

**THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF CONGOLESE  
MIGRANTS IN JOHANNESBURG:  
'A GENDERED ANALYSIS'**

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**Dedication**

To God Almighty for making these studies possible for me.

To my father Mugisho Mulega Prosper and my sisters Viviane, Olive, Josephine, Anne Marie, and Jeanne D'Arc Mugisho for all your love and support that enabled me to accomplish so many things in my life may God bless you abundantly.

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## **Declaration**

This work is submitted for the Masters degree in Forced Migration Studies in Graduate School of the Humanities and Social Sciences- University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

I declare that this thesis is my own work, and has never been submitted for any other degree in any other university.

Signature-----on the -----

**Aline M Mugisho**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This qualitative study explores the socio-economic integration of Congolese migrants<sup>1</sup> living in Johannesburg. The study further analyses the gendered way in which this concept is constructed. Drawing on respondents' own subjective experiences, this study investigates the way Congolese perceive, and explain socio-economic integration and the role that gender-roles play in this understanding. Participants were identified using purposive sampling, snowballing techniques and narratives of eleven Congolese women and men were employed in data collection using a semi structured interview guide. Data for this study was analysed using a combination of content, narrative and discourse analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> The term migrants in this report refer to both asylum seekers, refugees and other forced migrants. This is due the fact the participants in this study comprise migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. When necessary, the term refugee or asylum seeker may be used to refer to a particular case.

Analysis of the data revealed that loss of status played a major role on Congolese women and men's feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration. Loss of status was increased by migration through intersections of unequal power relations, access to services, and broader related migration issues. Findings show that loss of status influenced Congolese men and women's perception of socio-economic integration and the meaning from which they drew their explanations were linked directly to the discourses related to experiences of migration. Findings also reveal that participants drew on interrelated specific migration –related discourses including poverty, access to services (institutional), legal status, socio economic status, socio-cultural status and xenophobia to explain their perceptions and feelings regarding socio-economic integration in South Africa.

Further analysis indicated that being socially and economically integrated is not simply defined by having jobs, the right to access services and associating with South Africans but having the life that one had in the country of origin prior to migration. This includes feeling respected and finally having the same economic and social power as the locals. Among discourses drawn on, Congolese man and women also used the discourse on traditional practices to justify their unwillingness to integrate into the South African community. This brings us to a new discussion as to who defines integration, for it is often assumed that migrants' wants to integrate, but these findings challenge this assumption. The unwillingness to integrate also arises from what respondents described as the reversal of gender roles, and culture showing how these can be a barrier to socio-economic integration. These discourses were also used to justify Congolese women non association with South African women to romanticize the cultural values of the country of origin.

Finally, the findings revealed the gendered way in which participants perceived their loss of status and their contribution to the family. Male participants perceives perceived their partners' or wives' work as an additional hand in times of need as they are unable to support the family due to their lower income. Female participants perceived their loss of socio-economic status as an important component of their socio-economic integration in South Africa and in that note they believe they would be in a better position to take care of their children and improve their lives if they could work and access other services. Lastly, participants explained their understanding of the country of origin prior to migration which represented their roots, their country, a place of

education to which prior to migration they didn't give a strong connotation. The loss of status and the migration experience has however made them change this notion and participants started to view their country of origin as a place of freedom, where one can be at ease, gain education and so on. Congo was perceived as a very important place and this was shaped by the fact that most of participants cannot go back because of their migration status as refugees.<sup>2</sup>

## **Structure of the Research Report**

This report is divided into four chapters. The first chapter covers literature related to migrants' integration in general and socio-economic integration in particular as well as gender roles. The literature reviewed looked at how various researchers have defined socio-economic integration and gender roles and how migrants and refugees explain and perceive it. It also looks at the effects of loss of status on socio-economic integration, looking specifically at the loss of legal status, socio-economic status, socio-cultural status, xenophobia and other factors contributing to the socio-economic integration of migrants and refugees around the world.

The second chapter outlines the context, aim and significance of the study. The methodology is presented in this chapter and highlights the design of the study, data collection strategies, challenges encountered as well as the data analysis. A section of the ethics followed in the study is also included here.

The third chapter is a presentation of the study findings based on the analysis of the data. It looks at how loss of status, starting with loss of legal status, socio-economic status and socio cultural status affect Congolese men and women's perceptions and feelings of socio-economic integration in Johannesburg. It further explores Congolese perception of xenophobia and the meaning Congolese attached to their country of origin.

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<sup>2</sup> The 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugee defines refugees as; "a person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for the reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside his country of nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having nationality is being outside the country of his former residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it".

The fourth chapter presents the summary and the main conclusions of the study. It includes a sample of the interview schedule used and references.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section is divided into sections that look at the definition of socio-economic integration and gender roles, highlighting how the concept of socio-economic integration and gender roles has been explained by researchers. It then explains various issues related to loss of status and how these affect migrants' perception of socio-economic integration. Finally this literature analyses the role that legal status, socio-economic status and family status including motherhood, kinship and family support plays in relation to socio-economic integration.

#### **1.1. Defining socio-economic integration and gender roles**

The concept of integration is a complex and problematic one as is the problem of clarifying and explaining integration of refugees and migrants (Kulhman, 1995). Although many authors have attempted to define socio-economic integration, there has been a disagreement on what integration means or consists of (Polzer, 2008; Jacobson, 2001; Wrong, 1994; Crisp, 2004; Stewart, 2005). Some suggest that integration differs from one person to another, meaning only an individual or a group of individuals may be able to define what integration means to them (see Yetim, 2008; Walter, 2006; Sen, 1999). Others suggest that integration can be measured by looking at practical aspects of migrants' lives in the host society such as work, education, and other social related factors. This has resulted in many different interpretations of what integration is and what it constitutes. In addition, there is a paucity of literature on migrants' integration in general and socio-economic integration in particular. The available literature often focuses on the integration of refugees<sup>3</sup> into a given society and thus defines integration as;

*“where the lived everyday experiences of refugees is that of being part of the social community, the lack of physical danger, freedom of movement in the host country, freedom to return to the country of origin, access to government services such as health, housing, social inclusion (inter-marriage), social interactions, permanent residence/ citizenship” (Polzer,2008:3).*

Crisp (2004:1) in an attempt to define integration came up with a description that breaks integration into three concepts: Rights, economic opportunities and socio cultural factors. He describes integration as a process which lead to a durable solution for refugees and can be regarded as:

- 1) “A legal process: whereby refugees are granted a progressively wide range of rights, and entitlements by the host state that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its citizens.
- 2) As an economic process: where refugees become less reliant on state aid or humanitarian assistance and becoming more self-reliant and endeavouring sustainable livelihood, and subsequently contributing to the economic life of the host country.

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<sup>3</sup> The 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugee defines a refugee as “A person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for the reasons of race, religion and nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside their country of nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having nationality is being outside of his former residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear , is unwilling to return to it”.

3) As a social and cultural process: it is a process of acclimatization by the refugees and accommodation by the local communities that enables refugees to live amongst or alongside the host population. This comes without discrimination and allows refugees to actively contribute to the social life of their country of asylum but also live in harmony with the host society” (Crisp, 2004:1).

The International Organization for Migration (2007a:24) views integration as “introducing migrants into a new society, or the process of bringing people of different racial, ethnical or cultural groups into unrestricted and equal association into society”. While all the above mentioned definitions attempts to describe what integration would mean to refugees and to some extent migrants, these have been challenged in some cases. For example some researchers believe that the process of integration is not a simple concept that is limited to defining what refugees should have or be entitled to in the host country (Riano et al, 2005). These researchers suggest that in order to define integration there is a need to include the actors that may facilitate the process of integration such as the host government and the refugees themselves. For instance, Stewart argues that the integration process is influenced by the institutional environment of the receiving society as well as the personal capacities of the settling population (2005:2). Bulcha (1998) similarly argue that integration refers to the way refugees relate to the social environment in the host country.

Moreover, in emphasizing the complexity of the concept ‘integration’, scholars have suggested that integration be looked at as “a situation in which host and refugees communities co-exist and share the same resources (both economic and social)” (Bond: 2005:7; Kuhlman, 1991). In defining integration as such, these authors imply that there are no greater mutual conflicts that exist between refugees and the host community and therefore there is an equality of opportunity, cultural and mutual tolerance (see also Favell, 2001). The latter definitions could be taken to relate integration in different contexts and also involving refugees in the process which makes them better for constructing refugees as people with agency. They may however, be criticized for being idealistic as they assume that human societies are a tensionless and a forever peaceful environment which is the contrary to the lived reality of migrants and refugees. Along this line, Wrong (1994:3) claimed that “human societies always contain tensions that make them vulnerable to possible dissolution”. This at times have led researchers to ask according to Wrong,

what holds society together. Also, in addition to the acknowledgment that human societies may face tension and conflict as described above, there is evidence suggesting that most tension comes from the moment when people feels threatened by outsiders and perceive themselves as facing competition (Polzer and Wakabwe, 2008; Jinnah et al, 2008; Amisi, 2006, Jacobson, 2001). This is due to the fact that in a country where local integration is set as a durable solution, migrants and refugees are meant to share the same resources as the locals. In relation to this, Jacobson elaborates that “the obstacles to local integration are security and a burden of scarce resources (2001: 11). Amisi (2006:3) argues in favor of Jacobson claiming that “xenophobia is a result of perceived or real fight over scarce resources”.

In addition to this, there is an exclusion of specific factors that may be important for socio-economic integration. Most importantly, all these writers ignore how understandings of integration may be shaped by the context and the meaning migrants attach to such understanding. Thus, this study did not adopt any particular definition of integration but instead allowed Congolese women and men to give their subjective definition of socio-economic integration. Also integration according to (Cruz-Saco, 2008:1) “enables persons, regardless of their attributes (Socio-economic class, age, gender, and sexual preferences) to enjoy equal opportunities that are available in the so-called mainstream groups. However, women experience discrimination in many areas that may constitute a barrier to their integration (Parrado &Flippen, 2005), these includes gender roles which are often constructed as women’s roles.

### **Defining gender roles and socio-economic integration**

The social role theory describes gender roles as the process by which people of either sex are expected to obtain characteristics that equip them for the activities that they typically perform (Wood & Diekman, 2000). The gender role strain theory similarly suggests that “people learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or a girl in society through myriad activities, opportunities, encouragements, overt process of gender roles socialization. To the extent that women, more than men, occupy roles that requires domestic activities (e.g.; domestic skills, provision of emotional support), such tendencies stereotype women in general and are incorporated into female gender roles” (Eagly et al, 2002: 323; see also Prentice and Carranza, 2002). Thus, these theories portray women as socially and domestically skilled individuals and

men as instrumentally competent and assertive individuals. The theories above mentioned also imply that gender roles are not ascribed to people as adults but they are something that they grow with. They are also “stereotypes and norms, and are imposed on developing child by parents, teachers and peers” (Prentice & Carranza, 2002:1; Witt, 1996). In line with this, Reeves et al (2005) argue that parents are often more concerned about the success of their male children than female ones as they assume that girls will grow up and get married and care for another family while boys will work and care for their families.

The above descriptions of gender roles however may be criticized for being simplistic for they only consider one way in which gender roles are exerted. Also they look at gender roles as acceptable and unchangeable while the reality of people’s experience indicate that these roles may change according to the social environment and situation that people are in (Yetim, 2008; Walter, 2006). In migration studies for example there is evidence that there is a shift in gender role as women migrate independently. These become principal breadwinners (Nunez et al, 2010) and provide for their families living either in the country of origin or in rural areas (Boyd and Grieco, see also Espiritu, 2005). The later claims challenges the ideology that gender roles are normal and acceptable roles and brings us back to the idea that gender is a social construct which involve more than just conventional definitions but a subjective perspectives.

## **1.2. Loss of status and socio-economic integration**

Peisker and Farida (2006) in their research report focusing on three types of refugees’ integration in Australia (Ex-Yugoslavs, Black Africans and people from the Middle East) found that although refugees were involved in economic activities they did not feel integrated. The authors claimed that this is due to loss of status indicating that refugees when coming to Australia faced degradation and had to work in low paid jobs and undesirable occupation such as cleaning services, meat processing, taxi driving and building which are classified by the Australian labour law as low-status jobs. In addition, they cited that these refugees faced non recognition of their qualifications as a systematic barrier, discrimination on the basis of race and culture and the lack

of mainstream social networks that could assist in the job search, etc. as a result they state: “refugees repeatedly compared their status in Australia to the lives they had before fleeing their country of origin including the jobs they had to explain how they feel low in Australia” (Peisker et al, 2006: 203). Status is described by modern sociologist based on objective measures such as “occupation, education and life style and the subjective evaluation of individuals’ actions and traits” (Weiss and Freshman, 1998:1). There is certainly extensive evidence for the claim that migrants often compare their lives prior to migration to their lives in the host country to give a meaning to integration. The lack of the same resources available in the country of origin and especially the non recognition of knowledge and qualifications often make migrant live in a lower status than what they had in the country of origin. This is however a two folder issue because to some people migration gives a higher status (Massey et al, 1993) while others migration makes them lose it. For the purpose of this study, this literature review will explore three components of loss of status of which, loss of legal status, loss of socio-economic status and finally family status including motherhood and family support. The term migrant in this literature shall refer to both cross border migrants and internal migrants

### **1.2.1 Loss of legal status and socio-economic integration**

Many authors have documented the powerful role that legal status plays in migrants’ integration in the host country (Jinnah et al, 2009; Polzer, 2010; Palmary et al, 2010; Piper, 2005). For example, Piper (2005) found that some Philippine migrants in Thailand were greatly abused by illegal labour brokers due to the fact that the visas they used to enter the country expired making them illegal in the country. This made it hard for them to survive as the police would arrest them and send them to their country of origin. As a result, they were recruited by people who locked them in the house during the day and made them work night hours “women were engaged in illegal sex trade and male in drug dealings” (2005:6). Flores (2003) similarly argues that Mexican undocumented immigrants experienced great violation of human rights and failed to integrate in the United States due to the lack of legal status.

Legal status may be defined as citizenship identity document or any other permit relating to the motivation of migration that allows a migrant to freely live in the host country (Da Lomba, 2010). During the migration process people often lose their citizenship from their country of

origin. For instance, people in a refugee situation lose their legal status due to events threatening their lives and often find themselves stateless. Hathaway (1990) argued that the lack of legal status makes it difficult for refugees to access rights and other resources especially when their claim for asylum<sup>4</sup> has not been approved. He further accentuate that those in intense and urgent refugee situation, may be put in camps and experience difficulties and vulnerabilities. Jinnah et al (2008) argue in favour of Hathaway emphasizing that migrants and refugees face difficulties and problems accessing or claiming for services in their host country for two reasons: 1) the fact that they are out of their country of origin implies that they don't have access to the same resources that they are entitled to in their country of origin. 2) The loss of their citizenship or nationality may expose them to vulnerability and limit their access to certain services in the host country. Here, it could be argued that integration for people in the situation above is difficult for access to rights is one of the major components of integration (Polzer, 2008, Crisp, 2004; Jacobson, 2001).

Linking loss of legal status to sustainable livelihoods which includes access to land and employment, but also the ability for refugees to support themselves and their families, Polzer (2010) suggest that refugees in South Africa fail to integrate and sustain livelihood due to lack of proper documentation. Kihato (2007) similarly argues that refugee women in South Africa make a living through street trade and small income generating activities. She claims that these women are often disturbed by the police who confiscate their small merchandise due to either the lack or non recognition of their asylum permit. The findings of Riano et al (2005) correspondingly reveal that the lack of legal documentation of women from the Middle East living in Switzerland made it hard for them to make a living. As a result most of them were involved in sex work and other less than ideal working condition as this is the only way they could survive without documentation. The authors additionally indicate that even though Switzerland had integration offices that provided services to refugees and others migrants, it was difficult for these women to enjoy these services because they required a legal permit in order for them to access it. Additionally, Babha (2004) emphasized the difficulties that women seeking asylum faced in enrolling their children to school in the United Kingdom claiming that the lack of documentation

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<sup>4</sup> An asylum seeker is defined as a person who's live is under threat or in danger, and who is seeking protection in a country other than that of their nationality or origin. Asylum seekers are often referred to as refugees whose claim for asylum has not been approved in the country where they are seeking exile. (Torton, 2003a).

made them discriminated and as a result they could only be given space if there was no British child applying for that place (Crawly, 2000). The cases above described highlight the role that legal status plays in the integration of migrants and refugees.

However, integration is primarily defined as a social and cultural process (Crisp, 2004), whereby refugees are allowed to contribute actively to the social life of their country of asylum. In South Africa for example, a Member of the Mayoral Committee for Community Development in the City of Johannesburg stated that; “an inclusive society is one that all the people have access to basic services including social services... people can showcase their talents in sports and partake community activities”<sup>5</sup>. However, there is extensive evidence showing that refugees face challenges accessing these services due to either lack of documentation or non recognition of their refugee permit see (Polzer, 2010; Veary et al, 2010; Amisi et al, 2005). Also, in relation to ‘refugees showcasing their talents’ the findings of Hlobo (2005) suggests that refugees do not partake in sport activities or hardly get the opportunity to showcase their talent as they are often required to have a South African identity document to do so. Moreover, it is difficult for people to engage in cultural and social activities if their document is not recognized because they may be arrested by the police but also when they don’t have document in the host country they might be classified as illegal (see Amit, 2010 also De Haan, 1998, Hovil, 2007). In this line, Middleton stated that “documentation is the key to migrant well being and prosperity” (2008: 23). Conclusively, the above description indicates the role that legal status plays in socio-economic integration. It is evident that when people migrate or flee they partially or completely lose their legal status. The loss of this gives them less entitlement in countries where they live and therefore limit their socio-economic integration (Jinnah et al, 2008; Da Lomba, 199; Polzer 2010; Hlobo, 2005). It is important to note though that the loss of legal status is not the only factor that impacts migrant socio-economic integration. It is a combination of factors including the loss of socio-economic status and family status. These will be explored in the following sections.

### **1.2.2 Loss of Socio-economic status and socio-economic integration**

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<sup>5</sup> Councillor Nandi mayathula-Khoza claimed this during the Inclusive African Cities Conference held in Johannesburg may 2007.

Weber (1978) cited in Yale (2011: 8-9) “describes socio-economic status as a relative rank that an individual holds with attendant rights, duties and life style in a social hierarchy based upon honour or prestige”. Adams (2011:13) states that socio-economic status may be measured on three major components citing “income, material possessions or living condition”. In keeping this notion, Hollingshead (2011) implies that people may be said to have status when they occupy high positions, when they are able to control by order or influence other people’s conduct, when they derive prestige from holding important offices; or when their conduct is esteemed by others. During the migration process however, people lose their materials, jobs, and other valuable things behind and travel or flee to another country. Some researchers claim that migration gives people a higher socio-economic status as they move from undeveloped to developed countries where the currency often has a higher value than that of the country of origin (see Massey et al, 1993, Bakewell, 2009). However, there is also extensive evidence suggesting that migration may make people lose their status as they migrate and live in lower conditions(Hlobo, 2005; Jinnah et al, 2008; Baruti et al, 2006; Malkki, 1996).

Linking integration to socio-economic status Drache (2003) argue that the barrier to socio-economic integration of refugees is not the inability of the host government to provide services to them but the inability to give them the same life as they had in the country of origin. He further argues that in many countries refugees do not integrate but rather find survival strategies within which they involve in low paid jobs with difficult working conditions and long working hours that the host population will not do. Peisker and Tilbury (2007) similarly argue that refugees may have resources and jobs but they are often considered as inferiors or desperate people by the host society. This is due to the fact that often in the host country their qualifications and other capabilities are not recognized except for scarce resources. Meaning only refugees who have special skills may be employed according to their qualification, the rest will be employed in jobs below their qualification (Bakewell, 2009). Verdiame (2004) claim that when refugees experience economic hardship it becomes difficult for them to have a social life, as the little that they earn covers the basic needs and cannot be used for extravagance. This however may have not been the case when they were in their country of origin especially because when people find themselves in refugee situations, their first priority is to save their lives.

For instance, in her research report focusing on self settled and camp refugees in Kigoma Tanzania, Malkki (1997) documented the different ways in which refugees from Rwanda experienced loss of socio-economic status by fleeing to Tanzania during the Rwandan Genocide. She described the way the situation was crucial in Rwanda and people had to flee the country to save their lives and therefore left everything behind. As a result they lost their jobs, houses, businesses, etc. for those living in camps they were dependent on humanitarian assistance and could hardly use their skills. For those who were self settled, they owned small businesses and others were involved in traditional fishing. Two years later, when the United Nation High Commission for Refugees conducted integration survey to assess the way refugees were integrated in Tanzania, seventy five percent of refugees claimed they did not feel integrated. The author then conducted a qualitative analysis to explore the reasons why refugees did not feel integrated, and suggested that the respondent felt that their life style in Kigoma was far below the way they lived in Rwanda. As a result some perceived their situation as a temporary one and did not feel the need to integrate, while others claimed that they lived below their life style and unless they had the same life as they had in Rwanda, they cannot claim to be integrated in Tanzania (Malkki, 1996: 381-383).

Several theories have been advanced to examine the links between wealth or material possession and socio-economic integration. Wastl-walter (2006) argued that refugees who had money in the country of origin had a hard time to adapt to their new life in camps, due to difficult living conditions and dependency that they experienced in camps. Black (1998) similarly claims that a camp is a poor solution for refugees as it's creates dependency. The findings of Peisker et al (2006) also suggest that refugees in Australia claimed that the loss of material and the inability to afford the same things as in the country of origin affected their feeling of social integration. They added that they felt powerless as they were unable to realize their dreams. Refugees further claimed that they expected some changes in their lives and knew that it want be the same in the host country, but they didn't expect to live in such difficult and poor conditions in Australia.

The inability to meet refugees expectations have been identified to play a major role in the socio-economic integration of refugees around the world. For example, Kirisci (2004) suggests that refugees from the Middle East expected to be treated the same way as nationals in Germany. Their expectations included getting employment that meets their qualifications and being able to

have as social life for them and their children. These expectations however could not be realized and in addition refugees stayed in an excluded area. This affected refugees' feelings of integration and made them feel denigrated. In emphasizing denigration of refugees Hjerm (1998) cited in Kraus (2008) indicated that when refugees feels denigrated, they may become reluctant to socialize with locals and thus socialize within their small groups instead. This is because when people are treated like inferiors by the people they share the same space with, this may affect their self esteem and as a result they prefer to be amongst those who show them respect (Johnson et al, 1997).

Another problem that refugees face in the country of asylum is access to education (Polzer, 2010). Literature has also highlighted that in some countries qualifications may not be recognized and refugees are therefore required to have qualifications from the host country (Walter, 2006; Jinnah et al, 2008). Many factors, including limited financial resources that make it hard for them to pay for expensive school fees and the lack of access to alternative resources (bank loans and others) has been cited amongst other things to play a major role on migrants' feelings of integration. It is important to also elucidate that the issue of accessing education is a two folder issues (Hlobo, 2005; Amisi et al, 2006). The first aspect is that it concerns people who would like to get education in the host country and improve their lives (Jacobson, 2006). It is secondly a problem for parents who flee with their children as it may be difficult for them to enrol their school going children in school due to lack of financial resources (Palmary, 2006, Veary et al, 2010). This is another problem related to the loss of socio-economic integration from the country of origin. The lack of the same economic opportunities available in the country of origin, the absence of family support and networks makes it difficult for refugees to integrate in the host country (Peisker et al, 2007; Hlobo, 2005) as the economic hardship they encounter reminds them of the country of origin and as a result they may consider their host country as a temporary place and therefore refuse to integrate.

### **1.3. Family status, motherhood, family dynamics, network and socio-economic integration**

#### **1.3.1. Family status and socio-economic integration**

Prentice and Carranza (2002) argue that people are given status within the family at birth and develop these as they are growing up. Boys are thought how to become men and provide for the family, while girls are prepared to become home makers (Witt, 1996). These are roles that are ascribed to people and allow them to claim a certain position within the family. They are known as gender roles but some refer to them as family status see for example (Eagly et al, 2002; Wood & Diekman, 2000). Family status however may be shaped by the role that one play within the family. Within this line Mencer (1977:23) claimed that “a dollar of a wife’s current gain receives less weight than a dollar of a husband’s current gain”. Lin (2006: 238) challenges this claim suggesting that “Nowadays women like men are able to provide for their families and takes up roles that were previously viewed as male’s”.

Additionally, the reversal of gender roles has been observed within the migration process which challenges the idea of men as bread winners and women as home makers (Nunez et al, 2011). As a result, one’s family status may shift between provider and home maker or one may have both. For example, Curran & Saguy (2005) emphasized that women from Philippines migrated to Thailand in search for greener pastures and sustained their families through remittances while their husbands remained home to look after the families. Espiritu (2005) similarly argue that Dominican women migrated to the United States for economic reasons and once integrated in the labour market in USA they called their husband as a result of family reunification, and looked after the family. Similarly, and as discussed in the previous chapter, refugees around the world struggle to find jobs due to either lack of documentation and non recognition of qualification (Bakewell, 2009; Global Commission for International Migration, 2005). As a result they engage in low paid jobs and often cannot afford to sustain the family with one source of income.

The GCIM (2005) found that it often requires a combined income to survive for refugees in the host country. This might either shift the roles within the family of allow people to play both roles (Breadwinners and caregivers). The findings of Kihato (2007) similarly suggest that refugees in South Africa struggle to make a decent living for themselves. Consequently they engage in jobs like security officer or car guards, and sometimes car wash which is lower paid. In this case, refugee women work in small street trade, piece jobs like hairdressing, domestic work to supplement the husband’s income. Hence, they organize themselves in a way that the husband may look after the kids during the day while the wife is doing a small business or other

peace jobs, and in the evening the husband goes to do his security jobs while the wife looks after the children (see also Hlobo, 2007).

It is however important to note that the shifts in family status are not always accepted and peaceful. Kiwanuka (2008) noted that the power struggle and the reversal of gender roles are amongst the factors that made migrant women vulnerable to domestic violence. Also Parrado & Flippen (2006) argued that Mexican men's fear of losing their family status as head of the family constituted a barrier to Mexican Women's their integration. Additionally, the authors emphasise that these men did not want their women to associate with Americans' as they were afraid that women may find information on the opportunities given to women in America and find a way working and socializing. The authors further argue that the ability of women to work constituted a threat to their husbands' family status and as a result these women were socially and economically restricted. In keeping with the idea of family status, Poiret (2003) argue that some migrant women from Senegal and Mali were socially and economically excluded because they were viewed by their husbands' as children's caregivers. The author however argues that the reason given by Malian and Senegalese men was a response to their fear that if their wives could work and earn income, their status within the family would be threatened. The following section explores the role of motherhood in socio-economic integration.

### **1.3.2. Motherhood, Family dynamics, network and socio-economic integration**

Elsever (2004) argues that motherhood facilitates the integration of migrant women as they contribute to the education of their children and thus interacts with other parents when attending School parents meetings. Parrado and Flippen (2005) similarly claim that migrant women may get information from their children that may help them integrate in the host society. Tummala-Narra (2004:167) challenges this claim, she suggests; "Mothering has been proven to have a huge impact in some migrant women's life in general. Mothering in a foreign country sometimes can pose a major challenge". She highlights that "the process of becoming a mother in an adopted land presents specific challenges in terms of finding jobs for immigrants mothers'. The result of Moon's (2003) research on working class Korean women in New York affirms that significant changes occurred in their lives after giving birth. Burgess (1994) argue in favour to Moon's claim looking at poor African migrant women in the United States, accentuates that

mothering evoked a financial problem to African women as their working conditions were not ideal, these ones had no right to maternity leave and other advantages. The choices of being a mother or falling pregnant even when unplanned lead them to loss of their jobs. Similarly, Kihato (2007) suggested that motherhood played a major role in refugee women's integration in South Africa. This is because sometimes they did not have someone to look after their children while they work and thus stayed at home to care for their children.

In addition, Tumala-Narra (2004) argue that those who strongly value their cultural practices make sure that they keep their language and other practices as identification with, but also as a basis of authenticity. This she claims is often a task attributed to mothers as they are trusted to pass on their 'roots' to their children. The author uses an example of some Iranian American women who claimed that they did not want to interact with Americans for fear of losing their cultural morals. Being a mother in this case comes with the responsibility to conserve cultural values and therefore limit women's chances to socially and economically integrate in the host society. In keeping with this notion, Boukhobza (2005) indicates the way some girls from the Migreb region of Africa living in France were restricted from interacting with French women apart from school and rather spent time with their mothers to learn their languages.

Researchers have also documented the role that family dynamics play in facilitating socio-economic integration of refugees and migrant around the world (Espiritu, 2003; Piper, 2005). This has been constructed as a social network for migrant when coming into the host country in terms of facilitating their access to jobs and other services (Jolly & Reeves, 2005). Piper (2005), Lin (2006) and Donato et al (2006) respectively argue that those who migrated and precedent families find it easy to socially and economically integrate in the host country. This is due to the fact that the members of a family who proceeded may be well established in the host country and help the new-comers to easily integrate through their established network (Curran et al, 2005). This situation is hardly found in refugee situations and the lack of family present a challenge for some of them to integrate in the host community. In this case, the lack of family support makes it hard for them to integrate in the host society.

Finally, social networks are defined by Bourdieu, as the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (1986: 249). Social networks have been

identified to play a major role in the socio-economic integration of migrants around the globe (Baum, 2000). The theory explains that people who previously migrated provide information to those who wish to migrate and in some cases even secure jobs for them (Massey et al, 1993; Bakewell, 2009). These however, are often not either available or they are available but not useful for refugees (Da Lomba, 2000). This is because sometimes refugees may get into the country of asylum and find people they know but who are less informed or who are facing difficult situations as well and therefore fail to help new-comers (Malkki, 1997).

#### **1.4 Conclusions and critique of the literature**

The literature suggests that the barriers to socio-economic integration of refugees are fostered by a combination of multiple interrelated factors. This makes it difficult for one to isolate specific barriers to integration. Loss of legal status which occurs through the migration process resulting in lack of resources is presented in different ways. This aspect has been documented in the literature as playing a bigger role in migrants' women's lack of socio-economic integration. This factor also has been pointed to influence the migrant feeling and understanding of socio-economic integration. However, as elaborated above, loss of legal status alone is inadequate to explain the issue of refugees and migrants' integration. Rather, it is interrelated with contextual, and a socio-economic barrier through which integration is based and understood.

The review of literature also represents a gap in studies conducted on socio-economic integration as most of the studies basically focused on integration of migrants in general and when refugees are concerned it is often those who live in camps. This makes it unclear how such findings could be relevant for self settled refugees living in African cities. Similarly, there is insufficient attention paid to the role of the migration context and socio-economic status in shaping the perceptions and the feelings of socio-economic integration in Africa. The few studies focus on the economic situation in the country of origin and little is known about the role of socio-economic status prior to migration and its effect on refugees' feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration an aspect that I will look at in detail. The literature also covers less of what refugees themselves emphasize as the main barriers to their socio-economic integration as well as the discourses they draw on in explaining these barriers.

##### **1.4.1 Methodological issues**

Studies reviewed above show that different methodologies are used in studying integration of migrants and refugees around the world. Qualitative and quantitative methods including interviews and focus group discussion techniques were used. I found the use of several methods important, particularly given that integration and the factors related to it are also complex.

#### **1.4.2. Sample selection**

Several limitations exist in the selection of the study in some of the reviewed studies to the extent that one would question representativeness of the sample included especially since some of the studies used quantitative methods. In the surveys conducted by (Riano, Baghdadi, and Walzer, 2006; as well as Peisker and Tulbury, 2007) there was a tendency to include in the sample only refugees and migrants who were involved in an income generating activity or who had a job. Much as such a technique eased the difficulty of identification of participants it may not have been representative of refugees and migrants who are unemployed although these ones are known to constitute the majority of refugees and migrants in the areas they studies. Inclusion of migrants and refugees who are unemployed and not involved in any income generating activities would have enhanced such the representativeness of the results.

In addition, Malkki (1996), investigated the socio-economic integration of refugees in Camps and those out of the camps but receiving ration from the UNHCR, using the lists provided by the UNHCR as directories in the identification of participants. This technique made it easy to identify participants based on the services provided by the UNHCR. However, potential participants who do not receive services or who are not registered by the UNHCR were left out (Smith, 2003). Such a selection seemed biased towards a sample of a specific category of migrants and refugees (those who were registered by UNHCR) thus not representing the different categories of Rwandese refugees in the location of interest.

#### **1.4.3. Data Collection**

Most of the studies reviewed relied both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection thereby increasing to the understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Johnson et al, 2004). However, three studies (Curran et al, 2005, Amisi et al, 2006; Kirisci 2004) relied only on focus group discussions. Although focus group discussions elicit a range of responses and ideas from

participants and are quick means to collect information from participants (Wilkinson 2004); the use of focus groups only without triangulation with other data collection techniques in these studies posed a limitation of the inability to capture subjective experiences and or perception of migrants and refugees' integration from a stand point. In addition, the individual differences that may have existed within the participants of the study might have not been captured during the analysis as information was collected at a group level (Bickman et al, 1998; Newman, 2003). Methodological triangulation as used in Malkki's (1996) study where the survey was supplemented by focus group discussion and individual interviews could have added more weight to the findings in terms of deeper understanding of the integration of refugees and migrants and the associated factors from different perspectives.

Finally, a related study analysed the employment and integration of refugees in Australia and the problems related to it. Despite having such rich and detailed data by the use of individual interviews and questionnaires in Peisker and Tulbiry (2007), their study mainly used quantitative statistical methods of analysis. Although the findings were able to be generalised, the quantitative analysis method may only have provided statistical results which limit the understanding of elaborated issues related to integration and employment of refugees in Australia (Newman, 2003).

Nevertheless, in all the studies in the literature reviewed, there was no mention of the language employed in collecting the data. Although most of the study explained that participants were immigrants, which may raise questions on the understanding of the questions and questionnaire asked and responses by both participants and interviewers. Also few of these previous studies focus on subjective experiences of refugees using discursive approaches which I will focus on.



## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY

A growing body of literature focusing on gender and integration of migrant women around the world has addressed different types of gendered inequalities that women face (Currant and Suguy, 2005; Boukhobza, 2005; Boyd and Grieco, 2003; Espiritu, 2005; Piper, 2005; Riano, Baghdadi, and Wastl-Walter, 2006; Schwarzer and Hahn, 1994; Elsevier, 2004; Moon 2003; Jolly and Reeves, 2005). This study contributes to this body of literature by exploring the socio-economic integration of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg and the gendered way in which the concept is constructed.

My interest to this study comes first from my working experience with Congolese women at the Coordinating Body of Refugees Community (CBRC) in South Africa. I wanted to understand why women seemed so poorly integrated. My motivation specifically is drawn from the gap found in the larger body of literature as highlighted below, and my experience as a refugee woman in Johannesburg.

#### 2.1 Significance of the Study

Previous literature indicates that the lack of socio-economic integration of migrant women and men is often influenced by socio-cultural factors (Poirret, 2003; Lin, 2006; Parrado and Flippen, 2005), economic and political factors (Kihato; 2007). Researchers have also documented factors related to the host country such as social networks and legal status as migrants shape and determine the way they socially and economically integrate (Piper, 2005; Riano et al, 2006; IOM, 2007; Yetim, 2008; Middleton, 2010). These factors also include integration policies related to migration, institutional barriers, lack of language skills of the host country, kinship ties, motherhood and the economic dependency of women (Wachholz, 2000; Curran et al, 2005; Piper, 2008; Tummala-Narra, 2004; Boukhobza, 2005; Parrado et Al, 2005; Moon, 2003).

Unlike some of the above studies, which seek to address the integration of migrant women and men based on the observer's perspectives or surveys, this study engages with Congolese migrants men and women 's subjective understanding of socio-economic integration and the impact of gender on their integration into the South African community or population. This

study highlights specific factors that Congolese men and women think facilitate or constitute a barrier to their socio-economic integration. In this way, findings reflect accounts of those who have experienced migration either independently, forcibly, or as a result of family reunification without ignoring those willing as well as not willing to integrate (Reeves et al, 2005; Wastl et al, 2006).

Additionally, concepts of gender as well as socio-economic integration of migrant have been developed in western societies and are both criticized for being ethnocentric and somewhat simplistic as a result of not paying due attention to the specific situation and context of a certain group of migrants. Also most literature on gender, migration, and socio-economic integration does not pay due attention to the integration of women migrating within Africa. Looking at the South African context, two points around the concept of integration were important to consider; Firstly, the question of who defines the integration of migrants and the socio-economic integration of migrant women and men. This question also relates to the experiences of migrants including the strategies they develop if there are any, to socially and economically integrate. Although some studies exist which relate specifically to the social integration of migrants into South African society (see for example Hlobo, 2005; Polzer, 2008; Kihato; 2007); migrant women's account within this process remains under researched.

Secondly, the literature on gender, migration and integration often refers to the role gender plays in the whole process of migration (see for example Yetim, 2008; Donato et al, 2006; Elsevier, 2004). Less attention has been paid to the influence of gender roles in relation to the socio-economic integration of migrant women throughout the migration process. This study attempts to address the paucity of literature in this area as well.

In relation to the above highlighted issues, this research aimed to address these gaps in the existing literature on gender, migration and integration, and also explored the socio-economic of Congolese Migrants in Johannesburg. Specifically, this research particularly intended to explore;

- The influence of gender roles on Congolese women's access to social and economic activities within their own community as well as the South African community that they share the same space with in Johannesburg.

- The way gender affects the socio-economic integration of Congolese women in the South African community.
- How gender-roles are constructed in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the way migration experience has shaped these notions.

In line with these objectives, this research specifically aimed to answer the following central questions: *how do gender roles affect the social and economic integration of Congolese women living in Johannesburg? How did the migration experience shape these roles?*

## **2.2 Research Design and Methodology**

This research takes a form of qualitative descriptive case study and draws on respondents own subjective experiences. It aims to explore the socio-economic integration of Congolese migrants living in Johannesburg. Qualitative methods allow the researcher to collect data that is based on participants own categories and perceptions, provides individual case information, provides understanding of people’s personal experiences of phenomena, and can determine how participants interprets construct (Johnson et al, 2004; Newman, 1994). Qualitative research is also “an umbrella term under which a variety of research methods that use language as data are clustered” (Polkinghorne, 2005: 137). Additionally, qualitative methods describe and analyse people’s “individual and collective actions, beliefs thoughts and perceptions” (Macmillan et al, 2006: 315 in Kiwanuka, 2008:8). The qualitative approach was chosen due to its advantage of offering insight into human behaviour - the social and cultural contexts of human activities that cannot be understood without reference to the meanings and experiences attached to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). In relation to this study, the emphasis is on the centrality of the meaning Congolese women and men attach to socio-economic integration into the South African community.

The use of qualitative methods in this research enabled me not only to capture in-depth and detailed information provided by the participants of the study (Patton, 2002), but also to reflect on the co-construction of meanings that participants and I (as the researcher) attach to gender – roles and socio-economic integration. This is in line with qualitative methods that place the researcher as central to the research process (Kirkwood, 1993; Weinberg, 2001) and the understanding of women’s experiences as situated within a particular time and place (Hartsock,

1997). Although a qualitative approach does not allow a generalization of data, it is the preferred methodology for this study as it enabled Congolese women and men to explain their feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration and gender roles from their own understanding. Unlike qualitative research approaches which sacrifice details and “fit people’s experiences into predefined commonsensical categories” (Bograd, 1988: 21 in Kiwanuka, 2008:6), the combination of various qualitative methods was important in order to understand Congolese women and men’s experiences as they relate to the context of migration (Merriam, 2002; Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004).

This study adopted a case study design as it investigated a contemporary phenomenon in its setting or context (Smith, 2003) and utilized individuals as the unit of analysis. The study also makes use of the respondents’ own subjective experiences paradigm, because it accentuates the ways that people construct knowledge based on how they categorize their world. This knowledge is created through contexts which people are in as well as their interactions within such environment (Polkinghorne, 2005). It would mean that Congolese men and women’s understanding of socio-economic integration into the South African community is based on their world-view and interpretation of what they consider as reality. The environment and the series of experiences play a significant role in influencing their understanding of socio-economic integration.

This paradigm also focuses on how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction (Elliot 2005). Choosing the constructionist approach was therefore based on the idea that “social occurrences do not have a pre-determined reality but rather, are socially constructed and can be understood as “a system of meanings and practices that construct reality” (Terre Blanche et al, 1999:151). In this case, Congolese women and men’s understanding and perception of socio-economic integration and gender-roles may be based on their meaning. In emphasizing meaning, the concept of language is seen as “central to the process of constructing reality for language enables to think about, and give a meaning to our experiences and to understand it in a particular way” (Weedon, 1987:32 see also Polkinghorne, 2005).

The study also employed narrative techniques in acquiring information from the participants. Narratives can be defined as a discourse with a clear sequential order that connect events in meaningful way for a defined audience (Elliot, 2005 in Kiwanuka 2008). Narrative analysis also

“permits a holistic approach to discourse that preserves context and particularity” (Riessman, 1993 in Smith 2003: 328). The verbal accounts expressed through stories by Congolese men and women in this research about their lived reality and experienced throughout the migration process, thus provided “in-depth details and insight into cultural and social meanings within which their personal narratives were embedded” (Patton, 2002: 116).

The use of narrative in this study was also based on the premise that stories and their open-ended nature present the best means from which one can learn about an individual’s experiences and perceptions (Lieblich et al, 1998; Gergen, 1997). It was also based on the theory that people narrate particular experiences in their lives often where there has been a “breach between ideal and real, self and society” (Riessman, 1993) as it is the case of participants of this study, whose migration experience turned out differently from what they expected and had planned. In relation to such transformation Wood explains:

When our lives run smoothly and are untarnished by inconsistencies or chaos we feel no urgency to locate a narrative that imposes coherence. However when our experiences does not make sense, when chaos intrudes in our lives, we are compelled to find some way to generate coherence-or the illusion of it (2001:3).

### **2.2.1 Participants of the Study**

The participants to this study were Congolese adults from the Democratic Republic of Congo who migrated or fled to South Africa either seeking asylum or in search for greener pastures. In order to establish the dynamics that may exist in gender differences, men and women were interviewed in this research. I interviewed eleven participants four of which were asylum seekers, four refugees and two holders of a temporary residency permits. All respondents were either low income earners or were not involved in any income generating activities. At the time of the interview two participants were doing car guarding, petty trade, one was a security or in the case of six of them were unemployed. In relation to marital status, the majority of participants were married (eight), one was a widow and another one was single mother separated from her intimate partner. These participants were selected due to various reasons starting with Hlobo’s (2005) suggestion that Congolese are amongst the highest number of migrants in Johannesburg. This linked to my ability to speak Swahili, French and Lingala which are the mostly spoken languages in Congo; this was an advantage as it limited the language barrier and

made it easier for me as a researcher to interact with participants in an informal way. In relation to the length of stay, these participants constituted a focus of my study as they have been living in South Africa for a year or more. Linking time to integration, Wrong suggested that “people may be able to claim that they feel integrated into a given society when they have spent a considerable and reasonable amount of time into that community” (1994: 229). Thus, a minimum stay of a year was deemed a sufficient time for Congolese to relate and explain their feelings of socio-economic integration into the South African community.

The study population also consisted of men and women who have worked in Congo prior to migration.

### **2.2.2 Sample**

The eleven Congolese men and women who participated in this study were identified using purposive and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was best suited for this study owing to its advantages of use with people who are knowledgeable and in a position to identify the required participants for the study (Vureen et al, 2000). Additionally, purpose sampling is a useful strategy when the “researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation as the purpose is to gain deeper understanding ...” (Newman, 2003: 222). This was then important as one of the objectives of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how gender roles are constructed by Congolese. The first participant to this research was a Congolese community leader who works with the particular first respondents that fit into the criteria I elaborated for the study participants on which the subsequent snowball was based. Five participants were identified by the community leader. The participants that were referred to me also referred me to others that they thought met the requirements. This was in line with Bickman’s (1998: 199) definition of snowball sampling as “the chain referral or reputational sampling”. Meaning members of a target population refer to others who meet the criteria for the study (Singleton et al, 1993).

Snowball sampling was suited for this study because it is appropriate in identifying people who are able to speak to the researcher without being skeptical. It enabled me to identify Congolese men and women who were able to open up and speak about their experiences and feelings of

socio-economic integration without doubting as I was referred to them by either a friend or someone they trust (community leaders).

Being a former member of a service provider organization (Coordinating Body of Refugee and Migrants Communities), I wouldn't be able to identify specific respondents easily as they are often reluctant to speak about their integration due to the fact that they may be cut off from the support they receive should the information be disclosed. Although before the interviews I explained to participants that their participation to my research will not have any impact on the services they received either from Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) or CBRC, participants seemed to doubt this statement. It was therefore important for me to use the above techniques by going through community leaders and explained to them clearly that the research is for the purpose of my studies and that the information they give will be kept confidential for them to allow me to speak to them. After this was made clear, they recommended and introduced me to other participants as a student researcher.

### **2.2.3. Challenges in the sampling process**

Initially, Johannesburg had been identified as the study area given that it is accessible to me, the city is still the most popular destination for migrants in South Africa (Landau, 2006) and the social worker at the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) who was envisaged to link and help me identify the first participants was based there. However, during the actual time of identification of the participants, the social worker was not able to assist me in accessing Congolese women and men of my interest. At the time the research was supposed to start, this social worker was promoted and relocated to another office in Pretoria.

Additionally, during my first meeting with the social worker where I explained the purpose of my research and the type of participants, she explained to me that Congolese often went there to receive social and material support but also she offers them psychological support. According to her, this was due to the fact that most of her clients who were Congolese experienced diverse forms of loss and trauma and their migration status as refugees made it necessary for her to add psychological support to material and social help they received from JRS. She nevertheless pointed out that her Congolese clients are often reluctant to speak about their feelings especially when it comes to opening up about their survival strategies. I then learnt that the reluctance that

Congolese have in disclosing their survival strategies was because JRS will not be able to provide financial or other material support to people with income regardless of their income nature (low or high).

The statement of the social worker during our meeting indicating the reluctance of Congolese disclosing about their survival strategy made me start imagining that they might not trust me enough to open up to me freely due to the fear that I might disclose their information to JRS. Moreover, after the social worker was promoted there was no other person in her position who would assist me to identify participants in the organization as previously the idea was not only about the social worker identifying the participants but also to help them psychologically should the interview bring back memories that would traumatize them. Later on when I spoke to Congolese they pointed out that they struggle to survive in the South African society. To some of them, JRS was the only way of them putting bread on the table. I later learnt that they would not jeopardize this by disclosing their income generating activities to me.

In sum, these factors as heard from some respondents and the social worker at the Jesuit Refugee Services, could have contributed to the problem of me getting accurate data from participants. I therefore had to change the plan as follows:

I contacted two Congolese community leaders' one living in Bertrams and another one living in Yeoville<sup>6</sup> (Johannesburg). These community leaders have been elected to represent the Congolese community when there is a need. During my meeting with each of them, I explained to them the purpose of my research. I further explained to them that the data will be kept confidential and it will not be used in ways that would harm the participants. I also showed them informed consent forms that participants and I would sign in order to accentuate my statement. They then agreed to help me identify the first research participants. The reason why I had to go to community leaders is because unlike the social worker at the Jesuit Refugee Services, participants trusted their community leaders as they believed they understand their problems, and often experience the same difficulties.

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<sup>6</sup> Mr. Jacques K. Kamanda is the secretary general of CBRMSA and has worked with refugees for more than ten years. He is also Congolese community leaders. Additionally, him and the other community leader I spoke to further believes that Congolese are living in areas like Yeoville and Bertrams because many migrants live there. This is often for their safety as they fear Xenophobia and other violence towards foreign nationals in areas where they can be mixed with South African

Also, due to the fact that the social worker at JRS stated that her Congolese clients who had counselling sessions with her had gone through traumatizing experiences and showed the need of counselling, I thought this may occur during the interviews. As a result I contacted the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVSR)<sup>7</sup> an organization that provide psychological support to victims of violence. I contacted this organization because the initial person who was support to give psychological support at JRS was no longer working in Johannesburg. So the CSVSR agreed to provide psychological support to participants who may need this support after the interviews.

#### **2.2.4. Sampling Procedure**

The two Congolese community leaders assisted me with the identification of the first six respondents on which the snowballing was based. These and subsequent respondents were selected based on their willingness to participate in the study after an explanation of what the study was about. The purpose of selecting the first five respondents from different areas was to ensure the diversity of participants as Congo has a diversity of culture (Hlobo, 2005; Baruti et al, 2004). After the purposive sampling was done, snowball sampling was undertaken in which each successive participant was identified by the preceding respondent who had been interviewed.

The first community leader purposely helped to identify the two participants living in Bertrams. Of the two identified an additional respondent who also identified the last successive from this area. The other community leader also identified three responded each of whom identified one producing a total of five participants living in Yeoville. This constituted a total of eleven participants, six from Bertrams and the other five from Yeoville.

#### **2.2.5. Data Collection**

In order to understand the meaning that Congolese women and men attach to their socio-economic integration, I conducted individual in-depth interviews. Patton (1990), explain that in-depth interviews add depth, detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience. Although they are often criticized for their small sizes and inability to “satisfy academic credibility and

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<sup>7</sup> The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation provide psychological support for victims of violence for many years. They have professionals qualified both in social work and psychology who would be able to assist participants in event of trauma.

responsible advocacy” as emphasized in Landau (2003:7), Holloday (1997, 143) however, strongly believes that in-depth interviews and the immersion in a culture makes a large sample size unnecessary. Ritchie et al (2003:83) similarly argue that there is a point of diminishing return where a large sample is repetitive and no longer contributes to new evidence.

It was important to rain check if there were any problems with the questionnaire wording and understanding of concepts, so in order to discover this, a pilot interview was conducted with two women, one working at the Jesuit Refugee Service and another one unemployed. As a result, a few words in the guiding questions were changed in order to increase the level of understanding amongst the actual participants of the study. As an example the word ‘role’ was changed to ‘responsibility’ in the family.

The data collection was done using a semi structured interviews guided with open-ended questions and administered through face-to-face in-depth interviews. They lasted approximately one hour for each participant. Open-ended, in-depth responses enabled me to understand gender roles and socio-economic integration from the stand-point of participants without predetermining their point of view as it is done in quantitative surveys (Polkinghorne, 2005; Newman, 2003). The open-ended interviews were advantageous for this study because they yielded “in-depth responses” from Congolese men and women with regards to their perceptions and feeling of socio-economic integration and the impact of gender roles therein (Patton, 2002:4).

The majority of participants were not able to speak or understand English and where thus interviewed either in French, Swahili, or Lingala, depending on the choice of the participant. Only three participants were able to speak and understand English and thus chose to be interviewed in English. My ability to speak, and understand the languages above mentioned seemed to be an advantage as participants did not have to speak to strangers. This also increased confidentiality of participants’ information due to the fact that they trusted me as I was recommended by either the community leader or someone they knew and whom they trusted. Prior to the interview, the issues of confidentiality and interviewing skills and translation were discussed with participant. I translated questions in French, Swahili, and Lingala but also went through them several times with another person who was able to speak the languages above mentioned to make sure of the accuracy of my translation.

During the interviewing process, there was one issue that I had not anticipated beforehand. Two of the participants broke down and cried in the middle of the interview. At this stage, I had to shift between two positions- one of the researcher who wanted information for the study and the other of the counsellor who was concerned about the impact of re-telling traumatic incidences on the study participants. Because of my back ground as a counsellor, I found it hard to ignore why they were crying and simply continue with the interview. It would be as I was only being interested in the information and not concerned with them as individuals. So, I had to ask if they wanted to talk about what made them cry before I could provide some basic emotional support. I also had to be certain if they wanted to continue with the interviews before I could proceed.

Once the interview process was over, I expressed my gratitude to each of the participants and asked them whether they felt like having any additional counselling, which was available for those interviewed at CSVR or myself if they would feel comfortable to speak to me instead. Amongst those that expressed the need to talk about their feelings at that time with me, I provided further emotional support and basic counselling after the interview. Prior to the study, I had identified possible sources and referral areas around Johannesburg where people with trauma could receive assistance. These proved useful for the referral of three participants who needed information where they could access such psychological services to attend their problems or simply talk about them after the interview.

I found the stories revealed by Congolese women and men quite stressful and distressing. This was especially hard for me due to my experience as a refugee but also as a Congolese woman. As a result, I decided to go myself through the process of counselling before I could transcribe the data. This caused a delay for my data transcription as I did not feel like listening to the same stories over again; but after the counselling I managed to transcribe the data.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

The data analysis was conducted using a combination of content, discourse and narrative analysis techniques (Newman, 2003; Polkinghorne, 2005; Riessman 1993). The latter two approaches were also used to complement the weaknesses of meanings inherent in content analysis (see below). Although these two approaches differ in terms of strategies of data analysis, discourse analysis typically focusing on text and narrative analysis on the story and how it is told, they

complement each other and use similar strategies in constructing meaning from the texts. These strategies include a focus on language in the interpretation of meaning and how it influences reality as well as attention to the context in shaping knowledge.

According to Newman (2003:322), content analysis is used to determine “words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated”. The content in this case refers to words, meanings, themes or ideas relayed by participants in the study to explain the impact of gender roles on the socio-economic integration of Congolese living in Johannesburg. In developing the coding system, my emphasis lay on examining the data for emerging themes. In this case, interviews were analysed paragraph by paragraph identifying and writing down the codes on margins of the copy of the data set. Codes were compared and a list of main codes was developed after which detailed analysis was conducted on the codes identified. Categories were formed from the coded topics to reduce the codes.

The focus at this stage involved identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying and labelling the primary themes and patterns of data to determine significant information bearing Congolese men and women’s understanding and explanation of socio-economic integration (Patton, 2002; Palkinghorne,2005; Smith, 2003). Data was analysed inductively, ensuring that themes emerged naturally from the data. This allowed the breaking up the linear sequence of data collected to join and compare sections of the text that appeared to belong together.

The second level of data analysis was done using discourse analysis, which draws largely from the on respondents own subjective experiences approach. Paiter et al (1999:156) suggest that “discourses are broad patterns of talk and systems of statements that are taken up in particular speeches and conversations”. The importance of using discourse analysis is that it provides the means through which different ways of talking about reality over others can be assessed. It also focuses on language as a means for understanding reality. In using discourse analysis, I therefore drew on three aspects of language (Parker, 1999) namely contradictions, constructions and practice. In using the three aspects, I identified contradictions in the texts, examined the different meanings and how they were constructed. When doing the analysis, the selected texts were read and re-read to identify the subjects the discourse refers to including “binary positions, the recurrent themes phrases and metaphors used” as well as the topics that Congolese men and women talked about in the text and how the participants presented themselves (Terre Blanche et

al, 1999; see also Parker 1992). The other stage involved identifying discourses and narratives that Congolese men and women drew upon to explain their understanding and perception of socio-economic integration and gender-roles.

The final stage of the analysis was the form, which focuses on the stories Congolese men and women told. The approach “looks at the participant’s story and analysis how it is put together, the linguistic and cultural resources drawn on and how it persuades the listener of authenticity” (Riessman 1993:1). The narrative analysis also enables participant’s understanding and interpretations of their story (Smith, 2003). In this case, this approach was useful in analyzing Congolese men and women’s narratives and the various discourses they drew on to explain what socio-economic integration means to them. Unlike discourse analysis, the narratives focus on telling about experiences rather than an examination of text and content of language used. These experiences are taken as the truth, which in this case represented how the participants of the study explained their lived reality (Riessman, 1993).

In analyzing this data, I repeatedly read and listened to the interviews and how language was used in order to understand what respondents said and to understand how and why the story was structured in the way it was (Riessman, 1993; Smith, 2003). I selected specific parts of the story relevant to the themes identified for interpretation, which I focused on during the analysis (Riessman, 1993). Drawing on Mashiach, I took a categorical perspective of the story given that I was primarily interested in Congolese men and women’s understanding and perception of socio-economic integration into the South African community. Mashiach et al (1998:110-113) explain that “categorical content reading focuses on the content of the narrative (Themes or perspectives cutting across selected subtexts) as manifested in separate parts of the story”. In relation to this, the stories were broken down and sections belonging to a defined category were collected from the entire story. The sections chosen to be analysed and written about and from which conclusions were drawn were linked to the research questions and what I thought was relevant based on my background as well as the constructionist on which the study was based. My experience in data collection in Bertrams and Yeoville areas and background while working with refugees and migrants at the Coordinating Body of Refugees and Migrant in South Africa as well as my experience as a counselor to influenced to some extent, how I collected the data, the questions I asked and the outcomes of the data

## 2.4 Ethical Issues

Prior to data collection, approval for the research had been secured from the human research ethics committee of the university. I first met with the community leaders who helped me identify the first respondents and explained to them what my research was all about. They then spoke to the participants and explained to them about my research and finally asked them if they were happy to speak to me. With their permission they gave me their phone numbers. Then I called and set up a meeting with each of them. They chose the place they wanted the interviews to take place. I asked them if they wanted us to meet at the park, or their houses or another place where they felt comfortable. Before the interview could begin, I explained the purpose and the objectives of the study and verbally requested interviewed consent to participate in the study and the use of the tape recorder. The tape recorder was used for all the participants as they all agreed to its use. The use of a tape recorder was advantageous at this level as I was able to pay full attention to the respondent instead of pausing to take notes.

The participants were also informed of the kind of questions that were going to be asked in order to ensure that if they consented to participate in the study and that they were fully aware of the nature of the study (Lewis, 2003). The respondents were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they had a choice between agreeing to continue with the interview or not to answer any question they felt uncomfortable with at any stage (Homan, 1991; Sieber, 1999).

The identity of the participants in the study was protected using pseudonyms instead of the real names. They signed the consent forms as an indicator of their acceptance to participate to the study using the same pseudonyms. Therefore, only the people who consented verbally and in writing were interviewed. I also assured them of confidentiality, emphasizing that the information about the data collected from them with the tape recorder and written text would not be made public in a way that could be linked to a specific individual.

After the interview was over, I reimbursed the participants for travel expenses incurred since they were coming from different places and some of them had to pay transport to get the place where the interviews were conducted. Although I am aware that this may not be recommended in some circumstances, I needed to interview them in a place that was safe and where they felt comfortable as most of them share their accommodation with other people who could hear what

was being discussed. I also wanted a place which was free of interruptions with home responsibilities. In this case, the places I found needed them to travel from their homes.

The recorded information was transcribed verbatim after the interviews in order to preserve information and additional meanings expressed by the respondents, which would later be used during the analysis.

## **2.5. Limitations of the study**

This study explored the impact of gender roles on the socio-economic integration of Congolese women in Johannesburg. The study was carried out in less than a year which implies that the lack of time prevents the researcher alone from exploring more than just the socio-economic aspect of integration of Congolese.

Although I wanted to know more about marital status in relation to socio-economic integration, an aspect which was added later, this was not fully developed due to time limitations.

Initially when I spoke to community leaders about my research and told them that I needed Congolese women and to interview, they were a bit sceptical as they thought I was going to use the findings to their disadvantage. As a result participants were reluctant to talk to me in the initial phases of the interview. However, I explained clearly to them that this research was for my studies purpose and I will not use it for their disadvantage. Also, when necessary I shared my experience with them then they showed trust in me and freely spoke to me.

## **2.6. Reflexivity**

One of the reasons why I decided to research on Congolese women in Johannesburg was due to the fact that I considered myself as one of them and assumed they would freely speak to me and relate to me as one of them. However, during participant narrative this assumption shifted as I was placed between an 'insider', an 'outsider' and in between. With regard to the issue of the position of researcher sharing the same culture, gender or nationality with participants, Merriam et al (2001:405-407) argues that "only participants decide when to include or to exclude the researcher as one of them as this varies with the social position of the researcher and the situation context therein". In relation to this study, participants often either considered me as an insider when they related to problems that they are facing in different areas.

For example, participant would at times, refer to me as someone who knows their situation. Female participants however often seem to confuse my position as someone who may understand their situation but not fully. As a result they will stop at one time and ask me ‘*do you understand*’? Or ‘*you see*’. Male participants often considered me either as an outsider or as someone who may have a vague idea of what they are talking about. For example Jean (married and father of two) often used questions like “you know? Or you know what I mean”? This experience made me ask questions on how and when the researcher can be considered as an insider or an outsider? Also who what defines or determines the position of the researcher within the research process?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the main findings of this study. In this chapter I argue that loss of status plays a major role on Congolese<sup>8</sup> men and women’s feelings of socio-economic integration in

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<sup>8</sup> The word Congolese in this research shall refer to and represent the views of research participants only and not all Congolese living in Johannesburg.

Johannesburg. According to participants, their integration is influenced by their socio-economic status, the position they occupy and their related experiences. This section builds on these explanations to explore how Congolese related their feelings of socio-economic integration to their specific migration status. In this research, participants describe loss of status as the loss of what they had in the country of origin and which gave them a status in society but which they had lost through the migration process. In relation to the above definition, four major constituents of loss of status will be explored in this section: loss of legal status, socio-economic status, cultural status and the importance of country of origin. In the final section of this chapter I will explore how these findings lead us to a new way of thinking about integration and its connections to xenophobia.

### **3.1 Loss of legal status**

A lack of proper documentation was one of the many barriers to socio-economic integration that participants identified in this study. Previous studies have highlighted how migrants may experience double vulnerability and violation of human rights due to loss of legal status. For instance, Jinnah & Holaday (2009:141) suggested that people who move out of their countries of origin may experience vulnerability for at least two reasons; “1) the fact that they are out of their country of origin means they don’t have access to the same entitlements that are available in their country of origin, and 2) the loss of their citizenship or nationality may expose them to vulnerability and limit their access to certain services”. It is evident that the factors highlighted by Jinnah et al, (2009) are visible in the daily lives of Congolese men and women. Loss of legal status in this research will be referred to as the loss of citizenship that Congolese had in the country of origin and which they have lost by either fleeing or migrating to South Africa.

Many authors have documented the way a lack of legal status may affect migrants in terms of economic hardship (Espiritu, 2005; Riano, Baghdadi and Wastl-Walter, 2006; Donato, Manalansan, and Pessar, 2006; Yetim 2008; Kihato, 2007), cultural dislocation (Tumala-Narra, 2004; Boukhobza, 2005; Poiret, 2005; Curran and Suguy, 2005), language skills (Hlobo, 2004; Polzer, 2010; Nunez et al, 2011); lack of family and lack of access to services and other entitlements (Malia, 2000; Landau, 2008a).

Loss of legal status was amongst other variables that shaped the way Congolese in this study defined their socio-economic integration. For instance, in this study, participants elaborated factors that perpetrated their loss of legal status citing violence and political conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)<sup>9</sup>, and other events threatening their lives. This deeply affected their feelings of socio-economic integration in South Africa because; unlike economic migrants they did not prepare for their journey and thus had expectations. These expectations included having a legal documentation which some perceive as their human right. To others having a legal document that would allow them to operate in South Africa as if they were in their home country is part of their belief that South Africa is an African country which is part of Africa. The latter group drew on a discourse of African hospitality to argue for their entitlement to documents. Others did not however know that they needed a different kind of document before coming to South Africa as some of the participants crossed borders illegally trying to save their lives. They later envisaged having better jobs that would allow them to survive in South Africa. Their loss of legal status therefore came as a surprise which they only find out when they reached South Africa. The extracts below reflect on these;

*In Congo we have many many foreigners working there in organizations and business and we don't have any problem with them...you see especially those who come from Africa because they are our brothers...I wanted to come to South Africa because I thought somehow that I will be welcomed the same way we welcome people in Congo... and you know nobody never told me about the home affairs that I will come here and be a refugee I am telling you this refugee thing disappoint me...(Henriette, mother of two)*

*...I came to South Africa because I knew that here there is human rights more than in Congo, after going through a lot in Congo now I am here and I don't even have a document...I think it also my right to be legal in this country because I am a refugee but now I am with no paper and can't do anything... (Divine, Mother)*

*...briefly I came here, you know what is happening in our country over there they always fight, then we were involved as the young, you know as the youth you can't just see things and keep*

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<sup>9</sup> The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been going through political conflicts since 1996. Up to date the country still suffers different types of conflicts leading many Congolese to flee their in search of either personal security or search for better life. Congolese presents a larger part of refugees in South Africa. (Hlobo, 2004; Amit, 2010).

*quiet you see, so we started preaching about peace reconciliation over there and we released some musical albums that we were inviting people to peace and reconciliation so the political authorities of the place were not happy about it you see so we have been hunted, we have been followed all over the country, we even had to change our identity documents so that we can do something and then our family was not safe anymore so I had to get out of the country and that is how I reached South Africa...(Jean, married and father of two).*

*...My husband was working as a military colonel, first he worked with Mobutu government, during AFDL he worked also with Kabila, RCD came he worked also with those rebels from Rwanda because they took them in hostage if you do not accept they kill you, there was a problem in my province because we find out that the rebels started to rape and kill people and he was not happy and come to the part of saying that one part of eastern Congo must be given to Rwanda and they did give him to sign and he said no....he was arrested and disappeared and after that they arrested me and said that I must be the one who knows where he went...I was in jail for a very long time and when they released me it was because they wanted to kill me fortunately my boss knew and made fraudulent papers for me to travel the same night they killed three of my children...I didn't want to leave but my boss from the hospital came and said to me I will come to you tomorrow and bring all your children just go you have qualifications, you have knowledge you will get better life....(Peace, widow and mother of three)*

Participants drew on their experiences prior to migration to explain the reasons perpetrating their loss of legal status. Although they did not directly link their loss of legal status to their explanation, the accounts above indicate that they experienced loss of legal status prior to migration. Jean and Peace's account for example reveals that they lost their legal status while in their country of origin due to the political conflicts going on in their country. The two participants above mentioned explained that they had to escape out of the country using fraudulent documents or identities as they could not use their original citizenship identities. As a result these participants lost their legal status even before leaving the country.

These experiences are not new in the history of migration although the focus is often not directed to the loss of legal status in the country of origin but in the host country, however few researchers have quickly emphasized similar views. For instance, Malkki (1996) argues that

when people are facing a situation that threatens their lives, their first priority is to save their lives, and not necessarily the labelled identities that identify them as citizens of a specific country. Bakewell (2002) similarly argues that the vulnerability of refugees does not start in camps or settlements. It starts at the moments when people are forced to leave their places of origin. In this case, the loss of legal status of these participants begins prior to migration and continues within the migration process. In relation to this study, the loss of Congolese citizenship greatly affected the respondents in many aspects of their lives such as work, education, and access to other services. This may be due to the fact that the legal identity they are currently using (e.g asylum seeker permit or refugee status) are in many cases not recognized by some service providers which makes it hard for them to socially and economically integrate but also to access services. Thus, their losses in this context have a huge impact on their feeling of socio-economic integration.

In addition, participants also used their descriptions of loss of status to show how South Africans are failing in their hospitality. Henriette for example explained that she did not think it would be difficult for her and the family to live in South Africa because she saw people from other countries living well in her home country. She also associated her expectation to the lack of information prior to migration in order to explain how much she was disappointed when she reached South Africa. Divine on the other hand chose South Africa because she knew that it was a country where human rights are practiced, and believed that she will get better life here including the right documents needed for her to survive. In relation to this account Congolese associated their loss of status to their meaning of socio-economic integration and therefore felt that it was difficult for them to integrate as Nadine's accounts explains;

*...I am just here with this A4 asylum paper which is not even recognized by anybody, I can't study, can't work, and even to rent a house is a problem because some security guys will only ask you for a green identity (South African), it just shows that we are nothing in this country with this document... (Nadine refugee)*

In this account the participant also associates her loss of legal status to explain the hardship she experiences in studying, working, and renting a house. Middleton (2008:23) refers to documentation as a “*key to migrants well being and prosperity in the host country*”. It is evident

that Congolese's experience of socio-economic integration is strongly based on the document they are using or loss of legal status. Moreover, the narratives of participants also indicate that the loss of legal status led to the loss of socio-economic status and so forth. The next section will build on this to show how the loss of legal status led to the loss of socio-economic status.

### **3.2. Loss of socio economic status and Congolese socio-economic integration**

The literature on migration often focuses on the status that people gain after migration, which is often assumed to improve. Migration theorists have focused on what people gain by migrating from undeveloped country to developed countries (Migration from South to North) to show how this improves migrants lives (Massey et al, 1993; UNDP, 2009; Lessault and Beauchemin, 2009). Only few scholars have directed their focus towards the people who migrates within the global south. See for example (Bakewell, 2009; De Haas, 2007; Adepodju, 2006). In this study however, Congolese seemed to have lost their socio-economic status by fleeing or migrating to South Africa.

When leaving their country Congolese did not perceive their material possessions as something that they should hold on to as they expected to be able to gain even more possessions in their new society. Hence, they left everything that they had with hope to build new and even better ones when they will reach South Africa which some perceived as their safe heaven. Leaving everything behind therefore was not perceived as the loss but as moving forward with life. The loss of socio-economic status started to have effect on some as they reached South Africa, but to others as time went by and when realizing that life was getting more and more difficult. The ones that took some time to realize their loss of socio-economic status were especially those women who migrated to join their husbands or family as the extracts below indicate;

*...you know when I came, I started living with my sister and the husband in observatory, I had everything, never suffered for rent and life was good, but when my sister's husbands' business was not going well here in Johannesburg, they decided to move to Durban and I couldn't move there with them, so I decided to stay in Johannesburg...I could not afford the house so I was evicted and found a couple of girls who accepted to let me share their room with and that is when the suffering started and as you know, we are refugees here and cannot go back home*

*because the situation is bad there...since that time my life has just been bitter....(Francoise, single mother of one)*

*...and from the border my husband came to wait for us, me and my children, when we got to Johannesburg I found him in a small room and I thought he was living there because he was alone here but we are going to find our own house since I am here with the children, after three month I asked him when are we going to our house then he told me, he can't afford a house and that we are going to stay there until things hopefully change, I cried and looked my children and said Lord, how am I suppose to raise my four kids in a room when they were used to sleep each one in his room in Congo?...I can tell you this is very bad my sister, I wish I can go back... (Anita, married and mother of four).*

The above accounts indicate that women who migrate to either live with the family or join their husbands took time to realize their loss of socio-economic status. According to participants this deeply affected their feelings of socio-economic integration into the South African community. The majority of participants felt that their life had systematically changed in a negative way. Only two women had a different view in this regard, where one experienced no change in her life because she was not working back home and the other one had particularly low expectations because she had not finished school.

Single women in particular indicated that their loss of status was accompanied by the discrimination they face in the documentation process, loss of familial support present in their home country which resulted in them not feeling socially and economically integrated into the South Africa. In this case, they based their understanding of socio-economic integration on many factors. Married women on their side believed that their husband's loss of socio-economic status affected them and had an impact on their socio-economic integration. Those who were married prior to migration viewed their loss of socio-economic as something that has sent them back materially. This was illustrated by the things they had in their home countries such as houses, cars, and other material things that they could not afford in South Africa. The few who did not work back home perceived the way they live in South Africa as just the start of a new life. Their experience of loss of status differs from that of those who previously had a high socio-economic status. They however believe that if they were in their home country, they would have better

career opportunities than in South Africa. They explained that networks and family support would have made it easier for them to find jobs, study, and access services. These networks are not available in South Africa and therefore cannot have these facilities that otherwise were available in their home country. Additionally, participant associated their suffering to their legal status<sup>10</sup>, and the non recognition of their qualifications to explain the hardship they encounter in terms of findings jobs in South Africa. The factors above highlighted constituted the basis of these women's claim that they do not feel integrated in the South African community.

Amongst the main factors Congolese women perceived as having an effect on their socio-economic integration into the South African community was dependency on their husbands or intimate partners. In their responses, they felt that this was due to the poverty they are experiencing due to either failing to acquire jobs because of lack of valid documentation or information, the refusal of employers to recognize their asylum seeker permits as valid documentation for employment, and general lack of resources. Similar issues are often visible in a refugee like situation. For example, the findings of Peisker & Tilbury(2007: 1)., in their refugee employment survey in Australia reveal that amongst other things “refugee faced structural disadvantages in labour (e.g. Non recognition or part recognition of qualifications, lack of accessible references, etc)” This said, Congolese women associated this with their loss of socio-economic status and the discrimination they are facing in the South African labour market and felt that as a result socio-economic integration in South Africa is difficult.

Participants also added that being a woman does not advantage them to access alternative jobs available in the market which they believe are more advantageous to men. Congolese women cited jobs like car guards, security guards, and carwash as ones that people with the type of documents they use (asylum seeker and refugee status) can easily access. This however has limitations for them as women especially because they have children and wouldn't be able to leave them and work until late hours or during the night but also these types of jobs are stereotyped as men's work. Additionally these are lower paid jobs that would not allow them to send their children to nursing schools or pay the aftercare for school going children. As a result the fewer jobs available in the above mentioned fields are more advantageous for men than

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<sup>10</sup> The majority of participants to this research were asylum seekers, refugees or carrying just a letter from the home affairs explaining they still waiting for their appeal decision to be made.

women. De Haas (2010) emphasized that resources and basic skills that migrant men come with give them an advantage over women who lack such in an immigration context. In this case this gives them a different class and power as compared to women, which facilitate their socio-economic integration.

In this study Congolese women also felt that their lack of socio-economic integration was as well influenced by financial dependency on their husbands or intimate partners. This they linked to the immigration laws and status that in addition limited those without legal status to work or be employed. In relation to this, participants felt that their socio-economic integration was highly dependent on their documentation status, the status which they believe they have lost by migrating to South Africa. In reference to the time they were in their home country and to the material possession they had back then, participants compared their loss of status as being reduced from adulthood to childhood. This situation was defined as not having documents, being treated like children when it comes to accessing services, loss of income, and the employer's doubt of their capacities or abilities to perform at work places like South African. The excerpts from participants illustrate this and other issues clearly;

*...I was a very big woman in Congo, to be a matron in a big hospital like let us compare Johannesburg hospital to the general hospital of Bukavu, I was the matron in that hospital I was teaching anatomy, physiology, public health, first aid, and I was busy...I didn't expect me to stay without a proper job no matter my qualification I know that here in South Africa they don't have many nurses that qualifies like me because I got level 6, many of them did spend 2 or 3 years but on my knowledge I did not expect that I can spend six years without a proper job... I did find myself sometimes selling on the street, working as security, and it was tough for me and I used to say that for that reason my integration was and is difficult...I have to work according to my knowledge, according to my profile but no one gives me that chance to work... you will discover that there is a kind of discrimination and no matter you can involve or whatever you are doing they will undermine you and tell you that heee this is not Congo, this is South Africa... and you see now for these reasons I have to leave a very low life... just imagine from by big house with 6 bedrooms in Congo, now here I have to live in a room with my 3 kids I am telling you it is difficult...I wish the situation back home can get better so that I can go back...(Peace, widow and mother of three).*

*No, because I am not accepted as I would be in Congo, I am not free; I am deprived somehow for some rights.... I will start with the home affairs it is my right to be given a paper without making me suffer or corrupting, but I have been going to the home affairs since January I have been going and I have a refugee status that is supposed to be renewed every 2 years but they only renewing my status for two weeks or a month and asking me to come back , I am leaving in Johannesburg but I have to go to Pretoria...I am not working and my husband is a security officer and only have a salary of 2000 rand of which I have to pay rent R1500, I have buy food, pay the transport to go to Pretoria and still my husband's transport is also included... but when you show them that they tell me if I feel like I am suffering I must go back in my country because the war is finished over there...right now as I am speaking to you I have no document, my paper was lost by the Refugee Status Determination Officer, and every time I tell them I need papers they keep on asking me to come back, and without that paper I cannot do anything you see... I am asking myself if just because I am not in my country I am not human?... (Henriette, married and mother of two)*

*In Congo I was living in my own house with 3 bedroom and 2 bathroom, but here I live in a small room with four children and my husband and the landlord choose for me what to cook, I can't cook beans, and cassava in the same week because they take a long time to cook... the landlord even measures for me how many kettles of water I must bath in...when I went to register my children at school they asked me for so many papers so that they can take my children at school... I am not free here because also here there is many totsi's and I am always insecured and fearful ...(Anita, married and mother of four).*

The accounts above indicate that participants drew on socio economic status such as position they had prior to migration, jobs, and other luxuries they had in their home country to explain their loss of status. Congolese women also compared the type of jobs they had home and other facilities to explain how migration has lowered their living standard and profile. In doing so they associate their lack of documentation to the non recognition of qualifications from their own country into the South African labour market, the language barrier, the institutional discrimination they facing, and xenophobia to demonstrate how difficult it is for them to socially and economically integrate into the South African community. Additionally participants included the expectation they had prior to migration, their previous view of South Africa as a country

where human rights are exerted and enjoyed, and the broader discourse of African togetherness to highlight what socio-economic integration means to them.

Peace for example described herself as ‘a big woman’ in Congo, with her nursing qualifications compared to the length of study in the same field in South Africa. She associates this with her expectation and her length of stay, and the type of job she eventually had to do (selling on the street, security guard) to explain what integration means to her. According to her, integration is not only about surviving into a given society as emphasised in Wanjiku (2007) but having the luxury that one had and being able to meet ones expectations. This includes acknowledging or recognizing a person’s qualifications, knowledge and the profile or status one had prior to migration in order to feel integrated. Peace also emphasized that her integration is difficult because even though she would be willing to forget about the material and other things she had in Congo, the discrimination she is facing in many areas will not allow her to simply integrate in South Africa as they always remind her that “*this is not Congo*”.

The lack of rights or violation of human rights was amongst other things cited to have a major impact on Congolese women socio-economic integration. Henriette explained that she does not feel integrated because she doesn’t have any rights and she is not accepted as she would be in Congo. She associated her loss of socio-economic status in Congo, with the lack of documentation in South Africa to explain how she feels that her right to work is being violated. This she linked with lack of financial resources which would otherwise makes it harder for her to corrupt some service providers to claim that her integration in South Africa is difficult. The ability to access and enjoy rights in the host country constitutes a major component of integration for refugees and migrants (Stewart, 2005). For instance, Crisp argument in this regards state that integration maybe regarded as “ 1)a legal process, where refugees are granted a wider range of rights- 2)as an economic process where refugees can work, etc,- 3) as a as social process where they live in harmony with host society (2004:1). Henriette finally claimed that she does not feel integrated in South Africa, and this she blamed on the loss of socio-economic status.

Additionally, Anita explicitly describes the way her landlord chooses for her what to cook, how much water to use which she believes all this is because she is not able to afford her own apartment. She added that her integration is not defined by having a luxurious life only but also

the feeling of physical safety. This is in line with Jacobsen's statement that "refugees are *de facto* integrated when they are not in physical danger (no threat of *refoulement* either)... (2001:9).

Also participants referred to the discrimination they face in the labour market based on their nationality, language skills, legal status but also non recognition of qualification to explain the difficulties they are facing in to socially and economically integration as the extracts bellow indicate:

*According to me, the barriers to my integration is that problem of us not getting jobs, because they discriminate us because we are foreigners, maybe you may have the means and the qualifications to do that job but they will not give it to you but because you don't have a South African identity...you may be speaking Swahili and for that reason they will think you don't have the capacity to do that job. You may have studied but to get a job is very difficult... at this level your qualifications become useless because you don't have a South African identity, you don't speak Zulu, if you don't speak perfect English really you not going to get a job, you find you went to school in your country but the only job that you get is domestic worker and when you are a domestic worker they pay you 100 per week, when you pay transport you see crèche for the baby, all that is suffering you see all those are barriers to our integration...(Francine, married and mother of two).*

*I am not working , if I am going to look for a job they just tell me just leave your asylum seeker and your phone numbers and we gonna call you... if after a month you call them they will tell you we don't have anything for you yet, we going to call you, they just promise me but nothing until now... soo I decided to do peace job instead, another job I found was at an Indian lady, but when she spoke to me she said I want someone who can take care of my children but what language are going to speak to them? (Divine, mother, married and mother of two)*

*Unlike in Congo, here we don't have any rights... you go to the home affairs they neglect you and treat you like a child, at the hospital they treat you like animals, even at the shops they discriminate us... now I am not working I am still struggling and I am worried about the future of my children... (Nathalie, Mother of one)*

These extracts also reveal another aspect of how people differently perceive their socio-economic integration into the host country. Not all participants compared their lives in South Africa to what they had in Congo to give a meaning to their lack of socio-economic integration into the South African community. Divine for instance, believes that if she can just have a job to help her husband financially and if she wasn't discriminated against by South African she would feel integrated. These accounts reveal that the loss of legal status have led women to the loss of socio economic status. For instance, in her analogy of being '*treated like a child*', Nathalie tries to show loss of socio-economic status have left her powerless as she is construed as incapable of doing many things. These are therefore at the centre amongst other issues that has an effect on the socio-economic integration of Congolese women.

Economic and financial necessity was another factor that participants (Francine, Divine, Henriette) saw as one of the issues related to their loss of socio-economic status and affected their socio-economic integration. There was a contradiction in their understanding of the impact of their financial support in relation to the family power and their gender roles. Some of the participants said they felt the need to work so that they can help their husbands who are unable to sustain the family on their own given the type of job they have in South Africa (Low paying Jobs). Working to these women seems to be just an alternative solution for their financial problem given the circumstances. As opposed to the time they were in Congo these women did not feel that it was necessary for them to work because their husbands were able to take care of them and their children and fulfil their financial need, but in South Africa the situation is not the same. These women therefore perceive themselves as caregivers or people who need to hold the family together and hence attach their need to work or financial contribution to this perception. Others feel that it is important for them to work because they have to care of themselves regardless of their marital status. To these women working was an important factor in relation to their socio-economic integration. Working to the latter is then constructed as a need and not a necessity.

Moreover, the respondents associated their loss socio-economic status to explain how they feel in their new society. In the narratives of their daily experiences, participants explained that their new life in South Africa makes them feel like they have lost authority. When participants had material possessions as well as qualification (houses, cars, titles, etc) they felt that this gave

them a certain authority and power in society. Those with skills like nurses, tellers, and teachers felt that they had a high socio economic-status. Referring to having domestic workers who worked for them, being in a senior position and having subordinate or simply being able to perform in their duties that they have qualifications for gave them a certain social status. They further explained that the ability to have a job back home, and other components above described gave them respect and self esteem. The feeling of being respected was associated with the recognition of knowledge, work, and ability to socialize. This related to participants' perception of socio-economic integration was then characterized as forcing their integration while not being accepted. The extracts below depicts on this;

*...imagine you take someone to the hospital who is in labour, but they ask you to sit down and wait, the nurses will just pass and say nothing, when you ask them to allow you to help them because you know this work they tell you heeeee this is not Congo, this is South Africa... ( Divine, married and mother of two)*

*Haaa in Congo I was respected because I had my job, and people working under me, they respected me a lot and I could do anything I wanted because I had money....you know it was my last born's birthday this week, but I couldn't even make a birthday party for her because there is no money...this work that I am doing now is just low for me... (Peace, widow and mother of three)*

*....the thing is when you see the people who knew you in Congo, and now here in South Africa you even feel ashamed to look at them...in Congo I had so many things and people use to respect me a lot, but here I am a nobody... everybody speaks to you the way they like... (Francine, married and mother of two)*

The extracts above indicate that participants compared their lives prior to migration to explain their loss of socio-economic status. In their narratives, they described what they felt gave them social status in their home country and which they don't have in South Africa. For skilled workers like Divine, it difficult for her to feel integrated in the South African society as she cannot perform as she used to do in Congo. She also associated the non-recognition of knowledge to the difficulties her fellow Congolese face when it come to accessing basic services such as health care to express her loss of social status.

Nevertheless, the understanding of social status is diversely understood and the meaning varied from one person to another. For example, Peace based her understanding of social status on the lifestyle back home and the position she occupied at her work place which gave her a certain power to control. She characterized her life in South Africa as “low”. This was due to various reasons which she included not being able to celebrate a birthday for her child. Peace’s perception of loss of status relates to Hollingshead’s description of social status which states;

*“people may be said to occupy high positions when they are able to control by order or influence, other people’s conduct when they derive prestige from holding important offices; or when their conduct is esteemed by others”* (Hollingshead in Yale, 2011:21). Status does not however stop the fact that she migrated. She associates her feeling of loss of status to her daily interaction and experiences. Social status to her means the ability to have people work for her, who respect her as a nurse, having the ability to host parties on her children’s birthday, etc.

It is evident that the description above relates to Peace’s feeling and understanding of loss of social status as she highlighted in the early extracts. Francine’s perception of loss of socio-economic status involves having people who speaks to you with respect, which she links to the material possessions she had in Congo and the way the people who knew her then treat her differently in South Africa. To her socio-economic status is not based only on who you are but also what you have as her words explains *‘I had so many things and people used to respect me’*. These findings also relate to the general discourse on social status, which elaborate social status as; *“the relative rank that an individual holds with attendant rights, duties and lifestyle in a social hierarchy based on honour and prestige...this can either be ascribed or achieved requiring special qualities or gained through competition and individual effort* (Smith et al, 2011: 6).

Initially Congolese described work as part of the privileges that are available in their home country but that are not available in South Africa. Working was referred to as a resource from which they could make money and as a normal attribution. Later on however, participants changed their perception of work which gave a new dimension to its meaning in the context of socio-economic status. At this stage, working was perceived as an identification which classifies a person from a lower socio-economic status to a higher esteem in society. In this research this was also associated to the position one held at their work place, the people under supervision but also the power and authority one had in the country due to the position they occupied at their

work place. The lack of this in South Africa constitutes the larger part of their feeling loss of status. In relation to this study the loss of social status seemed to have affected the way Congolese feel socially and economically integrated in South Africa.

Feeling socially and economically integrated in South Africa for Congolese does not however only depend on the loss of social status. It stems from the loss of legal status, which according to the participants caused the loss of socio-economic status. Moreover, participants felt that the loss of status including the components above described have resulted in poverty which forces them to compromise on their cultural practices. According to participants the loss was not only about wealth but also power and cultural respect. For instance participants associated their loss of status to their new lives in South Africa to express how they are losing their cultural values (in reference to the dressing code for married women and others), and how these remind them of their country of origin. These explanations in this study will be referred to as the loss of cultural status. The following section will explore what participants construct as culture and how this shapes their meaning and perception of integration into South Africa

### **3.3. Loss of socio cultural, family power relations, and gender-roles**

The previous sections have described the way socio-economic integration is perceived by Congolese and the factors they felt has affected it into the South African community. In this section, I explore the way participants identified different aspects of culture. These included Gender relations, dress codes, and hospitality. Additionally this section will analyse the way people use the notion of culture to describe gender roles. Culture “relate to beliefs, practices, norms and behaviours shared by members of a group, it has been defined as a ‘social doctrine taken on by a group based on race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation region or national origin as a unifying phenomenon” (Raj & Silverman 2003: 369 in Kiwanuka, 2008:80). This section will analyse the notion of culture looking at how Congolese described, explained and the meaning they gave to it and how this relate to their feeling of socio-economic integration in South Africa.

The literature on culture in the context of migration describes how cultural norms can easily change when people are out of their country of origin. (see for example Piper, 2005; Jolly et al, 2005; Donato et al, 2006; Curran et al, 2005). Scholars have also pointed out the way people

struggle to live up to the same practices from the country of origin when they live in a new country due to different migration related factors such as lack of family that encourages these practices, lack of financial resources due to the fact that the things that seemed cheaper and affordable in the country of origin may be scarce and expensive in the host country (Mountz, 2003). The practices in the host country may be different and for integration purposes immigrants may need to adjust in their new society (Moon, 2003; Tummala-Narra, 2004; Boukhobza, 2005). This study also identified similar factors that interrelate to the broader migration discourse on culture.

Initially, participants explained that they wish to keep what they identified as their cultural values by romanticizing them as better than those of South African. Their lack of integration was described as a part of this attempt to maintain ‘their culture’. At this level the meaning of culture varied from one person to the other. For instance, some participants described culture as gendered behaviours and norms; while to others it meant the nation or practices exerted in their home country, whilst to others it meant the dress code, women’s behaviour, etc. Also there was a contradiction between some participants when it comes to the definition of culture, some explained that it is women’s responsibility to keep the cultural practices while others believed that culture is a responsibility of everybody. Both participants however strongly linked their culture to their feeling of socio-economic integration.

For those who perceived culture as a gender problem, the loss of their cultural status begins with laws in South Africa. They explained that the issue of gender equality in South Africa is a big a very big problem which they construct as against the bible and men’s pride but also against their belief as Congolese. The extract below for example reflects on this;

*I am now feeling integrated in South Africa for some points, and the other points I can say I am not integrated. Because you can see for each country there is culture, and culture is depend of people or groups I can say or ethnics I don’t know, but if you comparatively of our country you can say many difference here in South Africa ( )<sup>11</sup> what can I say, according to the women here in South Africa like there is that fifty fifty for everyone even if you are a man you are a women you say fifty fifty, even the government they say fifty fifty , it is good for some people but us like*

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<sup>11</sup> The empty parentheses explain a silence or pause during the interview, this convention sign has been extracted from the clinical phonetics and transcription of atypical speech by Duckworth, Allen, Hardcastle, Ball (1990).

*Congolese and according to the bible that we know the bible we knowt the man is a man is the head of the family and he must have the responsibility, has the responsibility so for us we must know what it is the responsibility for the man and what the responsibility for the woman (Bisimwa, married and father of four).*

*...the South African women are different from us because they rely so much on this fifty fifty law of theirs, they want to compare themselves to men but us we are not like that and were never told that way from where we are coming from, you see so our culture is completely different from what we see here, even our laws does not compare us to men like here...it is difficult to integrate here also for this reason...(Henriette, married and mother of two)*

*This democracy they are saying 50-50, that thing does not exist over there you know once a women is married is for life, but is not here, here a woman get married she knows that it is for a while, and she can go out with anyone she wants...but where we are coming from we haven't been thought that way you know...(Jean, married and father of two)*

These excerpts indicate that Congolese linked their understanding of socio-economic integration to the South African policy of gender equality. Bisimwa for example emphasized that it is difficult for him to integrate into the South African community because of what most participants' referred to as 50-50 (South African gender equality policy)<sup>12</sup>. In order to emphasise the meaning and connotation given to this policy some men in South Africa has been referring to it as '50-50'. This is a gendered issue that seems to imply the way men feel as if they are being treated as equal to women whom they previously regarded as inferiors. For example, Bisimwa claims that agreeing to the South African gender equality policy or simply accepting to live in such a society means losing his cultural values or cultural status. Henriette however, perceives South African women as different from her because of what she calls their 'fifty fifty' law. Amongst her arguments, she says because women and men are considered equal it is difficult for women to get special treatments. She added that it is difficult for her to integrate in South Africa because she feels like if she does so she might lose her cultural values. At this level, participants seemed to conflate gender equality with a loss of morals and social degradation and saw themselves as more knowledgeable of the bible and morally superior than South Africans.

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<sup>12</sup> The term fifty fifty was initiated in a song Mandoza and has become a popular but always derogatory metaphor of gender equality. It's a way of reflecting gender equality as being about hostile women.

In relation to hospitality, participants claimed that in Congo, it is their culture to treat outsiders with respect and love because they are in their country. However they believe that South African do not show this same love or accept them. The reference to 'showing love' to participants meant receiving a great hospitality from South African, giving them the equal opportunities, associating with them without discrimination and finally respecting them without calling them names. Participants also associated love with their perception of culture to claim that they don't feel socially and economically integrated in South Africa. Citing crime, insecurity, and other crime related issues Congolese, especially women explained that they are losing their hospitality culture that is very important for them in Congo.

Moreover, linking their feelings of loss of cultural status to the loss of legal and socio-economic status, married participants claimed that poverty and lack of resources amongst other things is what makes them lose their cultural values. The emphasis at this stage was placed at the dress code that married women in Congo consider to be respectable but which is unaffordable in South Africa. In addition, due to xenophobia participants fear that such clothing is going to be a way of them being identified as foreigners. The statements below reflect on this;

*...if we speak about the way we dress up, you will see us dressing in traditional outfit and they can identify us like that unless we are wearing pants that is when it gets confusing but when we speak they will recognize that we are foreigners, in reality the South African are so discriminating they don't have love while all of us are human being, maybe its language that is separating us ...we are all God's creation but them they discriminate us so much you see...(Francine, married and mother of two)*

*...women here in South Africa don't like us Congolese, they are reluctant and discriminative, they don't like us we don't know why, they call us names like kwerekwere...we force ourselves into them (Divine, mother of two)*

*...the situation in this country has changed us imagine you are a married women but you have to dress up in pants and jeans because if you dress up in our traditional clothes they will identify us...also it is difficult for us to buy the our traditional outfit because it is very expensive to make it here, and it is difficult... (Aline, mother of one)*

As seen above, participants based their explanation on the way they live, their dressing code and other factors to highlight their loss of cultural status. During their narrative they emphasised that the outfit is not just a way of dressing up. This also reflect who they are, give them respect, keeps their identity and other things that they believe are important for them. In South Africa however it is difficult to keep this practice because of poverty, lack of jobs and xenophobia that they are facing. These problems prompted participants to claim that it is difficult for them to socially and economically integrate in South Africa. Additionally, there was a contradiction between participants and women participants when it comes to the responsibilities of keeping the cultural practices. Male participants for example felt that it is women's responsibility to keep the cultural values and pass it on to their children. Women participants however, felt that it is important for all of them to keep the cultural values and maintain them to keep the family together. The loss of cultural status in particular and the loss of status in general therefore shaped respondents perceptions of socio-economic integration.

### **3.3.1 Perception of the country of origin, family power, networks, and Gender roles**

The broader literature on migration has shown how migrants struggle to integrate into a given society due to the lack of resources enhanced by their legal status, lack of familial support and social networks in the context of migration. This had been noted to have had an impact on how migrants feel about the host country but also the way this experience shapes their perception of their country of origin. Sometimes people have referred to the country of origin as home, as place, as space, as feeling. This notion is however multidisciplinary and complex. Mallet (2004:1) for example describe home conflated with or related to the "house, family, haven, self, gender, and journeying". In the migration literature the country of origin is often referred to as a place where one can be at ease, a place of belonging (see for example Johnson, Freels, Parsons and Vangeest; 1997). Nived et al, (1998) suggested that migrants perceive their country differently after their migration experiences had a negative impact in their lives.

Initially, the respondents described DRC as a place where one comes from and which holds their root. Congo was referred to as the origin or where they come from but not much was thought of when they were living the country and it was taken for granted. This perception however changed as they lived in South Africa. The loss of legal status and socio-economic status made

Congolese perceive their country of origin differently. In this regard, Congo was given a new meaning that to some meant a place of freedom, an origin, and a disciplinary environment due to the presence of family and networks, a place where one can fulfil their dreams, safety, acceptance and respect but also it became a place of high importance. Most participants claimed that when they were leaving their country of origin it didn't seem that there was something that they would hold on to. This was because they expected to get better things in South Africa and were willing to make it their new home and just visit their country of origin. An exception of two participants namely Peace and Nathalie who never wanted to leave their country of origin perceived Congo as special even prior to migration. The life of Congolese in South Africa, which according to them is very bad then made them realize how important their country is especially because now the majority cannot even return there<sup>13</sup>. This was expressed in different ways as described below;

*Aline: What do you think has changed since you came here?*

*Anita: ...At home my life was better and I had everything, and my family also is there, I was working...you know even if there is war in Congo but at least we know that there wasn't people who would attack you on the street like here...(Anita, mother of four)*

*Jean: a lot has changed you know, because here things that were giving you bread over there arriving here it is changing you see, really there I was living through my music career because I couldn't succeed to get a job according to what I have studied you know, so I was too much in my talent and I was surviving through that but here to change the options now...(Jean, married and father of two)*

*Peace; ...people respected me there you know, due to my job as a nurse and lecture, but here people just look at you and they don't even respect you simply because you are not in your country (Peace mother of four).*

The description above highlights participants' perceptions of their country of origin after migrating to South Africa. In addition to all the qualities that Congolese used to romanticize their

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<sup>13</sup> According to the article 33, paragraph 1 of the 1951 United Nation Refugee Convention a refugee may not return "where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion".

home country they also referred to it as a place of talent recognition. It has been pointed out in the literature on migration that a certain level of skills may not be of use to those having them for only scarce skills may be needed in the host country. The rationale behind this is that some skills may be available within locals and therefore perceived as competition between migrants and locals (see for example Peisker and Perth 2007).

The presence of family support which was available home was also one factor that female participants felt that reminded them of the country of origin. Reeves et al (2005) claimed that the lack of family support and networks had a huge impact on the feeling of integration of Thai women in China. The care given by parents for those who were single, and material help provided by relatives and other networks also made Congo special for the above mentioned participant as the words of Francine highlights;

*My parents were able to fulfil all my needs, I was satisfied and by their support, and I felt no need to work, and I was a student but I didn't finish my studies I was in grade eleven and then go a man who proposed to marry me and I choose to get married and that is how I came to South Africa to join my husband (Francine, married and mother of one).*

Although the extract above highlights the importance of family support, it also brings a new aspect of what the country of origin can mean for female participants. It shows that it can be a place of family support but also encourage early marriage. This relates to the general discourse on kinship ties and family dynamics in a migration context. See for example (Elsever, 2004; Lin, 2006; Piper, 2008, Jolly and Reeves, 2005). The country of origin was important and changed a meaning after migration to most of the participants. It is however important to note that not all romanticized this notion and gave it a positive meaning. Some participants although they claimed to have lost their status by migrating to South Africa they still recognize that they have learnt something by coming to South Africa such as English and so on.

*...I can say some things are changing, because now I have some experience because I can see I know that people are working hard here in South Africa...you can see how people are working from early six, to even 8pm, people are working in the shop...they are working hard but us in Congo we have time to start working and finish, see they are working harder than in our country, maybe that I can say that has changed...(Bisimwa, married and father of four).*

*My life here is has changed, because it is not the same way as I was living there than I live here...here I have the first facility, I have studied English that is a facility because in Congo I didn't get someone who would pay English courses for me...I got someone who sponsored my English course and studies for three month. Now I still want to study again so that I can see if I get a job...(Anita, mother of two)*

These explanations indicate that participants expressed the change they are experiencing in South Africa but also bring in a new perspective of the country of origin. As they describe their feelings participants reveal that the hardship they encounter in South Africa has some positive into it. Bisimwa's explanation for example helped him realize he had more strength than he thought he had in the country of origin. The way people work in South Africa has made him realize that he can do better than he did in his home country like working long or extended hours, Anita on the other hand believes that she is more advanced now in terms of her language skills than in Congo. Her extract may precisely show how much a small benefit acquired can change one's life. It is however an important aspect for further investigation as it may take the discussion on how little things taken for granted may have a good impact in terms of socio-economic integration. All participants though, seemed to lack one or more things that they don't have here in South Africa that is available in Congo and as described earlier they felt it is difficult to integrate into their new society.

For instance, those who have children, claimed that Congo was a good place for them to raise their children and work at the same time. In South Africa however, it is difficult for them as mothers to socially and economically integrate because they have to look after the best interest of their children. Although some scholars have argued that motherhood facilitates the integration of migrant women as they contribute to the education of their children and thus interacts with other parents when attending schools and parent meetings (Elsevier, 2004; Parrado et al, 2006), there is extensive evidence suggesting that being a mother plays a negative role in the lives of refugees and migrant mothers. In relation to this study, motherhood presented a challenge for some participants to engage in socio-economic activities as the statement below explains;

*I am not working, if I am going to look for a job they just tell me just leave your asylum seeker [papers] and your phone numbers and we gona call you... if after a month you call them they will tell you we don't have anything for you yet, we going to call you, they just promise me but*

*nothing until now...if I ask them why they don't want to give me a job sometimes they say they want only the ladies who don't have children... (Divine, mother, married and mother of two)*

*You know when you have children it is difficult to think about yourself...when I was in Congo I was working but my mother or my sister used to stay with the children, but now I can't do anything because I can't afford crèche and I don't have anyone to look after them here...also I don't want my children to just stay with anyone because I want to educate them...(Francoise, single mother).*

These extracts indicate the way motherhood can constitute a barrier for the socio-economic integration of migrant women into a given society. Divine's account for instance highlights the way she is not getting a job because some employers don't want to hire women with children. Francoise however, associate claims that being a mother is not the only issue for her but also the lack of family support which makes it hard for her to integrate. Similar findings views have been highlighted by Burges (1994) in her research looking at poor African migrant women in the United States. She accentuates that mothering was a financial problem to African women as their working conditions were not ideal for maternity leave or other advantages. As a result the choices of being a mother or falling pregnant even when unplanned led them to loss of their jobs. Similarly, Kihato (2007) suggested that motherhood played a major role on refugee women integration in South Africa. This is because sometimes they did not have someone to look after their children while they work and thus stayed at home to care for their children. All these experiences and hardship that Congolese are facing in South Africa has changed the way they perceive South African. It is important to note that the issues Congolese faced were also associated with the xenophobia that they claim to experience in South Africa which had an impact on their feeling of socio-economic integration.

Additionally, female participants claimed that it is difficult for them to integrate because as mothers, they struggle to work, but also their partners or husbands have a lower income to care for them. In this regard they feel that they would be able to claim that they are integrated if their partners could have a good income so that they could support them financially. Using such definitions, Congolese women centralized their integration on very basic things depending on how much the husband can provide including rent, food, clothes and satisfy other basic needs. This said they believe that because their husbands have no decent jobs, it is difficult for them to

feel integrated. Poiret (2005) emphasized that migrant women from the Maghreb region living in France struggled to integrate as their husbands struggled to make a decent living to sustain their families. To justify why they did not feel integrated or why their integration is dependent on their husband's income, participants claim that they have to take good care of their children and their husbands in return must take care of them as women or wives. The lack of a proper income from the husband makes it the reason why they don't feel integrated.

The two excerpts below highlights participants' views of reasons they account for socio-economic integration;

*...like I told you at the moment, I am not working, and my husband doesn't have a good job either, and I have two kids a girl and a boy even if my husband wants a good job he cannot get it because he is a foreigner, now he is doing security job where he earns R2000 and most of it goes for rent for this reason we are not happy (Henriette, married and mother of two).*

*I am suffering here and I don't feel integrated because my husband doesn't have a good job, now he is car guard, and all the money that he gets we spend it for rent, we struggle even to have food and clothes. The only way I would feel integrated in this country is only if my husband have a good job and show me that we really are free in this country (Anita, married and mother).*

These findings reveal that Congolese women based their feelings of socio-economic integration on their partner or husband's ability to care for them. They also drew on a patriarchal discourse that presents women as primary care givers and men as principal bread winners (Nunez et al, 2010, also Eagly et al, 2002). The reference to not being able to feel socially and economically integrated when the husband or partner does not have decent income seems to point to the inability to survive on their own or the inability to integrate on their own. In constructing themselves as such, women in such situation view their integration as impossible and entirely represented themselves as people with lower agency. Similar views are revealed in Curran and Suguy (2005) in their study of Chinese women in Thailand, which showed that when a woman is attached to her traditional believes she might underestimate her capacity and therefore struggle to socially and economically integrate in the host society. This representation is clearly seen in second extract depicting feelings of not being able to contribute brought about by their material status and the related hardship they encountered during this time. Their understanding of socio-

economic integration and gender roles therefore moves beyond the classical definitions of integration and gender roles by researchers to include the understanding of their position as Congolese women in relation to their barterers and the environment they are exposed to and how women are traditionally viewed in their country of origin.

However, the husband's inability to take care of them was not always seen to compromise women's agency in this way. The context in which socio-economic integration was experienced is one other factor that women considered to have an impact on their perception and their feeling of socio-economic integration. In this study one of the participants indicated that she started to believe that she is able to take care of herself and provide for her children as her fellow South African women do because the South African constitution gives equal right to both men and women. According to Burr, "our knowledge and understanding of the world is a product of our social processes" (1995: 4). Therefore, given the high level of human rights discourse directed at the awareness of gender equality in South Africa as well as public debates on equal rights and participation (Kihato, 2007), some respondents began to understand and explain gender roles drawing on such existing discourses. That could possibly have not been the way that gender roles were addressed and understood in their home country. The statement below by Aline (Single mother, separated from partner) expounds on this:

*...one thing that I like the most about South Africa is because they give women the same rights and its one thing that keeps me going, although I can say that I had a husband and we are no longer together but I don't feel like I am alone because they show us that even if you are a woman you have that right to do everything you want or.... They give women the value of being women and we see even at the time when they celebrate women's day we really feel we are well because even us they give us a place in society, they make us feel proud for being a women, and the way they consider women they put women in front unlike in other countries like Congo where women don't have the same value, and they look women as inferiors and they know that a women after giving birth a women is supposed to take care of the kids and that it, but in this country they show us that even after giving birth you can work, or you can be both a mother and have a career, you don't have to sit just at home, they give women that pride, they make you feel proud to be a woman to feel considered and have a special place. That is something that touches me sooo much and keeps me going every time I think about it, that treatment gives women value and*

*make them stronger because there is no man who can play with them, even if they go out of their country nobody can play with them because everybody knows that South African women are strong and can work. The fact that they give women the right to equal opportunities in South Africa gives women value and makes them respected...*

In this new context, this woman's explanations that make sense of the world change due to new experiences, people and institutional talk the encounter in the South African community. According to Burges (1994), institutional talk—referring to the discourses used by institutions, groups and organizations “allows women to discover their abilities and capacities, which may lead to change their view of themselves”. Therefore, in a new society where gender roles are framed differently (in this case by human rights advocates, and gender equality promoters, media, agencies as well as fellow women), it is important that these women access such information as they may help them access services. Congolese women's perceptions of gender roles are seen to have changed from being acceptable and normal to being contested in the South African community. Thus the one woman above mentioned drew on the rights-based discourse to explain and construct gender-roles differently as she now felt she has more rights that can be used to her advantage. However, far from simply celebrating this discovery, some of the respondents also felt determined to hold on- to their gendered practices and believed that they cannot adopt South African values. This new perception also seemed to occur due to their loss of status as they now open themselves to new options for survival in South Africa.

Most of the women in this study, while believing that they can learn a lot from South African women, were skeptical about their behaviour. In some instances they feared associating with South African women because Congolese men portrayed South African women's behaviour as disrespectful and unacceptable. As a result Congolese women explain their isolation from South African women as a strategy to maintain their relationships with their husbands. Congolese men on the other hand look at South African women as disrespectful and perceive their culture as deviating from what they called African culture and biblical instruction. Based on this belief, the above mentioned participants believed that according to the bible women must be submissive and South African women are not. As a result, they would not allow their women to associate with them, ‘so that they don't get corrupt’. Although participants value being in the country where women's right are exerted to higher extend than in their country of origin they still have

limited ability to enjoy these rights for the fear of losing their husbands whom to some represent their only family.

This situation questions the level of agency that these women have. Parrado and Flippen's findings of their research on Mexican families in the United States suggest that "...migration disrupts the social bonds and support present in the home country and promote husband-wife dependence" (2005: 351). In this regard, the education received back home and the fear of losing the husbands trust was something that prompted them not to socialize with South African women. In this case women derived their meanings from a kind of social learning theory in order to explain their fear to associate. Considering such conservative perceptions may violate women's freedom of association which constitutes a major component of socio-economic integration. See for example (Jacobsen, 2001). Additionally two of the male participants although recognize that their women have rights, clearly express their opinion in terms of letting their wives or partners interact with South African women. Below are their responses;

*Aline: Would you encourage your wife to have South African Friends?*

*Bisimwa: Ah no, I can't, because I just see some women South African, I just see some ladies South African and I can see how they are living, I can see the behaviour for women here is different for life of our Congolese women, because if you can see the behaviour of women here in South Africa is not the behavior for Congolese women, us we know that women is there to respect the man... to say to respect someone doesn't mean that the women can't have rights but she needs to respect her husbands or her man.*

*Jean: humm no, you see.... Here a women get married she knows that it is for a while and she can go out with anyone she wants and then still normal but us we haven't been thought that way you know, they thought us that once a women get married to her husband is for life and she must stick on her husband for ever... and then the material as well is corrupting the youth especially women in this country you know, there is no love here in South Africa but people only see the material, money, cars and they go for it...(Jean, married and father of two)*

The analysis of the two accounts above indicates that the respondents linked their loss of status to their understanding of women's roles and behaviours to restrict their wives from interacting

with South African women. While the cultural values of women from Congo were being romanticized by Congolese men and women, the above accounts also reveal how gendered norms shape the possibility of integration. The participants also portray their partners as their private goods or as people that they want to protect from the bad influence of South African women. These extracts further reveals male participants insecurity of losing their wives or partners to those who have more money and materials than them as Jean implies. His fear may additionally relate to the loss of material status that most participants have experienced to show how much this affects other areas of his life.

This behaviour seems to be visible only because of migration, as it seems that back home this over protection was not necessary. Men's fears of letting their wives or partners interact with locals is not new in the history of migration. This is often explained as a way to conserve their cultural values and in addition to transfer these values to their children. For instance, Tummala-Narra (2004) and Espiritu (2006) respectively emphasise that those who value strongly their conservative cultures make sure that they keep their language and other cultural practices as identification and the basis of their authenticity. The authors also imply that when this is functional, socializing with locals may be restricted by the family or partner. For example an Iranian American mother said her husband did not want her to interact with American for the fear that she might lose their cultural values. She added that they didn't want their children to do so whether at school or elsewhere because they wanted them to grow up knowing her original cultural believes (Riano, 2003: 23). Also, a Congolese community leader expressed similar views in Baruti and Ballard's research on Congolese organization in South Africa, stating;

*"Our main concern is trying to bring on board anyone who has [tribal name] blood because we as [Tribal name] wants to protect and conserve our culture, the main focus is to preserve at all costs our mother tongue because whenever a [tribal name] is born we must try our best to teach him. The father must teach him...then he will feel secure because he will be among brothers and sisters. This does not mean excluding others or isolating ourselves but we must know who we are ( Interview, anonymous, 03.12.03a in Baruti et al, 2004:11)."*

Additionally, the analysis of the accounts indicate that the respondents expressed the fears of letting their partners or wives associate with the South African as they are skeptical of what they

might learn from the new environment in South Africa, and lose their root. As a result Congolese prefer associating within themselves in tribal groups and other local organisation as the above statement suggest. The participants also portray their partners as special and innocent. This however according to participants can easily change should women associate or interact with the South Africa. The need to protect their women is therefore important for Congolese men ; South African women are dangerous and can easily influence their wives or partners. The attitude of men being overprotective of their wives has previously been observed in a migration context. For example, Riano, Baghdadi, and Walter (2006) in their report of a survey conducted in Switzerland looking at the socio-economic integration of skilled immigrant women from Latin America, Middle East and South East Europe find that these women experienced abuse from their partners as they didn't want them to work or integrate in the Switzerland society. It is important to emphasize that the abuse did not start with their man being over protective but rather by women trying to contest their partner's behavior. Similar views are found in Kiwanuka (2008) in her research on migrant women's perceptions of domestic violence whereby women claimed that their husband chose friends for them.

Moreover, Bisimwa's account seems to depict the role culture plays in shaping acceptable behaviour—reason being why he will not accept his wife to associate with South African. His narrative relating to the new environment seem to suggest that in DRC women could not be influenced or become disrespectful towards their partners, and if such behavior was noticed there was some kind of control from the family. This is one more explanation of their protective behaviour towards their wives or partners as the dynamics above mentioned (Family) is missing in the city they migrated to (in south Africa).

In keeping the emphasis, Congolese men drew on the bible scripture that states that women should submit to their husbands. They also placed their fear on external influences because they believe that their wives will not be able to change on their own. Congolese women in this study, who were living with their partners prior to migration, claimed that they were satisfied with the way their husbands took care of them back home. Far from agreeing with their husband's fears however, female participants in this study believed that they are capable of integrating into the South African community while keeping important behaviours from home. Additionally, they also felt frustrated by their husbands' restriction of their interactions with the locals because they

read this as a sign that their husbands don't trust them. In this case, events in the course of migration influenced the way men looked at their partners and trust how they trusted them. Congolese women also gave reasons why they would like to have South African friends. They do not want to befriend in the same way as their fellow nationals but they feel it is necessary to have South African women friends for specific reasons. The extracts below explain women's rationale as to why they would like to have South African friends;

*Aline: Would you like to have South African friends?*

*Francine: yes, I would like just to have some South African friends so that they can teach me English, take me around and show me places because this is their country and they know many people so they can also give me some connection so that I can have a job as well...but my husband doesn't want to hear that and he says he cannot trust me again if I have South African friends.... It is difficult*

*Divine: yes, I would like to have South African friends because I believe this is their country and they know best, you know there is a say in my language that says that visitors does not know where the moon comes from in the evening, so because we are visitors it is difficult for us to know which door to knock, I would like to have South African friends so that they can connect me and show me how to get a job and other things...they can also teach me their language because if I can know their language me and my children will not suffer...I just wish my husband would let me befriend them for now until I can work on my own.*

The above extracts indicate that Congolese women are not willing to associate with South Africans, however, they would like to have them around due to the fact that they don't have networks here or people who would help them, they feel it is necessary for them to have South African friends. This is therefore dependent on the need and necessity they have to find career opportunities, learn languages and to move into areas beyond what they can access as refugee women in South Africa. Divine's account, in addition seems to define the kind of friendship and the duration this would last for. As a matter of necessity women would like to have South African friends for a certain period of time until they feel ready to integrate on their own. These accounts also bring in a new insight as to how people construct networking and social capital. According to a social network and gender theory; "migrant networks provide support to new men

and women migrants alike” (Malia, 2000: 1312). The accounts above however indicate a different perspective whereby Congolese women lack support from their networks and as a result seek to establish new networks and social capital by creating a benefit friendship with South African women. It is however important to note that this finding is beyond the scope of this research report, but could be a potential area for further research.

Women associated their loss of status with their daily experiences, behavior that husbands or partners display while in South Africa compared to how they used to trust or treat them in their home country. Congolese women in this study, who were living with their husbands prior to migration, explained that they had never experienced the lack of trust from their husbands before coming to Africa. These events however have been previously noticed in context of migration, and especially in the Congolese community. For example, Kiwanuka’s findings of her research on migrant women’s perception of domestic violence in South Africa reveal that migrants’ women’s partners “started choosing for them people to talk to and not to talk to, and places to go to and not to go to, claiming it was for the women’s good” (2008: 56). In this regard, while migration has provided an eye opening to some women, it may as well re-instate gender inequalities.

In relation to such behaviour, Congolese men in this study associated their fears of women’s integration to its consequences in the family power relations. Based on previous explanations and experiences, the men in this study believe that their women’s socio-economic integration could be a threat to the sustainability of the family rather than a development. The fact that South African provides equal opportunities to women and men and according to participants the government favors mostly women than men, they fear to lose their power by simply letting their wives or partners socially and economically integrate. Jean’s words below highlights this fear;

*...because what we see once a wife go work, start earning more than a husband you know she starts changing ya ( ) is happening to many people we see we know them, you know they are struggling with the wife being jobless for years but once she gets a job she starts earning more than the husband and then the family starts shaking, no more respect, she comes home whenever she wants you know, driving expensive cars than the husband you and all those things...*

The extract above indicate that in addition to the fear of Congolese men of letting their wives or partner interact with South African on a social level due to their fear to lose the controlling position and pride that supposedly will not be there when women are economically integrated. This shows how status in the family maps onto the public shows of status in terms of power, family control and authority, etc. Drawing on the predetermined roles that consider men as principal breadwinners and women as primary caregivers (Nunez, Vearey, and Drimmie, 2011) Congolese men explain that the change of this role will change the family and make women lose respect for their husbands. Respondents claimed initially that their women are special and have a better behaviour than South African women; this could however quickly change if women socially and economically integrate. Also, this made Congolese reluctant as they experienced xenophobia from South African. The following section will discuss the impact of xenophobia on Congolese women and men socio-economic integration.

### **3.4. Xenophobia and socio-economic integration**

Xenophobia is often referred to as one of many negative attitudes towards foreigners and represents one of the negative views of foreigners (De Master: 2000). This can also be defined as a negative attitude towards foreign nationals. In South Africa the term xenophobia is often referred to as either the violence or negative attitude that South Africans have towards foreign nationals living in South Africa. The work of Polzer and Segatti, (2008); Baruti et al (2004) and Misago et al, (2008) show how xenophobia has been evident in South Africa for many years and is often directed to African foreign nationals. In this research participants claimed to have experiences whereby they are called names by their fellow South African (*Kwerekwere*). This relates to the definition of Hjerm (1998) in Kraus (2008: 1) that defines xenophobia as “the denigration of individual or based on perceived differences”.

The denigration constitutes the first form of xenophobia that Congolese reported to be experiencing from institutions that provide services to them. In their narratives respondents repeatedly mentioned that they don't feel respected because of the way they were treated some people working at the home affairs, hospitals and even the police. Participants claimed that often they speak to them like children and often even when they are right they ask them to go back to their country of origin and stop bothering the South African. Skilled participants in this research

felt they experience denigration starting with the non recognition of their qualification or simply the way they undermined their knowledge. This was often experienced by nurses, carpenters, etc, as the extracts below explains.

*...you know I applied for this job, and they called me for an interview, but when I got there they said they cannot give me that job because I am a foreigner....(Bisimwa, married and father of four)*

*Yeah, I feel integrated at some, not totally because we still pushed away from some departments or from ... you see you go somewhere and find South African gathered for a certain purpose but you don't feel integrated in that because they will call you names and point fingers especially if you don't speak their language you know, ya soo we don't feel fully integrated in this community ( Jean, married and father of two).*

*When you go to the hospitals, like this other day I was taking my sister there and she was in labour, I saw her bleeding and the sisters were just passing there, I told them if you are very busy, allow me to help you before she losses the baby and they told me do you think this is your country? You kwerekweres things you can just come here and tell us what to do...(Peace, widow and mother of three)*

Participants associated these experiences with their loss of legal, material, social and cultural status to explain that they don't feel like integrating into the South African community. In doing so they cited things like language barriers, being called names, and the denigration of their knowledge and qualifications at an institutional level to explain their experiences of xenophobia. These factors therefore challenge the mainly used definition or understanding of the word xenophobia as it is referred to in the literature. In this regard the respondents seemed to be developing a negative attitude towards locals (South African) whom they perceive to be people with no compassion or consideration for others and as a result they feel it is difficult for them to integrate in the South African community. From the way participants despite South African cultures to the hardship they encounter both on a social and economic level; participants started referring to South African as people with no love, respect and consideration.

At this level, Congolese struggled to even refer to them as South African but find denigrating words that differentiate them from South African. And that said they referred to South African as

“*them*” and to Congolese as “*us*”. Existing work on the discursive function of words like ‘*them and us*’ suggest that it is vocabulary used when people are referring to a different group that they consider as inferiors or lower as they struggle to call them either by name or national identity for this implies a certain level of consideration (see for example Anand, 2011; Buraway, 2004). This related to the loss of social status have made participants claim that their integration into the South African community is difficult and hence changed the way they perceived socio-economic integration.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study analysed the gendered way in which socio-economic integration is perceived, constructed and understood by Congolese men and women living in Johannesburg. In this study, I argued that loss of status played a major role on Congolese women and men feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration. The loss of status seemed to have increased by migration through intersections of unequal power relations, access to services, and other issues related to the context of migration. Findings show that loss of status influenced Congolese women and men's perception of socio-economic integration. The meaning from which they drew their explanations was linked directly to the discourses related to experiences of migration. Findings also reveal that participants drew on interrelated specific migration-related discourses including poverty, access to services (institutional), legal status, social status, fear of public violence and xenophobia to explain their perceptions and feelings of socio-economic integration.

From the clear and concise analysis of the Data, I highlighted the ways in which various factors intersect to impact on the experiences of Congolese women and men living in Johannesburg. Four major themes were developed from the main theme which is loss of status and therefore the analysis focused on loss of legal status, loss of socio-economic status, loss of socio-cultural status, family power relations, and Gender-roles, and finally xenophobia.

Loss of Legal Status played a major role on Congolese feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration. Based on their own subjective experiences, Congolese explained that the lack of proper documentation is the main problem they encounter as it affects many other areas of their lives such as access to services like health, work, education and even security. Most of the participants were either refugees or asylum seekers who fled the Democratic Republic of Congo in Search for safe heavens in South Africa. Repeatedly participants referred to the paper they use as 'useless' because in many cases it is not recognized by employers and other service providers. Female participants expressed the gendered discrimination they experience at the office reception offices as their claims for asylum are often rejected. In this regards, they believe that the loss of Congolese Citizenship and the lack of similar documentation in South Africa makes it even tougher for them to live a happy and prosperous lives. In reference to this,

Middleton (2008) argued that documentation is the key to migrant happiness and prosperity in the host country.

Also, the other factor that Congolese believed played a major role on their feeling of socio-economic integration was loss of socio-economic status which they often referred to as loss of material possession they had prior to migration. This have mainly affected their feelings and perceptions of socio-economic integration in South Africa as in their narratives, they often compared their socio-economic status in South Africa to the one they had in Congo. The inability to get the same life and enjoy the economic opportunities as South African seemed to have had an impact on how they perceived integration. Prior to migration, most of participants claimed they had houses, good jobs, cars and other materials which they cannot afford in South Africa due to the low paid jobs, non-recognition of knowledge and qualifications and poverty they experience.

Congolese had different perceptions and gave different meaning from scholars to what constituted socio-economic integration in the migration context. This implies that participants understanding of socio-economic integration varied with the context within which their daily lives was experienced and interpreted (Riano et al, 2006; Tacoli, 1995). In this case, their understanding and feelings of socio-economic integration and gender roles were strongly shaped by the context they were in, given that meanings can never be 'fixed' but change with interactions and context (Gergen 1973, Burr 1985), the changed understanding of gender-roles in a different social context of migration may have influenced the meanings that Congolese attached to socio-economic integration.

They mainly understood integration based on the position they have, the way services were accessed, respect shown by the locals, men's income, and finally the way their rights are accessed. This made them perceive and define gender roles differently than they did while they were in their home countries. These findings to some extent relate to the International Organisation for Migration's definition of integration. In this definition, the organization interprets integration as "introducing migrants into a new society, or the process of bringing people of different racial, ethnic or cultural group into unrestricted and equal association into society" (2005:1).

The lack of socio-economic integration according to participants was also caused by the discrimination and xenophobia they experienced in South Africa. Further analysis indicated that being socially and economically integrated is not simply defined by having jobs, the right to access services and associating with South African but having the life that one had in the country of origin prior to migration. This includes feeling respected and finally having the same economic and social power as locals are perceived to have. Among discourses drawn on, respondents also used the discourse of 'traditional' gender practices to justify their unwillingness to integrate into the South African community. This brings us to a new discussion as to who defines integration, as it is often assumed that migrant wants to integrate, but these findings challenges this notion. The unwillingness to integrate also arises from the reversal of gender roles, and to explain how what people construct as culture can be a barrier to socio-economic integration. These discourses were also used to justify Congolese women's non association with South African women to romanticize the cultural values of the country of origin.

Finally the findings revealed the gendered way in which participants perceived their loss of status and their contribution to the family. Male participants perceived their partners or wives' work as an additional hand in the time of necessity as they are unable to support the family due to the lower income they have. Female participants perceived their loss of socio-economic status as important component of their socio-economic integration in South Africa. On that note they believe they would be in a better position to take care of their children and improve their lives if they could work and access other services. Lastly, participants explained their understanding of the country of origin prior to migration which represents their root, their country, a place of education to which prior to migration they didn't give a strong connotation. The loss of status and the migration experience has however made them change this notion and participants started to view home as a place of freedom, where one can be at ease, education and so on, at this point home was perceived as a very important place especially because most of participants cannot go back as they are refugees.

Amongst the issues not covered in depth in this study are the use of social capital and its effect on the socio-economic of refugees and migrants in a society where access to services is difficult. Also Although I wanted to know more about marital status in relation to socio-economic integration, an aspect which was added later, this was not fully developed due to time limitations,

which I recommend that future studies pick up for further investigation on integration of migrants into a given society.

### ***Semi-structured interview guide***

#### Individual in-depth interview guide

The socio-economic integration of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg: “A Gendered Analysis”.

Welcome to this interview. As you will remember from the information session, my name is Aline Mugisho, I am a student at the University of Witwatersrand, and I am doing my Masters in Forced Migration Studies Programme. I would like to tell you that your views are important for my research and I would like you to speak openly. You have chosen a false name that will be used in this interview and during the publication of the results. The things I discuss here with you will be kept confidential and when I write about my research findings I will make sure to do it in such a way that one will be identified.

Do you have any questions? Please feel free to ask in case there is something you don't understand. Also I would like to tell you that you can do this interview in French, Swahili, lingala or English, we will do the interview in whichever makes you feel comfortable.

1. Do you feel integrated?
2. If no, according to you what do you think are the barriers to your integration?
3. Do you have South African friends?
4. Please tell me about yourself and your family
5. Who do you live with?
6. Are you married? Do you have children?
7. If yes, what does your wife or partners do?
8. Where do you mostly interact with South African?
9. Are there any areas of your life where you feel more integrated than others?
10. I want to know how you spend your day in South Africa
11. And how did you spend your day in Congo?
12. What do you do for a living?
13. Do you work?
14. If not why?
15. If yes, how did you find your job?
16. Was it hard for you to find a job in South Africa?
17. If yes, do you think it would be easy for you in Congo? why?
18. What kind of work do you do?
19. Is there a certain kind of job you prefer over others?
20. If yes why?
21. How do you feel about South Africa
22. Comparing to when you were in Congo, what do you think have changed since you came to South Africa?

## APPENDIX

### Research Participants Information Sheet and Consent Form

Title of research project:

The Socio-economic Integration of Congolese migrants in Johannesburg: 'A gendered analysis'

Names of Principal Researchers:

Aline M Mugisho

Department/ Research group Address:

African Centre for Migration and Society ACMS (Former Forced Migration Studies Programme FMSP). 1, Jan Smuts Avenue, Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Telephone: 072 132 1688

Email: [alibety1@yahoo.fr](mailto:alibety1@yahoo.fr)

Nature of Research:

Individual in-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussion

Participant's Involvement

Consent to participate in a Focus Group Discussion and Individual interview

What's involved:

Your participation to this study will include the following:

- A focus group discussion with 5 other people (Which will take about an hour)
- Individual in-depth Interview alone with the researcher that will take about 30 min.

Do note that I will keep your personal information confidential and that you can choose a false name that you would like to be called when you are interviewed.

Risks:

There are few risks in participating in this study. I will ask you some personal questions (only for individual interview) about your life and work. You may experience some discomfort in discussing some topic of the interview. But, you may find it useful to talk about these issues with someone. If for any reason you are uncomfortable you can skip a question or choose to stop the interview at anytime. If any of the topics discussed in the interview upset you, I can refer you to a counsellor that you can talk with further.

Benefits:

You may not receive any direct benefit from this study. But this study will help the researcher understand the impact of gender roles on the socio-economic integration of migrant women in Johannesburg, particularly in the Congolese community.

Costs:

There are no direct costs associated with this research project.

Payment:

You will receive transport money to the value of 50 Rand.

- I agree to participate in this research project
- I have read this consent form and the information it contains and had the opportunity to ask questions about them.
- I agree to my responses being used for education and research on condition my privacy is respected, Subject to the following;
- I understand that my personal details will be used in aggregate form only, so that I will not be personally identifiable
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this project
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.

PARTICIPANT:

Printed Name  
Date

Signature/ Mark or Thumbprint

Person who sought the consent

Printed name  
Date

Signature/ Mark or Thumbprint



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