit objectifies women. The accompanying female spouse does not have a say in the decision to leave the country of origin and is thus constructed as a dependent, even though they have a solid professional/ education background. The idea of relocating to a foreign country suggests that women are often expected to sacrifice their career trajectory and achievements to sustain the structure of the family and support their spouse. Although there may be concerted efforts to draft new laws or revise certain laws relevant to employment and migration issues, governmental, non-governmental and civil society members, including researchers, need to play an important role in countering some of the challenges facing accompanying migrant spouses. Relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations need to avail social support and integration assistance.

Colonialist schemes created gender stereotypes in the education and professional sectors, where the migration conventions are no exception. Despite so much having been done to fight gender inequality, immigration conventions do not seem to help the situation as much as they seem to make no effort to rectify the negative connotations of the colonial legacies of education systems. Thus, according to Halfacree and Boyle (1999, p. 8) “Career-wives” are more affected, because the decision to migrate is influenced by a husband’s career, which was influenced by their colonial past. If applicants of the critical skills work permit are predominantly male, surely this ought to raise some questions regarding how the country will be able to achieve gender justice, if policies constantly empower only one gender. Therefore, gender politics that were at play under the colonial

administrative system need to be challenged and deconstructed to accommodate women who stand disadvantaged in so many respects. Moreover, wider research needs to be done to thoroughly unearth what accompanying migrants go through, and in the end, find ways of ameliorating their situation.

The South African constitution is enshrined with women's rights, empowerment, and gender equality statements; accordingly, gender, even in immigration regulations should be prioritised. Whether or not migrant career-wives' skills are scarce in South Africa is beside the point; in my view, the real issue is that these women migrated to South Africa because their spouses responded to a call to alleviate skills shortages, the South African government offered their husbands the chance to pursue such employment, and surely the accompanying spouses have to be offered something in lieu. Policymakers need to revise the accompanying migrant status conditions, as they move with times and interact in the global village that the world has become. From this study's findings, there is evidence that the South African immigration policy overlooks the point that women's professions and careers reflect and could be directly linked to colonialism; a reality ignored in the development and implementation of such policies. According to the research participants, the migration policy's impact on them depicts a system that does not care for the family. From their narratives, if only the critical skills visa holder had to emigrate on their own, leaving his family behind, the family could disintegrate. Alternatively, migration does not necessarily help the situation either, if the family comes along and the accompanying spouse cannot work; where having to depend on only one income could still mean untold suffering for the family, and even eventual collapse, as some participants reported contemplating divorce at some point in their journey.

Respect for the family or marriage as an institution should not enforce patriarchy that positions women in domestic roles, but it should respect and promote women's full development, economic advancement, and independence. It is a reality that patriarchy

does not only exist in the family structures but everywhere, including the state governing policies, as public patriarchy that manifests itself through constricting and repressive immigration laws and regulations. Under the prevailing conditions, the accompanying spouse is on the receiving end of gender-biased policies, which are a threat to the common goal of gender justice. Gender justice and women's emancipation could be realised if economically and politically stable countries like South Africa, would be actively involved and come to the party. The country's commitment to gender equality would be implemented across all sectors, migration included. It is high time that immigration policies that fight and completely eliminate gender injustice and female oppression, citizen and non-citizen alike are seriously considered, and their implementation takes centre stage, accompanied by practical implementation with tangible results.

South African policymakers do not seem concerned about the increase in migration of spouses into the country, as study results indicate that there are no negative effects of this migration. In Australia, for example, accompanying migrants have working rights ranging from a certain number of hours per week to full working rights (Department of Home Affairs Australia, 2017; 2018). Similar concessions should also be available in South Africa as the accompanying migrants also contribute to the growth of the economy. Moreover, the accompanying migrants are capable of bringing different skills, qualities and attributes to South Africa that promote the country's growth and economic development, just like their husbands. However, dual-career households challenge and provide countries with a model for degendering labour immigration policies, and the degendering of immigration policies requires a more refined and improved gender-sensitive approach, the implementation of which should be monitored to circumvent inconsistencies in the country's governing policies, and ability to achieve gender justice (Halfacree & Boyle, 2005, p. 8). Essentially, accompanying spouse migrants in the skilled stream could make a positive contribution to the growth of GDP per capita, through high rates of labour force

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participation, and normal ways to social life. Favourable migration conditions that appeal to skilled migrant spouses may attract them to migrate to or to remain in South Africa. Given these findings, an interrogation of the wisdom in creating a cyclic change of status process that more often than not yields no positive outcome for the accompanying spouse must be instituted. Skilled principal migrants, who may now hold citizenship or permanent residence, might leave South Africa to other destinations that have more favourable conditions for their accompanying spouses; because the latter may decide to return to their home country; an action that will put a strain on the relationship, and create disruption to the family. Engagement amongst governments and in time coming into bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as crafting strategies of circumventing these challenges amongst the countries could go a long way in alleviating the plight of accompanying migrant spouses in South Africa.

As alluded to earlier, migration policies do not seem to give any thought to accompanying migrant spouses, in sharp contrast to asylum seekers, who have almost the same rights as citizens, or immigrants from other countries that are allowed to work without any work permit in addition to provision for work permit concessions for others that have been made. In the midst of all this, accompanying migrants cannot change the status to that of asylum seekers, neither can they be employed like those that are allowed to work without work permits, because accompanying immigrant permits stipulate that they should not work. While some of them could have applied for the dispensation permits, just like the change of status to their general work permit, they needed to submit a letter from an employer; yet they cannot be employed, because an employer needs a permit to offer them employment. As this chicken-and-egg debate comes into play, the poor accompanying migrant finds themselves right back in the place where they started. If the number of illegal migrants that were regularised through the special permits and that of individuals that responded to the call to fill the South African skills gap were compared,

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the latter is likely to be just a small fraction of the former, and special permit provision for accompanying migrants would not be as massive an exercise as was the regularisation of illegal migrants. Immigration laws should be sensitive, and rights-based, and those that discriminate against accompanying migrants particularly women should be revised. The revision of the laws should be inclusive of regularising accompanying women's migration, as well as reviewing discriminatory bans, thereby allowing women methods for legal migration that will not restrict employment. Ultimately, the revised immigration laws should offer options for independent immigration status from spouses.

The emphasis on migrant women in less-skilled sectors of the labour market has obscured the significant presence of skilled migrant women. As the majority of immigration receiving countries encourage and facilitate the flow of skilled migrants, it is important that focus shifts to female skilled migrants particularly those accompanying their migrant spouses, that patterns of migration and some of the challenges migrant women face, both regarding current immigration policies and their ability to penetrate the job market. NGOs, other civil society actors, individuals, and institutions, could engage the accompanying migrants as volunteers or relief workers, and give them allowances while ensuring that their rights are not infringed, that they are protected, and that they have equal access to services as non-migrants. That way, the migrants can positively contribute, and be able to stay abreast with trends, keep up to date within their areas of specialisation and be able to cope with their status challenges. Migrant workers are also potential sources of tax that the government could tap into if accompanying migrants could be engaged gainfully. From the preceding discussion, the study findings and my own experiences, where I would, therefore, like to challenge the policymakers to seriously examine this matter, and consider some concessions such as embodied by the Zimbabwe special dispensation permits for professional accompanying migrants.

Migration and the preparation thereof are complex and highly individualised and therefore, require a lot of planning. Prospective immigrants, therefore, need to do thorough research and gather as much information as they can before finalising the decision to move. Engaging a reputable immigration attorney or agent could be a good investment that could save them the stresses and heartache associated with the processing of documents. Settlement in the host country after migration could also take a toll on the immigrants' wellbeing and as such, they have to be prepared psychologically, by gathering as much information as they can around what to expect and how they can manage challenging situations. Migrants can become affiliates to migrant networks, where social relationships based on friendship, membership of a family, clan or community of origin, that connect non-migrants as well as current and former migrants at places of origin and destination (Gelderblom & Adams 2006; Heering, Van der Erg & Van Wissen, 2004; Massey et al., 1993). Massey and Zenteno (2000) posit that migration networks grow incrementally as each migrant expands the network and ensures the success of the migration outcome by reducing the costs and risks associated with migration (Gurung, 2008). Furthermore, prospective migrants draw on networks for information regarding the motivation continuum; the importance of balance and realistic expectations; resources and access to employment and accommodation; and friendships, demands and stressors of living in a new country; as experienced by predecessors and advice on how to cope in a foreign environment (Gelderblom, 2000; Massey et al., 1993). Migration networks have, however, been criticised for being gendered, as there is unequal access to networks between men and women, impressing migration on a community's psyche and channelling migrants to a particular geographic location and sometimes to a particular labour sector causing clustering by ethnicity, nationality and occupation (Adler, 2008 as cited in Werner & Barcus, 2009; Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003; Guilmoto & Sandron, 2001). Additionally, further criticism of migration networks includes that in some countries employers,

government officials, traffickers, migrant brokers, and online-based virtual communities facilitate migration in a similar fashion to what migrant networks do, and not enough attention has been given to studying the dynamics of social networks over periods exceeding the short-term (Boyd, 1989; Guilmoto & Sandron, 2001).

Empowering potential migrants to make informed decisions on migration issues, through information campaigns conducted within home communities could go a long way in preparing them for the life phase they will undertake by way of migration. Thorough pre-migration preparation, in terms of gathering reliable and comprehensive information, grasping the complexities of South Africa's immigration legislation, and doing adequate financial planning where possible secure employment or a permit that allows them to work before departure lightens the burden. For migrants who do not have access to large or established migrant networks, forming supportive social networks and establishing a sustainable community identity; feeling safe to express their ethnic identity and be respected and accepted, and become part of the wider community; and participation in civic, community and social activities facilitate settlement (Spoonley et al., 2007). Additionally, (prospective) migrants need to collect information on the contact details of members of the settled community willing to support new arrivals, to reduce the stress of adaptation, in addition to obtaining the contact details of organisations that could provide psychological assistance to newcomers; as some immigrants may require trauma counselling, as well as individual, marital, and family therapy to process pre-migration experiences and manage post-migration difficulties.

Relevant information from the findings of this study could be availed to the Departments of Home Affairs, Labour, and Community settlement as well as community organisations to raise awareness of the challenges migrants face and have to deal with, and their support needs as the government plays a vital role in building a society that endorses multiculturalism and cultural sensitivity in public areas, neighbourhoods,

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schools, and workplaces; which could provide a more welcoming and supportive context for migrants.

Acquisition of knowledge by locals on the accompanying spouses and their migrant spouses' motivation to immigrate to South African could offer insight and a more holistic view of the immigrants. Voluntary and continued contact between South Africans and the immigrants would conceivably reduce prejudice and enable the building of constructive relationships, as citizens recognise that the migrants are in no way a threat to the cultural norms and the status quo. Efforts to engage communities on issues of social cohesion and integration seem to be scattered and unsustainable, and much of the decision-making is made from a place far removed from reality. This does not promote social cohesion, but rather, it alienates certain sectors of society from the rest, and pushes them to the periphery, where they end up being more vulnerable to the wrath of mob violence and the like; something that has to be looked into. Accompanying migrants spend most of their time in communities, as their spouses will be at work, and chances are they will bear the brunt of any exclusionary behaviour. Government officials do not help the situation, as they perpetuate the idea of the threatening foreigner and their use of such strategically pejorative words as 'influx', which feed into the fear that the communities have of the immigrant. Increased public awareness and recognition of the benefits of migration and migrant contributions in origin and destination countries could go a long way in alleviating the plight of migrants, particularly female accompanying migrants. In destination countries, efforts should encompass the social inclusion of migrant women, improving perceptions of migrants. Community leaders and law enforcement agents ought to promote nondiscrimination and understand that the accompanying migrants are professionals that could meaningfully contribute to the community and the country at large. Authorities must engage in active efforts to destigmatise migrants, offer and encourage community education, train and raise awareness through creating partnerships with media institutions.

Training on gender sensitivities and human rights for officials, immigration authorities, police, and other relevant workers ought to be ongoing.

From the insight gained in this study, migration is a complex phenomenon, particularly if it is undertaken to accompany a principle migrant in a specialised field of expertise. However, no one element can be viewed in isolation. Accompanying spouse status is therefore considered worthy of further examination on a large scale with male accompanying spouses and children as well, as they are also affected somehow by having to be uprooted from their familiar environments to foreign land, where they have to engage in meaning-making, learning different cultures, and a host of other changes. The aforementioned exercise will precipitate the crafting of a blueprint that details exploring the possibility of migration; what researchers need to be engaged in, how best those concerned can better prepare for such major life-changing experiences; what options are available for all concerned, and what can be done beforehand to avoid the shock of discovering what could have been when they have already moved. Moreover, in instances where there might be no other option but to move, certain provisions should be available to help them navigate life in the new world in which they may find themselves.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

This research study invited women to present the stories of their experiences as accompanying migrant spouses. The resulting accounts were analysed using thematic analysis which resulted in seven overarching themes: motivation to relocate; effects of migration; how accompanying immigrant status is experienced by the female accompanying spouse; challenges immigrants that hold accompanying spouse status face; meaning-making, adaptation; and strategies deployed to cope. These were discussed in terms of the construction of the 'accompanying spouse status' and how this powerful social discourse impacts women's wellbeing. Limitations of the current study

were also identified and some suggestions for further study put forward. The focus of this study has been exploring the lived experiences of accompanying migrant spouses, an under-researched phenomenon that has been riddled with mixed perceptions and assumptions. It is hoped that the outcomes of the research may expose the gaps and allow a fuller picture of female accompanying spouse experiences to emerge.

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