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# Home Is Always Calling: Determinants of Civic Participation Among Zimbabwean Immigrants in Cape Town, South Africa

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

HOME IS ALWAYS CALLING: DETERMINANTS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION  
AMONG ZIMBABWEAN IMMIGRANTS IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

By

Rumbidzai R. Mufuka

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

December 2013

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Home is Always Calling:  
Determinants of Civic Participation Among Zimbabwean  
Immigrants in Cape Town, South Africa

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This research project examines factors that have influenced community engagement among immigrants from Zimbabwe living in Cape Town, South Africa. A case study of PASSOP (an immigrant rights organization in Cape Town) tests existing theories on civic participation through interviews with immigrants, knowledgeable informants and activists. The study identifies reasons for leaving Zimbabwe and legal status in South Africa as factors that influence why undocumented immigrants participate in or withdraw from civil society in Cape Town. The results indicate that the conditions of the country of origin and the related reasons for leaving—political and economic degradation in Zimbabwe—heavily influence the decisions of immigrants to engage in their adopted communities. In addition, South Africa’s haphazard immigration system makes documentation onerous and difficult while xenophobic tensions make integration precarious. This study has implications for policymakers, activists and academics concerned with the integration of new immigrants in their new home country.

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## **INTRODUCTION: Home is Always Calling**

Mr. Rugare emigrated from Zimbabwe to South Africa in August 2008 as inflation in his homeland neared a trillion percent, political violence was rampant and unemployment statistics topped 95% (Berger, 2008; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009). For several years, he had avoided any political affiliation within his homeland in an attempt to avoid being recruited to squelch the opposition or targeted for supporting them. However, after the reigning Zimbabwean political party, ZANU-PF, again declared victory in June 2008, Mr. Rugare found himself on the losing side of land redistribution and other policies that favored ZANU-PF supporters. The commercial farm where he worked for a white owner was ransacked and taken over by ZANU-PF loyalists. Post-election ongoing tensions and a rapidly deteriorating economy left Mr. Rugare with few alternatives for sustaining himself and his family. Landless and jobless, he arrived in Cape Town with a few crafts to sell, a rarely used Zimbabwean passport and an automatic 90-day stay granted to Southern African Development Community (SADC) members.

From other refugees, Mr. Rugare learned that he needed to apply for asylum of some sort. But, without direct involvement in politics or evidence that he was targeted for his participation, the South African Department of Home Affairs declined to process his application for political asylum because no asylum is in place for economic migrants to South Africa. Even without asylum or a work permit, however, Mr. Rugare found a job as a farmworker north of Cape Town in DeDoorns.

For months, Mr. Rugare's new neighbors claimed he and his fellow immigrants undercut wages and increased crime; he did not report their threats to the police, as he did not believe they would protect him. In December 2008, a small, xenophobic riot erupted

in his township; South African local councilors supported an eviction from his home and dismissal from work.

Mr. Rugare spent the next several weeks at a makeshift shelter on a soccer field outside of town. While there, he met a Zimbabwean volunteer with the non-governmental organization PASSOP (People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty) who encouraged him to visit the office for paralegal advice as the government was offering a special visa for Zimbabwean immigrants. The activist, Mr. Dambudzo, was driven out of Zimbabwe in 2004 for fervently and openly campaigning for the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). When threats to his life intensified, Mr. Dambudzo fled with his family to South Africa where he was granted political asylum and found work as an English teacher. Undeterred by his country's violent political past, he continued to volunteer for the MDC expatriate chapter in Cape Town and regularly attended township meetings. Although eligible for South African residency, Mr. Dambudzo never applied. He often spoke of returning to Zimbabwe "where his umbilical [cord] is buried." In the meantime, Mr. Dambudzo and fellow foreign nationals worked tirelessly to prevent anti-immigrant outbreaks in their townships by notifying the police, meeting with locals and addressing the concerns of local South African leaders.

After receiving paralegal advice, Mr. Rugare obtained a three-year visa through the special dispensation program for Zimbabwean migrants. In a chance meeting several weeks later, Mr. Dambudzo asked Mr. Rugare to attend a workshop on xenophobia and community engagement. He declined, stating that he was worried about being harassed for his participation. Mr. Dambudzo told him that those things didn't happen in South Africa like they did in Zimbabwe. "You're free here," he said. Mr. Rugare replied that he

had a visa now and could not miss a day of work because his family in Zimbabwe depended on his remittances. “I may be free here,” he says. “But politics is still a dirty game everywhere. I’m just here to work and go back home.”

This fictional account combines the stories of several interviewees to describe civic participation in a context that goes beyond education, skills, time and resources. I had heard pieces of this story from my Zimbabwean family members, so I embarked on this project wanting to know more about the political and civic lives of migrating Zimbabweans. I expected Zimbabweans to be in the thick of civil society. Preliminary correspondence with PASSOP, an immigrant-rights NGO in Cape Town, led me to believe I would find a vibrant community of immigrants willing to organize, march and protest for their rights as refugees, asylum seekers and residents in South Africa. Based on existing theories, I hypothesized that the relatively high levels of education and English-speaking skills provided some advantages over other immigrant groups. Also, their newfound ability to be seen and heard without violent repercussions galvanized them despite the prohibitive nature of their legal (or illegal) status.

Upon arrival in Cape Town, however, I found that much of the energy and enthusiasm was limited to a small cadre of activists and leaders and did not trickle down to the everyday migrant from Zimbabwe. Before interviews began, I listened to conversations and observed meetings in Zimbabwean communities. I often heard skepticism about the merits and benefits of civic engagement and political activity from educated professionals and poor migrants alike. Education and skills did not seem to translate to higher levels of political participation among the immigrants I met. But some did participate, namely the organizers of the meetings, so what motivated them? And

what disincentivized the others? My initial hypothesis no longer made sense, and the theory on which it was based did not seem to fit. Before interviews began, I revised my initial hypotheses and acknowledged that other variables must be at work.

The dominant theories on civic participation and immigrant incorporation predict low participation rates among undocumented immigrants due to low socioeconomic status and a tenuous legal status. On the other hand, large-scale surveys on civic participation among immigrants (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001) show that mobilized citizens-to-be with the time, skills and adequate resources to participate tend to do so. This focus on individual-level characteristics like education, income and skills certainly increases our understanding of how and why citizens engage in civic activity.

However, non-citizens who will not attain citizenship are rarely studied; thus their impact on their communities is less understood. Furthermore, non-citizens seem to buck the well-studied relationship between education and political participation (La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998, p. 567). The above average levels of education among Zimbabweans do not seem to result in above average levels of participation as they do in other populations. For both reasons, to understand the motivations of these immigrants we need to assess the influence of variables that are less commonly studied in the literature on immigrant participation: country of origin, reasons for leaving and legal status in studies of immigrant incorporation and participation. The data I present show why and how a Zimbabwean's experience at home and status upon arrival in South Africa influence the decision to engage in or withdraw from new communities.

The remainder of this project proceeds as follows. Chapter Two begins my argument for the need to include additional variables in immigrant participation research

through an examination of the existing literature on civic participation, immigrant incorporation and migration studies. New evidence is needed to bridge the gaps between these research agendas as well as explain circumstances where theories fall short. A series of interviews with migrants and activists is presented as a way to assess motivations that go beyond easily measured variables like income and education.

Chapter Three describes the research design in detail as well as its evolution from a confirmatory plan to an exploratory agenda. As a deviant case, my research sheds light on the underlying conditions that affect a migrant's willingness to participate in civil society in a foreign land (Gerring 2001). The interviews as well as the field notes serve as the primary data source for analysis.

The first half of Chapter Four is an historical overview of the key political and economic circumstances that drove migrants out of Zimbabwe and to South Africa. A brief history of immigration law in South Africa since the end of apartheid is also outlined as this history affects migrants and their ability to integrate. The second half of Chapter Four links the recent history of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa with three determinants for participation in civic life. I hypothesize that a migrant's personal history, their experiences with politics and economic challenges in Zimbabwe as well as the legal status they attain upon arrival in South Africa affect their decisions to engage in civil society.

In Chapter Five, an analysis of the interviews reveals that personal histories are intimately linked to an immigrant's decision to participate in activities in South Africa. For both withdrawn and active migrants, there is a common thread in their decision-making process. Immigrants who were civically active in Zimbabwe often engaged in

similar activities once in Cape Town. In contrast, immigrants focused on economic survival, often in the informal economy, and who withdrew from their communities in Zimbabwe are also withdrawn upon arriving in Cape Town; they continue to focus on surviving from day to day. *The Things They Carry* (to borrow from (O'Brien, 1990)) to South Africa, whether political or economic in nature, in many ways provide the foundation from which they build their new lives. These characteristics are also closely tied to their ability to integrate legally via the South African immigration system. Simply, there is no asylum for economic refugees and political victimhood is often difficult to prove. These co-determinants—reasons for leaving and legal status upon arrival—are strong indicators of participation.

Chapter Six concludes with a discussion of the results as well as recommendations for further research and analysis.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, I outline the existing scholarship on civic participation, immigrant incorporation and migration studies. I then demonstrate how the relationship between these three areas can be better understood with new evidence. The main conclusion is that country of origin and legal status should be considered when analyzing participation among immigrants. A third variable, immigrants' reasons for leaving home, sits between origin and legal status in that the factors that drove them to migrate influence their participation as well as their ability to acquire a documented status. Together, all three variables create a more complete picture of participation than education and income alone. In the chapters that follow, I use a series of interviews with migrants and activists to show how these variables affect immigrant participation in their adopted homes.

### **Civic Participation**

Theories on civic participation posit that naturalized immigrants and immigrants with a path to citizenship with high socioeconomic status are those most likely to become civically active, especially when mobilized to act by others (Brady, Scholzman, & Verba, 1999; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). A simple transplantation of Verba's Civic Voluntarism Model to immigrants in South Africa, for example, would emphasize factors such as financial resources, recruitment (i.e., being asked to participate), civic skills (e.g., vocabulary, writing, organization and the like), time education and engagement (1995). Other researchers that look beyond the socioeconomic status of immigrants find that socialization—inculcated beliefs about voting and the democratic process—can serve as the mechanism that translates accumulated resources into action (Bishin & Klofstad,

2011; Bloemraad, 2006; Cho, 1999). In addition, an immigrant community with a high level of social capital— understood obligations and expectations, reliable information channels and established social norms (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000)—is more likely to mobilize these resources when threatened (Cho, Gimpel, & Wu, 2006; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998).

While these literatures inform our understanding of how immigrants participate in the civil society of their new country of residence, both exclude migrants who navigate civil society without the ability to become citizens, the right to vote or high socioeconomic status. Furthermore, much of this literature focuses on Western democracies where migration is more efficiently regulated by the state and paths to incorporation and citizenship are defined clearly (Penninx, 2004). In total, the effect that civic participation has on the social fabric of community is less understood outside of the United States, Europe and other developed nations.

The contribution of mobilized immigrant groups has been documented in several cities around the world, but more often in the specific context of workers' rights, not civic participation more generally (Anderson, 2010; Salzinger, 1991). In this same vein, the literature on immigrant participation connects policy change to voting rates in the immigrant community (Cho et al., 2006), which omits the effects of non-voting activities and thus the observations of non-citizens.

Loyalty to Zimbabwe and its proximity to South Africa make it unlikely that Zimbabweans will seek permanent residence or have any desire to live in South Africa as citizens. Nonetheless, many Zimbabwean immigrants express a desire to have the quality of life promised to all residents of South Africa. However, for citizens and non-citizens



alike, the government's limited ability to enforce immigration laws and encourage inclusion and integration results in a persistent gap between rights granted in the Constitution and rights experienced in real life (Pieterse, 2004). As predicted by Verba et al. (1995), civic organizations thrive in this gap with the support of citizens and non-citizens;<sup>1</sup> they provide a foundation from which all residents can express their wishes to the government. Participation of immigrants or non-residents, however, depends on the depth of their incorporation into their communities.

### **Immigrant Incorporation and Migration**

Research findings in the field of immigration have produced significant conceptual divergences. An economic analysis, for example, might measure the “success” of an immigrant's incorporation by average earnings, which are determined by education, work experience and other elements of human capital (Nee & Sanders, 2001). Political scientists have explored the political dimension of immigrant incorporation, particularly how immigrants participate in campaigns and voting (Bishin & Klofstad, 2011; Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001). Here, immigrants are depicted as citizens-to-be with participatory patterns and motivations that mirror their citizen counterparts (DeSipio, 2011). Other studies of immigrants examine variables like personal resources (Ramakrishnan, 2005), duration of time in country and subsequent generational differences (Ramakrishnan & Espenshade, 2001) and the ease with which a host country facilitates incorporation (Bloemraad, 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> There are an estimated 100,000 registered non-governmental organizations in South Africa and 50,000 unregistered NGOs (Jankelowitz, 2007).

Rationalist studies of economic incorporation surmise that migrants, far from support networks and social norms, tend to follow pragmatic and individualized paths to employment, often with little social mobility (Piore, 1979). A structuralist approach attributes this vulnerability to an older systemic mechanism to reduce labor costs, which often encourages the recruitment of cheap foreign labor subsequently creating tensions among natives and migrants (Castles, 1995). Overall, there is an assumption that migration stems from a “cost-benefit calculation of the differential productivity and returns to human capital in different national settings” (Portes, 1995, p. 19).

Sociologists and anthropologists, often refuting the rationalists approach, have explored the stages of the integration process, settlement and patterns of incorporation into new communities. The sociological approach, according to Portes, notes the history of contact between the country of origin and the receiving country. Immigrants are viewed not simply as individuals clutching a bundle of personal skills, but rather as “members of groups and participants in broader social structures that affect their economic mobility and incorporation” (Portes, 1995, p. 24). Portes opens the incorporation literature to include measurable human capital, like education, as well as less measurable assets like community organizing skills.

A weakness of the sociological approach is it maintains a narrow state-centric logic that ignores the voices of residents without a path to citizenship and those who do not desire citizenship. The modes of incorporation, as outlined by Portes, include the ways in which immigrants are received as reflected in government policy, civil society and public opinion (Portes, 1995, p. 26). Yet, this implicitly favors migrants entering legally and omits those living outside of government regulation, civil society’s reach or

the public's awareness. Thus, an undocumented immigrant's perspectives on the value of citizenship and the possibility of alternative forms of participation and incorporation are omitted. Portes' model helps explain hostile public opinion or policy towards non-white immigrants in the United States, for example, but is unhelpful in explaining black on black hostility in South Africa. In addition, the sociological approach emphasizes incorporation via economic activities or employment over political and social activities. Finally, much of the literature on immigrants comes from the United States, Canada and Europe (Bloemraad, 2006; Castles & Kosack, 1985; Soysal, 1994), but there are indications in other studies that participation varies widely depending on country of origin, host country, legal status and reasons for leaving (Kemp, Raijman, Resnik, & Gesser, 2000).

Stephen Castles addresses these gaps in his overview of migration studies literature. He specifically argues for "the need to embed migration research in a more general understanding of contemporary society," which "requires forms of enquiry that start from a situation of rapid and generalized changes" (Castles, 1995). An emerging goal of migration research is to document the ways in which migration is embedded in broader social changes at the nexus of origin and destination. This shift encourages researchers to explore differences regarding geography and intensity of migrational flows and the impact migration has on policy, structures and institutions as well as migrants' responses to them.

The extent to which migration can transform the latter, however, is a source of contention. In particular, Alejandro Portes (2010) argues that massive migration can lead to local-level changes while the pillars of society remain unaltered, including the basic

values guiding social interactions and power. In Cape Town, for example, interviewees in my research expressed frustration with government institutions and businesses but felt some sense of tolerance by other immigrants in their communities. Vertovec (2004) argues that transnational practices affect more than the specific sociocultural institutions that interact with migrants. For example, the dual-orientation, or “bifocality,” of an immigrant’s outlook influences family life and perhaps the lives of generations to come.

Research on transnationalism and migration attempts to bridge this divide with its focus on the construction of migrant identity, transnational networks and transition in urban environments. Transnationalism is most commonly understood as a process of building linkages and networks between two countries of residence. A rapid improvement in technology and communications allows migrants to maintain close ties to their home countries. This facilitates the process of transnationalism; migrants can more easily be a part of two worlds—their country of origin and their adopted country. For this reason, migrants are thought to have double lives (Vertovec, 1999). In addition, migration is not just an end-result, but also a process in that a migrant can take on a double life. In this regard, both countries are affected, so the duality of a migrant should be considered. To date, transnationalism literature focuses on the impact of the host country with a disregard for the country of origin. In addition, the literature remains territorially bounded, suggesting that migrants are trapped within the boundaries of specific nation-states. This also omits the ideas, perceptions or habits an immigrant might carry from their home country.

Broadening the realm of immigrant incorporation beyond citizenship, employment or economic incorporation allows for the possibility that factors other than

citizenship, human capital and market fluctuations can influence incorporation in a host country. Moving beyond the orthodox dichotomy of undocumented migrants as victims or villains is essential to genuine scholarship on migration (Anderson, 2010). This is particularly important in South Africa where the rights of all people, citizens and non-citizens, are enshrined in the Constitution but are enforced unevenly. There is clearly a gap between formal law, which guarantees rights to non-citizens, and local practices, which often exclude non-citizens from the community. These three factors merit further study as demonstrated by interviews with members of the Zimbabwean immigrant community in Cape Town. Experiences with political violence and economic hardship at home, institutional and cultural barriers in South Africa, the option to repatriate and a tenuous legal status all weigh heavily on an individual's everyday decisions to engage in their communities.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown that much of the literature to date overlooks how a migrant's legal status and country of origin impact their willingness and ability to participate in their adopted homes. The following chapter outlines how data were gathered through a series of interviews with Zimbabwean migrants and activists in South Africa as well as the evolution of the case selection, coding, hypotheses and research design.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **Theoretical Framework**

My original research proposal was designed to test theories and hypotheses on civic participation among immigrants in South Africa based on dominant theories in the literature. Gerring (2001) characterizes this type of research as one in which decisions have been made about the evidence before the research process begins. In this case, my hypotheses were based on a citizenship-based approach, the dominant paradigm in the immigration literature. The nature of this theory leads to evidence gathering that would garner straightforward results and a hypothesis that can be answered in a yes or no fashion.

Before arriving in South Africa, my research question (Why do Zimbabweans engage in civic participation in Cape Town?) was based on preliminary interviews with activists and a review of the literature that suggested Zimbabweans with high levels of education and income would have high levels of participation. Upon arriving and observing very little participation, I needed to retract and ask: “Under what conditions do a Zimbabwean immigrant’s country of origin, reasons for leaving and legal status enable or discourage participation?”

I originally had hypothesized that Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town would be civically engaged because they possessed characteristics that were previously shown to foster participation, such as higher than average income and education. My ideas about immigrants in Cape Town, which were easily quantifiable and measurable, did not reflect the reality at hand, which was messy and did not comport with the dominant theories of civic participation. I quickly found that the lenses that framed my research design were

frequently and frustratingly being broken. My approach was not appropriate for this case as the uniqueness of the Zimbabwean population in Cape Town warranted a more creative exploration. Other factors also necessitated a shift in my approach: weak or non-existent demographic data, confidentiality concerns due to the legal status and the experiences of the migrants, remote and dangerous interview points, limited electronic communication and language barriers. All of these required a reexamination of my original goal to interview 200 Zimbabwean migrants and 10-20 community activists, leaders and politicians. To wit, I needed to shift my research design from confirmatory to exploratory.

Gerring notes that theory and evidence are closely intertwined in the exploratory research model (2001). Therefore, prior theories as well as intuition and the evidence itself suggested the hypotheses above. However, they evolved to reflect the evidence at hand as the project evolved. After this process of “mutual adjustment,” concepts and theories (which admittedly were outlined in advance) are refined to comport with the newly discovered evidence. An exploratory research design differs from the confirmatory model in its approach to developing and testing the hypothesis. In this model, the hypothesis develops through suggestions of prior theories and research or the evidence under investigation. According to Gerring this model is preferable because it requires a constant evaluation of the evidence, opens the researcher to conceptualization, theorization, and investigation and discourages premature conclusions (2001, p. 231). Instead of discovering “Yes, my hypothesis is true!” or “No, it is not,” I revised my expectations based on my initial observations in the community. I then sought to test those new expectations more deeply throughout the remainder of the study.

This research project provides new and informative ways to analyze the reality of participation in South Africa and leads to new insights on an increasingly important case of non-citizen immigration participation. Gerring (2001) and, more recently, Reiter (2013) outlined the disadvantages and advantages of exploratory research. For both authors, there is no purely confirmatory or purely exploratory research design. The latter, in my research however, allows for a revision of my initial hypotheses and the reformation of my research question as I became more familiar with the phenomena related to the problem at hand. As such, the theoretical frameworks previously proposed were ill fitting after the research was done. A correlation between participation and education and income simply does not provide the whole story in Cape Town. Indeed Verba et al may not have intended their work to be applied in an environment and context that did not mirror their own, namely an industrialized, democratic nation with a long history of civic participation.

By superimposing a theory that was generated in the United States and Europe onto Zimbabweans in South Africa, I was perpetuating a particular type of scholarship—one that was not designed to be wholly applicable in non-Western countries, despite the attempts of some authors to do so. To assume that these theories could be universally applied stretched the theories beyond their validity. In addition, it excluded the views and experiences of migrants by omitting their opinions altogether. In order to study an often under-observed population, a context beyond pre-existing theories is necessary to guide my research. A single-case study methodology, with an exploratory research design, allows for the insertion of context into a theoretical framework. In this case, the recent political and economic history of Zimbabwe as well as its migratory relationship with



South Africa provides a context for the reasons why country of origin and legal status are important variables in determining participation.

An additional theoretical framework, borrowed from economist Albert Hirschman's conceptual text on consumer choice, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), serves as a starting point from which to examine the roots of participation more deeply. Hirschman argues that consumers have two choices when confronted with deteriorating quality of goods: to exit the relationship or voice their discontent. Applied more broadly, when members of a community perceive that a decrease in quality or benefit exists, they can exit, emigrate or withdraw or voice their concerns in an attempt to improve or repair the dysfunction. These options also mirror economics and politics. A dissatisfied citizen, for example, can exit his country, shift his energies elsewhere and perhaps use the market to improve his position. This mechanism is neat and impersonal; there is little to no face-to-face interaction between citizen and state. In fact, failure of the state is only communicated by statistics (e.g. a decline in population or productivity). "Voice," however, is a messier concept that ranges from cranky Letters to the Editor to violent uprisings. Voice implies an "articulation of one's critical opinions rather than a private, 'secret' vote in anonymity" (Hirschman, 1970, p. 16). Exit is roundabout while voice is political action.

In a political setting, providing room for criticism and feedback can reduce the number exiting while stifling dissent can increase pressure to use the only other expression of discontent, withdrawal. Hirschman argues the easier it is to exit, the less likely voice will be used. As applied to Zimbabwean migrants, the ease in which an immigrant can travel between the two countries is apparent by traditional migratory patterns back and forth. Loyalty to a company or, in this case, to a country is another

factor Hirschman argues can affect an individual's decision to use exit or voice. Where there is loyalty, exit may be reduced, especially when the option to exit is unappealing. So, Hirschman asks, "Under what conditions will the exit option prevail over the voice option and vice versa?" and "In what situations do both options come into play jointly?" (1970, p. 5).

For the last three decades, Zimbabweans have exited an increasingly oppressive and economically unstable regime to find opportunities elsewhere. A physical exit was a last resort for many and a silent protest for some but increasingly easier than voicing their discontent. However, the proximity of South Africa meant returning home was almost always an option and often preferable to living abroad permanently. Ironically, the ease with which Zimbabweans could exit South Africa for home was also cited as a reason to withdraw from their communities. Proximity in this way heightened a sense of loyalty and disincentivized engagement for some migrants. In my research, these were the same migrants who left primarily to find work and exited civic and political activities long before moving to South Africa.

Other migrants, who were forced to exit Zimbabwe because their vocal political dissent put them in danger, continue to give voice to their dissatisfaction in South Africa. Loyalty and proximity are also factors in their decision to participate; indeed, one activist said, "Home is calling" and refused to apply for residency even though he qualifies. His loyalty to Zimbabwe motivated him to help his countrymen in a foreign land. For activists, their history of past participation in Zimbabwe motivated them to continue similar work in South Africa despite obstacles.

## **Case Selection**

The activities and members of PASSOP (People Against Suffering Oppression and Poverty) served as the starting point for this case study. Founded in 2007, PASSOP is a community-based non-profit organization that promotes immigrant rights and integration through basic rights education, anti-xenophobia workshops and advocacy campaigns in South Africa. Their resources provided access to an immigrant community that is often out of sight and inaccessible. Using their contacts, I was able to interview Zimbabweans of various socioeconomic levels, including prominent leaders in the immigrant community. “Snowball sampling” was therefore applied in an attempt to gain access to geographic and demographic representations of Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town. As a result, I received perspectives from the un-mobilized at the grassroots level as well as mobilizers.

To understand the utility of studying this particular group of immigrants, it is necessary to discuss what case selection is more broadly. In qualitative research, case selection is not random, but purposeful. According to Gerring (2004), a case is “a spatially bounded phenomenon ... observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time; in other words, it is ‘an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units’” (p. 342). For example, an historical episode like the war for independence in Zimbabwe is a case in itself, but different aspects of the crisis are cases of broader theoretically defined classes of events, such as revolution, guerilla warfare, the decision-making of political leaders and the like. This in mind, a central question to ask of any case study is, “What is this a case of?”

(Gerring, 2007, p. 19-20). This study of Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town is a single-case research design of a “deviant” or “outlier” case. Deviant case study research designs focus on observed deviations from existing theoretical propositions with the aim of explaining why the case deviates from theoretical expectations and, in the process, refining the existing theory and generating additional hypotheses (Levy, 2008). The deviant case is particularly well suited for theory development because it helps researchers to understand the limits of existing theories and develop the new concepts, variables and theories that will be able to account for what were previously considered outliers.

A study of the participation levels of Zimbabwean immigrants in Cape Town is an example of a deviant case because it strays from theoretical expectations about immigrant participation, leaving room to refine the existing theory and generate additional or new hypotheses. Otherwise stated, this is a “most-likely” case (Gerring, 2001) that is shown to be negative. Current theories predict that immigrants with high levels of education, moderate incomes and accompanying skills and resources to be civically active in their adopted homes. My research, however, shows that Zimbabwean migrants do not participate despite their elevated education levels and requisite skills. In fact, they seem to participate less than their less educated counterparts. Since the literature to date does not explain the phenomena in Cape Town, studying this deviant case allows for much-needed theoretical development or a new framework altogether to shed light on the additional mechanisms that affect levels of immigrant civic participation in a foreign land.

### **External and Internal Validity**

Case study research often suffers from problems of representativeness because it includes, by definition, only a small number of cases or even a single case of a broader phenomenon (Gerring 2007). In the case of this study, civic participation among Zimbabwean immigrants is a particular example of immigrant participation more generally and, as a result, is weaker with respect to external validity than its cross-case or large-N cousins (Gerring, 2007, p. 43). However, as in this study, recent studies that explore immigrant participation among Latino non-citizens in the United States reveal that traditional socio-economic measures of education and income as well as length of stay in the United States were non-significant predictors of non-citizen participation (Leal, 2002). Another study finds that factors contributing to lower voting turnout include the belief that the Latino vote will not make a difference, mistrust in government and prior experiences in their native country (Leal, 2002). This study on Zimbabwean migrants sheds light on these and other similar deviant cases. At the same time, these other cases lend credence to the external validity of the results presented here.

While issues of external validity are necessary to consider, it is also important to consider that the “corresponding virtue of case study research is its internal validity” (Leal, 2002). Internal validity focuses on whether there is a good match between the researchers’ observations and the theoretical ideas they develop (Brewer, 2004, p. 273). It is often easier to establish the veracity of a causal relationship pertaining to a single case than for a larger set of cases. This study of Zimbabwean migrants peers into the “black box” of causality to locate the intermediate factors lying between legal status, reasons for leaving home and country of origin and their purported effects on participation.

### **Key Variables: Determinants of Civic Participation**

Based on my data collection efforts in Cape Town, I deduced that political and social barriers, legal status and reasons for leaving home impede Zimbabwean civic participation in South Africa. Intervening variables include loyalty and proximity, or the ease with which an individual can return home. Loyalty to Zimbabwe and the ease with which they can enter and exit South Africa affect their decision to withdraw from their communities in Cape Town or voice concerns. Their choice to exit or voice is intimately tied to their country of origin, their legal status and their reasons for leaving.

#### *Country of Origin*

Country of origin has been included as a variable in analyses of civic participation as a summary measure of home society characteristics (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). It is also used as a metric to group immigrants for comparison (new language acquisition among different groups) or to compare circumstances that drive immigration, inhibit integration, influence economic and labor disparities or promote assimilation (see, e.g., (Jasso & Rosenzweig, 1986; Chiswick & Miller, 1992). Black, Niemi, and Powell (1987); Finifter and Finifter (1989) studied an immigrant's ability to "translate" previous democratic experiences and apply them to a new political process in the United States. An immigrant's previous political experiences may also influence his or her likelihood of participating in the electoral process. According to the "translation" argument, previous experience with democratic systems is among the best predictors of future participation for immigrants. Other scholars make a slightly different argument regarding the influence of country of origin on voting, contending that refugees are less likely to participate politically, not because of a lack of experience, but rather due to their histories of state-

sponsored oppression and lack of trust in government institutions (Harles, 1993; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) (Fennema & Tillie, 1999). More recent studies examined country of origin as a mechanism of mobilization for voter participation. Being from a particular country of origin is what provides access to and involvement in such ethnic networks and organizations and the resulting political mobilization (Portes, 1995)

While these studies acknowledge a connection between country of origin and participation, nearly all explore how these experiences affect voting and citizenship—two very narrow aspects of political participation. Furthermore, nearly all study the connection in an American or European context. In addition, country of origin is often used to create general and broad categories that hide unique effects. For example, an Hispanic category would be comprised of Spaniards who migrated from a robust democracy and Cubans who migrated from a communist regime. Examining immigrants by region of origin, rather than country of origin, is also problematic given the heterogeneity in migration flows. By studying—almost exclusively—the affects on voting and citizenship, these studies miss the many small political and non-political steps an immigrant might take towards voting before actually casting a ballot or applying for citizenship, if either are even available or possible. An immigrant might attend meetings or marches or support a local candidate or cause. They may simply form a neighborhood cleanup committee.

### *Reasons for Leaving*

It is difficult to separate an immigrant's country of origin from their reasons for leaving because the former is almost inextricably linked to the latter. However, the

particular circumstances within their home country should not be taken for granted. Economists take for granted that migration decisions are based mainly on an economic calculus: expected wages abroad minus unemployment risk and moving costs. The wage-differential theory fails to account for different perceptions of risk and the relative economic standing of potential immigrants at home and abroad. To claim that Mexican immigrants and Nicaraguan immigrants migrate to the United States with the same economic motivators omits how the different situations could affect their activities away from home. Those fleeing a protracted economic stagnation and those experiencing a recent depression might have different expectations about their return and obligations abroad.

Furthermore, immigration policies in most countries differentiate between persons coming for economic reasons, refugees with close family ties and those escaping political persecution. Political victims are often eligible for protected status, but economic migrants rarely qualify. Immigrants escaping state-sanctioned political violence may carry that fear overseas whereas those fleeing non-violent political oppression might embrace a new opportunity to participate.

### *Legal Status*

Governmental policy is important in determining the incorporation patterns of different national-origin groups. Groups afforded refugee status are better positioned to create strong co-ethnic communities that, in turn, influence community involvement (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). South Africa's current policy and institutional framework were not designed to deal with large-scale migration flows and has never had to deal with such a situation before. South Africa's constitution forbids refugee camps, and its general



policy of urban self-sufficiency and self-settlement means there are no institutions in place to provide large-scale shelter or assistance.

So far, little reconciliation has occurred between the crisis, the resulting needs and the response. South African migration frameworks have been applied to Zimbabweans with little to no adaptation to their specific circumstances or numbers (Polzer, 2008). While visa restrictions have been abolished for other neighboring SADC members, Zimbabweans continue to face special challenges as migrants to South Africa. Since 1996, South Africa has required Zimbabwean passport holders to provide proof of confirmed and paid accommodations or a letter of invitation from a business associate, friend or relative legally residing in South Africa. Visitors must also show evidence that they are able to sustain themselves while in South Africa and are gainfully employed in Zimbabwe. Proof of marriage also has been required for unemployed visitors. Some circumvent these restrictions by entering with a passport and a 90-day permit, but the Zimbabwean government's inability to issue them expediently and their expense (between \$53 and \$318 USD) means that few can acquire them (Crush, 2008; Polzer, 2008).

Also in 1996, the South African government tried to help with a limited amnesty to nationals of SADC countries that met certain requirements. The Department of Home Affairs estimated that one million of the two to four million Zimbabwean migrants would qualify, but only 175,000 were granted permanent residence. Fear, a lack of information and access as well as allegations of corruption stunted the potential of this program. The

rising rates of arrest and deportation<sup>2</sup> forced the majority of Zimbabweans to cross into South Africa without documentation and remain underground (Siegfried, 2013).

From September 2010 to July 2011, the Department of Home Affairs tried again to remedy the ongoing problem with the creation of a Special Dispensation Program (ZDP) for Zimbabweans only. The program took many forms over several months, but ultimately deportations were suspended and migrants were given three months to apply for temporary work and study permits, good for up to four years, if they provided Zimbabwean identification documents and proof of employment, enrollment in school or business ownership. However, few could afford the fees to acquire these documents; those who could faced long waiting periods at the Zimbabwe consulate as well as the South African Home Affairs offices (Keepile, 2010). Before the start of the program, nearly 400,000 Zimbabwean asylum seeker applications were pending. As of March 2013, about 275,000 Zimbabweans had applied during the ZDP of the estimated 2 million Zimbabwean migrants in South Africa (Ndlovu, 2013). By most accounts, the same problems kept many applicants away: poor implementation, fear, lack of information and corruption (Amit, 2011).

Migrants arriving in South Africa currently without a passport or other form of documentation must file paperwork within five days at one of three Refugee Reception Offices in Durban, Pretoria and Musina, South Africa. In the last few years, dozens of refugee reception offices around the country have closed. Currently, no plans are in place to move the remaining offices closer to the borders, which leaves no offices in cities where the majority of immigrants live (Fight over Refugee, 2013). Even so, immigrants

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<sup>2</sup> Exact Zimbabwean deportation numbers are not publicly available, since the DHA stopped breaking down their deportation statistics by nationality in 2005.

awaiting final approval of their application must return to a now far-flung Home Affairs office and renew their temporary visa, which may last between six weeks and three months. “Noreen<sup>3</sup>,” a local vendor, said the “whole [community] of refugees are crying...going back and forth [to get papers] but nothing helps.”

Both restrictions and amnesty have proven hard to enforce fairly or uniformly. Migrants moving through border checkpoints or queuing at refugee centers may be subjected to none, some or all of these provisions, which elevates the sense of fear and uncertainty. In addition, South Africa does not recognize Zimbabwe as having experienced a political crisis in recent years, but rather an economic one. In addition, like most countries around the world, South Africa does not accept economic refugees for asylum purposes. This places an onerous burden on those claiming political asylum as well as those who cannot make such a claim at all. Migrants who face exclusionary state policies that deny them legal status, or make the process onerous, experience greater structural and economic limitations and must adapt to limited economic options, weak co-ethnic networks and general disadvantage - often regardless of human capital (Chavez, 1998; Polzer, 2008). In Cape Town, the precarious legal status of Zimbabwean migrants adds a third layer of skepticism about civic engagement. Without documentation, there is little protection from the government and a constituency prone to xenophobic attacks, leaving Zimbabweans to fend for themselves, much like they did in the country from which they escaped. This precarious legal environment adds an additional layer of skepticism about civic engagement.

Thomas sums it up well:

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<sup>3</sup> “Noreen.” Personal Communication, October 25, 2012.

If you're not a citizen, in many ways you're excluded. You do not have a voice, so [you] feel alien to South Africa...[you're] not recognized [because you] do not have documentation, permanent documentation<sup>4</sup>.

### **Coding and Analyzing Interview Data**

Data on the variables described above were collected through an in-depth analysis of interviews with Zimbabwean migrants. When coding data like this, researchers usually have categories in mind and are also seeking ideas to develop from the data. After line-by-line coding, the concepts revealed can be refined further to deconstruct the range of meanings of a broad concept, such as reasons for leaving. For example, reasons for leaving Zimbabwe were divided into political and economic categories. Herrera and Braumoeller (2004) describe this quantitative system of codifying text as a form of content analysis. The number of participants citing their legal status as a reason for participation, for example, is counted as a frequency and used to describe a pattern.

The next phase of interpretation, discourse analysis, assumes that discourse – “the content and construction of meaning and the organization of knowledge in a particular realm – is central to social and political life” (Crawford, 2004, p. 22). Objectives from discourse analysis literature reveal the “ontological and epistemological premises which are embedded in language, and which allows a statement to be understood as rational” (Pedersen, 2009). Therefore, in order to understand the civic lives of Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town, their discourse must be understood to be part of the underlying logic of the social and political organization of their communities. Search terms such “politics, fear, violence, home and work” were used to scan the interview text for relevant passages warranting a close read. In addition to counting the number of respondents who

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<sup>4</sup> “Thomas.” Personal Communication, November 26, 2012

cite “fear” as a reason to avoid participation, ‘reading between the lines’ means identifying signifying elements in the discourse that relate to the three variables that form my hypothesis. For example, an interviewee’s response or non-response reveals her skepticism about the value of community meetings. Although he did not express this directly, and thus may not be “counted,” his answer—“but I will spend money to attend!”—reveals the importance of income and perhaps a prioritization of work over all other activities. In this example, follow-up questions and answers as well as interviews with organizers support this interpretation of his statement.

To collect these data, I conducted semi-structured interviews of 8 immigrants<sup>5</sup> who requested services from PASSOP, attended a meeting organized by the NGO or who were referred to me by another interviewee. These immigrants were asked questions from the “active/inactive” immigrant survey, which included demographic questions pertaining to their time in South Africa (when they arrived, under what circumstances and the like) as well as questions about social and political barriers to activity. The survey also included questions adapted from *Civic Talk* (Klofstad, 2011) and Verba et al's (1995) Civic Voluntarism Model, which addresses recruitment, resources and engagement. They were also asked open-ended questions about their levels of engagement in South Africa (membership, attendance, type of activity); their experiences with civic engagement in Zimbabwe; reasons for leaving and legal status. I also led three focus groups: one comprised of eight construction workers seeking guidance from PASSOP for a strike they were planning. Because of the nature of their efforts, all eight wished to remain anonymous<sup>6</sup>. The second focus group consisted of three men in a nearby township who

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix C for a summary of International Review Board guidelines used.

<sup>6</sup> The constructions workers are referred to as “8CW” in the remainder of the text.

were willing to participate as a group but also wished to remain anonymous<sup>7</sup>. The third group consisted of three men who came to PASSOP seeking paralegal advice.

Five Zimbabwean community organizers in Cape Town were asked questions from the same “active/inactive” surveys mentioned above, but with additional open-ended questions about mobilizing immigrants, levels of participation and perceived reasons for inactivity. The survey also included questions about recent outbreaks of xenophobic violence to see if an exogenous shock affected Zimbabwean immigrant participation. I also conducted semi-structured interviews using a separate “leadership” survey with two Cape Town representatives of the Movement for Democratic Change, the opposition party in Zimbabwe. Using the same leadership survey, I interviewed two coordinators at the Scalabrini Center, a non-profit organization in Cape Town that provides paralegal services and skills training to immigrants. Except for the employees of The Scalabrini Center, each interviewee was assigned an alias to protect their identity. Their home, place of employment and other identifying characteristics are omitted.

For those who were willing to speak on record, great care was taken to ensure reliability and confidentiality in their interviews. The following International Review Board (IRB) protocols were used:

- Consent forms were read and acknowledged
- Only first names were used on record and were subsequently coded and changed to aliases
- Audio recording was optional
- All documentation was stored electronically in encrypted, password protected files

The complete surveys can be found in Appendix A. A list of all interviewees can be found in Appendix B and the IRB-approved scripts used for consent are in Appendix C.

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<sup>7</sup> The three township men are referred to as 3TM in the remainder of the text.

In my original research proposal, civic participation was divided into political acts that directly petition the government and non-political activities that do not engage the government. Examples of political participation included protests, campaigns and petitions; examples of non-political participation included church attendance, membership in trade unions or women's groups. However, for reasons further explained in Chapter Five, these definitions did not align with the interviewees' ideas of participation, political or otherwise. Therefore, I define participation more broadly based on their own definitions. For most, political participation was any activity in which there was potential for exposure to state and local officials. Non-political activity had a lower risk of exposure.

### **Research Limitations**

The economic and social impact of increased migration in southern Africa has been well documented (Adepoju, 1998, 2001; Kiwanuka, 2009). Migration to urban areas, like Cape Town, South Africa, in particular, has risen dramatically over the last decade (Kihato, 2005; Tabutin & Schoumaker, 2004). However, the actual number of Zimbabweans living in South Africa is unknown and speculation varies widely. The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) recently withdrew its estimate of 2.4 to 9.5 million because of faulty methodology, but those numbers are still reproduced widely (Crush, 2008). Statistics South Africa<sup>8</sup> estimates between 500,000 and 1 million undocumented persons reside in South Africa. The Foreign Migration Studies Program at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg estimates that the foreign population

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed analysis, see "Misconceptions About Cross Border Migration to South Africa" by the African Centre for Migration and Society (Campbell, 2013).

ranges from 1.6 to 2 million, or 3-4 percent of the population. Its estimates of the number of Zimbabweans, 1 to 1.5 million, are in line with others (Danso & McDonald, 2001; McDonald, 2000; Polzer, 2009). But even low estimations make Zimbabweans one of the largest and most representative segments of the immigrants in the country. Nevertheless, without more precise figures, it is difficult to know for sure the quantitative or qualitative characteristics of a sample population of Zimbabweans in South Africa or Cape Town. The information gathered from thirty interviews does not claim to be representative of the entire population of Zimbabweans in South Africa. However, it can add to the literature by expanding our understanding of additional variables that contribute to immigrant participation.

A second limitation concerns the hidden and dispersed nature of immigrants, making it challenging to locate Zimbabweans without ties to PASSOP. Prospective interviewees were reluctant to participate or engage fully due to fears they were being spied on by local immigration officials or the Zimbabwean government. Despite their prominent role as cross-border traders, women in particular were difficult to interview as cultural norms kept them in the home or work obligations kept them as busy as their male counterparts. A result of this is a bias in the data in favor of educated male respondents, often with documentation, who were more easily accessible because of their activities with PASSOP. However, in townships, I was introduced by a member of PASSOP and interviewed respondents with low to moderate levels of education and income and tenuous legal status. Finally, limited time and resources as well as safety concerns also made it difficult to interview community members and leaders who were far from the city center.



In the original proposal, I planned to interview active and non-active immigrants in order to test if previously outlined variables caused civic participation. However, when civic participation was not discovered, the question was reversed: what causes civic participation among immigrants? This reversal results in a case selected on the dependent variable: participation. Selecting cases on the dependent variable is problematic if the results are treated as representative of a population. This study makes such a claim. As long as large samples of similar cases are not forgotten, (“i.e. retained in subsequent analysis as points of reference (Lijphart, 1971, pp. 301-302), the analysis is not likely to be subject to problems of sample bias. Furthermore, the exploration of causes as well as impediments to participation means that all types of immigrants are observed in this study.

Despite these limitations, the interviews documented here add significantly to the existing literature on immigrant attitudes and experiences, in particular their attitudes on civic participation and self-advocacy. Furthermore, the data and my analysis stress the importance of less quantifiable (and less-studied) variables in the understanding of the motivations of immigrants. Finally, the reasons potential interviewees gave for not answering my questions provide additional context to their situation and insight into unspoken or unstated fears and concerns and about engaging in the community.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined the evolution of this research project and the theoretical framework that will be used to understand civic participation among Zimbabwean

migrants. The process of coding and analysis were also detailed. Finally, the limitations of this case were highlighted as well the merits of the subsequent analysis.

The next chapter provides a short history of Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, its migratory history with South Africa and how economic changes since the end of apartheid changed the relationship between the two countries. The chapter also includes a review of federal legislation passed since 1994 that directly affects the immigrant community. Before uncovering under what circumstances Zimbabwean migrants in Cape Town engage or withdraw (voice or exit) in new communities, more must be said about their reasons for leaving Zimbabwe and South Africa's role in determining their legal status.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THERE AND BACK AGAIN**

### **Migration Out of Zimbabwe Since Independence**

For nearly 40 years before independence, Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) was subject to white, minority rule. In 1964, minority leader Ian Smith unilaterally broke from the United Kingdom and declared Rhodesia to be a sovereign nation. At this point, many members of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) political parties reacted by shifting their goals from political participation to liberation from white rule. The two groups, led by Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, respectively, waged a guerilla war against Smith's Rhodesian Front forces. With no end to the war in sight, the Smith government formally ended white rule with an agreement that appointed Bishop Abel Muzorewa as the nominal head of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia (Mtisi, 2009, p. 165). Neither the nationalists nor the international community accepted this arrangement, so the war continued until Muzorewa ceded power to the British government and a peace deal was negotiated. The conflict ended in 1979 when the United Kingdom brokered The Lancaster House agreement between Smith's collapsing government and ZANU and ZAPU. In 1980, Mugabe, who was exiled during the liberation effort, returned and was named Prime Minister of the first democratically elected government.

Zimbabwe enjoyed years of economic prosperity and the goodwill of the international community. However, when promises from the United Kingdom and the United States to buy, develop and redistribute white-owned land to black farmers fell short of expectations, the Zimbabwe government came under pressure from its citizens. By 1990, the government had resettled only 52,000 of 162,000 black families on 3.5

million hectares of land. Of this land, only 19% was of high quality; the rest was unsuitable for agriculture or received marginal rainfall (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009). Unable to finance land distribution in addition to its domestic responsibilities, Zimbabwe welcomed support from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, most often in the form of Economic Structural Adjustment Programs. Mugabe revived waning popular support by promoting land reforms that forcefully appropriated land from white farmers. He also continued his campaign to consolidate power, often citing the lack of financial support promised by other nations.

Mugabe's power grabs, political intimidation and economic mismanagement resulted in tighter sanctions and deeper isolation that further increased pressure on a stalling economy and its citizens. Subsequent land reform programs in Zimbabwe occurred within the complicated context of rural-urban migration, political manipulation, peasant rights and the disruption of exports, tourism and the livelihood of households. These controversial measures alienated farmers, businesses, international donors and professionals who left Zimbabwe for neighboring countries, Europe and the United States (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009).

The year 1998 marks a distinct downward turn in the economic situation of the state: inflation was starting to rise, real wages were falling and employment was dropping precipitously (Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009, p. 202). The government struggled to balance domestic development and export promotion as well as develop a social contract between the state, farmers and laborers. The most recent redistribution effort, the Fast Track Resettlement Program of 2005, was, in part, an attempt to create such a balance. It was also a reaction to the most credible electoral challenge to Mugabe's rule in 30 years.

It is no coincidence that the government coupled its reform program with plans to contain and demobilize the political opposition as well as a restructure the state.

Amidst the land resettlement, Mugabe initiated Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Take Out the Rubbish), which demolished several neighborhoods and apartment complexes thought to be strongholds for the opposition movement. At least 650,000 people in Harare, the capital, were displaced (Scoones, 2010; Totolo, 2010). Some returned to their rural homelands where petty commodity producing accounted for 94 percent of the newly redistributed farms. These subsistence farms, however, were not enough to compensate for the growing numbers of unemployed; foreign food assistance was needed for about 5 million people by 2008.

At the height of skyrocketing unemployment, inflation and crumbling infrastructure, the elections of March 29, 2008, proved to be the most credible threat to President Mugabe's reign. After withholding results for several weeks, the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission announced in May that opposition candidate Morgan Tsvangirai won 48% of the vote to Mugabe's 43%, necessitating a run-off (Punishing Dissent, 2008). Ahead of the run-off, violence against civilians became so intense that Genocide Watch, an international monitoring organization, placed Zimbabwe at Stage 6 of 8—the preparation stage immediately preceding mass political murder, or politicide. Murder, torture and mutilation were some of the signs of increasing de-humanization of targeted groups (Genocide Watch: Zimbabwe, 2008; Post-Election Violence, 2008). After a bitterly contested election in which the opposition's first round win was overturned after 30 days political wrangling, violence and intimidation, in February 2009, Mugabe's

ZANU-PF party and the MDC signed the Global Political Agreement, a power sharing agreement.

After several weeks of political wrangling, violence and intimidation, Tsvangirai withdrew his candidacy citing the violence perpetrated against his supporters. In the June 2008 run-off, Mugabe won a reported 85% of the vote, but the MDC won a majority in the legislature. Mugabe was installed for a sixth term on June 29, 2008. Simultaneously, the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe constantly printed money to maintain the budget. Then Finance Minister Hebert Murerwa banned all currency exchange bureaus and criminalized corporate foreign currency accounts; this also hurt Zimbabweans who had abandoned the state currency for more stable foreign notes.

Hyperinflation reached 230 million percent—a world record— devaluing both earnings and savings of Zimbabweans (Berger, 2008; Mawowa & Matongo, 2010; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009). Rewards for long-term investment dwindled; importing and trading goods from abroad became the primary way to survive.<sup>9</sup> These actions fueled the resulting “kukiya-kiya”<sup>10</sup> economy and became the official survival strategy of the state and its citizens. The state abandoned the Zimbabwean dollar for the US dollar in 2009; MDC-appointed Minister of Finance, Tendai Biti, noted that the reliance on a cash budget, which was based on foreign currency, meant that ‘what we gather is what we eat’ (Jones, 2010).

The economic and political deterioration of Zimbabwe was a long, slow process. The patterns of circulatory migration remained in place but peaked in times of crisis. At

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<sup>9</sup> After 2000, it was not uncommon for ZANU-PF members to storm manufacturing companies and force them to reduce prices or threatens to ‘buy’ them out for absurdly reduced prices and turn them into personal businesses (Mawowa & Matongo, 2010)

<sup>10</sup> The multiple forms of ‘making do’ in Zimbabwe are known as ‘kukiya-kiya.’ It is both a strategy and a mentality emerging in an era of suspended development and scarce resource (Jones, 2010).

the height of the political and economic crisis in 2008 and during the simmering tensions thereafter, South Africa once again became a safe haven for Zimbabweans seeking respite from the violence as well as work and stability.

### **Migration to Post-Apartheid South Africa**

South Africa has long been the center of an extensive system of migration in the southern African region. Foreign mine workers traditionally made up forty percent of the South African mine labor force; in the 1960s, foreigners represented eighty percent of mine workers. Historically, labor migration to South Africa was regulated through a highly formalized system of bilateral contracts with neighboring countries. These contracts primarily focused on supplying labor to the mines and large farms. Additional streams of movement—white settler migration, informal migration and refugee migration—have been regulated and deregulated by various agreements in the last 30 years. Informal and refugee migration are the most relevant when discussing the nature of Zimbabwean migration to South Africa.

During apartheid, migrants, like black South Africans, were subject to pass laws governing their movement, but their presence as laborers was seen as a necessary evil; therefore, passes were often easy to obtain. In fact, some farms were so desperate for laborers that they contracted firms to intercept migrants at the borders. Detained migrants were rarely deported but often sent to work on farms in the prison labor system. The number of migrant settlers during apartheid is difficult to calculate because record keeping was so poor. However, a census counting foreign-born Africans indicates that the number increased throughout the 20th Century, peaking after World War II. However,

few migrants were permanent immigrants so many eventually returned home (Crush, 2000).

After the wave of independence movements across Africa in the 1960s, migrants, once welcomed to South Africa for economic reasons, became a threat to the political order. Border posts were established for the first time, and the government considered banning all foreign Africans from entering South Africa (Crush, 2000, p. 18). Its actions were slightly less draconian; employers were pressured to stop employing non-South African migrants, and the increasingly oppressive conditions and human rights violations made South Africa a less attractive destination. The number of foreign-born Africans in South Africa fell through the 1960s and 1970s as many returned home for good. In the 1980s, the South African government tightened controls on the entry of the less-educated and unskilled and only selectively allowed entry to those with skills and resources for investment (Musoni, 2010; Raftopoulos & Mlambo, 2009) (pp. 213-216).

In 1993, South Africa began to abide formally by international refugee law after signing a Basic Agreement with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees<sup>11</sup> (UNHCR). In 1995 and 1996, South Africa became party to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and United Nations (UN) refugee conventions. However, there is no national-level legislation implementing the South African government's obligations under these documents, which leaves all refugee handling procedures to be determined by the Department of Home Affairs, their local offices and officials within each office. In the last decade, Human Rights Watch and the UNHCR have published several reports

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<sup>11</sup> According to South Africa's Department of Home Affairs, a refugee is a person who has been granted asylum status and protection. An asylum seeker is someone who has fled her country of origin and is seeking recognition and protection as a refugee. (see: <http://www.home-affairs.gov.za/index.php/immigration-services/refugee-status-asylum>)



describing a system rife with bribery and extortion (Kriger, 2007; Kriger & George, 2006; Zinyama, 2000). Since 1994, South Africa has deported an increasing number of migrants while also trying to reform the legal infrastructure for migration. However, the system for deciding asylum cases is characterized by pervasive corruption, arbitrary decisions, an inadequate appeals process and long waiting periods (Bouckaert, 1998; Mbelle, 2005).

In lieu of national legislation that complies with international agreements, the Aliens Control Act of 1991, often called “apartheid’s last act,” governed all aspects of migrant control in South Africa until its repeal in 2002. Concurrent legislation and amendments—a National Movement Control System, the Refugee Act of 1998 and the Immigration Act of 2002—attempted to control entry of certain classes of immigrants while admitting skilled labor into an economy experiencing stagnant growth and a growing skills gap (Bouckaert, 1998). The 2004 amendment to the Act placed added emphasis on economic growth and skilled labor but continued to control permanent and temporary residency by prohibiting employment to holders of 8 of the 12 permits available for temporary residence.

Paranoia about foreigners seemingly worsened after apartheid ended; ministers and local councilors openly blamed foreigners for diseases, unemployment and called for them to be rounded up and deported for putting a severe strain on public services (Johnson, 2010). In 2002, then Director-General of Home Affairs, Billy Masethla, justified strong actions against foreign persons:

Approximately 90 percent of foreign persons who are in RSA with fraudulent documents...are involved in other crimes as well...it is quicker to charge these criminals for their false documentation and then to deport them than to pursue the long route in respect of the other crimes that are committed (Bouckaert, 1998).

Legislators seemed to reflect public sentiment, as evidenced in a 1997 survey conducted by the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP). Sixty-one percent agreed that migrants strained national resources; 25% of South Africans wanted a total prohibition of migration or immigration; 22% wanted the government to return all foreigners to their own countries (Holaday, 2010). A 2006 national survey conducted by SAMP revealed that 84% of South Africans believed the country was admitting too many foreigners, with many supporting strong measures to deport them. Of the 70% of South Africans who thought crime had increased, three-quarters blamed immigrants and increased diversity (Johnson, 2010). Again, nearly two-thirds said foreigners used up resources destined for citizens.

### **Contemporary Zimbabwean Migration to South Africa**

Despite recent difficulties in migrating, South Africa remains the primary destination for Zimbabwean migrants moving temporarily or establishing permanent homes. Higher wages, social and political stability in South Africa, when compared to Zimbabwe, are crucial factors (Kiwanuka, 2009). In 1997, a survey of 947 Zimbabweans who had visited South Africa found that the majority of female respondents (65%) went to shop, sell or buy goods for import to Zimbabwe. This aligns with anecdotal evidence that female traders kept the Zimbabwean economy afloat after the dissolution of the local currency (Middle-Aged Women, 2009). Forty-one percent of males went to work or to search for work, which possibly represents the permanent or semi-permanent migrant stream, legal or otherwise (Kiwanuka, 2009).

Fifteen years later, deteriorating economic conditions in Zimbabwe altered the plans of these semi-permanent or circular migrants. Refugees fleeing political oppression and violence now joined Zimbabwean migrants leaving an increasingly desperate economy. In 2009, twenty-nine percent of Zimbabwean asylum seekers interviewed at the border in South Africa cited economic reasons alone for migrating while 42% listed economic reasons alongside various forms of persecution and/or civil conflict (Zinyama, 2000). For many, migration “emerged as the only solution to an economic situation that depleted access to an increasing number of human rights,” which threatened their survival as well as their families (Kiwanuka, 2009, p. 25).

South Africa’s current immigration policy and institutional framework were not designed to deal with large-scale migration flows and have never had to deal with such a situation before. Overall, the South African asylum system is overwhelmed by the number of applications it receives. South Africa’s constitution forbids refugee camps and its general policy of urban self-sufficiency and self-settlement means there are no state-run institutions in place to provide large-scale shelter or assistance. So far, little reconciliation has occurred between the crisis in Zimbabwe, the resulting needs of migrants and the governmental response. Instead, general migration frameworks have been applied to Zimbabweans with little to no adaptation to their specific circumstances or numbers (Polzer, 2008). According to the Department of Home Affairs, in order to qualify for refugee status/asylum:

you must be able to present evidence that your life was in danger due to persecution as a result of your race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group; or if there is war in your country. No other reasons exist to apply for refugee status or asylum status.

Although South Africa attracts the largest number of asylum seekers in the world, the Department of Home Affairs approves just 15% of applications, much less than the global average of 38%. South Africa ranks 36th in the world for the size of its population (Siegfried, 2013). Although South Africa's 1998 Refugees Act established six grounds for persecution that qualify victims for refugee protection, several studies have found that determination officers limited their definition of persecution to political grounds and only considered a history of persecution as evidence of future risk (Siegfried, 2013). There is no asylum for economic hardship. With no civil war in Zimbabwe, victims of violence must prove they were targeted for their participation in politics or swept up in a less formal squashing of political opposition.

Immigrants previously involved in a purpose-specific circulatory migration process now find themselves extending their stay each time, despite the risk of harassment, arrest or deportation. The longer these migrants stay in South Africa, the more embedded they can become. The depth and breadth of their civic engagement, however, are more than a product of their education and skill set. Some arrive legally and others without documentation, but all bring memories of political violence and economic hardship that affect their levels of participation. Furthermore, their reasons for leaving—political, economic or a combination thereof—also affect their levels of participation.

A shortcoming in the literature on migration is its binary distinction between refugees and voluntary migrants. This is reflected in current policies on migrants. “Refugees” who have been granted asylum benefit from guarantees of entry and protection under international law while “voluntary migrants” – seen as synonymous with those who do not apply for asylum – are, for the most part, left to fend for themselves.

The conditions of attaining refugee status tend to favor applicants who have suffered clear forms of persecution in their home country, in line with the 1951 UN Convention, even though the African Union Protocol (of which South Africa is a signatory) allows scope to recognize the effects of “events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of [their] country of origin or nationality.” (Kiwanuka, 2009, p. 62).

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined the factors driving migrants out of Zimbabwe since independence as well as the legal and social environment they find upon arrival in South Africa. The history of migration between Zimbabwe and South Africa is complicated—swinging between open hostility and open arms in the last several decades. South Africa’s unwillingness to recognize the recent crisis in Zimbabwe as having political roots leaves economic refugees without recourse and the government with few options to stem the tide of migration. Political refugees fare a bit better, but current legislation places the burden on Zimbabweans to prove they are victims of political violence or risk deportation by going underground.

The next chapter lays out my argument that an immigrant’s experiences at home form the foundation for participation abroad. In Zimbabwe, in particular, political and non-political experiences left many fearful of any kind of engagement. For many, this fear factored into the decision to migrate; these reasons for leaving later affect their ability to acquire legal documentation. For many without documentation, civic participation risks exposure to government officials and suspicious locals. Migrants with documentation have more freedom but often use it to secure employment. Together, these

three factors—country of origin, reasons for leaving and legal status—affect an immigrant’s willingness and ability to participate in their communities.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DETERMINANTS OF CIVIC PARTICIPATION**

The factors that influence an immigrant's civic participation away from home can be imagined in this way: Country of Origin is a backpack that an immigrant carries to her new home. Her bag might be filled with goods to sell in order to send money home. In this case, the economic collapse in Zimbabwe pushed her to seek work abroad. Ineligible for asylum, she peddles her wares on the street and stays with friends. Or, perhaps, his bag is heavy with previously hidden books on organizing political protests and pamphlets for the opposition party. His opposition to the regime is well known; a violent assault by Mugabe loyalists ultimately drives him and his family to South Africa in the middle of the night. Upon arrival, he shows documentation of his involvement—newspaper clippings, threatening letters—and receives political asylum along with a work permit.

Most often, Zimbabweans have a mix of contents in their backpack, which in turn affect their legal status in South Africa (Kiwauka, 2009). Economic refugees do not garner as much sympathy or legal protection as political refugees. However, political scars are sometimes hard to prove. If documented status is attained, then the possibility of integration and participation, both political and social, increases. In this chapter, I will use interview data to describe how an immigrant's country of origin, reasons for leaving and legal status in South Africa affect their willingness and ability to participate in their communities, whether for political or non-political activities.

## Country of Origin

*The “level of oppression from the country of origin...influence[s] how we [Zimbabweans] participate in activities, even in foreign lands.” -Benjamin*

Immigrants from different countries of origin migrate for many reasons, possess varied political, social and economic histories, along with distinct cultural experiences. They also encounter different receptions as a result of the characteristics that they bring (Koopsman, 1999; Portes, 1995). Therefore, it is unsurprising to find that emerging research shows that country of origin affects political participation, such as voting and citizenship acquisition (Wong, Ramakrishnan, Lee, & Junn, 2011). However, its effects on civic participation more generally are less understood. I argue in this section that country of origin is the starting place for tracing an immigrant’s decision to participate in or withdraw from their adopted communities.

Wong and colleagues’ (2011) research notwithstanding, a weakness of previous studies on immigrant participation is a failure to examine how characteristics associated with incorporation vary by country of origin. For example, in the United States, Mexican immigrants with college degrees and well-paying jobs are not as likely to naturalize as Chinese immigrants with the same characteristics (Mogelonsky, 1997). This demonstrates how country of origin can override certain characteristics deemed dominant or simply alter the way in which they mediate incorporation. Though a few studies have touched on these interactions (Bass & Casper, 2001; Jones-Correa, 1998; Liang, 1994), these studies are limited by the relationships they explore and the number of immigrant groups investigated. Studying the interactions between country of origin and certain characteristics, like legal status and reasons for leaving, facilitates a greater



understanding of the mechanisms that mediate between where immigrants come from and their level of civic engagement. I observed this interaction, particularly how the political and economic climate affected Zimbabweans before they migrated and after they become residents of South Africa.

“Martin,” a member of Zimbabwe’s Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and political activist in Cape Town noted, “...generally people don’t appreciate the level of freedom that is here in South Africa...There is a suspicion that there could be some [Zimbabwean] government operatives here in Cape Town.”<sup>12</sup> “They don’t want to be followed by men in dark glasses when they get home [from a meeting],” according to “Benjamin,” a community organizer<sup>13</sup>. “It’s a little bit complicated for Zimbabweans,” he continues,

...especially considering the type of victimization that a lot of people have gone through and things that we read from the newspapers, things that we see on TV, things that we hear from our friends that go back home. You get really terrified if you hear what happens to other activists. So I guess that’s one of the reasons you find a lot of Zimbabweans don’t want to actively participate in issues, even that affect them terribly.

The reason they give you for not attending a meeting, for example, is that “they’re scared of what they [saw] or the trauma that surrounded the environment when they were in Zimbabwe<sup>14</sup>,” according to “Richard” another MDC member and activist outside of Cape Town. Therefore, people live in fear though they are outside Zimbabwe, Martin says. “It’s a fact.” This fact has to do with their background, “where they’re coming from...what happened in Zimbabwe,” according to “Thomas,” a paralegal and community organizer for refugees. The mentality or notion that “politics is a dirty

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<sup>12</sup> “Martin.” Personal Communication, October 31, 2012

<sup>13</sup> “Benjamin.” Personal Communication, November 26, 2012

<sup>14</sup> “Richard.” Personal Communication, November 25, 2012

game...prohibits or prevents Zimbabweans from being active in politics<sup>15</sup>” in South Africa. Thomas agreed that the “level of oppression from the country of origin...influence[s] how we [Zimbabweans] participate in activities, even in foreign lands.” Benjamin looked to level of education to explain the differences in participation among the immigrants in his community: “Those who are learned would understand why they would want to take part in political or social activities. And also those who are illiterate would not understand a thing...”

Still, Benjamin recalled Malawian, Namibian, Angolan and Congolese migrants in his township who refused to be driven away during the xenophobic violence in 2008: “They stayed and were ready to fight while we were packing our bags...Zimbabweans who claim to be educated were running away in chaos. [I]t is related perhaps to the way our countries are run. The moment you see a gun in Zimbabwe, you get terribly terrified. But Namibians and Angolans are not afraid of that.”

This observed difference highlights how experiences at home can affect an immigrant’s perspective on their situation abroad. The post-independence Angolan Civil War (1975-2002) was characterized by massive foreign intervention as well as violent guerrilla warfare (Angola, 2013). The conflict also became entangled with the Second Congo War (1998-2003) and the Namibian War for Independence (1966-1990). All three conflicts involved the widespread destruction of infrastructure, the use of non-state militias and child soldiers and rampant human rights violations. The violence that pushes people out of the Democratic Republic of Congo now is perpetuated by guerrillas, rebels and non-aligned groups. The ongoing conflict operates under a weak political agenda; it is characterized by its randomness, cruelty and disregard for civilians. In some villages,

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<sup>15</sup> “Thomas.” Personal Communication, November 26, 2012

civilian-run, “self-defense” militias have taken up arms in order to protect themselves (Castle, 2012).

By contrast, the Zimbabwean War for Independence lasted 15 years (1964-1980) and much of the fighting was rural, which left the urban political, economic and social infrastructure mostly intact. Most of the violence against civilians in recent years is perpetuated by the state against political opposition to the government and those thought to support them (Zimbabwe: Political Violence, 2008; Zimbabwe: Surge, 2008). Both urban and rural populations are affected. However, there is a certain consistency and predictability to this type of violence in that perpetrators are often identifiable as militia, army or police; keeping a low profile, politically and socially, may protect you. For this reason, state-sponsored violence can elicit paranoia among friends and neighbors. Martin notes, “You can’t be neutral according to people from Zimbabwe. You can actually even be labeled intelligence officers and the like if you try to demonstrate that you’re as neutral as possible.” Turning in a traitor may save your life; watching out for snitches makes everyone wary.

The fear of being swept up in political violence or forced to vote, march or rally against your wishes does not seem to vanish at the border crossing. The interview excerpts in Table 1 below highlight these fears and their connection to their home country. The words and phrases in yellow indicate the coded words used to identify the passages relating to the “country of origin” variable. Once identified in a search, I checked the relevance to the variable and determined that the majority of interviews support my theory that experiences in an immigrant’s country of origin affect their levels of participation. In the excerpts below, nearly all describe how fear inculcated in

Zimbabwe follows migrants to South Africa. This fear influences a migrant's decision to withdraw or engage in their new community.

Table 1: "Country of Origin" Interview Excerpts with Coding

<b>Country of Origin</b>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b>...perhaps it's also to do with the level of oppression from the <b>country of origin</b>. It's quite an influence as well; it has an influence on how we participate in activities, even in foreign lands.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> The moment you see a gun <b>in Zimbabwe</b>, you get terribly <b>terrified</b>. But Namibians and Angolans are not <b>afraid</b> of that.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b>...They don't want to be followed by men in dark glasses when they get <b>home</b>. I guess it's one of the reasons why you find a lot of Zimbabweans' <b>fear</b> to take part in activities here in South Africa.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> Because <b>fear</b> is [the Zimbabwean intelligence service's] biggest weapon.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> Protests especially are not very popular amongst Zimbabweans. The reason being that people believe if there's media coverage that they'll be seen back <b>home</b> that they were toi-toi-ing for this or toi-toi-ing against that.</p>
<p><b>Thomas:</b> For some reasons Zimbabweans do not want to take part in anything they view as <b>political</b>. Maybe it's to do with their <b>background</b>, where they're coming from.</p>
<p><b>Thomas:</b> Perhaps to do with what happened <b>in Zimbabwe</b>, the <b>politics</b> [there] is a dirty game. That notion, I think, it also prohibits or prevents Zimbabweans from being active in <b>politics</b>.</p>
<p><b>Charles:</b> In Zimbabwe, <b>politics</b> isn't something that's discussed, like freely, so you see people actually they don't want to discuss these political issues freely.</p>
<p><b>Martin:</b> I think also the other thing is <b>fear</b>. You know people are much scared of talking <b>politics</b>.</p>
<p><b>Richard:</b> Some of the people [in South Africa] are still being hounded by the <b>fear</b> they saw <b>in Zimbabwe</b>. So some of them still carry that fear.</p>
<p><b>Arnold:</b> So actually we are all <b>afraid</b>. I'm also <b>afraid</b> because demonstration <b>in Zimbabwe</b> are...crushed.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> ...a lot of Zimbabweans, as soon as they have enough money, they go back <b>home</b>.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> <b>Home</b> is calling and you know, as you get older, you want to be closer to where your umbilical cord buried. So I would definitely want to go <b>back home</b>...I still think of going back <b>home</b>.</p>
<p><b>Martin:</b> [South Africa] cannot be permanent...if the situation improves <b>at home</b>, we can go back.</p>
<p><b>Source: Personal Communications, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b></p>

When attempting to mobilize Zimbabweans in townships, Thomas noticed a “fear of being victimized by criminal elements and also political elements,” whether real or imagined. According to “Arnold,” a former police officer-*cum*-pastor in a large township, that kind of violence is possible everywhere in Africa. There is a belief that if you get involved in politics, “you can also be a victim to circumstances, one way or the other. People kill each other in politics, they burn each other’s houses, destroying property in the name of politics.” Whether it’s a meeting or a rally, “people from Zimbabwe, they know how demonstrations, especially demonstrations, are dealt with in Zimbabwe...they are crushed<sup>16</sup>.”

“Lewis,” a community organizer in the farmlands north of Cape Town, agreed “Zimbabwe politics have affected a lot of Zimbabweans because they still feel that things are the same like in Zimbabwe.” Zimbabweans migrated with their fears intact; the xenophobic violence and anti-immigrant rhetoric from politicians probably has magnified their concerns.

An immigrant’s political and non-political experiences in Zimbabwe affect their views on participation and often factor in their reasons for leaving home. These reasons later determine their legal status. Altogether, these factors affect their willingness to engage in their communities in Cape Town.

Many interviewed agreed with Pastor Arnold that “the best way to solve your problems is to be involved in community issues,” but few seemed willing to act. Migrants arriving for work don’t see how “any kind of recreational, social activities...fall into their

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<sup>16</sup> “Arnold.” Personal Communication, November 14, 2012

priorities,” according to Sergio at Scalabrini. “Noreen<sup>17</sup>,” a local entrepreneur, agreed “a person participates when he has what he needs. [He] can’t talk about participating if he needs work or food.” She is an active member of a support group for parents of disabled children and would like to participate in PASSOP’s activities but her situation, she said, does not allow it.

So who is left to advocate on behalf of this vulnerable population? Who participates despite these obstacles and why? According to Pastor Arnold, “only those who have got that calling would dare involve themselves in African politics.” Previous studies show that past participants in civic activities often continue to participate, even without recruitment (Brady et al., 1999). That “calling” holds true in this study since all of the activists interviewed had a history of participation in Zimbabwe.

Benjamin, the community liaison, doubted he would have left Zimbabwe if he did not have a wife and children who were also in danger. He had volunteered to weed out a corrupt member of a local council; his involvement got him “in trouble, big trouble.” He cited his respect for human rights as something that drove him to South Africa, where he quickly resumed his activities in his new community. He saw his work in South Africa as an extension of the work he left in Zimbabwe. He said he qualifies for permanent residency but refuses to apply and maintains hope that he can return to “where his umbilical cord is buried.” This sense of loyalty intensifies his need to participate—helping Zimbabweans in South Africa is no different from helping Zimbabweans at home. “By helping Zimbabweans,” he says, “you are kind of empowering them.” If everyone is able to return home from a successful stay in South Africa, everyone is better off.

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<sup>17</sup> “Noreen.” Personal Communication. October 25, 2012

Martin also saw his work in Cape Town as a continuation of his efforts in Zimbabwe. He was an active member of the MDC in Zimbabwe and part of a refugee organization in Cape Town. He and fellow members “put pressure...on the government of South Africa to address...the issue of documentation, the issue of police harassment [and] the issue of access to basics like health [and] education.”

Lewis, the farmworker advocate, was also active in his community in Zimbabwe as an MDC councilor. Thomas, the paralegal, was involved in community action. He grew up in Mbare Musika—a long-standing ghetto and marketplace—and mobilized neighbors for service delivery and electricity outages. So when he arrived in South Africa, he got involved after his experience with Home Affairs. “The conditions were very bad, service was poor [and] inefficient,” he said. When he heard that PASSOP was helping refugees like him, he was “excited...and attracted to the idea of helping immigrants, fellow asylum seekers in South Africa.” He sought out the director, began as a volunteer and was eventually hired to work full-time.

While Lewis made a conscious effort to get involved, the makeshift union of construction workers did not. Even though their attempts to petition their supervisor could be considered “active,” they did not define themselves that way. Approaching management to address their grievances on the job site and threatening a strike was merely a way to demand wages allegedly withheld from them<sup>18</sup>. When asked if they would protest on the streets on behalf of others in similar situations, one expressed discomfort in participating in South Africa, stating they were “too far from home” to get caught up in political activities. Many agreed that a fear of CIO (Zimbabwe’s Central Intelligence Organization) prevented them from participating, especially “if you [want to]

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<sup>18</sup> “8 Construction Workers.” Personal Communication. November 5, 2012.

go back home.” Just speaking about Zimbabwean politics made another interviewee emotional.

The idea of fighting for their rights on a larger scale, say on behalf of all migrant construction workers, made little sense to this group. None mentioned a personal history of participation in Zimbabwe, so it is possible they were not civically or politically active before arriving in South Africa. “So in that regard,” according to Martin, “they don’t have information as to why they should be involved in these activities.” Charles has tried to mobilize Zimbabweans in his township, but they “think it’s a waste of time. What they want is to get jobs and get money and concentrate on their own lives. So they don’t think there [are] some other groups that can help them” with their problems in South Africa. For Phillip, going to protest or seek help in lieu of work is not an option. Because even if he “toi-tois<sup>19</sup>,” it will not help solve the problem. “It can’t,” he said. “You’re going to spend some money to do that instead of spending that money to solve your problems.”

Perhaps it was the sudden lack of income that prompted the eight construction workers to look for help and information. Seeking help after the fact frustrated Richard who organized poorly attended meetings about workers rights. While still employed, they asked Richard, “Why do I need [the] CCMA (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration)? I’m getting paid.” Ironically, the group of construction workers was at the PASSOP office to learn how the CCMA could help with their case. Richard spoke of similar members of his community:

[While working] they forget one day they’re going to be fired. One day they will be injured at work. One day the companies are going to be closed and they’ll need their monies. All of these things they forget. It comes [down] to the issue of shortsightedness.

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<sup>19</sup> The toyi-toyi is a Southern African protest dance with origins in Zimbabwe (Nevitt, 2010)



Fear is a documented reason for their shortsightedness. However, their perceived lack of foresight is also tied to their loyalty to Zimbabwe and the relative ease in which they can return home. Benjamin spoke to many Zimbabweans who did not want to be involved with his community work. “Some would say they’re busy; we came here to make money.” But, “as soon as they have enough money, they go back home.” Benjamin had a sense of ownership, despite being keen to return to Zimbabwe one day. “For others,” Sergio said speaking of farmworkers, “it’s just a place. So why meet every Friday or every Saturday, discussing things to uplift the community?”

Here, Hirschman’s theory on loyalty intervenes as reason for withdrawal. Going home is an option for Zimbabweans in a way that it probably is not for other migrants in South Africa. The proximity and increasingly stable environment in Zimbabwe are welcome incentives for migrants who were hesitant to leave in the first place. For Samuel, episodes of xenophobic violence and a hostile legal environment mean leaving South Africa is easier than staying:

...if there’s no more space for me to live here, I just have to return home. It’s so simple and easy. I can just return home. Because it’s difficult [here], they don’t want us, they don’t want us to live here. So if I don’t have space I must just take my keys and go.

Despite success as a farmworker advocate, Lewis does not believe his stay in South Africa is permanent either. He is documented but also has “got a lot of plans to do back home.” Richard also planned to return to Zimbabwe, where his “political heart” resides. Even though he is an active advocate and organizer, “South African politics comes [in] second,” he said.

The activists interviewed above expressed disappointment that a dark cloud of fear follows Zimbabweans into South Africa. However, they were optimistic about their

newly found freedoms and ability to be active in their community. Inactive migrants were more optimistic about returning home than integrating in South Africa. More interestingly, the call home is strong for both inactive and active migrants, but active migrants seem to channel their loyalty for Zimbabwe to their Zimbabwean community in Cape Town. I argue that this outlook is rooted in their reasons for leaving Zimbabwe, which were political for many activists. In the following section, the interviews demonstrate how different motivations for migration affect an immigrant's perspectives on civic participation.

### **Reasons For Leaving**

*“All the places we used to sell [our goods to] were destroyed...Political violence...forced us to come here.” -Phillip*

It is difficult to separate an immigrant's country of origin from their reasons for leaving because the former is almost inextricably linked to the latter. However, the particular circumstances within their home country should not be taken for granted. Economists take it for granted that migration decisions are based mainly on an economic calculus—expected wages abroad minus unemployment risk and moving costs. The wage-differential theory fails to account for different perceptions of risk and the relative economic standing of potential immigrants at home and abroad. To say that Mexican immigrants and Nicaraguan immigrants migrate to the United States with the same economic motivators omits how the different situations at home could affect their activities away from home. Those fleeing a protracted economic stagnation and those

experiencing a recent depression might have different expectations about their return home and their obligations abroad.

Zimbabweans who somehow avoided the violence at home fled because economic opportunities were scarce. Sergio, an outreach coordinator at Scalabrini, works with Zimbabwean farmworkers and seasonal migrants. These people are “here for work,” he said. “Migrants, especially seasonal workers, are there because of work. They’re here because they need to support their family, send money back. It’s the nature of migrants.” They remain in survival mode upon arrival and are “more worried about bread and butter at [a] personal and family level to such an extent that [anything else] could be taken as a luxury,” according to Martin.

What is unique about Zimbabwe and an immigrant’s reasons for leaving is the nature of the recent economic collapse and political upheaval, as compared to migrants from neighboring countries. These personal histories of politics and the economy begin to explain why Zimbabwean immigrants are less willing to become involved in their communities, as compared to other migrants to South Africa who arrived for similar reasons. For example, in 1997, the Zimbabwean economy was the fastest growing on the continent; as recently as 2000, Zimbabweans enjoyed their status as the “breadbasket of Africa” (Orlet, 2005; Power, 2003). Memories of enough food for everyone with exports to spare is still fresh in the minds of many. Thus, an immigrant who flees for economic reasons may have a reasonable expectation that things could get better and they could return home. While the economic stagnation in the Congo or Angola shows some signs of improvement, its problems span more than a generation and are much more deeply entrenched. Circumstances in a migrant’s country of origin create a general set catalysts

for migration. A deeper look into those circumstances reveal that those incentives might be related to politics, economics or both. Whether a person migrated for political or economic reasons is, of course, linked to the country they left behind, but it also forms the foundation from which an immigrant builds their new life.

The direct question, “Why did you leave Zimbabwe?” caused suspicion in preliminary interviews, so reasons for migrating were identified by asking interviewees when they arrived in South Africa, their work status in Zimbabwe and how often they returned to home. Additional questions about their history of civic participation often revealed if their migration was necessary for political or economic reasons or both.

Preliminary interviews also revealed that Verba et al’s (1995) definition of political participation—activities that are purposely directed at the state—did not translate in the South African context to Zimbabwean migrants. Political participation was not just about voting since no one could vote in South Africa and voting in Zimbabwe is problematic; interviewees more often spoke of politicized experiences—some of which happened to them without consent—and how it implicitly or explicitly shaped their civic or political participation in South Africa. For example, a community meeting to clean up a neighborhood park with volunteers could be construed by government officials as commentary on their delivery of public services. This non-political activity, or activity that does not directly petition the government according to Verba et al, could be politicized and thus labeled as political activity. Rather than stretch Verba et al’s categories to fit, the interviewees defined political and non-political activities themselves.

Since several answers to the questions above were possible, economic migration was coded if at least one of the following items were endorsed:

- Loss of job/no work available
- Had no home or lodgings
- Tried to improve my standard of living

In Table 2 below, these are grouped as “looking for a job.” Political motivation to leave Zimbabwe was coded if at least one of the following items was endorsed:

- Threat to life or property because of direct political involvement
- Perception of political involvement led to loss of livelihood
- Forced participation in political rallies, meetings

Also in Table 2, these are grouped as “political violence forced us to come here.” The names listed below are from interviews with 8 immigrants, the community and political organizers as well as the focus groups. The interviewees from Scalabrini are not included.

Table 2: Reasons for Leaving

<u>Reasons for Leaving</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>Inactive</u>
<b>Economic:</b> “Looking for a Job	Noreen	8CW, Chris, Derek, Matthew, 3TM, Lisa, Samuel, Teresa
<b>Political:</b> “Political Violence Forced us to Come Here”	Martin, Thomas, Richard, Benjamin	
<b>Political and Economic</b>	Charles, Lewis, Arnold, Olivia	Phillip
<b>Source: Personal Communication, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b>		

“Lisa<sup>20</sup>,” a township resident, only cited economic reasons for her relocation. She could not find work in Zimbabwe and came to South Africa and found work as a housekeeper. “Charles<sup>21</sup>,” a community organizer outside of Cape Town who was directly involved with the MDC in Zimbabwe, moved to South Africa because his involvement put his life in danger. He says his second reason was economic although he does not elaborate.

<sup>20</sup> “Lisa.” Personal Communication, October 13, 2012.

<sup>21</sup> “Charles.” Personal Communication, October 15, 2012.

“Phillip<sup>22</sup>,” a carpenter living in the same township as Lisa, was repurposing used items for resale in Zimbabwe until his neighborhood was demolished during “Operation Murambatsvina” in 2008. “All the places we used to sell [our goods to] were destroyed” so “I decided to come here...looking for a job,” he said. Phillip was quick to say he was not politically active in Zimbabwe although ultimately “political violence...forced us to come here. [The ZANU militias] thought us [to be] MDC supporters and we were not even involved in politics.” After settling in Cape Town, Phillip spent his time and money on various carpentry projects for pay. His reasons for leaving were both political and economic.

The ability to prioritize work over other pursuits probably has to do with the relative ease with which a Zimbabwean can find work compared to other migrants. Kanyalitsoe<sup>23</sup>, an employment coordinator at the non-profit Scalabrini Center, said Zimbabweans often arrive with more than good qualifications. For instance, “a Somali, to start, has a problem with the local language” as does an African from a Francophone country like the Congo. The major barrier is communication so that is why “at the end of the day, with very good qualifications, [migrants] from French speaking countries opt for low-skilled jobs.” The ability to speak English along with marketable skills means it is often “easier for a Zimbabwean to get a job; it could [even] be a high-paying job.” At least ninety-percent of students in Scalabrini’s English classes are French speakers and this course is often a prerequisite for job training classes and other community events conducted in English.

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<sup>22</sup> “Phillip.” Personal Communication, October 13, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> K. Malemane. Personal Communication, November 29, 2012.

Arguably, every migrant is preoccupied with finding a job; Zimbabweans may find a job more easily thus precluding them from other activities where they may be recruited for civic participation. The interview excerpts in Table 3 below represent many of the interviewees' reasons for leaving Zimbabwe. The words and phrases in yellow indicate the coded words used to identify the passages relating to the "reasons for leaving" variable. Once identified in a search, I reviewed the passage to check the relevance to the variable and determine whether it supported my theory that an immigrant's reasons for leaving affect their decision to participate or withdraw from their adopted communities.

Although fewer interviewees cited economic reasons for leaving, it was clear that reasons for leaving affected their decisions in South Africa. The interviewees often spoke anecdotally about reasons for leaving; the excerpts in the left column below are their impressions of how political violence casts a long shadow over Zimbabwean migrants. On the right, Arnold and Phillip bluntly speak for themselves; they left for work and arrived to find work. Martin and Sergio share their impressions of migrants with economic motivations. Altogether, these excerpts support my theory that the contents of a migrant's backpack can expand or limit their choices upon arrival in South Africa.

Table 3: "Reasons for Leaving" Interview Excerpts with Codes

Political Reasons for Leaving	Economic Reasons for Leaving
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> Especially considering the type of <b>victimization</b> that a lot of people have gone through...You get really <b>terrified</b> if you hear what happens to other activists.</p>	<p><b>Arnold:</b> We are here to earn a <b>living</b>.</p>
<p><b>Phillip:</b> That time when I left Zimbabwe there was also that <b>political violence</b> which forced us to come here.</p>	<p><b>Martin:</b> Most of the [active Zimbabweans] are <b>political</b> refugees, most of [the others] are <b>economic</b> refugees. As a result, they are more worried about</p>

	bread and butter at a personal and family level.
<b>Benjamin:</b> It's the <b>experience</b> that I have gone through. I ran away from Zimbabwe and came here.	<b>Phillip:</b> ..all the places we used to sell were destroyed. We didn't have any <b>jobs</b> .
<b>Lewis:</b> Most of the people in Zimbabwe were affected by Zimbabwean <b>politics</b> ...being forced to [do] what they don't want [to do]. So I think Zimbabwe <b>politics</b> have affected a lot of Zimbabweans because they still feel that things are the same like in Zimbabwe.	<b>Sergio:</b> [Zimbabweans] are here because they need to support their family, send <b>money</b> back home.
<b>Richard:</b> When I came to South Africa...I was a <b>victim</b> of <b>politics</b> .	
<b>Charles:</b> The reason why I'm in South Africa is because I couldn't stay in Zimbabwe because my life was in danger. One, on <b>political</b> grounds. Two, on <b>economic</b> grounds.	
<b>Arnold:</b> We [Zimbabweans are] here because of the <b>political</b> bickerings, the <b>political</b> tensions, the <b>political</b> fightings.	
<b>Source: Personal Communications, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b>	

In an American and European context, language skills and an above average education have proven to be aspects of human capital that recruiters can harness to mobilize immigrants and would-be activists (Brady et al., 1999). Recruitment, or being asked to take part, can expand political participation among immigrants with these skill sets. However, Abramson & Claggett (2001) found that past participation affects the success of all types of recruitment. For Zimbabweans, past participation, or the lack thereof, directly affects their perspectives on participation in South Africa. In the previous section, interviewees made clear that fear is inextricably linked to participation in political and non-political activities in Zimbabwe; fear was still preventing migrants from engaging in activities in Cape Town. In the next section, I argue that the fears



drove them to South Africa, whether it was a fear of destitution or a fear of political violence, affect the type of legal status they acquire upon arrival in South Africa.

### **Legal Status**

*“Where there are two elephants, it’s the grass that suffers and we are the grass.” - Benjamin*

Legal status is intimately linked to an immigrant’s country of origin as well as reasons for leaving. Again, an immigrant’s experiences in their country of origin affect their reasons for leaving which in turn affect the legal status acquired upon arrival. Acquiring legal documentation was a primary concern for many; however, the basis on which they could obtain it affected their job prospects and the level of comfort in the community. As noted above, there is no asylum for economic refugees. Those who claimed political asylum also claim a sense of security and, for many, the courage to continue their political work. For migrants with no legal status, or a temporary status, job security is as tenuous as it was in South Africa. Their standing in the community is also precarious. The following interviews highlight how legal status factors into their decisions to withdraw and participate in the community.

Since an immigrant’s legal status can be complicated, interviewees reporting any type of documented status were coded as “documented.” For privacy reasons, no questions were asked about the details of their status. However, interviewees were asked if they considered their stay in South Africa to be permanent or part of a back and forth migration. Many answered by simply saying their “papers are in order.” The few who admitted to having an expired passport or no documentation at all were coded as

“undocumented.” All interviewees except for Lisa and “Matthew,” a client of PASSOP, claimed to have their papers in order. It is possible that some interviewees were untruthful or perhaps optimistic about acquiring a legal status at some point. Regardless, many experienced periods of undocumented or pending status during their stay in South Africa and several noted how difficult it was to attain the current status they had at the time. The documentation status of active and inactive interviewees is in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Legal Status

	<b>Active</b>	<b>Inactive</b>
<b><u>Documented</u></b>	Martin, Benjamin, Richard, Lewis, Olivia, Thomas, Charles, Noreen	Chris, Derek, 8CW, Phillip, Samuel, Teresa, Arnold
<b><u>Undocumented</u></b>		Lisa, Matthew
<b><u>Unknown</u></b>		3TM
<b>Source: Personal Communications, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b>		

Lisa, for example, was documented at one time, having arrived with a passport and a 90-day visa. But her passport has since expired and she heard that the local refugee center is refusing to give permits to those who cannot pay \$1500. It is unclear whether the \$1500 is a fine, a bribe or a bit of both. A lack of information and possible corruption appear to prevent Lisa from renewing her passport or applying for asylum.

Although Lisa was fired from her first job because she did not have a work permit, she had not sought help for her problems. She said she does not often talk about it with family or friends because she “know[s] they can’t help me.” She was optimistic, however, about a rumor that those applying for permits will be granted permanent residency. As of December 2012, there was no such plan by the government of South

Africa. Even without permanent status, Lisa continues to work in order to send money home to her child.

Phillip, who lives in Lisa's township, acquired refugee status and a work permit through the Zimbabwe Dispensation Program but prefers to be self-employed. By the time his permit expires in four years, he hopes to return to Zimbabwe. "I think I'll be in a condition to go back home," he said. Martin said that for him and other Zimbabweans their stay in South Africa cannot be permanent because "in most cases it is determined by circumstances. The reasons that pushed us to leave Zimbabwe, if they prevail here in South Africa, we go elsewhere." Martin also stated what Phillip implied: "If the situation improves at home, we can go back."

Pastor Arnold also lived in Cape Town without documentation for a period of time. He sought help from PASSOP and applied for refugee status while working as their representative in his community. It was not clear in the interview if he acquired documentation, but he no longer works with PASSOP and prefers to stay out of politics.

Unlike Lisa, many recent arrivals to Lewis' farmworker community actively sought help from the activists regarding their documentation. He recalled:

If they have problems like with documentation, if they heard that somebody is coming to address [it], or there's hope that somebody is coming to talk about that thing, can do anything, they come [to meetings] in numbers...even those without that [documentation] problem...come on behalf of their families.

Without papers, however, people have a "fear of identification or fear of victimization," according to Richard, the MDC activist. In an attempt to start a petition for the use of a community hall, "the thing that was hampering our efforts," he said, "was [that] some of the people, most of the people don't have documents. So if you ask them

to give their name or sign on a petition, they refuse.” Their hesitance is not without merit.

Thomas, the paralegal, recalled recent farmworker strikes north of Cape Town:

Many people were arrested as a result of being undocumented because they came out and participated in the strike action. Home Affairs conducted immigration raids...and of those striking workers who were arrested, some, a good number, had no documents and they were deported.

He continued: “[A lack of] documentation prevents people from coming out, engaging in public action because of their status.” Richard, the MDC activist, believed that “people are still hounded by the fear they saw in Zimbabwe.” Some of them carry fear that “the Zimbabwe intelligence officers are always around, everywhere...[you] are going to get caught and you’ll be seen doing this and this.” Even those who did not experience violence firsthand, “witnessed serious things that were not good.” Martin agreed that “people are so much scared of talking politics. Because there are incidents of people who are beaten here.”

In Table 5 below, active and non-active immigrants describe how documentation affected their experiences as immigrants in South Africa. The highlighted words were used to identify relevant passages for further analysis, which follows after the table.

Table 5: “Legal Status” Interview Excerpts

<u>Legal Status</u>
<b>Phillip:</b> In terms of <b>documents</b> , we are all fine because of <b>asylum</b> ...I have that work permit. That was good for me.
<b>Benjamin:</b> I don’t want to be permanent <b>resident</b> of South Africa. It’s perhaps why I haven’t applied for <b>permanent residency</b> even though I qualify.
<b>Thomas:</b> So many people were arrested as a result of being <b>undocumented</b> . Because they came out and participated in that strike. So <b>documentation</b> also prevents people from coming out, engaging in public action because of their <b>status</b> .
<b>Richard:</b> The thing that was hampering our efforts was some of the people, most of the people, don’t have <b>documents</b> .
<b>Source: Personal Communications, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b>

Thomas surmises that there is a relationship between documentation and participation. In his experience as a paralegal and community organizer, “[someone] with a temporary three-month section 22 asylum seeker permit, compared with a Zimbabwean with permanent residence...the [latter] is much more active, claims more and more rights and entitlements from the government.” Studies on immigrant incorporation corroborate Thomas’ observations; documented migrants usually have increased levels of participation as compared to their undocumented counterparts (Leal, 2002). Non-citizens who understood politics, planned on naturalizing and had English-language skills were more likely to become involved.

In the table below, active and inactive immigrants described personal reasons for participation and withdrawal as well as reasons they have encountered in their community. Some keywords (e.g. active, inactive and politics) were used to identify relevant passages, but I identified most passages with a thorough reading of the interviews. For active migrants, participation was “voluntary” and “necessary” and often a continuation of their activities in Zimbabwe. In the right-hand column, inactive migrants saw little reason to participate and forgo opportunities to earn money. Again, many cite fear of persecution as a reason for withdrawal. Community organizers like Lewis, Richard and Kanyalitsoe acknowledge that these factors impede participation.

Table 6: Interview Excerpts Regarding Participation

<b><u>Participation</u></b>	<b><u>Non-Participation</u></b>
<b>Martin:</b> [Participation] was voluntary. Because I’ve been <b>active</b> somehow in Zimbabwe. It was <b>voluntary</b> because of my background.	<b>Arnold:</b> So if you get involved in <b>politics</b> , you can also be a victim to circumstances, one way or the other.
<b>Benjamin:</b> I realized	<b>Arnold:</b> I would rather not get myself

<p>[participation]...was quite important in 2008 when xenophobia broke.</p>	<p>involved in sensitive issues. I would stay safe, work for my family. I was not politically <b>active</b> even in Zimbabwe, so I would not be politically <b>active</b> here.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> There's no better way of establishing good rapport with the locals than working with them.</p>	<p><b>Arnold:</b> So people from Zimbabwe, they want to be safe. They've had enough of the violence, they've had enough of the cruelty. They say 'no we are here to work for our families.'</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> Sometimes <b>activism</b> is born out of one's experience.</p>	<p><b>Samuel:</b> We didn't see any reason for [protesting]. Because even if we "toi-toi" we [don't] think it's going to help us to solve the problem. It can't.</p>
<p><b>Benjamin:</b> Well I was like that even when I was back <b>home</b>. I was quite <b>active</b> in the communities as well...it was something I grew up doing.</p>	<p><b>Lewis:</b> But most of the time they only come, some of them, they only come to the meetings when they have got a problem. When they think they can get help.</p>
<p><b>Richard:</b> We have to <b>participate</b> in the South African politics positively in order for us to also benefit from the political situation in South Africa.</p>	<p><b>Richard:</b> So if you ask them to give their name or sign on a petition, they refuse. Probably for fear of identification or fear of victimization.</p>
<p><b>Charles:</b> But I couldn't just come to South Africa and keep quiet. I couldn't keep quiet.</p>	<p><b>Richard:</b> Once you just say we want to talk about <b>politics</b>, they tell you it's better not to be involved. The reason that they give you is that they're scared.</p>
	<p><b>Kanyalitsoe:</b> Most of them are preoccupied with their jobs, feeding their families and so forth. Zimbabweans will say 'no I have to look for work.'</p>
	<p><b>Thomas:</b> The other reason relates to practical barriers, work commitments. So they may not have time to come out and join others.</p>
<p><b>Source: Personal Communications, September-December 2012, Cape Town, South Africa</b></p>	

In this case study, documented and undocumented migrants cite similar reasons for withdrawing from their communities. Interviewees like Phillip were fortunate enough to

acquire a legal status that allowed employment and work, but earning money for his family was a priority for him. Lisa did not have documented status, but finding and keeping a job was still important. Despite living in a community with an active PASSOP presence, Lisa maintained a low profile—she only attended church—and work was a priority. “When you’re a foreigner,” Pastor Arnold said, “you take any job that comes your way, that cross your path, you snatch it.”

Negative political experiences in Zimbabwe discourage some interviewees from participating in Cape Town altogether. However, it does not necessarily preclude others from participating in new or different ways. In fact, my research found that the move from an oppressive environment to a more open society was liberating to some, particularly those with a history of past participation.

Nearly all of the activists and community organizers interviewed reported a documented status and also reported being active in their communities in Zimbabwe. In the next section, I argue that their willingness to participate stems from these experiences at home as well as a sense of loyalty. As Hirschman predicts, while in Zimbabwe, their loyalty made many vocal about their opposition to the regime. Exiting in protest was a last resort. Their inactive brothers and sisters share the same sense of loyalty for their home country, but without similar experiences with past participation, their loyalty only unites them in a common desire to return to Zimbabwe. Exiting remains their first resort and participation, or voice, is rarely an option.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

*“[The South Africans] are human beings like us. If things go bad, they are going to go to another country and they’ll be refugees also.” –Richard*

At an informal gathering of NGO representatives in Cape Town, immigration scholar Jonathan Crush described Sub-Saharan Africa as a “region on the move<sup>24</sup>.” Rapid urbanization and hyper-mobility, he said, allow people to move farther and faster than ever before. The literature on civic participation is extensive and the body of work on immigrant participation has grown more nimble along with its subjects. Despite disagreement on the impact and efficacy of migrant participation, authors are paying more attention to the agency of migrants. Extant scholarship, however, suffers from an over reliance on quantifiable measures and a framework that prioritizes migrants on a path to citizenship or naturalization (Bloemraad, 2006; Penninx, 2004; Soysal, 1994). To better understand migrant participation, researchers must move beyond the orthodox dichotomy of undocumented migrants as victims or villains or non-actors in their adopted country. Second, it is essential to genuine scholarship on migration as well as migrant participation that researchers explore country of origin.

In this project, I have used three understudied characteristics to demonstrate what scholars suspected from experience and anecdote: past participation experiences have a significant influence on participation. Specifically, I have shown that individual experiences related to participation, reasons for leaving home and legal status are the foundation upon which immigrants build their new lives abroad. But, why should we care whether non-citizen migrants engage in their communities, politically or otherwise? The purpose of this chapter is to conclude my argument by answering this question.

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<sup>24</sup> J. Crush. Personal Communication, November 28, 2012.



The chapter begins with an overview of the findings presented in this study. Next, I examine how a better understanding of immigrant participation might portend for immigrant integration and incorporation. This discussion shows that by starting at the beginning of the migratory journey rather than at the end of it, a more holistic picture of a migrant's decision-making process emerges. Thus, research on a diverse set of characteristics needs to continue, and practitioners in civil society can benefit from increased understanding of an immigrant's motivators and disincentives for participation.

### **Summary of Results**

Across Sub-Saharan Africa borders are porous and migration is relatively easy, but documentation and integration are often difficult. It is no surprise that survival is a priority and participation of any kind is not. Existing works on civic participation show a strong correlation between income, education, resources, recruitment and levels of participation (see, e.g., (Brady et al., 1999; Kemp et al., 2000; La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; Verba et al., 1995). However, we cannot conclude with this evidence that these same factors cause participation among immigrants, particularly those without documentation or a path to citizenship or naturalization. These characteristics are helpful in understanding participation, but they do not fully explain why some withdraw despite possessing the requisite characteristics and others participate without them. A number of factors could bring participation to the forefront, yet no single theory can predict such a personal choice. However, we need to consider the possibility that other factors not accounted for could be causing migrants to withdraw or participate.

As discussed in Chapter 2, existing data and methods of analysis have not fully explored alternative reasons for participation among immigrants. To address this, I conducted interviews with immigrants and activists with limited assumptions about their levels of participation. The theoretical underpinnings of case selection and the methods used to analyze it were discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 provided the context for the case study—the political and economic climate in Zimbabwe, the history of migration to South Africa and the legal environment they find there. It is unlikely Zimbabweans will achieve permanent residence nor do many want to live in South Africa as citizens. Therefore, levels of activity among Zimbabwean community organizers, for example, had less to do with achieving citizenship or voting rights and more to do with their political and civic experiences in their home countries.

By using the data collected to draw conclusions instead of testing a conclusion with data, I noticed patterns in their reasons for participation or withdrawal. I then hypothesized that these experiences in Zimbabwe as well as their reasons for leaving home and their legal status in South Africa impede or discourage civic participation. Chapter 5 analyzes each determinant revealed in the interviews and concludes by connecting them to reasons for civic participation. Interviewees made clear that their experiences in Zimbabwe left an indelible mark on a their social and political consciousness. After migrating, their reasons for leaving follow whether it was to escape political persecution or economic degradation. Once in South Africa, the contents of their backpack may afford them an opportunity to become legal residents or discourage them from applying altogether. Intervening variables include loyalty and proximity, or the ease in which an individual can return home. Loyalty to Zimbabwe—which is calling them

home—as well as the ease in which they can enter and exit South Africa affects their decision to withdraw from their communities in Cape Town or voice concerns. Altogether, these factors influence their willingness or ability to participate. This analysis adds to the existing scholarship by explicitly linking an immigrant’s experiences at home with their decision to engage in civic activities in their adopted country. Further research would test if all three determinants in this study hold as they relate to participation and which ones do not hold, leading to more specific concepts.

### **Further Research**

In an interview on the state of Zimbabwean migration and participation, scholar Brian Raftopoulos noted a fractured history of civic participation and advocacy in Zimbabwe<sup>25</sup>. He cited the Marikana Mine strikes and riots of August 2008 as an example of a broader problem with organization<sup>26</sup> in the region. Competitive opposition parties, organized labor, a free press and effective civil society groups are just starting to take root across the region. Under Mugabe’s regime in Zimbabwe, there have been few or no examples of effective community organizing. Even well meaning and well-to-do Zimbabweans arriving in South Africa are at a disadvantage. In addition, a strong sense of nationalism in South Africa—fomented by fragile economic growth—has inculcated an exclusionary social and political environment for immigrants.

My data indicate that this environment is discouraging for most immigrants. Would different circumstances elicit different attitudes? In June 2013, Home Affairs director Naledi Pandor announced possible amendments to immigration laws (Roy, 2013), but it

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<sup>25</sup> “B. Raftopoulos.” Personal Communication, November 28, 2012.

<sup>26</sup> The Marikana strikes resulted in the single most lethal use of force by South African security forces against civilians since 1960 and the end of apartheid. (Polgreen, 2012; Thornycroft & Blair, 2012)

remains to be seen if the government can shore up its institutional capacities as well as the political will necessary to support immigrants' rights in a consistent fashion. If the legal environment changes, it is possible that the social and political environment in which immigrants operate would also change. Tracking changes in attitude over time would foster a deeper understanding of the dynamics of migrant integration and incorporation.

As research in this field moves forward, it will also be important to consider alternative methods of studying this phenomena. The reevaluation of my hypotheses led to a rethinking of my epistemological framework. Donna Haraway (1988) suggests that the expectation of objectivity at the onset of research does not always capture the political challenges that underrepresented groups in society face in their efforts to obtain political equality. Looking through a feminist lens, she argues that reliance on objectivity perpetuates traditional forms of scholarship that excluded the views and experiences of non-whites and females. Research that begins from the experiences of those who have been left out of the production of knowledge actually strengthens standards of objectivity.

Standpoint feminist Sandra Harding argues not to "go native" or merge the self with the Other, but to look back at the self in all its cultural particularity from a more distant, critical, objectifying location" (1991, p. 191). Ultimately, it seemed disingenuous to incorporate this epistemology into my work after the data was collected. Even though being in the field broke some of my pre-conceived notions about Zimbabwean immigrants, I had no knowledge of this framework and, therefore, did not proceed with the lens in mind. I simply attempted to be more open to a hypothesis not previously considered. However, future research could advance our understanding of immigrant

participation by asking migrants questions that incorporate their perspectives on participation. For example, what role do Zimbabweans want to have in their adopted country?

In other words,

knowledge seeking requires democratic, participatory politics. Otherwise, only the gender, race, sexuality, and class elites who now predominate in institutions of knowledge-seeking will have the chance to decide how to start asking their research questions, and we are entitled to suspicion about the historic location from which those questions will in fact be asked. (Harding, 1991, p. 124)

Harding is “concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved” (Welman, 1999, p. 5). This understanding could emerge from a careful application of the “situated concept” approach case study research. This approach recognizes that unique experiences embedded in particular times and spaces are influenced by linguistic, country, regional, organizational and/or communal history and situations. When studying decisional behavior in particular, Gerring notes that case study research offers insight into the intentions, reasoning capabilities and information processing procedures of the actors involved. Using in-depth interviews allows researchers to witness the outward manifestations of an underlying mental process and thus record more fully how subjects arrive at their opinions (2007, p. 45). The situated concept approach would emphasize the need to understand concepts like participation, for example, as rooted in its own particular setting; conceptual meanings cannot be fixed in the abstract and are instead highly contextualized. As demonstrated in my study, Zimbabweans did not recognize my definition of participation in their context. As a researcher, understanding the lived experiences of the people involved with the issue being researched is essential to theory development and understanding.

Building theory from the ground up does not have to be at the expense of methodological rigor or bias. A careful design of the research design can reduce such criticisms. Morse et al. argue that contrary to current practices, rigor does not rely on special procedures external to the research process or “post-hoc” (Morse, 2002, p. 16). Rather, strategies of ensuring rigor must be built into the qualitative research process itself. These include:

...investigator responsiveness, methodological coherence, theoretical sampling and sampling adequacy, an active analytical stance, and saturation. These strategies when used appropriately, force the researcher to correct both the direction of the analysis and the development of the study as necessary, thus ensuring reliability and validity of the completed process (Morse, 2002, p. 16).

Verifying methodological coherence, sampling sufficiency, data collection strategies and analysis during the process of the research helps to ensure congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, theory and theory development. The researcher’s responsiveness to changes discovered along the way affects the reliability and validity of the evolving study. I propose that my study was a step in this direction. My future research will more deliberately apply these concepts to test the hypotheses that emerged from my study. Such a research agenda will add to emerging research on the “double engagement” of migrants (Mazzucato, 2008), which mainly focuses on economic contributions but could easily address the dual nature of a migrant’s social life. How a migrant navigates the social milieu of his new home requires an acknowledgement that his old home still exists, even if in his imagination.

## **Appendix A**

### **Survey for Active/Inactive Migrants**

#### **Demographic Data**

1. Age (18-25; 25-34; 35+)
2. Occupation in Zimbabwe (skilled or unskilled)
3. Occupation in South Africa (skilled or unskilled)
4. Marital status (single or married)
5. Children (yes or no)
6. Time in South Africa
7. Migratory or permanent living situation
8. Documented or undocumented
9. Recruitment (yes or no)

#### **Political vs. Community Involvement**

Which do you think is a better way to solve issues important to you: political involvement (voting, campaigning) or through community involvement (volunteering)?

#### **Perceived Importance of Political Participation**

How important do you think it is for people like you to be active and interested in politics and current events: very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not at all important?

#### **Political Activity**

Have you participated in a protest, a march or demonstration on some national or local issue? Yes or No? How many?

Are you a member of a political party?

#### **Non-Political Activity**

Are you a member of a non-political organization? Yes or No? Name:

Are you a member of an affinity (ethnic, nationalist, refugee, etc) group? Yes or No. Which?

#### **Reasons for Activity/Inactivity**

Were there any public policy issues or community, family or personal concerns that led you to engage in political activity? What were they?

What reasons do your friends and family in South Africa have for not being active?

#### **Civic Talk**

When you speak to family or friends, how often do you discuss politics and current events? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

#### **Time**

How much free time do you have during the week to participate in the activities you named above? A lot of time, a moderate amount of time, very little time, none?

#### **Resources**

How many times has anyone given you information about how to become active in politics and current events? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

#### **Engagement**

Thinking about how interested you were in politics and current events in Zimbabwe, what has increased your interest? Time? Resources? Recruitment? All?

#### **Recruitment**

How many times has anyone asked you to participate in an event or organization related to politics and current events? Often, Sometimes, Rarely, or Never?

**Social Barriers**

- 1) What, if anything, prevents you from participating?
- 2) Does your community encourage you to participate? How?
- 3) Does your community discourage you from participating? How?
- 4) What would you need to participate more often?

**Questions for Leadership**

- 1) What is your opinion of civic organizations for immigrants in South Africa?
- 2) What activities are you aware of?
- 3) Are their efforts having a positive, negative or neutral effect on the community? Why?
- 4) Have you noticed a change in attitudes towards immigrants since 2008? To what do you attribute this change or lack of change?
- 5) Have you noticed a change in policy regarding immigrants? To what do you attribute this change or lack of change?



## **Appendix B**

### **Interviewees**

#### **Active/Inactive Survey**

**5 females:** Lisa, Teresa, Noreen, Barbara, Olivia

**3 males:** Phillip, Samuel, Arnold

**Focus Groups:**           3 township men  
                                  8 construction workers  
                                  Derek, Chris, Matthew

#### **Leadership Survey**

##### **Community Organizers**

- Paralegal Coordinator, Thomas
- Community Outreach Coordinator, Benjamin
- Chair, Global Zimbabwe Forum, Martin
- Farmworker Advocate, Lewis
- Township Organizer, Charles

##### **Political Activists**

- MDC-Cape Town Coordinator, Richard
- MDC-Cape Town Coordinator, Martin

##### **The Scalabrini Center**

- Employment Coordinator, Kanyalitsoe
- Outreach Coordinator, Sergio

## Appendix C

### Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent- Informants & Activists

“Hello, my name is Rumbi Mufuka. I am a graduate student at the University of Miami in International Studies, and I am in Cape Town undertaking research that will be used in my dissertation.

Before we start I must ask for your consent to participate. Consent is necessary so that you are accurately informed about the research process and you understand your rights. If you’d like a copy of the consent form, you can take a copy with you.

Your participation is expected to take about 15 minutes. During this time you’ll answer questions about your time in South Africa and political and non-political activities.

The information you share with me will be helpful in recruiting others like you and those who currently are not as active as yourself. The results could also significantly enhance our understanding of these important processes.

Please know that you will be asked about information about your legal status, potentially illegal activities and affiliations which could put you at risk. All efforts will be made to keep your answers in the strictest confidentiality. First names or aliases will be coded with a number and the information gathered will be kept confidential. I will not link your name to anything you say in the text of my dissertation or any other publications. No direct benefit is promised to you for your participation in this study.

Participation is voluntary. If you’re ever uncomfortable for any reason and would like to stop participating, that is OK, just say so. I will not tell PASSOP whether you agree or decline to participate in this study; your involvement in PASSOP will not be affected in any way. If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me.

Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate?

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here for verbal consent.

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here for written consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant (if choosing to sign only).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent.

If so, let’s begin...”

**Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent**  
**Knowledgeable Informants**

“Hello, my name is Rumbi Mufuka. I am a graduate student at the University of Miami in International Studies, and I am in Cape Town undertaking research that will be used in my dissertation.

Before we start I must ask for your consent to participate. Consent is necessary so that you are accurately informed about the research process and you understand your rights. If you'd like a copy of the consent form, you can take a copy with you. Your participation is expected to take about 20-30 minutes. During this time you'll answer questions about your time in South Africa and political and non-political activities.

The information you share with me will be helpful in recruiting others like you and those who currently are not as active as yourself. The results could also significantly enhance our understanding of these important processes.

Please know that you will be asked about information about your legal status, potentially illegal activities and affiliations which could put you at risk. All efforts will be made to keep your answers in the strictest confidentiality. First names or aliases will be coded with a number and the information gathered will be kept confidential. I will not link your name to anything you say in the text of my dissertation or any other publications. No direct benefit is promised to you for your participation in this study.

Participation is voluntary. If you're ever uncomfortable for any reason and would like to stop participating, that is OK, just say so. I will not tell PASSOP whether you agree or decline to participate in this study; your involvement in PASSOP will not be affected in any way. If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me.

I would like to make a tape recording of our discussion, so that I can have an accurate record of the information that you provide to me. I will transcribe that recording by hand, and will keep the transcripts confidential and securely in my possession under lock at key. I will erase the tape after I transcribe it.

Do you have any questions about this research? Do you agree to participate?

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here for verbal consent.

\_\_\_\_\_ Check here for written consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Participant (if choosing to sign only)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

If so, let's begin..."

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