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RETHINKING PRECARITY: UNDERSTANDINGS OF AND RESPONSES TO PRECARITY BY ZIMBABWEAN MIGRANT SECURITY GUARDS IN SOUTH AFRICA'S PSI IN GAUTENG PROVINCE.

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A dissertation submitted to the Global Labour University in conformity with the requirements of a MA in Labour Policy and Globalisation

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Declaration

I, **Brian Murahwa**, candidate number **762676,** hereby declare that this research report is my own original work. It is hereof submitted as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Labour Policy and Globalisation under the Global Labour University at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. This report has not previously been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other University. Where I have used the work of other authors, I have properly acknowledged them and I have not copied any author or scholar's work with the intention of passing it as my own.

Signed: ----------

On-------- Day of---------- 2016

Dedication

To Phil, Maka, Tate and my unborn child, I hope you will all grow in a world better than mine!

Acknowledgements

I appreciate the efforts of everyone who made this dissertation a success. To my family, Nancy, Ginah and Lindy, thank you for giving me every reason to believe that I will make it. You guys are always there for me and you keep my hopes alive. I will forever be indebted to you. Someday, I will make you all proud!

I appreciate the efforts of my supervisor Dr Ben Scully, the guidance and being available always and most of all for believing in me even when I sometimes doubted in myself, I will forever be grateful.

To everyone who participated in this study, I hope my research adequately give voice to your experiences and interpretations of circumstances. My brother Kuda Makufa, I will forever be indebted to you. I am glad we are finally in touch after more than a decade of silence.

And lastly to amma and appa, I wish you had lived a bit longer. Thank you for fighting our battles as we soldier on in this life journey. Your spirits will always be among us!

Abstract

Understanding the subjective views of low skilled marginalised workers who occupy bottom ends of labour markets and are implicated in everyday precarious living and working conditions is crucial for advancing scholarship on precarity. This qualitative study grounded in a phenomenological theoretical framework highlights the disconnects between the academic understandings of precarity and an understanding of precariousness from Zimbabwean migrant security guards' own perspective in South Africa's Private Security Industry, Gauteng Province. Relying on data collected through a combination of my ethnographic experience in 2014 and in-depth face to face interviews I conducted from June 2015, this study examines the perceptions that migrant security guards have on precarity, the strategies and tactics they employ to navigate everyday precarious working and living conditions and most importantly, the rationale behind these workers continued stay and work under precarious situations. As workers with precarious backgrounds, the findings of this reveals that migrant security guards treat wage employment instrumentally, a source of their livelihood and has led to improvements in their standards of living as interpreted by them. The strategies and tactics employed by these workers either individually or collectively are therefore rationally and tactically crafted so as not directly challenge and disrupt the existing structures (state, capital and law) but instead to survive within these structures so as not to jeopardise their main source of livelihood-wage employment. For migrant security guards, wage employment remains a vital tool for meeting their varied socio-economic and political objectives. This study therefore led to the conclusion that there is generally a mismatch between academic conceptualisation of precarity and the way marginalised and low skilled labour migrants interpret and understand circumstances.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ILO	International Labour Organisation
PSC	Private Security Companies
PSI	Private Security Industry
PSIRA	Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
SATAWU	South African Transport and Allied Workers Union
SD6	Sectoral Determination 6
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	World Bank
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is an ethnographic analysis of precarity as experienced by Zimbabwean migrant security guards in extremely insecure work structures in the South Africa's Private Security Industry (PSI). It highlights the disconnects between academic understandings of precarity and an understanding of precariousness from those who experience it directly. The widespread perceptions on precarity and the responses by low skilled Zimbabwean migrant security guards in the PSI that this thesis documents goes beyond interrogating precarity as both a descriptor and a condition.[1] This however does not mean to suggest that this researcher completely disputes and renders useless the academic debates on precarity, for it is this literature that this study is making efforts to respond to. Instead, an understanding of precarity, I argue, can be embraced from a perspective that explores the subjective views of those grounded in precarious histories (backgrounds) and are centrally implicated in everyday precarious work and life situations.

Pursuant to the above argument, this study set out to explore the perceptions that migrant security guards have on precarity and how they respond to their insecurities. This perspective allows me to explore how these workers think about their work and life, how they organise and their treatment of wage employment. More specifically, the study aimed to explore these perceptions and responses in a context where migrant security guards continue to work and live under precarious situations, yet they are less interested in overtly challenging the structures (state and capital) responsible for their existing

[1] Something that can only be understood as an outcome of the existing neoliberal globalisation (See for instance Standing, 2011 and Lewis et.al, 2014).

insecure working and living conditions. The focus is to reflect on these dynamics using migrant security guards as an empirical case. In contemporary literature, the migrant is often described as the emblem of the precariat- the precarious figure par excellence (Jorgensen, 2015). With their precarious backgrounds, contested citizenships, working and living under precarious conditions as denizens[2], Zimbabwean migrant security guards stand out as a special case. They experience what Candeais called 'double precariousness' which involves the precarisation of labour on one hand and the precarisation of social reproduction on the other hand (Candeias, 2004:1). By exploring the subjective views of these workers in the global South, this study adds new insights and revelations and provokes further debates on precarity.

The findings of this qualitative study grounded in a phenomenological theoretical approach lead to the conclusion that there is a disconnect between some academic conceptualisation of precarity and the way precarious workers interpret and understand their situations. In this contemporary era of neoliberal globalisation, Barchiesi (2011) for instance adopts a radical approach towards wage employment viewing it as exclusionary, exploitative and perpetuating inequalities. He therefore concludes that wage labour should not be counted on as a vehicle for the realisation of a decent living. Barchiesi's arguments on wage employment suggest that it leads to downward social mobility among the precariat. Indeed, one cannot dispute the exploitative nature of capitalism in the current neoliberal order. The concept of a decent life is however subjective. Migrant security guards working in the PSI viewed wage employment instrumentally, a source of dignity, pride and a relevant option for the realisation of their decent life, a form of upward mobility, a life interpreted and understood by them according to their own standards.

In contrast to Barchiesi, Guy Standing (2011) does not reject wage employment, but is instead concerned with the nature of wage employment in this contemporary neoliberal

[2] A denizen is someone who, for one reason or another, has a more limited range of rights than citizens do (Standing 2011:14).

era. Neo-liberalism has given rise to a market labour regime that places emphasis on labour market flexibility and liberalisation. Resultantly, there has been a fundamental change in the nature of work, increasing atypical forms of work and growing masses of people falling into precarity traps. For Standing, those in the precariat lack seven forms of labour security under industrial citizenship (see table 1). For Standing, it is the formalisation of wage employment which is relevant for curbing labour related insecurities, which is necessary if decent lives are to be realised. In the literature presented this far on precarity, as is the case with discussions that follow, little, if any, is said about the way low skilled marginalised workers who occupy bottom ends of labour markets interpret and understand circumstances.

The exercise of agency is central to Zimbabwean migrant security guards' interpretation and conceptualisation of precarity. Despite powerful external forces shaping the experiences of these workers, they are not passive victims of unseen influences and are, in fact, functioning decision makers and actors in their own lives (Hodson, 2001:50). Taking a cue from Berner (2000), a combination of both deliberate or emergent strategies and tactics employed by migrant security guards help them to navigate precarious situations. This research stresses the point that the strategies and tactics employed by these workers are not meant to directly challenge the power structures of the state and capital. Instead, they are engaged in in a tactical way that is convenient enough to overcome everyday precarious situations.

Drawing on my own personal experiences as a former migrant security guard and the experiences of my fellow countrymen (Zimbabweans) of precarity and responses thereto, this research came to the conclusion that human beings are not a homogeneous group and as such interpret life situations differently. In this respect, there is more to precarity than what seems to be understood in academic literature. I worked as a security guard for a year in Pretoria in 2014. Conducting a study on a group to which one belongs or has been a member of had methodological and ethical implications and challenges for the researcher as the methodology section will highlight.

1.2 Background

Globalization, how man understands the diminishing of space and time and the increasing mobility of people and capital, is believed to be a key driver of precarity. Global processes

of change have increasingly become the source of a spectrum of uncertainties, which in turn have a profound impact in everyday human lives (Berner and Trulsson, 2000a:6). Precarity has indeed become a common feature of the contemporary neoliberal period. Academic debates on precarity either as a descriptor or as a condition are divided between those who view it as something specific to work under neoliberal labour market conditions (see Webster, 2012; Standing, 2011) and those that view precarity as a feature of broader life (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005; Butler, 2004; Barchiesi, 2011). In terms of the former, the contemporary period of global capitalism has given rise to a labour market regime that places emphasis on labour market flexibility with its associated practices of flexible employment relationships, labour deregulation and privatisation. The result, Webster (2006) argues, has been a "…fundamental change in the nature of work leading to a fragmented and uneven labour market consisting of work that is often precarious, lacks benefits and has low wages" (Webster, 2006:1). This is increasingly creating a sense of insecurity amongst the global working class, particularly low skilled and marginalised workers.

Engagements with precarity beyond a workplace based analysis, as 'something more than a position in the labour market' have sought to encapsulate how precarious employment impacts on other aspects of social life, including individual circumstances, household dynamics and welfare provision (Barbie, 2002 cited in Lewis et al., 2014). Lewis et al. (2014) for instance link insecure work to the growth of a wider existential precarity characterised by having the inability to 'predict one's fate or having some degree on predictability on which to build social relations and feelings of affection', a form of ontological insecurity that pervades micro-spaces of human lives. Similarly, Butler (2004) views widespread precariousness as emanating from oppressive everyday governmentality and as an exposure to violence and suffering that emanates from socio-political spaces. The burden, as Bauman rightfully puts, is now on the individual, "to find individual answers to socially created problems; act upon them using their individually managed resources, and bear responsibility for their choices and the success or defeat of their action" (2011b:101).

In its general sense, the term precariat is often used to describe the working class. In the 1960s for instance, Bourdieu used the term 'precarite' in his analysis of the colonial working class (Jorgensen, 2015). The concepts "precariat", "precarity" and

"precarisation" have become popular with activists, academics and politicians among others in explaining the existing neoliberal order and have been outlined in different ways. In the context of this research, precarity implies a condition of insecurity; precariat denotes the migrant security guards experiencing precarious working and living conditions in South Africa and precarisation entails the process of experiencing precarity. From a broader perspective, these interlinked concepts refer to insecure labour conditions, which appear in various forms, and the accompanying insecure, impoverished living conditions, a characteristic feature of the current neoliberal era.

Despite the notion of precarity being a popular feature of the contemporary neoliberal order, there still exists no universally accepted definition of this term in academic debates. While the literal definition of the term refers to unsure, uncertain and delicate situations; precarisation, as a political term, is mainly understood as a working process which dismantles and polarise the levels of social rights and standards of living for most of the labour force and considered as a form of work below the standards of the traditional Fordist labour relation (Candeias, 2004). Precariousness should however not be embraced as a mere description of production processes since it also includes the process of 'double precarisation in daily work and daily life' in which basic social services for human existence are deteriorated (Candeias, 2004:1). Whilst the above claims are applicable to the ordinary poor working classes, there exist some differences within these poor working classes. As denizens, migrant security guards studied in this research are more exposed to precarious working and living conditions.

In tandem with the above arguments, McKarthy (2006) opines that precarisation comes on with the removal of social guarantees for working classes including housing, health care and unemployment insurances on one hand and its socio-cultural effects on an individual's daily life on the other hand. It therefore suffices to describe precariousness as an integral process covering insecurity and flexibility that has impacts on all aspects of human lives. For this reason, this research has classified precarious literature as falling into two categories, one in which precariousness can be understood from a perspective that explores production (work-related) from which so much has been written (Standing 2011, Webster 2006), and the other perspective that goes beyond the workplace

(Barchiesi, 2011; Butler, 2004; Candeias, 2004).[3] Since the precarisation is closely related to both work and daily life, the analysis of precarisation cannot be confined only to the field of production. This is so because Peck (1996) argues that the spheres of production and reproduction are separate but interlinked.

1.2.1 Organising strategies

Chun (2009) argues that the contemporary period of global capitalism and its associated practices of labour deregulation, privatization and flexibility is synonymous with the deterioration of working class organisations globally, and has rendered marginalised workers particularly susceptible to precarious and unfavorable working conditions. Compared to workers in full-time and permanent jobs, workers in flexible employment relationships usually receive fewer benefits and statutory entitlements, are subject to a greater risk of employer abuse and are less likely to be unionised. The majority of these workers are low skilled including woman, children and migrants. This confirms the findings from this study where respondents indicated that they were not entitled to any benefits and they lacked union representation.

Studies on worker organisation focus on the role of labour as a dynamic social movement, replete with contentious politics and collective mobilisation (Clawson, 2003; Wilderman, 2015). The growth of global capitalism has seen the emergence of new forms of power on the part of the working class in their battle to secure economic and political concessions from the state and capital (Silver, 2003). Silver distinguishes structural power which stems from workers' location in the economic system from associational power which derives from workers' self-organisation into trade unions, political parties and other collective organisations. Drawing on Silver's (2003) insights on structural and associational power and Bourdieu's (2003) analysis of symbolic and classification struggles, Chun (2009) empirically assesses how 'lower tier' workers can convert seemingly negative forms of marginality into concrete sources of leverage. In the context

[3] See chapter 2 for a detailed discussion

of this research, migrant security guards capitalise more on structural power than associational power as the section on strategies and tactics highlight (see Chapters four and five).

Within the African context and beyond, many scholars have made significant contributions to literature on working classes' different forms of resistance (Scott, 1985; van Onselen, 1973; Moodie, 1994 and Cohen, 1980). With specific reference to South Africa, because traditional labour migration tended to be biased towards labour intensive sectors like mining, agriculture and the construction industry, these studies have also been biased towards these sectors. Most recently, writing about farmworker uprisings in the Western Cape commercial farms for instance, Wilderman (2015) gave a detailed account of how these workers exercised their positional power and structural power through the withdrawal of their labour especially during the harvesting season.

As workers increasingly face the erosion of their structural power, they increasingly rely on associational power of collective organisations and their ability to win the support of various publics. In cases where there is a lack of support from various publics, unions and more empowered social actors, Chun argues that marginalised groups can still mobilise other effective struggles to overcome structural barriers. Such struggles (direct and confrontational) have been adopted in Western Cape's commercial farms when farmworkers barricaded roads and burnt tyres to gain public attention and thereby forcing employers to succumb to their demands (Wilderman, 2015). Elsewhere across the globe, the upsurge of labour unrest by atypical and vulnerable segments of the workforce in countries like South Korea and the United States, Chun argues, is reviving interests in the transformation of trade unions and the labor movement more broadly.

This study considers this literature as its departure point in two respects. Firstly, contemporary labour struggles particularly for marginalised workers situated at the bottom of the labour markets are less influenced by traditional organising struggles, through unions. Contrasting claims by Chun (2009) that most precarious workers devise alternative strategies and sources of power with an attempt to circumvent existing rules and procedures to reconfigure the relations of power; the findings from the study reveal that these workers (migrant security guards) are less interested in challenging powerful structures like the state and capital, structures that perpetuate their insecurities. The

benefits they derive from working under exploitative conditions outweigh the costs of not working at all. As such, tempering around with the existing order will have serious repercussions on their lives and that of their dependents. Besides, these workers believe their permanent lives are in their home country (Zimbabwe) and they are only here temporarily. Secondly, it emerged from the study that Zimbabwean migrant security guards' forms of collective actions go beyond work-related struggles. Their collective action is centered mainly on their religious beliefs, nationality and sporting activities. These forms of collective action are rarely addressed in precarious literature.

Most importantly, the study revealed that migrant security guards have very limited possibilities of exercising associational power. This resonates from the fact that they are not reached by trade unions and some believe they do not deserve to be represented because of their contested citizenships. Associational power is often embedded in state and legal frameworks which guaranties trade union rights and freedom of association. Despite falling under the broader working class category, entitled to labour related rights as enshrined in labour legislations particularly the Labor Relations Act and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), the majority of the respondents indicated that they had no proper documents and are therefore not protected by the immigration laws. As a result, migrant security guards' organising strategies are informal, often carried beyond workplaces and are used not to challenge the state or capital, but instead, to survive within these structures.

To understand why migrant security guards do not revolt directly against existing exploitative structures (capital and state), one needs to treat struggles over meaning and values as separate and unrelated to struggles over the distribution of power and resources. Immigrants' actions can best be understood within the public and hidden transcript framework (Scott, 1990). Public transcript describes the open interaction between subordinates (Zimbabwean security guards in this case) and those who dominate. However, subordinate groups (immigrants) create dissident subcultures that include 'offstage responses'. These subcultures, which are hidden transcripts, serve to sustain practical, everyday resistance to powerholders (Scott, 1990).

The hidden forms of resistance employed by migrant security guards are not meant to challenge the existing powerful structures, but rather, to negotiate within these

structures to their own benefits. Their actions are ideologically relevant in their pursuit of varied socio-economic and political interests. An understanding of this level of consciousness of the immigrants is much closer to reality of their lived experiences and provides a better understanding of their actions, behaviour and how they interpret situations. To borrow from Weber's notion of *verstehen*, meanings of actions can be understood in terms of the motives that give rise to them.

1.2.2 Globalisation, migration and increasing human insecurities

A dialectical interplay between globalisation and neoliberal policies' destructive to social reproduction is increasingly creating 'both the necessity and the desire for people to migrate across international borders in search of work' (Willis et al., 2010:2). To this effect, migrating for work is increasingly becoming a growing global trend. Improvements in information technology and advanced transport networks coupled by governments' failures to create economic opportunities, political instabilities and environmental catastrophes among other factors are perpetuating the global movement of people. According to the ILO, there were more than eighty six million migrant workers globally in 2005 (ILO, 1995). Currently, there exist more than one billion migrants globally (World Bank, 2014).

Studies that have focused on human migration at a global scale (see Cohen, 1987; Castles and Miller, 2009) have tended to portray migration as moving in one direction, from poor countries in the Global South to rich countries in the Global North, particularly for economic gains. However, according to the United Nations Development Program (2009), the majority of migrants move within their own national borders. Standing (2011) argues that South-North flows are broadly on par with those South-South and North-North. Despite all these dynamics, it suffices to note that international migrants occupy an increasingly important role in the heartlands of global capitalism (Standing 2011). Whilst there is a growing trend in the movement of skilled personal and some global elites, particularly from South to North, South-South and most recently North-South, this research targets low skilled Zimbabwean migrant security guards who occupy the bottom end of the South Africa's labour market.

Within the SADC region, South Africa with its history of labour migration that dates back to the 19th century remains the main destination country for labour immigrants. In

apartheid South Africa, recruitment arms such as TEBA (The Employment Bureau of Africa) and WNLA (Witwatersrand Native Labour Association) were enacted to ensure a regular supply of cheap labour to the mines and on the farms (Bezuidenhout and Buhlungu, 2010). On commercial farms, as was the case with the mines, immigrants from SADC countries immigrated into South Africa to work as seasonal workers from as early as 1910. Because labour migrants were concentrated in labour intensive sectors such as agriculture and mining, studies on labour migration within the SADC context in general and South Africa in particular tend to be biased towards these sectors (Bloch, 2007; Crush, 1999; Moodie, 1994; Labour Market Review, 2007).

The contemporary period of neoliberal globalisation has coincided with the growth of the service industry globally. According to the Human Rights Watch (1998), the service sectors in South Africa notably security, catering and domestic work are increasingly witnessing a proliferation of migrant workers from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland and Mozambique. Scholars who have however made breakthroughs in the service sector have paid attention to domestic work (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Griffin, 2011). Of particular interest in this study are Zimbabwean migrant security guards working in the PSI.

Although the post-apartheid South African government replicated the old system of labour control through legislations which criminalises 'undocumented' immigrants as defined by the Immigration Act (13) of 2002, this has not deterred the trend of irregular migration. Statistics suggest there are about four million 'undocumented' immigrants in South Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006). However, this figure is elusive due to the impossibility of counting 'undocumented' immigrants. In most cases, figures on the number of 'undocumented' immigrants are inflated for political expediency and are meant to bolster anti-immigration sentiments (Landau, 2004a).

The intensification of migration occasioned by accelerated flows of information regarding opportunities, images of desires and uncertainties, Nyamnjoh (2006) argues, has in turn engendered and exacerbated a global pattern of protected inclusion and rampant exclusion. One of the consequences has been the building or re-actualisation of boundaries and differences through xenophobia and other intolerances. Within the South African context, the slow pace of service delivery by the post-apartheid government has

bred discontent, indignation and a propensity to scapegoat (Tshitereke, 1999 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2006). Foreign black Africans in general and Zimbabwean immigrants in particular are portrayed as a major threat to the successful crystallisation of black citizenship in the new South Africa (Morris, 1998:117 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2006). In times of economic decline, immigrants become the easiest and most obvious target of resentment and are projected by citizens and authorities as the cause of social ills (Gunes-Ayata, 1987:243 cited in Nyamnjoh, 2006). Despite all these challenges, foreign nationals still find their way into South Africa's labour market.

The intensity of migration increases as a response to economic crises, political instability and global environmental change which constitutes the bulk of the modern day crisis. In Zimbabwe, state-sponsored violence directed towards citizens opposing the Mugabe-led ruling ZANU PF party, a deteriorating and collapsing economy coupled by environmental catastrophes that are threatening livelihoods has triggered migration for economic gains and political safety (Bloch, 2007). In South Africa, the increasing growth of the service industry in general is increasingly generating opportunities for foreign migrants and is also slowly changing the traditional patterns of labour migration which tended to be biased towards labour intensive sectors like mining, construction and farming. In the section that follows, I briefly explore the growth of the service industry with particular emphasis on the PSI.

1.2.3 The PSI at a glance

Neoliberalism has generated growing insecurities and inequalities across the globe. As inequalities and insecurities increase, security services become a necessity. Research shows that the PSI is one of the fastest growing and job creating industries across the world (Born, Caparini and Cole, 2007). Some of the countries where this industry has constantly grown over the past few decades include: India, Germany, China, Canada, Russia, U.K, Australia, United States and Nigeria. Available estimates suggest that in these countries alone, there are more than 60,000 private security service agencies engaging almost 12 million private security personnel (Sanjay, 2011).

In South Africa, the PSI is a consequence of the country's social inequality, violence history and inadequate police force. Statistics suggest that the number of registered active security guards (411 109) is more than double the South African Police (Hartley,

2011:3). This is however not a new phenomenon peculiar only to the South African context. Since the 1970s, private security guards in the United States have outnumbered public police officers by a ratio of three to one (Rosky, 2004: 897). In South Africa, the number of security guards is even higher than statistical figures suggest. This can be attributed to unregistered security workers (both migrants and locals) often employed by fly-by-night companies[4] who often resist compliance with labour laws. The ongoing student and working class struggles in the universities and communities, a clear indication of the extent of inequalities and discrimination in the country has made institutions spend millions of Rands on private security services.

With its history of unfair labour practices and a violation of workers' rights, the PSI resembles one of the most precarious forms of employment globally. Long working hours, lower pay, employment instability, higher accident rates and fewer opportunities for acquiring skills and promotion sums up some features of this industry (Sefalafala 2013). The Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority, the main regulatory body in the security industry has always stressed that Private Security Companies have a record of underpaying workers. Despite all these characteristics, there is both an empirical and theoretical vacuum regarding how those experiencing these precarious conditions understand, interpret and respond to them.

Regarding organisation, the PSI remains one of the poorly organised sectors in South Africa. According to the Gauteng Decent Work Survey, only 16% of security guards belonged to a union in 2011 (Sefalafala, 2013). Low levels of unionisation in South Africa's PSI can be attributed to a number of factors which include among others the nature of security work which is often contract based, the use of 'undocumented' immigrants who are in most cases reluctant to join unions due to fear of being exposed and most importantly due to an anti-union stance adopted by employers who discourage their employees from joining trade unions (Makgetla, 2007:29). The migrant security

[4] Fly-by-night companies are unregistered and informal companies flouting labour laws.

guards who participated in this study have their ways of organising and expressing their grievances as the section on strategies and tactics will highlight (chapters four and five). Reliance on ties of social networks and capitalising on their positional or structural power are some of the common used strategies by migrant security guards.

In a nutshell, this researcher is conscious of the fact that the information provided thus far may not necessarily be an exhaustive theoretical, socio-political and economic portrait of some background to this study. Nonetheless, it is a very critical departure point and foundation of this research thesis as it significantly helps the researcher to carve out his own contribution to theory and grounded arguments on the subjectivities constructed by Zimbabwean migrant security guards in the PSI from their own perspectives.

1.3 Rationale

This study contributes to and advances scholarship on precarity, labour migration and the Private Security Industry. According to Kalleberg (2009), there is an existing theoretical vacuum in our understanding of precarity. The existing scholarly work on precarity falls short of capturing the subjectivities that migrant security guards construct around their precarious lives. Standing (2011), Barchiesi (2011), Butler (2009) and Webster (2006), for instance, talk about how work and life in general is precarious and how people are caught in precarity traps. In this literature, these workers are defined by the things that they lack and the things that they do not do. Through an in-depth study of the various structures in which migrant security guards act and react, the research will produce insights into the lives of these workers from their own perspective.

Traditionally, labour migration in South Africa was concentrated in traditional labour intensive sectors such as mining, agriculture and construction. Resultantly, studies that have explored the precarious lives of migrant workers have been biased towards these sectors (see Moodie, 1996; Bloch, 2007; Labour Market Review, 2007). Scholars who have made breakthroughs in exploring the precarious lives of migrant workers in the service industry have mainly focused on domestic work (Griffin, 2011; Nyamnjoh, 2006). Except for Sefalafala (2013), who explored the work and life experiences of security guards in Gauteng using the ILO's indicators of decent work, studies on the PSI have focused mainly on its growth, demand and nature of work, economic contribution and

unionization as well as its complementary role in combating crime (Born et al, 2007; PSIRA, 2011; Hartley, 2011). By exploring the perceptions and meanings attached to precarity by migrant security guards, this study attempts to understand the rationale behind Zimbabwean migrant security guards' continued stay and work under precarious conditions and at the same time seeming less interested in challenging structures that perpetuate their precariousness.

The rationale behind choosing Zimbabwean migrant security guards stems from the fact that they fit the description of the most precarious group in three respects. Firstly, they are black foreign nationals living and working in a country with a violent history towards foreign nationals, particularly blacks who are often portrayed as major causes of social ills and become easy targets in times of economic decline and poor service delivery (Nyamnjoh, 2006). Secondly, these workers have precarious backgrounds if one is to consider the socio-political, economic and environmental problems that have forced these workers to migrate. Thirdly, by its own nature the security industry is risky and exploitative. In short, it is a combination of their extremely precarious backgrounds, nationality and the very nature of the PSI that make these workers a more precarious group. It is however the way these workers interpret, understand and respond to situations that form the basis of this research.

This study does not intend to romanticise migrant security guards and portray them as a socio-economic group devoid of working and living under precarious condition. Like any other working classes, these workers constitute the bulk of the world's precariat (Standing, 2011) and are conscious of everything surrounding them. Understanding, they also know realistically what the odds are against them and avoid obvious risks. Far from simply submitting to their fate, or accepting the socio-political and economic structures imposed upon them, Zimbabwean migrant security guards adopt alternative ways of manoeuvring insecurities, relying on all available economic, socio-political and cultural ammunition as individuals who are social, calculative and rational. They use whatever is available with due regard to personal insecurities either collectively or individually to navigate precarious situations.

Strikingly, this study seeks to understand why non-confrontational, covert forms of resistance are often preferred by migrant security guards in their pursuit of varied socio-

economic and political interests even under circumstances when it is justifiable to use confrontational and overt forms of resistance. By analysing these workers' subjective experiences and how they interpret their situations, this study adds new insights, revelations and dimensions on precarity, labour migration and working class agency. The findings of this study may be useful for policy formulation. The study will also help trade unions and other civil organizations find alternative ways of reaching marginal groups thereby improving their lives. For other marginalised groups in similar situations may also learn from the experiences of others on how to respond to insecurities.

This study also advances scholarship on precarity from a Southern perspective. Studies on precarity have tended to be Eurocentric (see Standing, 2011 for instance) and often treat the working class as a homogeneous group. The experiences of the general working class vary with variables such as geographical location, citizenship and sector. These variables are crucial in understanding how workers interpret and understand situations. Methodologically, a thick description of respondents' micro-politics and subjective views is analysed from a local context.

1.4 Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to examine the perceptions on precarity Zimbabwean migrant security guards have in their daily lives and the manoeuvres they employ to navigate precarious lives. To understand how individuals who gain their livelihoods from precarious security employment are entangled in precarious politics with the state and capital, this study:

i. highlights the perceptions that migrant security guards have on precarity;

ii. documents the tactics workers develop either individually or collectively to navigate insecurities and, if possible, diminish it.

iii. explores why migrant security guards enter and remain in contingent employment situations.

1.5 Research question

How do Zimbabwean immigrants working in the PSI understand and interpret precarity in their pursuit of varied socio-political and economic objectives?

1.5.1 Sub-questions

i. What strategies and tactics do they employ to cope with insecurities?
ii. Why do migrant security guards continue to live and work under precarious conditions and yet at the same time less interested in directly challenging the structures that perpetuate their precarious lives?

1.6 Scope of the study

The migrant labour system has been and continues to be a vital force in the development of the South African economy dating back to the early 1900s. Labour migrants were highly concentrated in labour intensive sectors like mining, agriculture and construction. The turn of the neoliberal era has seen an increasing growth of the service industry in general and the PSI in particular. With increasing insecurities, inequalities and declining public confidence in South Africa's security sector, the demand for private security services has been on the rise countrywide. Although the growth of the PSI is not only a national but regional and international phenomenon, this study specifically explores migrant security guards in South Africa's Gauteng Province (refer to section on methodology). The targeted population fits a broader description of precarity due to the reasons explored earlier in this research.

Time and financial resources limited the scope of this study. A small scale case study focused on Zimbabwe migrant security guards working for Private Security Companies in Gauteng was conducted. The findings of the study are fundamental in laying the ground work for a large scale study. Case studies allow, in principle, for rigorous scientific investigation and considering that a small scale study focuses on a small number of cases, it was relatively easy to manage.

1.7 Theoretical tool

This research is rooted in the phenomenological framework. Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that the phenomenological theoretical framework seeks to explore, describe and explain the meaning of an aspect of human experience as experienced by individuals. In the same vein, Patton (2002) further asserts that phenomenology focuses on how the individual's lived experience is perceived, described, felt, judged, remembered, made sense of and talked about by respective individuals. Through this framework, subjective

meanings of precarity are comprehended, interpreted and responded to by those who experience daily working and living precarious situations (migrant security guards).

1.8 Thesis organisation

Chapter one has provided an introduction, laying out a foundation for this research. It has presented background literature to academic debates on precarity, labour migration and the growth of the PSI. The chapter has also posed the main research question and its accompanying sub-questions, the research objectives, scope of the study and the theoretical resource utilised in this study. Chapter two highlights the academic debates surrounding precarity with specific emphasis on how it is interpreted from a work-related perspective and beyond the workplace. This section links the sphere of production and reproduction and also critiques the notion of precarity as something new.

Chapter three concerns itself with the research design and methodological issues. It explores the methodological dilemmas that the researcher encountered during fieldwork and how he reacted to these dilemmas. In this section, access to the study area and respondents; data collection through a combination of an ethnographic experience and in-depth interviews, purposive sampling and reflexivity are described, explained, assessed and justified. This researcher has deliberately omitted an independent chapter on literature review as the review of related literature is extensively done and spread throughout the whole thesis. Chapters four and five present and discuss the findings of the study within the context of major debates, arguments and ideas in relevant literature. Relevant theories are also applied to make sense of the findings. Because of the linkage between interpretations of situations and the responses thereof, these chapters are separated only for analytical reasons as their themes and sub-themes are overarching and speak to each other. Chapter six, the conclusive section, draws the conclusions of this research based on a reflection of the research question(s) and objectives in relation to the research findings.

CHAPTER 2

ENGAGEMENTS WITH PRECARITY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background to debates surrounding precarity. Generally, understandings of precarity seem to be divided between those who adopt a workplace based approach in which precarity is understood as something that is only experienced in the workplace (production) and those who subscribe to understanding precarity beyond the workplace. By providing relevant background to academic debates on precarity, this section lays a foundation for presenting the findings of this study that highlights the mismatch between these academic debates on precarity and the way precarity is understood, interpreted and responded to by Zimbabwean migrant security guards as they pursue various socio-economic and political objectives.

2.2 Growing precarity, a workplace based approach

The rise of neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on labour market flexibility has seen a significant transformation of work from the traditional standard employment relations (SER) to new forms of atypical employment (Webster 2006). Resultantly, precarity came to be a concept used interchangeably with 'atypical' forms of work (Markey et al 2002); attached to certain categories of non-standard forms of employment such as casual and temporary work and as a complex term that is multidimensional in its measurement and thus can affect any employment form, standard or non-standard (Tucker, 2002). For Burgess and Campbell, precarity is "… a catch-all term that attempts to encompass the full range of attributes associated with employment quality (Burgess and Campbell 1998:6).

Similarly, the International Labour Organisation's broad definition of precarious work includes all work characterized by a "range of factors that contribute to whether a particular form of employment exposes the worker to employment instability, a lack of legal and union protection, and social and economic vulnerability" (Rodgers and Janine 1989:1). From this perspective, precariousness is more concerned with all elements and factors that impinge on the quality of employment offered regardless of the employment

form. This definition seems to have been widely accepted and used by many labour theorists (Standing 2011, Webster 2006 and Barchiesi 2011).

Standing acknowledges that there is an existence of a "precariat" – a new class consisting of "many millions around the world without an anchor of stability" (2011:1). Standings' conceptualisation of the precariat is two-fold. Firstly, he conceptualises the precariat as a distinctive socio-economic group. In other words, this means that either one is in it or not (Standing 2011: 7). Secondly, he draws on an explicit Marxist perspective by asserting that "the precariat is a class-in-the-making, if not yet a class-for-itself" (Standing 2011:7). The participants in this study are more inclined towards Standing's first conceptualisation as a distinctive socio-economic group. According to Standing, those in the precariat lack labour related securities under industrial citizenship (see table 1). Developing insights from these defining features of the precariat, this study explores how migrant security guards understand, interpret and respond to these insecurities, a perspective overlooked by Standing and other labour theorists.

Table1: Forms of labour security under industrial citizenship

Labour market security – Adequate income-earning opportunities; at the macro-level, this is epitomised by a government commitment to 'full employment'. *Employment security* – Protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules and so on. *Job security* – Ability and opportunity to retain a niche in employment, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for 'upward' mobility in terms of status and income. *Work security* – Protection against accidents and illness at work, through, for example, safety and health regulations, limits on working time, unsociable hours, night work for women, as well as compensation for mishaps. *Skill reproduction security* – Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies. *Income security* – Assurance of an adequate stable income, protected through, for example, minimum wage machinery, wage indexation, comprehensive social security, progressive taxation to reduce inequality and to supplement low incomes. *Representation security* – Possessing a collective voice in the labour market, through, for example, independent trade unions, with a right to strike.

Source: Standing (2011:10).

Standing's claim that the precariat is a distinctive socio-economic group assumes that there are other groups that do not share the same features and these groups have different interests because of their different class positions. The precariat for instance is different from a group Standing called the 'salariat' that is defined through privileges such as secure employment, sick pay, paid holidays and pension schemes, often employed by the state in the public administration and the civil service (Standing, 2011:7). In South Africa, as is the case in many other countries across the globe, state employed workers enjoy the benefits that are not enjoyed by low skilled migrant workers. The majority of migrant security guards are unregistered because they are not permanent citizens as

mandated by law in the PSIRA[5] and therefore do not enjoy the benefits and minimum standards of employment enjoyed by registered security guards as guaranteed by SD6 of 2001.[6] This does not mean to suggest that the conditions of employment in the PSI are governed by the issue of legality. In as much as registration is vital for ensuring compliance, it does not guarantee it (Sefalafala, 2013).

Migrant security guards for instance lack collective bargaining power, do not have employment security, are not assured of a stable income and are rarely entitled to any work-related benefits which include among others sick leave and pension funds. This study shows that despite facing these challenges, it is their treatment of wage employment as a main source of livelihood, a vehicle for the realisation of their 'decent life', not necessarily the challenges they face in the PSI that forms the basis of their continued stay in precarious forms of employment in the PSI. With their precarious histories and backgrounds, migrant security guards are optimistic about the benefits of wage employment contradicting approaches that adopt a radical approach towards work (see Barchiesi, 2011).

Standing expands his understanding of the precariat by defining it not only in terms of class position, but also class characteristics that go beyond an immediate position in the labour process. For him, the precariat is defined by these class characteristics, such as having minimal trust relationships with capital or the state, thus distinguishing it from, for instance, the 'salariat'. According to Standing, the precariat experience few trusting human relationships, particularly work-based ones. For migrant security guards, this study reveals that trust and work-based relationships shaped especially by ethnic identities are prevalent among these workers and their employers and these relationships are vital for the maintenance of their socio-political and economic reproduction. Interestingly, despite the conflicting interests between labor and capital,

[5] PSIRA is the main regulatory body, established by an act of parliament to govern the activities of the PSI in South Africa.
[6] SD6 of 2001 sets out the basic conditions of employment in the PSI.

one can argue that trust is a vital force between these two different classes, particularly in the PSI. In the context of this research, it is through trust that employers recruit new employees through the use of existing employees' networks, a process that can be termed snow-ball recruiting.

The main reason for the demand of security is generally for the protection of property and some valuables. In most cases, particularly for those working night shifts, they spend much of their time alone without close supervision even from the property owners. In this regard, they are 'trusted' to safeguard property and valuables.

The distinction between the 'precariat' as a distinctive socio-economic group, "...a detached group of socially ill misfits living off the dregs of society" (Standing, 2011:8) and other global classes that are a direct outcome of globalisation such as the salariat and the proficians, has however met heavy criticism from different academics who often argue that there is no permanent divide between classes. Seymour for instance beleives that "we are all the precariat-including all who are not a member of the 'power bloc', a capitalist class in its fractions" (Seymour, 2012: n.p); he adds:

> *"…for precarity is something that isn't reserved for small, specialized group of people-'the precariat' or whoever. It spreads. It affects us all. The whip of insecurity disciplines even those who were recently comfortable (Seymour, 2014: n.p).*

Similarly, Choonara contends that;

> *"…all workers can find themselves in a more or less precarious position" (2011:n.p).*

The above claims by the two scholars hold true. The fact that we all experience precarious situations during the course of life is undisputed. However, the point missed by these scholars is that workers in general have different interpretations of their precarious situations. For migrant security guards working in the PSI, precariousness is neither celebrated nor romanticized, but is instead interpreted differently as they often juxtapose histories and backgrounds with present realities.

Another major defining feature of the precariat, Standing argues, is a lack of secure occupational identity. The precariat do not possess a secure occupational narrative that they can give themselves and define themselves as they go through life. For Standing, they

do not have that belonging to a traditional occupation, a craft or a profession (Standing 2011). A lack of an occupational identity, Standing argues, intensifies a sense of alienation and instrumentality in what they have to do. In this respect, 'actions and attitudes, derived from precariousness, drift towards opportunism' (Standing, 2011: 12). "Those in the precariat know there is no shadow of the future, as there is no future in what they are doing. To be 'out' tomorrow would come as no surprise, and to leave might not be bad, if another job or burst of activity beckoned" (Standing, 2011: 12). To argue that there is no shadow of the future for those in the precariat is to overlook the agency in those in the precariat. The fact that Zimbabwean migrant security guards invest in the future through land and property acquisition, livestock and other small income generating projects back home means they believe in the future. In fact, these workers view they current situation as temporary and their permanent lives are in their home country.

More so, Standing's argument that those in the precariat lack an occupational identity does not always hold if one is to consider the nature of the PSI. By lacking an occupational identity, Standing seems to suggest that workers are generally detached from their occupations. For migrant security guards, the study showed that the majority of these workers, particularly those who have been in this sector for some years identify and define themselves as professional and experienced security guards. Physically, security guards are generally identified because of their uniforms and other identifiable features such as whistles, ammunition, button sticks, security dogs etc. The majority of these workers are proud to be easily identified as security guards particularly in their locations where they argued that they are treated with respect with some societal members as they constitute part of the working class and most importantly, as people who can be relied on for security reasons. To argue therefore that those in the precariat do not possess an occupational identity is as good as rendering some professions useless.

Those in the precariat, Standing argues, are characterized by insecure forms of labour with minimum chances of upward social mobility and limited opportunities for a desirable identity or career (Autor and Houseman cited in Standing, 2011:15). According to Autor and Houseman (2010), entering a low paying job as in the case of the precariat permanently reduces the prospects of upward social mobility and gaining a decent income. The point missed by these two however is a clear definition of a decent income and a clearly definition of what constitute an upward mobility. It emerged from the study

that the majority if not all the respondents believed that their current jobs as security guards is an indication of upward mobility as they often relate with the situations that they used to find themselves in either back home or in other sectors like agriculture they once worked in. Narratives from the discussion of findings section (Chapters Four and Five) will highlight how some of these workers have had their lives changed as a result of security work and they vowed to remain in this industry for the longest time possible. This willingness to stay in this industry emanates from the benefits they accumulate including their ability to send remittances back home whenever they can. The argument therefore that those in the precariat do not have chances of upward mobility is flawed. More so, explaining upward mobility in materialistic terms, an approach adopted by Standing ignores the social aspects of life that were interpreted as important in this study.

According to Lewis et al. (2014), immigrants have a potential for forming political forces capable of collective action and resistance against neoliberalism. This claim asserts that migrant workers hold a role in reviving political conflicts and confronting political power. Standing (2011) downplays the role of immigrants as denizens in the struggle for social and political transformation. Concurring with Standing, this research shows that migrant security guards are rarely interested in directly confronting and changing the political landscape of South Africa. Disrupting economic and political space through challenging these spaces directly is tantamount to tempering with their livelihoods and that of their dependents. As such, the activities that they engage in, including the strategies and tactics they employ are rationally and tactically planned so that they survive within the systems that perpetuate their precariousness.

Central to Barchiesi's arguments is his radical approach towards wage employment. Barchiesi (2011) emphasises how the role and importance of work has been eroded in the post-apartheid era, particularly due to the government failure to resist the current wave of neoliberalism. Work, after functioning as a central motif of virtue and national character, Barchiesi argues, has been fractured and rendered irrelevant thereby losing its grip as a vehicle for the realization of a decent life. He stressed this argument by providing a compelling account of the vital role that work played in anti-apartheid discourse, where the notion of the dignity of work was instrumental. According to Barchiesi, the post-apartheid combination of political and economic liberalization in South Africa has challenged the promise of social emancipation that labor had come to embody

throughout past black working class struggles (Barchiesi, 2011). It is the gulf between the proclaimed status of work, its glorification and its reality which is central to Barchiesi's rejection of work as an important vehicle for the realization of a decent life. The glorification of jobs by many sociologists of work, Barchiesi argues, merely obscures and disguises the manner in which employment today is a decisive vehicle for poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Barchiesi, 2011b:8–15).

Barchiesi's assumptions that wage employment has become irrelevant and have failed to fulfill its promise of emancipation and dignity for the ordinary working class does not hold for migrant security guards. Evidence from the study revealed that work for these workers remain a vital source of their socio-political and economic emancipation and most importantly a source of their dignity. Borrowing from Anderson (2010:304) quoting Piore (1979), migrant security guards "view work purely instrumentally". Barchiesi's arguments seem to be driven by the fact that jobs in the current neo-liberal era have become inhuman and indecent due to the conflicting interests between capital and labor. Wage employment for Barchiesi therefore does not amount to a decent life. The definition of a decent life as interpreted by migrant security guards is however subjective. What they consider a decent life, the ability to meet the basics of life regardless of quality (housing, clothing, transport etc.), as well as the ability to send remittances back home, whenever they can offer a broader description of their conceptualisation of a decent life.

2.3 From precarious work to precarious lives

Studies of precariousness which neglect the broader social environment outside the workplace (Standing 2011, Webster 2006, Burgess and Campbell 1998) fail to account for the lived experiences of social classes, the cultural dimensions of the workplace and a multiplicity of activities and relations which are involved in daily living. Since precarisation is closely related to both work and daily life, approaches to debates on precarity should not only be confined to the sphere of production. According to McKarthy (2006), precarity is related to questions of housing, debt, welfare provision and the availability of time for building effective personal relations not only the disappearance of stable jobs. This therefore requires an analysis of precarisation as an integral process covering insecurities and flexibilities that have impacts on aspects of life. This argument

resonates from the fact that precarious employment has crucial impacts on the mind-sets of those who experience it.

While precarity has often been linked with work-related insecurities, Peck (1996) provides a framework that links both the spheres of production and reproduction through processes of incorporation, allocation, control and reproduction (Benya, 2009). Borrowing ideas from Polanyi, Peck argues that labour is not a commodity and cannot be regulated by simply matching supply with demand. It is thus imperative to recognise the significance of social processes that are vital in the regulation of the labour market (Peck, 1996). Writing about how labour is constructed and regulated, Peck calls for a social element in labour regulation. Borrowing from Polanyi's concept of embeddedness, Peck believes that the market alone cannot effectively regulate labour because it is enmeshed in networks of social relations (Granovetter, 1985).

Peck (1996:39) writes:

> *"The sphere of production and the sphere of social reproduction are both separate and connected. They are separate in the sense that they each have their own structures of dominance along with their own distinctive rhythms and tendencies, but they are also related in the sense that each conditions and interacts with the other".*

While these spheres are relatively autonomous, they are also linked. Peck (1996) asserts that the family and community are crucial in providing protection against the ruthlessness of the competitive labour market. For Castree et al. (2004), "it takes time, money and the non-paid labour of others (like family members) to produce workers day in and day out" (cited in Benya, 2009).

The effects of precarious work are multiple and are manifested not only at the workplace but also socially, economically and politically (Kalleberg, 2009:8). In his organisational management study, Feldman (2006) finds that precarity affects job attitudes and perceptions, turnover, on-the-job behaviour and productivity. The wide-reaching effect of multiple forms of uncertainty, Smith argues, "…affects the way people do their jobs, the decisions they make, the direction and extent of their aspirations, and their willingness

to comply with or consent to changes in workplaces and in the employment contract" (2001:169).

Luxton and Bezanson (2006) argue that work includes the 'social processes involved in the daily and generational reproduction of the laboring masses'. In the same vein, Barchiesi (2011) believes that production is not only the work effort of the working day that creates value and profit, but one's life, desire, ambition and cognitive ability developed across one's lifespan. With increasing work instabilities and insecurities, Smith (2011) believes that life-stories are breaking into fragments. A worker's expectation of a temporary contract for instance can result in hesitation to form social attachments (ibid).

The arguments presented in the preceding paragraphs show the inter-dependence between production and reproduction. Therefore, to understand how Zimbabwean migrant security guards understand, interpret and respond to precarity, a macro perspective, one that takes into consideration the worker beyond the workplace is relevant. External forces such as their contested citizenships, how they are incorporated in their communities, their histories, both work-related and general life histories among others all contribute to how these workers perceive their situations and how they respond to them. The way migrant security guards understand and respond to insecurities is often shaped by the interaction between these two separate but interlinked spheres.

From a political dimension, Neilson and Rossiter (2008) opines that precarity does not allude to precarious workers only but instead, it encompasses the more general existential state of the human being that is seen as the source of political subjectivation and economic exploitation. Similarly, Butler (2009) argues that precarity can best be described as a politically induced condition that expose certain populations to impoverishment and suffering due to the failure of social and economic networks of support, thus exposing them to injury, violence or even death. For Butler, there is a lack sense of agency by those experiencing precarious situations.

Butler contends that the notion of precarity is closely linked to 'norms'. Anyone who does not live within the 'normative system' is therefore more at risk of exclusion, harassment and violence (Butler, 2009: ii). In the context of this research, migrant security guards

lacking proper documentation can be said to be out of the 'normative system' in relation to the immigration laws. They are more at risk of exploitation and facing insecurities compared to any other working classes. However, to suggest that only those out of the 'normative system' are prone to risks and insecurities as asserted by Butler is a misconception. Despite having proper documents, some of the interviewed workers believed that having proper documents is never a guarantee for safety especially for black foreign migrants. The notion of citizenship is one important determinant of who falls within the 'normative system', at least in this context.

To suggest that the precariat lacks agency (Butler, 2009) invokes an under-appreciation of the strategies employed by migrant security guards both within the workplace and beyond as they pursue their varied socio-economic and political interests. The societal relationships created by some of the respondents were identified as important instruments for their own safety including the way they are incorporated in these societies. The decisions for the establishment of such societal relations, one can argue, are based on calculated and rational choices.

2.4 Contesting precarity

Globalisation, Standing argues, has transformed the nature of work, fragmenting class structure and giving rise to a new one (2011:9). This assertion has sparked debates among different scholars with some arguing that the precariat is not a 'new class' that emerged as a result of neo-liberal globalisation. Precarious employment is not new, argues Neilson and Rossiter; "If we look at capitalism in a wider historical and geographical scope, it is precarity that is the norm and not Fordist economic organisation" (2008:54) History has shown that work has always been precarious way before the growth of neo-liberal globalisation. In apartheid South Africa for instance, Moddie (1991:11) observed that mineworkers were often paid very low wages and lacked job security. Their contracts ranged from four months to two years (ibid). These challenges are still prevalent among the modern working class. A distinction therefore has to be made between the modern precariat, who in Standing's words is a direct output of neo-liberal globalisation and the traditional precariat who existed way before the growth of neo-liberal globalisation.

The concept has also been criticised for being Euro-centric as it resembled the working class conditions of those in European countries. It is to this effect that some scholars have stressed the importance of understanding working class experiences in their geographical localities. The experiences of the working class in European countries are different from those in developing countries. Whilst scholars like Harris and Scully (2015) and Barchiesi (2011) have provided an analysis of precariousness from the Global South's perspective, this researcher credit their ideas and develop from these ideas to argue that the working class in the South is not a homogeneous group. Within the South, workers are differentiated by factors like race, class, gender, ethnicity, skill, occupation and nationality among other variables. These variables are vital in understanding workers in different spaces.

2.5 Conclusion

This section has presented a thorough and clear engagements with debates surrounding precarity. By interrogating the existing literature on precarity, this section has led to the conclusion that there is need to embrace a holistic approach, an approach that combines both production and reproduction. To understand the precarious lives of low skilled migrants, there is need to go beyond interpreting precarity from a production based perspective, a perspective that is only biased towards the working place (production). It is important to understand workers beyond the workplace due to the connection that exist between production and reproduction. Contrary to views that the precariate is a new class, evidence provided in this section has shown that there is need to make a clear distinction between the precariate of the contemporary world (neoliberal globalisation) and the old precariate. More so, the bias (Eurocentric) views that are common in the conceptualisation of precarity has also been noted. The section that follows interrogates the methodologies that were used in this research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, this researcher outlined the objectives of this study and provided a background to the context and relevance of this study. I have also provided an overview of the academic debates surrounding precarity, labour migration and the growth of the PSI and provided a justification for this research. This chapter encompasses a discussion on the methodological issues concerning this study. The first part of the chapter describes and justifies the use of qualitative methods in this study. What follow is a description of how the research was conducted and a brief discussion of the methodological challenges that were encountered in the process of conducting this research.

3.2 Qualitative research

Drawing some indispensable theoretical inspiration from the phenomenological paradigm with its emphasis that meanings attached to daily experiences are highly subjective, this study is purely qualitative. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 17) define qualitative research as "…any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification." Qualitative research seeks to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study in its specific setting or context. Thus, a qualitative researcher, Barnes argues, aims to gain insight into the perceptions of the researched (1992:115-116). Qualitative research explains, in a nuanced fashion, the unknown and covert aspects of social life. Hoepfl (1997: 49) highlights the fact that qualitative research relies on the natural setting as its source of data and that the researcher acts as an instrument for data collection. He further adds that:

> *"Qualitative research has an interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and interpretations of those meanings by the researcher". (1997:49).*

Qualitative methods allowed this researcher to present the perceptions on precarity and the responses thereof from the subjective viewpoints of those who experience them. Qualitative techniques, Strauss (1990) argues, also allowed for an interpretive and contextualised approach, and a sustained focus on the complex creation and maintenance of meaning.

To this end, qualitative research design led to a nuanced, intricate and 'thick description' of the perceptions and responses to precarity by migrant security guards which quantitative methods could have failed to offer. Denzin (1989:83) describes a 'thick description' as a description that:

> *"...goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience or the sequence of events, for the person or persons in question".*

Such rich accounts are crucial and necessary in understanding how migrant security guards interpret and understand their precarious situations. As alluded to earlier in this paper, perceptions on precarity cannot be quantified. The gathering of data through qualitative methods becomes relevant in this study. Hence, choosing to follow a qualitative research approach in this study is both a pragmatic and rational decision.

3.3 Access to migrant security guards in Gauteng Province

It is important to note, from the outset, that this researcher has been a member of the studied population. I worked as a security guard for a year in 2014 during my postgraduate studies at the University of Pretoria. During this period, I established and shared cordial relationships with some of the respondents. As labour migrants working in the same industry, we shared a sense of community that was built upon some form of mechanical solidarity. As Giddens (1998) rightly puts it, mechanical solidarity is a strong sense of collective consciousness built around identifying with the same cultural norms and values, beliefs and lifestyles. These ties that are built on sameness were enhanced by the fact that we were all migrant workers identified as security guards, working in the same industry and staying in the same location. With some respondents, we engaged in

similar religious practices and sporting activities. Nonetheless, these ties had significant implications in terms of access. The ties either facilitated or limited access when I went to collect data, not as a security guard anymore, but instead as a university student. The implications will be addressed in the sections that follow.

The mechanical solidarity that defined the relationship between this researcher and the purposively selected respondents facilitated access. Having worked amongst some of the respondents, they treated me as *'one of their own'* and were quite receptive and willing to give me an opportunity to share their experiences and perceptions about life in general. Owing to their very busy schedule, as these workers rarely take a day off at work, I had to make appointments over the phone and they would willingly tell me when they would be free, particularly in-between shifts or after working hours. Resultantly, the interviews were conducted during times most conducive for the respondents as well as in areas they felt safe. The majority of the respondents were willing to invite me to their homes, which they, in most cases shared with fellow countrymen. I would meet some of the respondents at shopping malls, taverns, and sport fields among other public spaces where I would strike informal conversations that were linked to this research. Meeting these workers beyond their workplaces was crucial for their own securities and also helped me to understand and interpret their lives beyond the workplace.

Conducting a study on people with whom one shared cordial and friendly relationships can however on its own be a threat to access. A major methodological complexity that I had to grapple with was the highest level of suspicion with some of the respondents whom I used to work with. Their argument was clear;

> *"You are no longer one of our own! How can we believe that you are not spying on us?" (Interview, Tindo)*

Instead of taking this as a methodological challenge, this gave me a clear picture and understanding of how migrant security guards perceive of outsiders. From a broader perspective, the suspicion and fear shown by some of my respondents sum up the precarious conditions that these workers grapple with in their everyday lives. This challenge, for me, was representative of the social dilemmas a researcher has to contend with when doing research amongst his former workmates.

I ended up conducting interviews with other migrant security guards whom I had not selected amongst my sample following introductions from an old friend. These workers were however still relevant for this study because they met the characteristics of my sample population; Zimbabwean migrant security guards working in the PSI. In the section that follows, I describe the interpretive paradigm, the research approach that underpins this study.

3.4 Interpretive paradigm

The interpretive paradigm is generally concerned with the subjective view(s) of the researched or respondents. It is an approach that recognises that social reality is both a function and a product of our perceptions. Put differently, there are many subjective truths out there that can be measured or studied empirically. For this reason, what matters, are the viewpoints or perceptions of those who experience the phenomenon who in this case are precarious Zimbabwean migrant security guards. The aim, nonetheless, is not just to describe but to interpret and understand these subjective views. Interpretations of these subjective views need to be informed by the understanding of the context. This idea partially owes its origins to Weber's notion of *Verstehen,* that is, the idea that the researcher needs to 'understand' or be able to perceive the world using the same lenses as the subject(s).

It is however important to note that knowledge obtained through the interpretive approach cannot be generalised as it remains context specific. According to Weber (1981: 151):

> *"An understanding of human behaviour achieved through interpretation contains in varying degrees, above all, a specific qualitative self-evidence".*

In light of the above arguments, the researcher following this tradition needs to be very familiar with the context in which the phenomenon under study occurs or has occurred. In the context of this research, I can safely say my engagement with respondents both as an insider (having worked with them) and outsider (researcher) also helped my understanding of these workers.

For ethical reasons, I have documented all the steps I followed and revealed my biases via reflexive and ongoing consideration as is the norm in qualitative research. In this

regard, it has to be clear for others to see how I reached to certain conclusions. This is addressed in detail on the section on reflexivity (see section 2.8). I turn now to the research design that I utilised in this research.

3.5 Research design

A case study design was employed in this study. According to Knight (2002:41), case studies are generally described as in depth analyses that seek to go beyond the surface to look for meanings and to construct understandings on a small scale when compared to surveys. A case study can be seen as an "exploration or in-depth analysis of a *bounded system*" (Creswell in De Vos et al, 2005: 272). The emphasis on a 'bounded system' speaks to a bounded 'case'. A case can be geographically, spatially or theoretically bounded. This small scale study is useful for exploring the 'unknown'. It is manageable when compared to national surveys for it allows the researcher to concentrate on relatively few variables and explore them in-depth. Summing up his discussion on the usefulness of case studies, Kumar (2005: 113) said;

> *"This approach rests on the assumption that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type so that, through intensive analysis; generalisations may be made that will be applicable to other cases of the same type".*

Borrowing from Kumar, I am, conscious of the fact that the results of a case study are not blindly generalisable; they remain specific to the 'case' but can be useful in formulating a hypothesis for a large scale study on this topic.

Considering the impossibility of identifying or interviewing all migrant security guards due to time and resource constrains, I selected a relatively small number of the respondents who participated in this research project. Initially my sample size was eighteen participants. From these participants, three withdraw their participation due to the reasons that were not explained by them. However, fifteen interviews were successfully conducted. Of the fifteen interviews conducted, not all are used directly in the final analysis. Rather the findings draw on the perceptions and experiences of thirteen participants. I now turn to sampling, another important stage in qualitative research.

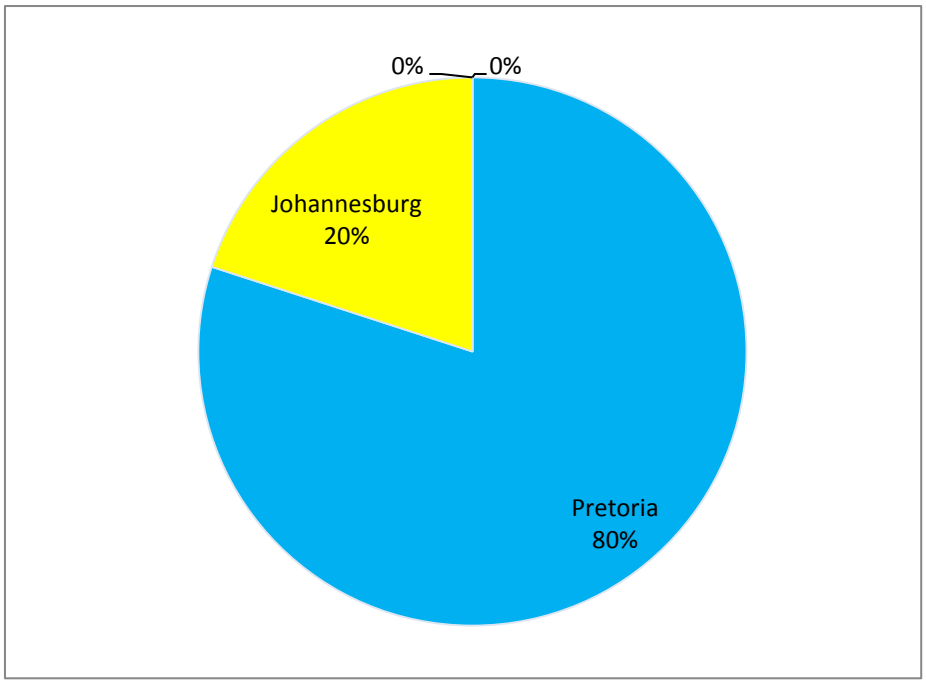
3.6 Sampling

Ferly (1989:39) defines sampling as a process of selecting the required number and characteristics of a given population for inclusion in a study. Factors such as the cost of the study, the demand for precision or accurate knowledge and time need consideration during sampling (Brewer and Hunter, 2006:80). Thus the researcher chooses a research site and recruits participants depending on a combination of these factors. Choosing to locate the study in Gauteng Province was a pragmatic decision. I once lived and worked with some of the respondents in Pretoria in 2014 during my studies at University of Pretoria. As such, close personal ties and trust were established with some of the respondents. Moreover, there were no language barriers in the study as the researcher speaks the same language with the respondents (section 3.8.1 will however address the translation problems encountered).

The costs of the study, time availability and the existing characteristics of these precarious workers (a combination of their precarious backgrounds and their current precarious situations as black foreign labour immigrants) justify the selection of this sampled group. Moreover, security guards are a common feature in Gauteng as is the case in any other provinces; it is not unusual to see for example security guards at shopping malls, taxis, trains, campuses and along the streets. Considering its economic activities, high crime rate and the hence the demand for security services, Gauteng, like other economic hubs of South Africa offered a good opportunity for exploring the issue at hand. The targeted group and area have been selected on the basis of feasibility, accessibility, manageability and the high possibility for precision.

Initially, my target population sample was migrant security guards working for private security companies in Pretoria. However, I had to look for alternative options after my attempts to collect data from some members of the sampled population went in vein. Some respondents were unwilling to contribute as they treated me with suspicion even though I made clear the fact that the study was only for academic purposes and was not intended to expose the respondents to any form of harm. I therefore supplemented my interviews with three formally employed and registered Zimbabwean security guards in Johannesburg to whom I was linked by a friend in Pretoria. The distribution of the respondents basing on these two cities is diagrammatically illustrated below:

Figure 1-Percentage distribution of respondents in Gauteng



Source: Researcher's own calculations

In figure 1 above, it is clear that the majority of my respondents were in Pretoria (80%). Conducting more interviews with registered migrant security guards in Johannesburg (20%) allowed me an opportunity to understand how workers in different sectors (formal and informal) interpret situations. Having worked alongside these workers, (in Pretoria) I had assumed that the personal relationships that I had already established with them would aid me in gaining access. Despite facing participation resistance from some of my former workmates, methodologically, this helped me understand some of the weaknesses of conducting a study on a group that one is closely connected to.

Two non-probability sampling techniques, that is; purposive and snow-balling were employed. Brewer and Hunter (2006:93) describe purposive sampling as a "claim on the part of the researcher that theoretically significant, not necessarily statistically significant, units are selected for study". In the context of this research, only Zimbabwean migrant security guards working in the PSI were considered.

Snow-ball sampling requires that the researcher recruits a number of initial participants and then asks them to identify or help to recruit other members of the study population. This sampling method is commonly used for studies where the study population

members are not readily identifiable or when it is considered unethical to develop a list of the members. In other words, snow-ball sampling is very useful where and when gaining access to participants is difficult (Henry, 2009:83).

This sampling method was therefore both suitable and appropriate for recruiting some participants in this study due to a number of reasons; firstly, there is no readily available official register that specifically captures migrant security guards. The country's data sources for instance StatsSA and Quarterly Labour Force Surveys from the Department of Labour's website do not have records for these workers since they are informal and unregistered. Even if such records were to exist, exhuming such information would also have fundamental ethical implications. For instance, it will be very difficult to ensure anonymity and hence protect the participants from potential disadvantage or even harm. Secondly, snow-ball sampling was utilised because of the challenge in accessing other security guards.

Despite having worked with some of these workers, there were other security guards that I had never met because we were always stationed at different sites. Even upon seeing some of them clad in the same uniform with mine, it would be difficult to tell whether one was a Zimbabwean or local as the company also employs a handful of South Africans. One would only know after speaking with them. In some instances, it was even difficult to ascertain if one was Zimbabwean because of the way they dressed and their mastery of some local languages to the extent that some would not use their mother-tongue (ChiShona) in public. Snow-ball sampling was therefore necessary to reach some of these workers.

Given that participants are actively involved in identifying and recruiting respondents, the use of the snowballing technique requires the successful managing of power relations between the researcher and the researched. Writing about the role played by informants in snow-ball sampling and the power dynamics involved therein, Noy (2008: 335) said:

> *"...informants who possess social capital and are willing to share it or to perform and embody with the researcher are those informants who are members in social networks, who have more friends and acquaintances than others... and they are therefore located centrally".*

Put simply, by determining who should participate and who should be left out, informants may 'dictate' the research process. This, nonetheless, should not be necessarily regarded as a weakness of snow-balling. In fact, reflecting on and analysing such dynamics actually enrich one's understanding and result in unique and, for analytical reasons, in-depth and more coherent knowledge. As Marshall and Rossman (1995: 1-5) rightly puts it; in qualitative research, the researcher purposefully avoids controlling the research conditions and focuses on the complexity of situational contexts and interactions as they occur in their everyday natural settings. This is by no means to suggest that the researcher has no influence on what is learned during the research process. Conversely, the point is that the researcher avoids intentionally creating artificial conditions as is the case, for instance, with an experimental method. In the section that follows, I highlight how data was collected.

3.7 Data collection

As alluded to earlier on in this paper, qualitative research is chiefly concerned with understanding "meaning" from the participant's point of view or perception. The findings of this study draws from data collected through a combination of an ethnographic experience and individual face to face in-depth interviews.

3.7.1 Participant Observation

In January 2014, I came to South Africa with the intentions of pursuing an Honours program at the University of Pretoria. I was housed by a friend who worked as a security guard in Pretoria. I asked him how difficult it was to find work in the PSI and he told me it was all about networking. Because he had been in the industry for five years, he was more connected and had gained trust from his employers. It took me two days to find a job as a security guard. No security experience was asked, neither was I provided with any training. I learnt my duties in less than three hours from someone who was tasked to show me what was expected of me. I decided to join the PSI to meet both my personal and education expenses. Living with someone who has been in the industry this long helped me understand the way people interpret and understand life.

I had no clear job description as a watchman save for guarding company property, searching clients and controlling some activities for security reasons. I worked at different sites, changing shifts with other security guards. I managed to establish good

personal relationships with the majority of the security guards. This was important in an industry where mistakes will likely impact on company security and will ultimately cost one a salary in cases of damage. As migrant security guards, there was need to cover up each other's mistakes. At times, especially in-between shifts, I would visit some of my workmates at their homes and we would go out to watch soccer at a nearby tavern. This enabled me to access the outside world of these workers beyond the workplace, paying attention to how these workers interpret their precarious lives and seeing if there were any extensions of their work to their households. According to Peck (1996), production cannot be divorced from reproduction, the two are linked and often impact on each other. The interpersonal relationships proved helpful when I conducted interviews with some of the respondents.

Sarantakos (1998) cited in Benya (1999) asserts that there are many different ways of doing an ethnographic survey. Researchers can either choose to be participants or non-participants, or to do direct or indirect observations. I became an active, direct observer since I was involved in daily security work. This also allowed me to observe these workers in their own settings. As part of participant observation, I also had informal interviews (in the form of conversations) with the workers. These were not limited to a specific day or time but I used any opportunity that provided for a proper environment to conduct them. Informal conversations helped in gathering background and general information.

Unlike interviews, participant observation goes beyond what is being said to what actually is (Manicom and Kassam, 1982 cited in Benya 1999). Unlike in positive science where the researcher seeks to reduce and control the context in which the research is conducted, in participant observation, subjects are studied in their natural setting without any form of control. In participant observation, the context contributes immensely to the actual subject under study. Burawoy (1998) argues that context is not noise disguising reality, but reality itself.

Ethnography is very useful in that it provides information when other methods are not effective; it can offer data when subjects are unable to do so. It approaches reality in its natural structure, allows for the collection of a wide range of information and is relatively inexpensive. However; one cannot generalise based on it, it cannot be employed when

large groups are studied, it is relatively laborious and time-consuming, and observers cannot be controlled in terms of their bias, attitudes, expressions and opinions. There is, therefore, little control when one is in the field. I have done everything possible to ensure appropriate representation of what I observed and participated in, including how migrant security guards interpret and respond to situations.

3.7.2 In-depth face to face interviews

In the field, participant observation was supplemented with in-depth interviews, which also added to the richness and contextual perspective (Burawoy, 1998). I managed to execute a total of fifteen of the eighteen scheduled interviews as some of the prospective interviewees withdrew their participation. Since the confidentiality and safety of the interviewees were a priority, I assigned each interviewee a pseudonym to protect their identities. The names that appear in this research are therefore not the real names of the respondents.

In-depth interviews, Bryman argues, are known for their ability to generate thick detail and description, which allows the researcher to gain understanding and meanings that participants attach to different social processes (2004:19). The interviewer-interviewee interface provided by the interview situation enabled room for probing, clarity and observing non-verbal actions such as facial expressions, body language and gestures.

However, in-depth interviews have been criticised for being a time-intensive and labour consuming evaluation activity because of the time it takes to conduct interviews, transcribe them, and analysing the results. Moreover, they lack the discursive and social element. If time and resources had permitted, focus group discussions would have supplemented in-depth interviews.

3.7.3 Design

In terms of design, these interviews were modeled using a semi-structured type of interview guide which outlined the key open-ended questions. Borrowing from Kvale (2008) that good interview questions should contribute thematically to knowledge production, I aligned and designed the interview questions so as to answer the main research question and the sub-questions of the study. Put simply, I broke down the provisional interview questions into themed sections relating to how migrant security guards understand their precarious situations and how they respond to them.

As some interviews progressed, it proved difficult to stick to my interview guide. To borrow from Weiss (1995:3), I had to "sacrifice uniformity of questioning to achieve fuller development of information." I created a flexible situation in which I and some of the respondents managed to turn the interview into a natural conversation where the respondent did narrated their perceptions and life stories without losing focus to the objectives of the research. As a result, some degree of uniformity was sacrificed and interview guides had to be partially ignored as each interview progressed into a natural dialogue. In some circumstances, some respondents would raise emergent and interesting issues which I had to follow up. Reading some uneasiness in respondents through their body actions and facial expressions, I had to leave certain questions from the interview guide.

3.7.4 Recordings and transcriptions

All the interviews were recorded at the consent of the respondents. Through recordings, interviews were captured in their original contents and provided reference during the data analysis phase. To avoid misrepresenting and distorting data due to forgetting, I also managed to take down field notes after leaving interview locations. One challenge encountered with the recorded interviews was that I had to initially translate them from ChiShona to English before transcribing them. Resultantly, there were some methodological limitations associated with this translation and I address them on section 3.8.1.

Lastly, since this researcher once lived amongst and worked with the respondents in the same industry and shares cordial relations with them, the issue of reflexivity was a significant methodological concern. The 'sense of knowing each other too well' had to be bounded and controlled so as not to compromise the data quality. As a result, I had to constantly reflect on a number of major reflexivity issues as these had a great bearing on the quality of the data I was going to collect and the subsequent analysis of this data. However, as will be noted below, reflexivity was a contentious issue for this researcher. I now turn to how I positioned myself in this study below.

3.8 Reflexivity

Reflexivity was a crucial component of my research. Reflexivity was vital considering the fact that this is a qualitative research that dealt with subjective views of migrant security

guards, a minority working class group, some with contested citizenship statuses. In this respect, I had to constantly consider my actions and my role in the research process and scrutinize them.

Initially, my target sample group comprised of migrant security guards in Pretoria, the majority of whom happened to be my former workmates. However, due to the challenges of reaching all of them, including some higher levels of suspicion that I was treated with as an 'outsider', I conducted three more interviews in Johannesburg. Unlike migrant security guards in Pretoria, the respondents whom I interviewed worked for formally registered companies and they were also registered. These workers however were selected on the basis that they met the same requirements of this study, being Zimbabwean migrant security guards working in the PSI. The differences between these two group of workers, registered and unregistered also provided room for understanding how workers interpret precarity from a different perspective.

As I embarked on the process of representing data during the write-up phase, I became entangled in analysing what to include and what not to basing on the objectives of this research. In the process, I was in a precise way 'adjusting' and re-creating the respondents' original stories. This also applies for the analysis of their responses. By choosing to analyse their responses within certain theories, frameworks, literature and debates and not others, I was assigning myself some overarching authority over the respondents' narratives. While both at a methodological and ethical level, this may be inevitable for the researcher, I tried as much as possible to minimise this by selecting quotations that were more or less representative of the theme in question, and then reproducing the selected quotations in their original form. Analysis of their interpretations was also left open-ended as much as possible so as to leave room for alternative interpretations by future readers. Although this solution may not be foolproof, it at least minimises distortions to the respondents' original perceptions.

3.8.1 Translation challenge

I conducted all interviews in the respondents' native language ChiShona. Although this was crucial in creating rapport with the interviewees, I was faced with the complex task of having to initially translate the interviews from ChiShona into English during the transcription phase. Achieving functional equivalence was my major challenge as I

grappled with the translation of some specific ChiShona words and proverbs into their English versions. Taking a cue from Sechrest et al., the translation challenges that I faced can best be summed up by the following quotation from them. They said:

> *"Vocabulary equivalence must take into account language as used by respondents and the possibility of terms lacking equivalents across languages. Equivalents in idiom and in grammar and syntax may be important, but equivalence in terms of experiences and concepts tapped is probably most important of all. Direct translation cannot be assumed to produce equivalent versions of verbal stimuli" (1972:41).*

In some cases I could not find English words that provided exactly the same meaning, context or explanation as the Shona concepts I intended to translate. For instance, in explaining why they keep living and working in precarious environments, one of the respondents said:

> *"…nyika yedu yaita mamvemve" (Interview, Sam).*

Although I had to literally translate this in English to; (our country of origin is now a mess, its better this side), this English translation and the meaning it now conveys is somehow diluted and removed from the Shona cultural connotation of the original statement. While generally by definition a mess entails a difficult situation to handle, the Shona statement above is deeper than the translation. The translated statement gives an impression that although the country is going through a rough patch, there is a possibility, a hope that the situation will be fine in future, and there is only need to 'clean up the mess'!. Contrary, the Shona statement denotes something beyond repair. *Mamvemve* is a deep Shona name that is given to rags that cannot be fixed even by the best tailor. Unfortunately, this meaning is not fully captured by the English translation. In light of the above example, I experienced a translation dilemma (Behar's, 2003). To borrow from this author, through translation, I was using my own words to interpret the narratives provided by the respondents.

3.9 Data Analysis

According to Marshall & Rossman (1995:111) data analysis is "the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data". In qualitative research, data

analysis begins and continues simultaneously with the data collection process. Once an interview is completed it is examined to see what can be learned from it; to identify areas that need to be expounded on and hence the interview guide may need to be modified accordingly. The objective of qualitative data analysis is not to provide statistical summaries but to "discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity" (Rubin and Rubin 2005:202). In the context of this research, data was analysed thematically.

3.9.1 Thematic Analysis

Following Bernard (2006) I initially produced my interview transcripts and field notes and reviewed them. My aim was to identify salient themes that permeated through these texts. To organise my data into various themes, I employed inductive or 'open' coding. I initially employed pile–sorting (Bernard, 2006) to come up with broader themes from the texts. This also involved locating emblemic quotes that were representative of the themes. In my coding I was continuously aware of noting the complementarities as well as the divergences (relationships) between these themes so as to come up with coherent arguments. I also kept in mind the original relationship that the research aimed to cover while at the same time remaining open-minded to new insights. I gave some serious consideration to the incorporation of the context in which I carried the research and the constant reflection on my biases as an insider in the analysis. Also from the phenomenological perspective, I analysed the interview transcripts and the field notes under the assumption that meaning was created and mediated in the interview process and reality exists in fluid and variable sets of constructions.

3.10 Ethical considerations

The process of data collection (in-depth interviews) began in June 2015 barely two months after the xenophobic attacks that started in Durban before spreading to some parts of the country. This was the most difficult period as foreign nationals, migrant security guards in this context, reminisced on these attacks that left thousands displaced, injured and some, dead. To gather information from this group of workers, I had to ensure that I upheld the non-maleficence principle, which is the need to keep the respondents safe from harm at any stage of the research.

Before conducting interviews, I explained fully to the respondents that the study was meant for academic purposes and that they were free to withdraw at any stage, even after the interview. Confidentiality, privacy and anonymity were adhered to at all times. To also guarantee safety for the researcher and participants, the interviews were conducted in private and secure spaces of the respondents' preference. There was no deception in this research. It is vital to note that, despite ethical issues concerning the research, I did everything possible to protect the respondents. I have in all circumstances protected the subjects by first seeking their informed consent and guaranteed them complete anonymity, and using only pseudonyms when quoting them.

Data collected from participants was coded and kept in a password protected folder. Upon completion of the study, data will be stored as a research report in the Wits University's on-line data base as well as in Research Commons and all potentially identifying features linking the report to the participants will be removed. Only those with access to the Wits University Electronic database will have access to the final report. The rest of this report deals with findings regarding the perceptions migrant security guards have about their precarious situations and how they respond to them.

CHAPTER 4

PRECARITY WHAT? IMMIGRANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF WORK AND LIFE

"The manliness of a man is measured by his ability to provide for his family. For a man to be treated with integrity, honor and respect, he has to work. This job (security work) is our source of livelihood" (Interview, Arty).

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the following chapters is twofold; to present the findings of this study and to provide a systematic analysis of the data collected. The disconnects between the academic understandings of precarity and how precarity in general is understood, perceived and responded to by Zimbabwean migrant security guards is articulated from the respondents' own perspectives. Themes and sub-themes that emerged from the study include; Rethinking Barchiesi's objection to wage employment, beyond demeaning stereotypes, networking, occupational identity, representation crisis, structural power, illicit improvisation, engaging informal activities and citizenship among others are explored in the following chapters. The two chapters (4 and 5) are interlinked. Whilst chapter 4 interrogates the understandings of precarity at workplaces and beyond, chapter 5 stresses the relevance of working class agency as they devise different strategies and tactics to manoeuvre precarious situations. As the discussion of findings in this and the next chapter unfolds, I stress the point that the names assigned to the interviewees are not their real names to protect their identity.

The findings of this study do not seem to conclude that migrant security guards are an exceptional working class devoid of precarious working and living conditions. As migrant workers, they experience precarious conditions in the general sense as understood in academic mainstream precarious literature. As low skilled workers, like any other workers, they lack many if not all decent work indicators. These are summarised in table 1. It is however not a lack of these work-related insecurities that is central to the arguments presented in this research for such work has been done in depth. Sefalafala (2013) for instance has already highlighted a deficiency of these indicators amongst security guards in Gauteng. Central to the findings presented in this research is an

illustration of how precarity is understood, perceived and responded to by those who experience it from their own perspective.

4.2 Perceptions of work and life

Evidence from the study has shown that life histories with precarious backgrounds provides a different level of interpreting existing conditions particularly for migrant workers working in different sectors of host countries' economies. Understanding different situations is in most cases done in a sort of a comparative analysis in which one relates both current circumstances and life histories that one once found him/herself in. For workers that have been in more pressing situations, a condition that is often slightly better than the previous one is often appreciated and acknowledged. These perceptions are highlighted in the sections that follow.

4.2.1 Rethinking Barchiesi's objection of wage employment

The majority of the security guards interviewed indicated that working in the security industry is helping them to meeti their own needs including the needs of their families. An emblematic quote which captures the importance of work in general and working as a security guard in particular was from a man in his early 50s who has worked in the PSI for the last 20 years. For this man, working in the PSI has enabled him to support his family back home, sending kids to school, acquiring a piece of land from the local municipality as well as purchasing livestock. Asked to elaborate why he has been in this job for this long, the 51 year old man had this say:

> *"This was my first job when I came here about 20 year ago. This is the job that I have mastered very well despite my lack of education and I really like it. Unlike those working on the farms and in the construction sector, the majority of which earn less than what we earn in this industry, we don't do those dirty jobs and we are always smart. This is not a back-breaking kind of a job. You are paid to sit and put an eye on property" (Interview, Madala).*

Whilst the above quote indicates a preference of a certain job to another, I was convinced that there was more to security work than the explanation that was provided by this respondent. To this effect I probed what this man has achieved by working in the PSI for

this long, I probed for a convincing explanation that has made this worker resist the precarious conditions associated with this type of work. He had this to say:

> *"If you are to look at the developments that I have made back home, you would wonder if I have been working as a security guard throughout my life. Even if I might not be able to send money back home every month, my family does not starve because I have invested through the money I get here. I have livestock, my own land and a grinding mill that serves the community. It's not about how much we earn in this industry that is really important, it's about how you plan with the little that you earn" (Interview, Madala).*

Comparing his current situation with the one he used to be in back home, another respondent noted that his life has improved a lot ever since he started working as a security guard in South Africa. He indicated that prior to working as a security guard, he has worked on the farms in Limpopo as a farm worker but he was just living from hand to mouth and could neither plan nor budget and he wasn't sure about his future. Jobs in some of the farms he had worked for were seasonal and they were only hired during specific seasons (harvesting periods). However, working in the PSI has been a "*blessing"* in the words of this respondent. He indicated that in the security industry, particularly for the company that he was working for, one can work non-stop throughout the year as long as you are able. Security job by its own very nature, unlike working on the farms is not seasonal and the demand for security services in everyday lives means security work is a daily routine.

Asked what has really transformed ever since he joined this industry, the 27 year old father of two had this to say:

> *"When I first came here in 2004 after completing my Ordinary Level, which I did not do well, I worked as a farm worker on some several farms in Limpopo. For orange-producing farms in Limpopo, you would only work with your mind settled for a few months during the harvesting period. After harvesting, the farm owners would lay off a number of workers and rehires again the next harvesting season. At times the farm owners would delay paying you your salaries, which were not much though and you would struggle to plan, budget or send remittances back home. My parents were much concerned about my safety than the remittances so they would just want me*

to call just to check on them. I had no cell phone and I had to rely on public phones. It would cost you a couple of rands to visit the nearby town to make such public calls. At one moment my parents thought I was dead because I had spent close to 3 months without making calling. Things changed when I started working as a security guard. I bought my own phone and now I constantly communicate with my family back home. If you can plan very well, you can do wonders with this little money. I paid lobola 4 years ago and I now have two kids. My wife runs a small business (sewing clothes) that we established with the money I get here as a security guard. I wouldn't mind if you were to take everything away from me but yet keeping me with my job. It is through this job that I am who I am today" (Interview, Arty).

The above revelations from the two respondents, including other revelations that came from the study indicates that these workers view work as an important vehicle for the realisation of their decent life. The statement that *'take everything from me but spare me my job'* attest to the importance of work as a source of livelihood for the majority of workers interviewed in this research. Although the concept of a decent life can be interpreted differently by different working populations, it suffice to note that defining what is decent is subjective depending on what individuals value most. For the majority of migrant security guards, a decent life entails the ability to meet daily living expenses (rent, food, accommodation and clothing) regardless of quality.

Because security work gives them an opportunity to meet these daily expenses, including an opportunity to provide for their families, these workers in the words of Piore (1979) view work 'purely instrumentally'[7]. For workers like Arty who have spent some years working on the farms, yet failed to produce something tangible that they are proud of, let alone worrying parents due to silence as narrated by the respondent earlier on, security work for them can best be described using the concept of ***upward mobility***. In its broadest sense, the concept of upward mobility encompasses a scenario in which an

[7] Viewing wage employment as serving a crucial means through which the goals of the basics of daily lives can be achieved.

individual or a group of individuals move from a lowly ranked position to a better position. Upward mobility in most cases brings with it improved status and power.

Amongst many African cultures in general and the Shona culture in particular, marrying is still regarded as an important cultural issue through which young man of marrying age graduate into adulthood. This transition often comes with improved status, respect and honour. Marrying solidifies relationships that enrich communities and nations by bringing forth new life and new hope. For security guards like Arty, the African adage that 'a man without a wife is like a vase without flowers' holds true. The fact that this respondent managed to pay lobola through money saved from the security jobs, which transcends to improved status in his community indicates the impact that security work has in changing his life. This contradicts the general beliefs that those in precarious employment have limited chances of upward mobility, let alone plan and budget their finances (Standing, 2011).

Whilst the transition from a low paying job to a better paying job that gives one at least an opportunity to plan and save is often regarded as an indication of upward mobility, a new dimension of upward mobility that goes beyond this economic reasoning emerged from the study. The case of a 43 year old respondent who used to sell pirated discs in the streets of Hilbrow attests to this claim. Asked what he has been doing prior to joining the PSI, this respondent had this to say:

> *"I used to make a lot of money when I was selling pirated discs in the streets of Hilbrow. I used to be financially stable. I would work for not more than 6 hours and would get between R500 on a bad day to about R1500 during that short period. The business was really paying me. You see, it would take me less than a week to earn my current monthly salary. I was my own boss and I would work at my own time" (Interview, Lee).*

Basing on the narratives provided by this respondent, I became anxious, wanting to understand why this respondent would leave this kind of activity and work in the PSI where it would take him the whole month to accumulate what needed only a week or less in his old trade. I probed for the rationale behind leaving this informal trading to joining the PSI and he narrated:

"Look my brother, at times it's not all about money but a peace of mind. I struggled to find the reasoning behind making a lot of money yet at the same time you are not a happy man. This informal activity (piracy) is more risky than working in the PSI. I would rarely spend a week without being arrested. It became something I got used to, that I would be arrested at least once a week, spend some few hours behind bars, bribe my way out and then back to the streets again. This is how I can best describe how I used to live. I had given up my Christian values as I was engaging in these illicit activities. I would sell to whoever would buy including material that was unsuitable for certain age groups especially kids such as pornographic discs. As a Christian, I regained moral conscience and I left that trade. Ever since I started working in the PSI, in 2012, I have never been in police cells. I no longer feel guilty that I am exposing children to adult material. I am a father too; I wouldn't want my kids to be exposed to such kind of material. I feel relieved now and I am happy with my current status" (Interview, Lee).

The foregoing narrative from this security guard questions the very concept of upward mobility particularly in material terms. Upward mobility in the case presented in the previous interview was more of a moral obligation through which one found a 'peace of mind' than the accumulation of material gains. By arguing that those in the precariat are known by the things they lack, the different forms of work-related securities (see table 1) Standing failed to acknowledge the fact that those in the precariat can also be understood by the things they do. His arguments on lacking different forms of work-related securities seem to suggest that these workers are only driven by material gains. If those in the precariat as believed by Standing for instance lack income security, it gives the assumption that their interests are strongly motivated by monetary gains, a lack of it will of which lead to different alternative options for securing it, or will lead one into aiming for jobs that yields greatest returns. To borrow from the rational choice theory, a theory of economic action which assumes that individuals are inherently self-interested beings and as such make decisions that yields the greatest gains (Scott 2000), the idea that those in the precariat value economic gains than all aspects of life lead to the conclusion that precarious workers are economic beings.

Lee's case however illustrates that some workers make decisions that are less likely to yield material gains for ethical and moral reasons. Borrowing from Sen (1977), such kind

of behaviour support the idea that human behaviour goes beyond the welfare maximisation framework as proponents of macro-economic thinking would like to believe. Lee's actions can best be described by Sen's idea of commitment in which one places an ethical stance ahead of one's own wellbeing. Desisting from selling adult content material to 'whoever can afford' including children supports the idea that humans have a moral obligation in several spaces that they occupy. It is not only material gains that are the source of security for those in precarious employment as the above case has shown. By desisting from anti-moral and risky-related activities, a certain level of security is realised in one's course of life. This has been the reason why Lee has never been in police custody since 2012, yet prior to this period, when he engaged in illicit dealings, it would be rare for him to spend a week without being apprehended by members of the police force, even though he wouldn't last long because as he attested, he would 'bribe his way out'.

Contrary to Barchiesi's assumptions that work has become irrelevant and has failed to fulfill its promise of emancipation and dignity for the ordinary working class, the arguments and evidence presented so far in this paper indicates that wage employment remains a vital tool through which the needs of migrant security guards are met, including those of their families. For Barchiesi, the existing wave of neoliberalism has rendered irreverent the realisation of a decent life through wage employment. It is the gulf between the proclaimed status of work, its glorification and its reality which is central to Barchiesi's radical approach towards wage employment.

The glorification of wage employment, Barchiesi believes, merely obscures and disguises the manner in which modern employment is a decisive vehicle for poverty, inequality and social exclusion (Barchiesi, 2011b:8-15). Sharing the same sentiments, the findings from a study conducted by Sefalafala on the experiences of outsourced security guards in Gauteng led to similar conclusions adopted by Barchiesi on the relationship between wage employment and the realisation of a decent life. Like Barchiesi, Sefalafala's findings led to the conclusion that there is an existing gap between the imagination of work as a requisite condition to earning a living and the actual reality on the ground, that is its failure to end poverty and material deprivation (Sefalafala 2013: 136).

Provoked by the stance adopted by Barchiesi, I asked the respondents how they perceived wage employment as a vehicle for the realisation of a decent life. All the respondents indicated that wage employment was the main reason they came here, because they believed that is the main available option through which the demands of life are met. One respondent said:

> *"The past ten years in Zimbabwe, we haven't received sufficient rainfall to rely much on agricultural produce. It's even worse these days. It's been a long time since my family produced enough to take us through the year. Livelihoods have been threatened and people seem to be running out of options. I came here to find work so that I can support my family" (Interview, Sam).*

The foregoing quote is supported by the stance taken by Bloch (2008) who asserted that migration for employment to South Africa is regarded as a well-established household poverty reduction strategy. With the prevailing natural catastrophes such as the El Nino phenomenon, this is resulting in very hot temperatures and a prolonged dry spell, a phenomenon that is being experiencing by a number of countries in the SADC region, livelihoods are being threatened. The situation is even worse for agro-based societies like Zimbabwe where communities rely on rain-fed agriculture. Migration for wage employment has been a better option as respondents have indicated that they send remittances back home and they have also managed to establish small income generating projects to supplement the salaries they receive in the PSI.

Highlighting the importance of wage employment as a vehicle for the realisation of a 'decent' life, one respondent narrated the psychological trauma that he experienced for more than two months when he had decided to leave security work because he thought the job wasn't paying him well. He narrated:

> *"Eeeh…my brother, sitting at home, like crime, doesn't pay! I spend about two months staying at home with my brother doing nothing when I had decided to quit this job because I thought it was not paying me enough. My brother was working so he would provide food. Let me warn you, unoona kukosha kwechikorobho kana warasa mvura (you would only realise the importance of a mop the moment you spill some water on the floor). You will realise the importance of what you have when it is gone! I contacted my boss two months later and he told me that he would still give another*

chance. I will never quit again even though the salaries are low, but money is never enough. The more you are given, the more you want" (Interview, Tanya).

The above quote indicates the importance of wage employment amongst migrant security guards. They understand work as an important tool for the realisation of a decent life.

Whilst the concept of a decent life can be appreciated broadly basing on the ILO's standards, an approach that seem to have been adopted by both Sefalafala and Barchiesi, there has not been a clear definition from the two on what constitute a decent life and what does not. The concept is subjective and therefore understanding the concept from a more subjective perspective, a perspective that embraces the perspectives of those to which the concept is purported to apply is crucial. In the words of one respondent;

"You must appreciate the little things that life has to offer. If you have a roof, do not walk naked and do not sleep on an empty stomach, what else would you possibly desire? Why do we have to live as if we never going to die? We will leave all these things (material) when the heaven calls" (Interview, Godknows).

The majority of security guards who used to work in other sectors like agriculture and domestic work (gardeners) stressed the idea that working in the PSI has improved their living standards compared to their previous employments. It is through wage employment that other expectations of life (marriage for instance) have been met in one of the cases highlighted earlier on. Some of these workers have invested in their home countries and therefore they boast of '*having my own home, family and livestock and can go back home and have a peace of mind when the situation becomes unbearable in this country'*. To conclude therefore that wage employment has become irrelevant and has failed to fulfil its goals of emancipation and dignity is to render wage employment useless. Barchiesi's arguments lack a context specific approach since even under the existing neoliberal hegemonic order; there are a lot of workers who still believe in the idea of wage employment to meet their varied socio-economic, political and social objectives. His ideas failed to link past histories (workers' backgrounds) to present realities.

4.2.2 Beyond demeaning stereotypes

I asked Tindo to expound on his experiences as a migrant security guard, I did not expect his response:

> *"I'm a migrant?! No, I'm a security guard..." (Interview, Tindo).*

The findings from the study revealed that the majority of the respondents were more open to be identified as security guards, a working class group, than to be identified as foreign nationals especially on their workplaces. One of the respondents gave a detailed account of how he kept reminding some workers at a construction company where he was stationed that he would prefer them to call him either by his real name or as a security guard. He charged:

> *"Some of these workers at a certain company had a tendency of calling me Mugabe instead of my real name no matter how much I reminded them that I was not comfortable being called by that name because it is not my name. I would prefer them calling me security. Initially, some workers didn't know that I was a foreigner. They only came to realise that I was a foreigner because someone had popularised the Mugabe name. Mugabe is the president of my country and I am a security guard" (Interview, Tanya).*

I probed for the rationale behind preferring to be identified by their occupation instead of their nationality and the reasons became clear. In Shingi's words;

> *"People start treating you differently the moment they realise that you are a foreigner. They call you all sorts of demeaning names and you never know who will be your enemies when disaster strikes"! (Interview, Shingi)*

Intensified globalisation, marked with accelerated flows and , paradoxically, accelerated closures, Nyamnjoh argues, has exacerbated human insecurities and anxieties of both locals and foreigners alike, bringing about an even obsession with citizenship and belonging (ibid,2006). The most striking result has been increasing intolerance of foreign nationals in different countries which is increasingly leading to cases of xenophobic attacks. Cases of the crisis of citizenship and subjugation have been evidenced in countries like Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire and recently South Africa (Nyamnjoh 2006).

In South Africa, a derogatory name, *makwerekere* is used to refer to us black foreign nationals hailing from poor economies who in most cases are perceived as drivers of social ills. The situation is further worsened by the fact that some of these immigrants are undocumented and therefore are portrayed as living and working outside the normative system. Butler contends that the notion of precarity is closely linked to 'norms'. Anyone who does not live within the 'normative system' is therefore more at risk of exclusion, harassment and violence (Butler 2009: ii).

Migrant workers without proper documentations or with contested citizenship statuses do not fall within the 'normative system'. The norm is that they have to be in possession of proper legal documents in accordance with the immigration laws. For this reason (contested citizenship), workers like Shingi prefer to be identified with their occupation instead of their nationality. This brings me to a separate section in which I contest the assumption that those in the precariat do not have an occupational identity.

4.2.3 Occupational identity

> *"Every man's (women's) work, whether it be literature or music or pictures or architecture or anything else is always a portrait of himself" Samuel Butler.*

The above quotation indicates that there is always an 'occupational identity' tag attached to every person who works regardless of their occupation. Depending on the skills that we acquire throughout life's course, our occupations in a general sense portrays ourselves. This can be the reason why we end up falling into different categories, teachers, drivers, doctors, members of the police, and most important in this study, security guards.

Advancing an explicit connection between occupation and individuals' personal and social identity, Christiansen suggested that participation in occupation contributes to one's construction of identity and is the primary means to communicate one's identity, concluding that "when we build our identities through occupations, we provide ourselves with the contexts necessary for creating meaningful lives, and life meaning helps us to be well" (ibid, 1999:547). Like Christiansen (1999), Unruh (2004) made the point that in social settings, people are often defined by what they do.

"When people out there see me donning this uniform, they identify me as a security guard than as a foreigner" (Interview Jah Bless)

The arguments and evidence presented in this section challenges the claims made by Standing that those in the precariat lack an occupational identity. For Standing, a lack of an occupational identity is one of the features that describe those in precarious employment. The precariat, Standing argues, do not possess a secure occupational narrative that they can give and define themselves as they go through life. For Standing, they do not have that belonging to a traditional occupation, a craft or a profession (Standing 2011). A lack of an occupational identity, Standing argues, intensifies a sense of alienation and instrumentality in what they have to do. In this respect, 'actions and attitudes, derived from precariousness, drift towards opportunism' (*ibid*: 12).

Whilst Standing's assumption of those in the precariat lacking an occupational identity may be true particularly for 'jack of all traders' low skilled workers in temporary forms of employment, this can be contested for workers employed in the security industry as they can easily be identified as security guards because of their uniforms. By lacking an occupational identity, Standing's seem to suggest that workers are generally detached from their occupations. I asked one respondent who happened to juggle both vending and security work to elaborate on how he can best describe himself. His response was simple:

"I am a security guard" (Interview, Tindo).

The above quote suits the definition of occupational identity provided by Christiansen (1999) who argues that occupational identity entails the way in which individuals define themselves in terms of the work they do. Put simply, he argues that occupational identity is a repertoire of meanings that are used to make sense of who one is in relation to one's occupation. For Standing (2011), those in the precariat "lack self-esteem and social worth in their work" (p21) and therefore do not have a work-based identity. For him (Standing), this distinguishes the precariat from a "traditional industrial working class" which "engendered a robust pride and dignity that helped it make a political force with a class agenda".

To argue therefore that those in the precariat lack an occupational identity (Standing 2011) is to render some occupations useless. Yet evidence has shown that occupations

like security jobs are still vital in meeting the needs of the general working class. Security guards, unlike other low skilled non-uniformed workers are easily identifiable by their uniforms and the equipment they use at their workplaces, which include button sticks, pepper spray, handcuffs and in some companies, firearms. I explore in the section that follows, the significance of the uniform, its symbol and the interpretations that migrant security guards attach to it as an identifying feature.

4.2.4 The uniform

The uniform identifies group members. According to Joseph and Alex (1972:720) the uniform "assumes the properties of a totemic emblem and embodies the attributes of a group". In other words, the uniform suppresses individuality as one becomes identified as part of a collective, a group donning the same kind of a uniform. Whilst suppressing individuality may come with different psychological implications on an individual, being associated with a specific group, particularly security guards can act to the defense of someone.

> *They (robbers) tried to attack me on my way to work this other day. It was during the day and they were not even bothered by the public. I was wearing my uniform. The moment they saw some of my workmates who were also wearing the same uniform, they left me and ran away. I think they got afraid that my colleagues would help me (Interview, Keny).*

The above quote signifies the importance of the uniform in creating collective identities. In a country where the lives of minority groups are believed to be always at risk due to intolerance from other local members, it is important to note that group solidarity is more important for security reasons. The uniform for migrant security guards creates a sense of 'mechanical solidarity' (Durkheim) among these workers. According to this concept, social cohesion derives from a collective consciousness or a general consensus over fundamental values. What unite these workers are their beliefs in safety in numbers, working in the same industry and fact that they are fellow countrymen. According to Lebra (1976), there is a certain security in being one of many. In fact, if members of a group all wear the same uniform and conform to the groups ideals, one might claim that everyone who isn't in uniform is an "other", an outsider from the body of the uniformed group (ibid). So the members of the group can decide to stand together against that other,

and thus form tighter bonds with their peers as they are all members of "the same". Even in the case of members of the police, it is very unlikely that one would attack one of them and expects not to suffer resistance from his/her co-workers.

Contrary to the general belief that the uniform of a security guard is a source of indignity and tends to strip away the individual's sense of honour and pride (Sefalafala 2013), the findings from this study has revealed that the majority of the respondents had a positive interpretation of the uniform. Of the fifteen interviews that I conducted, twelve respondents were of the view that the uniform identifies them with the working class and therefore symbolised honour, prestige and pride.

> *"When I am in this uniform, I feel very safe. This is my job (security work) and I am proud of it. I represent part of the working class in this country. Just like members of the police force, we also fight crime" (Interview, Keny).*

Another responded had this to say:

> *"You will only understand the importance of this uniform the moment you come across some members of the police raiding communities for criminals and 'illegal' migrants. I came across them one of these days when they were arresting people without proper documents. I was wearing my uniform and walking with my other friends who were dressed in casuals. They stopped and searched us. We did not have proper documents. I told them I was going to work and they believed me and let me go. My other friends were arrested and were later deported" (Interview, Jah Bless).*

When conducting their operations, it seems members of the police target civilians more than other uniformed forces:

> *"I go to town several times when I am not working. In most cases, I am stopped by the police and they search me or ask for my documents. Ever since I started working as a security guard, since 2012, I have never been stopped or searched when I am in this uniform" (Interview, Tindo).*

Even in their communities where they stay, some indicated that they have earned trust and respect from other societal members because, like the police, security guards are also responsible for fighting crime in the country. Some indicated that they are tolerated and

respected in their communities because 'they know the reasons why they are here unlike other migrants who come here to do crime, spread diseases and engage in all anti-social activities'.

The uniform may enhance or denigrate the honor of its wearer. Writing about black policemen in Germany prior to World War 1, Joseph and Alex (1972:719-730) emphasized how these uniformed forces were not considered "human beings" in their communities by the local inhabitants. The effect of the uniform depends therefore upon the relative degree of prestige accorded to its group (ibid). Where the prestige granted a uniform is low (as is the case with security guards Sefalafala 2013), it may represent a source of embarrassment rather than pride (ibid). In some instances however, the uniform was preferred to the casuals as one respondent narrated:

> *"You know, I am not in possession of proper documents. Considering my status, it is the casual clothes that make me feel insecure at times because they make me an ordinary person. When I am in these uniforms, I feel more secure" (Interview, Keny).*

The above quote indicates that identities are social constructs that can be easily manipulated by simply donning some different kind of clothes. This idea can best be summed up by the following statement from Joseph and Alex (1972:726) who believed that;

> *"With his/her uniform on, the wearer…becomes closely identified with the status signified by the uniform and only with this status".*

In other words, security guard uniforms mask personal identities and give insecure workers a certain level of security. This explains why some security guards feel more secure working in this sector, even working under precarious conditions because they believe that in as much as the nature of security work is precarious, it is also the best industry to shield them from public authorities as this respondent noted:

> *"Do I recall someone being arrested on their sites wearing their uniforms? No. But if you ask you how many times I remember people being arrested at their sites or on their way to their sites in construction or retail and catering, I can tell you that it has happened several times basing on stories of some of my friends who were once victims" (Interview, Tindo).*

4.2.5 Citizenship

"We are people of no boarders" (Interview, Jah Bless)

Post-apartheid South Africa has adopted some elements of the apartheid system. Whilst in the former period race was a factor of concern, post-apartheid South Africa has replicated this form of segregation, this time, around the notion of citizenship and belonging. The existing legislations, for instance the Immigration Act (13) of 2002 criminalises 'undocumented' migrants working and living in South Africa.

Of the thirteen interviews used in this research, nine respondents maintained that the fact that they were foreign migrants was partly the reasons why they did managed to gain access to security job. Put simply, their citizenship status was helpful rather than a hindrance to getting a job. I asked one of the respondents to elaborate and he said:

> *"We the Zimbabweans have a reputation of working hard, obedient and can be trusted. Some companies (informal) prefer us than locals because they believe in us. For me, it was even made easier by the fact that I had a relative who worked for this company who linked me with the employer" (Interview, Arty).*

Whilst it is uncontested that driven by the profit motive, employers often prefer cheap labour that is often not entitled to benefits and hence resort to marginalised groups who can easily be exploited, migrant security guards believe that the concept of citizenship places them at a better position to access wage employment which is their main source of livelihood. This has also been the case in other sectors like agriculture and construction. Writing about the experiences of Basotho migrant domestic workers in South Africa, Griffin (2011) observed a similar trend that Basotho migrant domestic workers were often preferred to local women because they were regarded as hard workers and were submissive. In as much as thinkers like Barchiesi would believe that this perpetuate exploitation, a stance that I also appreciate, the concept of citizenship requires a broader perspective, particularly a perspective from those with contested citizenship statuses.

After asking respondents about their views on whether their precarious situations were linked to their legality, different responses emerged. Whist the majority believed that they are in precarious situations despite the strategies and tactics they employ to

navigate precarity, some believed that had they had proper documents, the situation would be different.

> *"If I had proper documents, I would be working for a formally registered company and would also enjoy other benefits like other workers" (Interview, Joe).*

Whilst this view was shared by some respondents, there were others who believed that exposure to exploitation in South Africa has nothing to do with one's legal status and under some circumstances, even nationality is of less concern as long as you an unskilled black person.

> *"Here in South Africa, at times you come to realise that legal status alone is not a guarantee for no-exposure to exploitation. I have seen some people (foreign nationals) abused even though they had proper documents. I work with some South Africans and I am in possession of permanent residency but you are still exploited because of your skin colour. Exploitation knows no nationality as long as you are black and unskilled. I don't really mind though, as long as I can support my family" (Interview, Madala).*

The security guards that I interviewed, particularly those with contested citizenship status were adamant that they did not see anything illegal about being here and working to provide for their families. For them, what can be regarded as illegal has to be the inability to provide for one's family.

> *"I am surprised that they call us 'illegal' immigrants as if we are criminals. Is it crime to work and provide for your family? Is it not supposed to be crime when you cannot provide for your family?" (Interview, Keny).*

Another respondent charged:

> *"We are not boarder jumpers! We are cross borders and we used our own means (illicit) of getting here. Those were the only means suitable for some of us. If you have a passport, you are given about two weeks at the border as if they (customs office) know your reasons of being here. You give us fourteen days at the border; we convert them to as many years as we want, work and provide for our families. They can call us derogatory names but do we care? You arrest us today, deport us tomorrow and*

we will be back again the day after. We are people of no borders!" (Interview, Jah Bless).

For people to understand the driving force behind the migration of Zimbabweans into different sectors in South Africa, the respondents challenged those with negative views towards Zimbabwean migrants to go and spend at least a month in Zimbabwe so that they see things for themselves:

"These people (locals) have to understand the reasons why we are here. But they will never understand because they don't know what the situation is like back home. All they know about Zimbabwe are the things they read on the news or internet. I challenge them to go and stay in Zimbabwe for at least a month then they will understand better. I doubt if anyone would be able to stay that long there. Yes, they will move freely without being bothered about passports or identity documents. Trust me, they will realise that our country is no longer an industrial country but a residential country. We did not come here upon the invitation of any local citizen. We will go back home when we want, like we always do" (Interview, Arty).

The resilience expressed by workers like Arty, a view shared by the majority of them illustrates how workers can be so defensive when their source of livelihood is threatened. The evidence presented in the above quote challenges Barchiesi's arguments that "far from being a vehicle of social advancement and emancipation, wage labor is turning in South Africa into a reality of poverty and social exclusion" (2007:64). Considering that his arguments were centered on formal and unionised workers, this is a different case for low skilled and marginalised workers in informal employment who view wage labor instrumentally, something that they count on for their survival.

4.2.6 The crisis of representation. What crisis?

Those in the precariat, Standing (2009) argues lack a 'voice'-representation security- "because they are denied the opportunity to join trade unions or because they are either 'in service', subordinated in precarious labour, or 'providing services', where associational bargaining is constrained" (2009; 110).

Of the thirteen interviews used in the analysis of data in this research, only one respondent indicated that he belonged to one union (SATAWU) the biggest union in the

PSI. Interestingly, this respondent happened to be in possession of a South African citizenship and worked for a formally registered company (Fidelity). For him, joining a union was something that he had done because some colleagues had encouraged him to join a union for security reasons. Since joining the union, he indicated that he had never experienced a situation that wanted representation:

> *"Sometimes I don't understand why I joined this union. It's a couple of years now. I rarely commit offences at work. They keep deducting from my salary every month (subscription fee). Sometimes I think of withdrawing my membership but you never know what will happen to you in future, maybe one day I will see the relevance of being a member of a union" (Interview, Frank).*

Considering that of all the respondents, only one with a South African citizenship belonged to a union, one can argue that there is a relationship between belonging to a union and one's citizenship status. Workers in formal forms of employment (registered workers) are more likely to have a collective 'voice' or representation than marginalised workers in informal forms of employment. This supports the view that one of the major challenges facing trade unions is organising those in informal forms of employment as is the case with SATAWU (Makgetla, 2007). Globally, unions are bearing the challenge of being unresponsive and irrelevant particularly for those in atypical forms of work (Webster and Von Holdt, 2005). The rise of the precariat, Standing believes, means the end of labourism and is a strong indication that informal workers cannot be organised easily.

For migrant security guards whose legality is questionable, the issue of belonging to a union or having an organisation that represents them was not a '*major issue one can really worry about' (Interview, Tawa).* The majority expressed that they were not even sure if such organisations represent all workers regardless of one's citizenship status. A few respondents (three) who knew about the functions of unions were a bit sceptical and saw little if any relevance of these organisations in addressing the plights of marginalised workers.

> *"I do not think these unions even consider recruiting us. They seem to be concerned about the local citizens. Do we even deserve recognition because we are foreign nationals and some of us do not have proper documents?" (Interview, Tawa)*

Another respondent had this to say:

> *"We came here to work not to be represented. As long as I am working, I worry less about being represented. I heard that they will demand a certain monthly fee (subscription) so that you can be represented. I am not prepared to part with any cent of my salary; otherwise I end up working to be represented instead of providing for my family" (Interview, Sam).*

For migrant security guards who participated in this study, unions are irrelevant and they do little if any to offer solutions to the problems confronted by migrant security guards. The representation of migrant workers by trade unions seems to be a global issue. The migrant workers who participated in a study conducted by Crosthwait (2014) in the Gulf of Mexico did not see the relevance of trade unions that they viewed them with distrust and disdain. For migrant security guards, strategies like capitalising on their structural power through their social networks and to a certain extent, inaction are applied because they are less interested in directly confronting their employers which will likely impact on their source of livelihood. Most importantly, their collective action is rarely shaped by work-related struggles but is shaped by other things that they do beyond the workplace which include religious practices and sporting activities.

Studies that have focused on trade unions and migrant workers (see for instance Penninx and Roosblad 2000) have tended to focus more on the threat that labour immigration had on their own national bargaining structures and the employment and financial interests of their members. According to Waterman (1999), the concept of workers' solidarity is generally closely tied to the nation state and its concept of citizenship. This view is particularly valid considering how migrant security guards are reached by trade unions. The notion of citizenship, although the majority of trade unions claim to represent all workers regardless of class or citizenship, is still central in determining who is represented and who is not.

4.2.7 Conclusion

The foregoing arguments have illustrated how Zimbabwean migrant security guards interpret and understand situations from their own perspective. By having a different interpretation of what constitute precariarity, the evidence presented in this section clearly indicates a disconnect between the academic understandings of precarity and

how precarity is understood and interpreted by migrant security guards in the context of this research. The section has also provided an in-depth understanding of precarity by migrant workers at workplaces and beyond, this linking production and reproduction. In the next chapter, I turn to the strategies and tactics that these workers employ to navigate everyday precarious situations both at workplaces and beyond.

CHAPTER 5

NAVIGATING PRECARITY: STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

'By employing tactics one does not seek to win or stand up to institutional powers, but merely turns the tables on the strong. The individual is opportunistic: he wants to act well in the face of the challenges in life, carry on and hopefully be able to approach the next challenge' (Crosthwait 2014:125).

5.1 Introduction

Notoriously optimistic about the agency of the working class in a capitalist society, Marx predicted that members of the working class would become increasingly subject to common conditions of degrading work and poverty, and increasingly brought into contact with each other through socialized production. Generating a class consciousness of the unjust economic structure, he believed these conditions would propel the industrial working class or proletariat into collective struggles to replace capitalism with socialism. He was however less optimistic about the agency of the unorganised and unpolitical lower classes of society who are not interested in revolutionary advancement, the lumpenproletariat. In contemporary sociological analysis, the legacy of the lumpenproletariat as a marginalised and excluded layer of the working class is apparent in concepts such as the "underclass" and "declass," the "working poor" and "sub-proletariat," and now the "precariat" and the "informal proletariat" (Offe 2011:466). Migrant security guards constitute part of the precariat.

This chapter stresses the importance of working class agency. It explores the tactics and strategies that migrant security guards employ to navigate precarious conditions in pursuit of their varied socio-political and economic interests. Giddens (1987) conceptualizes individuals as knowledgeable reflexive agents who can justify their actions and have the capability to act and react rationally to the problems confronting them. The findings from this section lead to the conclusion that the strategies and tactics employed by migrant security guards are not intended to stand up to institutional powers, but merely to 'turn the tables on the strong' (Crosthwait 2014). I stress the fact that these strategies and tactics help these workers perceive and understand precarity from a different perspective. I do not make an attempt here to discredit mainstream

academic debates on precarity, instead, I present the findings from the perspective of those who experience everyday precarious situations.

Borrowing from Berner (2000), the strategies employed by migrant security guards to navigate precarity are presented as either deliberate or emergent. Whilst deliberate actions are consciously entered into, long-term, and comprehensive, emergent strategies on the other hand are improvised, reactive, and do not result from formal planning. Berner (2000) portrays emergent strategies as "muddling through," as a form of situational action, and a "stepwise process, where learning at each stage informs action for the next step, but where there is no calculated long-term plan or 'deliberate strategy" (ibid.:283). As de Certeau argues, everyday powerless people devise tactics to act within a situation, act by and make do (de Certeau, 1984). Inspired by a perspective that links production and reproduction, the strategies and tactics explored in this section are two-fold; workplace related and beyond the workplace. Using all available ammunition at their disposal, economic, political, social and cultural, these workers are always prepared to do battle with the painful, unpleasant, uncomfortable and the dangerous. In an industry (PSI) that is for workers both inherently risky, dangerous and structurally precarious, survival at any level requires a wide spectrum of coping mechanisms.

5.2 Disguising actions

In his book titled *"The Practice of Everyday Life"* de Certeau gave a classic example of a tactic employed by precarious workers called the "*perruque*", translated as the wig. de Certeau explains that the perruque is the tactic workers use to disguise their own work or activities as work for the employer. He gave an example of a secretary who writes a love letter on 'company time' (de Certeau, 1984:25). Like other tactics, putting on the wig tricks the imposed order.

Multiple examples of this kind of informal resistance emerged from the study. The use of company resources especially time for personal benefits was confessed by almost all respondents. Some respondents confessed that they engage in petty activities like selling cigarettes and airtime on their workstations especially those who operated day-shift. Some would sleep on duty or fake illness just to take a rest.

At one of the sites that sell building material, the security guards would approve the purchasing of unpurchased building material from some clients for a 'tip'. Those who were lucky to work nightshift would connive with thieves and steal the building material. Interestingly, this site became a source of conflict amongst some migrant security guards because it was a site of '*milk and honey*' in the words of one respondent. Everyone would wish to be stationed there. Conniving with criminals is a serious crime but their interpretation was simple:

> *"Mbudzi inodya payakasungirirwa" (a tied goat grazes within its range) (Interview, Joe).*

I struggled to properly translate the Shona idiom into English without diluting its deep Shona meaning. In simple terms, the statement indicates that a person in a tightly controlled situation will only have to devise strategies to benefit from that environment. Whilst their actions were criminal, the respondents indicated that this was the only way they can supplement their salaries because they were lowly paid and rarely get off days to look for other sources of income to supplement their salaries.

> *"You are asked to work every day and you don't have to complain. If you complain, they replace you and give you another site. But why would you complain when you are working at a site like mine because you rarely spend a day or two without pocketing something. Not all sites are the same" (Interview, Shingi).*

The fear that workers like Shingi would be easily replaced is a clear indication of the precarious nature of security work and confirms Standing's claims that those in the precariat lack job security (Standing, 2011). Nonetheless, it is not the possibility that workers like Shingi would lose their jobs that is of concern to him. Instead, it is being shifted from a site that he enjoys a lot of benefits to a site where such benefits are less likely to be enjoyed that is of concern for him. In this regard, one can argue that it is not always the case that those in the precariat lack job security because being transferred from one station to another (which happens to be the nature of security work) is not synonymous with losing a job. Losing a site from which one enjoys a lot of privileges does not entail losing a job because one would still be entitled to their salaries.

5.3 Structural power

Although security services are in high demand across the whole country, as in any other countries, security jobs are more likely to be abundant in winter and during the festive seasons. Many people tend to spend time indoors during the winter period and for those working very long and cold winter nights, the experience is not great. Criminals tend to enjoy this period too because they are aware that security guards do less operations at night so they capitalise on this situation. For some migrant security guards who have never encountered these harsh conditions, they either quit or look for jobs in other industries, fake illnesses, and lie about a death of a family member back home only to avoid working under extreme weather conditions. As a result, more vacancies are created with a few interested individuals to fill them.

The situation highlighted above provides room for the exercising of structural power by migrant security guards. During these periods, the respondents noted that the demand for security services is generally high and therefore employers would avoid risking losing their workforce.

> *"Dismiss me in winter and see if I care! I am saying this because I know very few people would be prepared to work during this period and the employers know that too. Even if you ask for some favours, like a certain pay rise, your plea will be addressed because they don't want to lose you" (Interview, Jah Bless).*

Another respondent narrated an incident in which his supervisor had to go and fetch him in the location because he had lied that he had no money for transport that day.

> *"He (the supervisor) came to the location for the first time to pick me up. I had lied to him that I had no money for transport and that day was very cold. He had tried to call another reliever but unfortunately his phone was off. He then gave me R150 for transport which was never deducted from my pay, something that rarely happens" (Interview, Tawa).*

Asked to elaborate on how he presents his grievances, especially those related to salaries, one respondent had this to say:

> *"You just have to be strategic when you approach these employers. I know the right time to ask for a pay rise. Winter or the festive season is the time. I have done that*

and it has helped. When I first complained, the employer laughed and said I would be easily replaced. I stayed at home the following day and he called me and we resolved the money issue. I then returned to work" (Interview, Arty).

Interestingly, the solidarity among migrant workers was evidenced from the fact that they had agreed, especially those who stayed at the compound, not to link any job seekers with their employer in either winter or during the December holiday. Because their employer relies heavily on these workers' networks, they are less likely to find replacements and they avoid taking risks by hiring employees whose background and intentions they do not know, lest they end up hiring criminals. Recruiting from within their employers (snowball hiring) is often preferred.

"One winter night, the supervisor came to us and asked if we knew of anyone who wanted a job. We told him even if we knew anyone; we wouldn't recommend him because he would still pay him the same salary as ours despite our experience. So he agreed that he would top up our daily rate from R100 to R110 in return for that favour. We could tell he was a bit desperate because some of the guys had gone back home so there were vacant posts" (Interview, Keny).

According to Standing (2011), one of the defining features of those in the precariat is a lack of representation security, that is lacking a collective voice through trade unions. Because the workers interviewed lacked this collective voice, one best way of explaining the actions presented in the above quotes is through the concept of structural power. In '*Organising from the margins*', Chun (2009) assesses how 'lower tier' workers can convert negative forms of marginality into concrete sources of leverage. Her arguments were shaped by Silver's (2003) insights on structural and associational power and Bourdieu's (2003) analysis of symbolic and classification struggles.

The evidence presented in the quotes above are in line with Chun's arguments that in cases of a lack of associational power (worker representation), as is the case with the studied group, marginalised groups can still mobilise other effective strategies to counter structural barriers. Withdrawing labour, a strategy that has also been applied by farm workers particularly during the harvesting season on the farms in Western Cape (Wilderman, 2015), is also applied by migrant security guards when the demand for their

service is high. This strategy has forced employers, under numerous occasions, to succumb to the demands of the ordinary migrant security guards.

Interestingly, these employees had the ability to withhold not only their own labour, but that of other potential employees especially when employers rely heavily on '*snowball recruiting'*. They simply cut the ties between the employers and the potential jobseekers and may use their networks as leverage for negotiating better wages and conditions of work. In Fiske's words, migrant security guards capitalise on "cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers... (1989:37). The evidence presented in this section, as is the case in with other sections suggest that despite operating within an exploitative system, migrant security guards are not passive victims of unseen influences and are, in fact, functioning decision makers and actors in their own lives (Hodson, 2001:50).

5.4 Engaging informal activities

The findings from the study revealed that despite earning relatively low salaries, the majority of respondents engaged in different income generating activities to supplement their incomes whenever opportunities arise. In other words, these workers' livelihoods are not only dependent on wage employment. The various informal activities that respondents engaged in varied with an individual's situation, available options and the strength of one's networks. Respondents engaged in activities such as street vending and working part-time in other sectors. I caught up with one respondent who worked nightshift and sells fruits along one of the streets in Hilbrow and he narrated how he balances security work and his own work as a vendor. He had this to say:

> *People always cry that security work doesn't pay but they do not do anything to supplement their salaries. Look, I make between R150-R250 daily by selling these fruits. You are a university student, do your calculations and add my monthly salary then you will have a rough idea of how much I make in a month (Interview, Sam).*

Figure 2: A security guard selling fruits in Hilbrow



Source: Photo taken by the researcher (11/09/2015)

This security guard showed me his payslip. His net pay was R4 187.64. He indicated that the amount should have been R5 887.83 without overtime and if his overtime hours were added, it amounted to R6 548.50. Having made some simple calculations, I realised that this respondent pockets an average of R8 000 a month in total. Interestingly, this respondent boasted about being an employer himself as he hires a certain lady to mind his business on a part-time basis when he is occupied with overtime work.

For Standing, those in the precariat suffer from employment insecurity and thus an absence of protection against loss of employment (Standing 2011:11). For respondents like Sam, losing a job was the last thing to worry about on his mind.

> *"…at some point in time, you will still lose your job whether you have experience or not. The moment you get a job, you should quickly think of some other things that you will do to generate income because in one way or the other you will still be fired. I am running this project (vending) so even if I get fired today, I will still have a source of income" (Interview, Sam).*

The resilience among migrant security guards can be shown in the sense that they are open to any other part-time jobs that may come their way. Rather than regarding any money-generating activity as beneath them or embarrassing, findings from the study reveals that migrant security guards are more concerned about making ends meet, even when it is a struggle. In circumstances of high unemployment and underemployment, making a living and providing for family is more important than appearances. For this reason, these workers are less interested in the status accorded to some jobs.

Doing part-time jobs, a common phenomenon practiced by the majority of low paid migrant workers is a comprehensive livelihood strategy that provides room for supplementing salaries and thereby meeting life expenses. All respondents acknowledged that they send remittances to their families back home and they visit them during festive seasons. Maintaining contacts with families and friends from home cements mechanical solidarity. A blend of security work and other part-time income generating activities to supplement livelihoods–characterizes many individuals' and families' tactics for navigating precarity.

Whilst the majority of the respondents indicated that they visit home 'regularly' and maintain contacts with their families and friends back home, one respondent however stressed the fact that he was more safe here in South Africa than back at home. He said:

> *"I will stay here for as long as I am alive. My father was bewitched by his family members when I was young and he passed away. I was told I would be the next victim. I did not even complete my high school level. My father would come into my dreams every night and would tell me I wasn't safe, I would die soon. He is the one who advised me to flee my home area. I was young when I came here, I was probably 17. I am in my thirties now and luckily I have kids here. I went to one of the prophets of the Apostolic Faith and once visited a sangoma[8] for cleansing purposes and they both*

[8] A Zulu term used to colloquially describe traditional healers among African societies.

advised me not to visit home because I will die. I don't want to die so I will stay and work here for as long as I am alive" (Interview: Shingi).

The above quote indicates that contrary to work-related insecurities that those in the precariat face (see figure 1) human insecurities cannot only be understood in work-related or economic terms. For respondents like Shingi, working and living under precarious conditions is a better option than returning back home for they fear for their lives. The belief in the existence of witches and witchcraft still strongly persists in Africa and is part of African culture knowledge. According to Kunhiyop (2009), almost all African societies believe in witchcraft in one form or another. Belief in witchcraft is the traditional way of explaining the ultimate cause of evil, misfortune or death (ibid 2009). In the African culture it is believed that witchcraft is the cause of all that is negative and all the problems that happen in the world (Fisiy and Geschiere 1990). Religion has been instrumental in helping workers like Shingi to cope with existing insecurities. I explore the relevance of religion in mediating fear among migrant security guards in the section that follows.

5.5 Surviving precarity through religion

Religion remains a vital force in the lives of precarious workers. The resilience that the majority of the respondents have can be attributed to their different religious beliefs. The majority of the respondents noted that they easily turn to prayers whenever they face difficulties. Showing me his bible, Godknows had this to say;

"This is the best book that you can read and get peace and solace from. At times if I have time, I read it alone and at times, we share the teachings with some of my workmates at this compound" (Interview, Godknows).

Although the respondents interviewed at this 'mini-compound'[9] indicated that they had different beliefs systems and with some indicating that they subscribed to both African

[9] A closed residence area provided by the employer at one of the company's sites

traditional beliefs and Christian doctrines, it was clear that these workers find time to relate their experiences, past and present with biblical stories. The idea of shared values and enduring association is often sufficient to motivate persons to trust and help each other even in the absence of long personal relationships. Religion maintains mechanical solidarity.

From time immemorial, people have engaged different religious practices across the globe. Writing about the role that religion played in the formation and development of seven primary civilisations (Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Indian, Cretan, Chinese, Middle America and Andean), Coulborn (1958) for instance has shown that religion in each of these societies gave its members the courage needed for survival in an unfavourable environment, by giving explanations to certain aspects of the human conditions which could not be explained in a rational manner.

Weber believed that religion offers people answers that provide opportunities for salvation – relief from suffering, and reassuring meaning. It is no surprise why migrant security guards find peace and solace in religion even when working and living under extreme precarious situations. I asked one respondent to relate a situation when his beliefs helped him cope with a difficult situation and he said:

> *"Remember the days of the xenophobic attacks; anything could happen to any foreigner anytime. We were under attack. But you know, as a Christian, I kept believing that nothing would happen to me because I am divinely protected" (Interview, Godknows)*

By relating the empirical world to the super-empirical world religion gives the individual a sense of security in an increasingly changing world. This sense of security of the individual from a functionalist perspective has significance for the society. Since religion helps man to forget the suffering, disappointments and sorrows in this life', social dissatisfaction and social unrest become less frequent and the social system continues functioning.

One can relate the radical approach offered on wage employment by Barchiesi to Marx's radical critique of religion. Whilst Barchiesi views wage employment as a perpetuating exploitation, Marx had the same view about religion. In a capitalist environment, workers,

by selling their labour, "…simultaneously lose connection with the object of labour and become objects themselves. Workers are devalued to the level of a commodity – a thing…" (Christiano et.al, 2008:125) From this objectification comes alienation (Standing 2011).

The ordinary worker in a capitalist environment is made to believe that he or she is a replaceable tool, and is alienated to the point of extreme discontent. Under such circumstances, Marx argues that people's tendency towards religion is used in a capitalist environment as a tool or ideological state apparatus to justify this alienation. Christianity for instance teaches that those who gather up riches and power in this life will almost certainly not be rewarded in the next life ("it is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than it is for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle..." Matthew, 19v24) while those who suffer oppression and poverty in this life, while cultivating their spiritual wealth, will be rewarded in the Kingdom of God. According to Marx, "religion is the opium of the people", and soothes the oppressed and dulls their senses to the pain of oppression. I asked one respondent if he was conscious of the fact that religion was perpetuating their precarious lives and he said:

> *"We care less; no one will ever live forever and will carry their riches with them when they die. Rich or poor, we are all going to die. I would rather be satisfied with the little that I have than having all these riches and perish in heaven" (Interview, Godknows).*

Another respondent was adamant that he was poor because he was not earning much and not living a luxurious life. He charged:

> *"Some people are very poor, the only thing they have is money" (Interview, Shingi)*

For respondents like Godknows and Shingi, material resources cannot be used as a measure of one's class position. According to Standing, those in the precariat are identified by the things that they lack, which in most cases are understood from a work-based perspective.

5.6 Provision of unpaid labour

The respondents I interviewed in Pretoria who working for one unregistered PSC confessed that they had, at some point in time volunteered to work without pay for a day or two for different reasons. One would wonder why these workers would volunteer to

provide their labour for free under circumstances that requires full compensation. Having seen this practised several times by my fellow workmates, I once vowed I would never provide my labour for free. One would never understand why workers at times provide their labour for free until you are pressed in a situation in which the provision of your services for free will be the only better option. In August 2014 on my way to work, I got stuck along the way due to transport problems. I switched my phone off to cut communication with my supervisor for I was convinced that he would call and would never borrow my explanation. When I got to my station an hour later, the supervisor had already replaced me with someone else. So many questions rushed in my mind. What if he fires me? What if he asks me to report for duty the following week? How would I manage to survive without this source of income? On this day, I begged to retain my post, even if it meant providing my labour for free. Realising how desperate I was, the supervisor dismissed the reliever and allowed me to work, but at no pay! It was better, I thought, than going back home and spending the whole day doing nothing. At least I would still be having my job the following day.

I realised that I wasn't the only person to have provided my labour for free, under pressing situations like these. This is a trend peculiar among insecure migrant security guards. This strategy is used as a sign of showing loyalty, commitment and hard work to please the bosses. Borrowing from Smith, working in unpaid positions provides workers a way to "establish themselves as good workers, employees who can be trusted by managers and employers" (Smith, 2010:291). In a context of high competition among the working class, one of the defining features of contemporary labour markets, this strategy benefits both parties. On the part of the employees, this provides room for job security and on the employers' part, it is highly profitable and coerces the prospective employee into a totally asymmetrical relationship–one in which employee rights are usually laid aside.

Concurring with Standing (2011) the exchange of free labour for job security is an indication of the extent of insecurity those in the precariat face. However, a different perspective can be drawn from such actions:

> *"At times they think we are very desperate when we sacrifice some hours or a day for no compensation. However, we have established good relationships through these*

actions. I am among the first people to be conducted for overtime work because they can rely on me. If you work overtime, you get paid more" (interview, Tawa).

Another respondent said:

"Look, I have so many friends and relatives who got this job in this company through me. If I introduce my cousin, friend or any relative to my boss and ask if he can offer him a job, he would make arrangements and hire him. It is because the employer understands me better and trusts me" (Interview, Tanya).

The illustration of workers' strategic embracing of close relationship with their employers identified in the previous cases is not something new amongst migrant workers. In her study about the experiences of Basotho migrant domestic workers in South Africa, Griffins (2011) observed that the employment relation was particularly more important than other aspects of their work, including wages (ibid, 92). Presenting a culture of 'submissiveness' (ibid), or in Jack Cock's (1989-84-87) words, 'mask of deference' the migrant security guard, particularly those with contested citizenship status is confident of keeping his work and retaining it even if he is to go back home during the festive seasons and is also able to widen his social networks particularly by helping others find work in this sector. I shall dwell much on networks in the section that follows.

5.7 Networks, networking and networked

Reliance on social ties as a coping mechanism is a prevalent strategy employed by the majority of Zimbabwean migrant security guards. A combination of both strong and weak links among migrant security guards is a common feature in the PSI and respondents indicated that they appropriate these networks to their own means to cope with different situations. Finding a job in a highly competitive labour market as low skilled foreign migrant is generally a daunting task particularly when one is not connected. Unlike skilled migrants (e.g. engineers and doctors) whose skills are in high demand in South Africa, foreign migrants have to rely more on personal ties to secure employment.

The majority of the respondents who participated in this study expressed that they found the security job as a result of 'knowing someone who was working in the same industry'. In my case, I got the security job after being linked with a friend who worked for that

company for almost five years. I realised I was not the only person who capitalised on these personal ties:

> *"My uncle worked for this company so when he came home for the Christmas holiday, he asked if I would join him when he come back. Initially, I did not want to take risks, like coming here and spending too much time without doing anything. He assured me I would start working for this company the earliest time possible. As you can see, we are staying together at this compound. We share everything here, food, clothes and this allows us to budget and send remittances back home" (Interview, Shingi).*

Whilst some respondents noted that they relied more on family ties, others were quick to note that they had friends who helped them find a job and they had known each other from back home.

The evidence presented in the above quote support the network theory with its emphasis on the importance of interpersonal ties among migrants in general and labour migrants in particular. According to Massey et al (1993:448), sets of interpersonal ties connect migrants in their origin and destination countries through ties of kinship and shared community origin.

Close friends and family members, Smith and Powel (2005) argues, have access to the same contacts and information. This explains why the majority of the workers I interviewed came from the same communities back home and had a history of interpersonal relationships even before they came to work in South Africa. The majority of migrant workers particularly those who find their way into the PSI rely much on personal connections rather than through formal channels. By law, foreign migrants without permanent residence status are not allowed to work as security guards in South Africa.

In countries like the United States, United Kingdom and China among others, research has also shown that a majority of job seekers secure work through information gathered through their social network ties (Smith and Powell, 2005). Employers also benefit from hiring through these networks, a strategy that can better be known as *snowball hiring*. Writing about Mexican migrants in America, Rodriguez observed that employers who hire through social networks of their immigrant workers "save on the costs of managing

and maintaining a labour force, as the labour costs are reduced to mainly paying for work performed" (Rodriguez 2004: 454-455 cited in Smith and Powel 2005).

Considering the nature of security work which include among others, the protection of property from theft, employers particularly of unregistered companies in the PSI have a strong motivation not to hire strangers. Instead, they prefer dependable employees who have been vouched for by others (Smith and Powell, 2005). This suggests that there is a certain level of trust between the employer and the migrant security guards. On the part of the employer, they hire new recruits through these networks because they can be trusted. For migrant security guards, they can bring stranded relatives to their employers because they believe they will be hired. In other words, there exist a symbiotic and mutually exclusive relationship between the employer and the employee. By suggesting that there exist minimal trusting relationship between the precariat and capital (Standing, 2011:19), Standing overlooked the relevance of such ties particularly in a sector like the security industry.

The respondents I interviewed at the compound formed a visibly well-knit migrant community and share some resources together and engage in other informal sporting activities together which enhances their group solidarity.

> *"We are a family, we are more like brothers. We try and help each other in any way possible. When we are in a foreign land, we are a family. If I get sick here, I get help from the people that I stay with. You will never sleep on an empty stomach" (Interview, Godknows).*

Basing on general observations and narratives provided by the respondents at this compound, one can argue, from a Durkheimian perspective, that there is a strong sense of community, one built upon some form of mechanical solidarity. According to Giddens (2008) mechanical solidarity entails a strong sense of collective consciousness built around identifying with the same cultural norms and values, beliefs and lifestyles. In this research, this was enhanced by the fact that the respondents were working for the same company, experience relatively similar precarious conditions and were of the same nationality. Their group solidarity was cemented by their religious beliefs and daily engagements with different activities including sport (see figure 3 below).

Figure 3: A team of security guards playing soccer after work



Source: Photo taken by the researcher (13/10/2015)

Respondents also had their own money-saving schemes *(mukando*) which were strictly amongst themselves. As denizens (Standing 2011), the majority of these workers do not have access to formal credit schemes in the country and cannot open their own bank accounts due to their contested citizenship status. Whilst they can use the *chimukidis* (see section 5.8) to blind some members of the police and their employers, they cannot use the same documents for opening bank accounts and accessing credits. The informal money-saving schemes established by these workers provide room for budgeting and in many instances; the majority of the respondents have shown that they have managed to start some small projects back home to sustain their families.

> *"We do not earn much here, if you don't plan with the little that you get, you will never do anything because you are likely to get broke soon after every pay day. This scheme (money-saving) at least provides you an opportunity to plan and budget. We are five and everyone contributes R500 a fortnight because that is how we are paid by our employer. So when your turn comes, you will be having something better. The majority of us here have managed to buy some livestock and start small business projects back home" (Interview, Arty).*

Network ties, evidence has shown, provide a number of benefits to the respondents. In their study on Korean immigrants in California, Light and Bonacich (1988) noted that these immigrants formed rotating credit associations, pooled their limited financial capital and this ensured that each participant accumulated enough to start their own business.

The idea of joining the money-saving scheme was however not embraced by all respondents.

> *"Mmmmmmm…its very tricky, what if I either get fired or get arrested and deported before reaping the benefits? I just don't want to take risks" (Interview, Joe)*

Relationships among migrant security guards are not always driven by group solidarity. Instead, respondents like Joe are conscious of the volatile environment that they are living in such that they avoid taking risks. His relationship to other migrant workers, one may argue, is best driven by utilities than by emotions. This explains why he rarely contacts any of his workmates when he goes home for the holiday, only to contact his colleagues when he wants assistance or to inquire about the situation at work.

The ability of individuals to influence their success is generally glossed over in academic debates on precarity. Whilst literature on precarity emphasises on what precarious workers are and what they are not (Standing 2011, Barchiesi 2008), there is little room for agency in explaining how precarious workers navigate precarious conditions through their reliance on interpersonal ties and networks.

5.8 Illicit improvisation

> *"The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing" Archilochus*

Giddens (1987) conceptualises individuals as knowledgeable reflexive agents who can justify their actions and have the capability to act and react rationally to the problems confronting them. Surviving in a system that is designed to marginalise some individuals on the basis of citizenship status, skill and competence requires improvising strategies to confront and survive within such a system. One of the strategies employed by migrant

security guards is the use of *chimukidi.*[10] This is a group name that is basically common particularly among those whose legality is contested. These documents are professionally designed and they look genuine and are used to blind some members of the police or the employers. The most common *chimukidis* are asylum documents, fake permits and security training certificates showing 'attained skills'. Showing me one laminated and fraudulently certified copy of an asylum document, one of the respondents said:

> *"You cannot tell if this is genuine or not, can you?" (Interview, Arty)*

The document was neatly laminated, looked original and the fraudulent stamp that was used to certify the 'originality' of the document from the 'commissioner of oaths' would cast doubts about the authenticity of the document. Several other respondents indicated that they have used the *chimukidis* several times and provide fake security training certificates and CVs with fake security experience when they were asked about their competency. Although the use of fake asylum documents was more prevalent among those with contested legal status, it was not the case with migrant security guards whose status was legal. Two respondents that I interviewed in Johannesburg who were working for registered PSCs expressed that they were using some documents that were not theirs.

> *"I am using my brothers' documents. He came here in 1995 and by then, it wasn't really hard to secure a national identity document. He passed away back home some years ago" (Interview, Sam).*

Another respondent indicated that he was also a beneficiary of the country's democratic transition following the attainment of independence in 1994 as the government opened up opportunities for the black foreigners to be part of the South Africa citizens by offering them permanent residency status.

[10] A chimukidi is a popular name used by Zimbabwean migrant workers to refer to a forged document.

> *"I was among those who benefited from the government program soon after independence. It was not difficult to attain a national identity document. These days, you struggle to get even a work permit if you are not skilled in any profession" (Interview, Madala).*

In line with the Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority, the regulatory body established by the act of parliament to regulate employment activities in the PSI, foreign migrants without permanent residency status are not allowed to practice as security guards in South Africa. However, the use of *chimukidis* manifests the agency of not only Zimbabwean migrant security guards but also different workers in different sectors. In her study about how women cope in response to masculine occupational culture and the physical demand of underground work in the mining sector for instance, Benya (2009) noted that fraudulent stamps were acquired to pass the Heat Tolerance Screening (HTS) stage, one of the prerequisites before job allocation. Because women would fail the HTS due to a number of reasons like being overweight, underweight, menstrual periods or breastfeeding, the acquisition of the fraudulent HTS stamp would certify them 'fit' to work in the mines.

Fake and forged illicit documents are produced and used within a system that makes them necessary. To borrow from Srivastava (2012:87), "cultures of copying are part of networks of disorder"–faking takes place in a disordered and dysfunctional system but also has an ordering effect. These forged, created, 'authenticated' and real-but-purchased documents illicitly done in Marabastat in Pretoria and Hilbrow in Johannesburg allow the holder to appear fully legitimate, and in that sense the documents become true and efficacious (Taussig, 2003:28). The migrant security guards have recognised the risks and benefits of engaging in an illegal system that affords them a partial status of 'legality' and 'competency'. Sadly, literatures on precarity seem to focus on conditions that threaten life in ways that appear to be outside of one's control.

5.9 Masculinities and sexualities: erotic capital at play

In a society where the incorporation of low skilled black foreign migrants is a struggle, migrant security guards find alternative ways of being accepted, tolerated and appreciated. One such strategy employed by some of the respondents interviewed in the study is the use of their sexualities. Two respondents indicated that with the help of their

masculinities and sexualities, they managed to establish relationships with local women who have helped them understand a number of local languages and also ensured their safety in the community.

> *"I have a South African woman with whom I have two kids with. I haven't paid the lobola yet but this woman has been too good for me. I can speak fluent Pedi and a bit of Zulu. She taught me these languages including even how to dress. I have blended well with the local environment and the majority of people in my community think I am one of their own" (Interview, Shingi).*

Another respondent who was in a relationship with one local woman narrated how he had escaped several attacks in his community because he was recognised as a 'husband' of one of the local woman.

> *"My first days in the location (Soshanguve) were a bit hectic. I was new in that area. My girlfriend had asked me to move in and stay with her. At times I would dismiss late at work so I would meet some guys in that location who would threaten me. They would shout at me 'pfutsek wena grigamba[11]'. I was new in that area so they didn't know me. It was after one weekend when I was going for shopping with my girlfriend when I met them. I thought they would shout at me again but they didn't. Instead, they greeted us and from that day, we became friends. Whenever they see me now, they call me 'in-law'. I feel safer now that I have been incorporated in this community" (Interview, Keny).*

I asked these respondents whether these relationships were really genuine or utility driven. The statement '*kuedza kukwana kwana*' was used to describe these kinds of relationships. The statement literally refers to a situation in which one tricks his way into an environment he/she doesn't fit due to different reasons. The individual identifies gaps that will make him/her be part of a situation. The relationships benefit both parties and

[11] Another derogatory name synonymous with makwerekwere used to refer to black foreign immigrants in South Africa hailing from poor economies.

according to these respondents, they believe they are appreciated because of their physical attractiveness as well as their ability to provide for these women. In other words, they trade their *erotic capital* for safety and security in their communities. As denizens with limited rights (Standing, 2011), they also, through these relationships access some things that they would not have accessed had they not been in these relationships. For instance, their partners can acquire credits facilities on their behalf. In Keny's case, he boasted about having a new cell phone and some clothes on credit using his girlfriend's account.

These kind of relationships, one can argue can best be understood within the social exchange theoretical perspective. With its roots in cultural anthropology, neoclassical economics and psychology, this theoryis based on an assumption that people participate in relationships only if they find that the relationships provide profitable outcomes (Cook and Emerson, 1978). An individual judges the attractiveness of a relationship by comparing the profits it provides against the profits available in alternative relationships. For respondents like Shingi who have vowed never to return back home due to superstitious beliefs, such kind of relationships work to their advantage.

> *"I wouldn't be enjoying all these benefits had I been in a relationship with, say, a foreign woman migrant" (Interview, Shingi).*

This however does not suggest that these relationships benefit men than women. Such benefits can best be described within the context of reciprocity in which both parties benefit.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has stressed the relevance of working class agency among migrant security guards in their pursuit of varied socio-economic and political objectives both in the workplace and beyond. The evidence presented in this section has shown that the strategies and tactics adopted by migrant security guards to navigate precarious living and working conditions are not meant to stand up to institutional powers, but merely to 'turn the tables on the strong (Crosthwait, 2014). These strategies and tactics are either deliberate or emergent. The next and final chapter concludes this research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This section concludes this research report basing on a reflection of the research questions and objectives vis-à-vis the research findings. This research report aimed to document an understanding of precarity by Zimbabwean migrant security guards and strategies and tactics employed thereof to navigate precarious situations. Grounded in a phenomenological perspective, the findings documented in this research report are a reflection of the views of the targeted population group (Zimbabwean migrant security guards) purposively selected in Gauteng province. Although the findings may not be universally applicable for all working classes in different sectors as they are a reflection of a group of Zimbabwean migrant security guards who participated in this study, one can argue that these reflections may speak to the views that low skilled marginalised workers who treat wage employment instrumentally, workers who often find themselves at the bottom ends of labour markets, such as labour immigrants, have on precarity. The arguments presented in this research can be used as a departure point for extending debates on precarity, using various cases and different approaches.

The conclusions reached in this study are shaped to a larger extend, by two polar-positioned theorists, Barchiesi and Standing. In as much as these theorists presented insightful ideas on precarity, Barchiesi can be credited for looking beyond the workplace. The duo, like other academics whose literature on precarity was used to shape this study, seem to concur that the notion of precarity has mainly gained attention in this contemporary neoliberal era. Whilst Barchiesi believes in the idea of a post-work politics which moves beyond wage employment as evidenced by his radical stance towards wage employment, which he views as nothing but exploitative, exclusionary and something that should not be counted on if 'decent lives' are to be realised, Standing is more liberal in his approach. Standing's arguments point to the fact that wage employment is still relevant in a capitalist economy. It is however the nature of work that precarious workers experience that is of concern for Standing (see table 1). The formalisation of work, i.e.

improvements on different forms of labour security which include among others, representation security, income security and employment security would thus improve the status of precarious workers.

Whilst I agree with Barchiesi's arguments that understandings of precarity should go beyond insecure employment to include the social conditions that people experience across their life courses (Barchiesi, 2011a), I challenge, with the aid of evidence presented in this report, his radical approach towards wage employment which he believes is exclusionary, exploitative and hence cannot be regarded as a vehicle for the realisation of a decent life in a capitalist economy. In as much as wage employment in a capitalist environment is exploitative due to different interests between capital and labour, one cannot overlook the fact that wage employment, as this study has shown, remains an important vehicle for upward mobility for marginalised groups who occupy bottom ends of labour markets such as low skilled labour migrants. For these workers who treat work instrumentally, wage employment resembles dignity, manliness and pride. Most importantly, it provides them an opportunity to meet their varied socio-economic and political objectives.

Perhaps, Barchiesi's findings were shaped by the group of workers that he studied-organised workers in formal forms of employment and workers who are not discriminated on the basis of their citizenship. For migrant workers in general and Zimbabwean migrant security guards in particular, wage employment remains their main source of livelihood, a central vehicle for the realisation of a 'normal' life that is interpreted by them. Understanding how wage employment is interpreted by different working classes requires an approach that goes beyond generalisations and homogenises all workers as if workers are a homogeneous group. Some workers are more precarious than others and hence an approach that attempts to homogenise workers without considering variables like life histories (backgrounds), citizenship, employment sectors among others is sociologically and theoretically toxic.

The findings of this study do not seem to romanticise migrant security guards as an exceptional group devoid of working and living under precarious conditions. Taking a cue from Standing's indicators of a decent work as should be the case under industrial citizenship (see appendix 1) it is clear that the majority of these indicators clearly apply

to migrant security guards. Standing (2011) argues that those in the precariat lack adequate income-earning opportunities, can easily be dismissed, lack opportunities for upward mobility, are not protected against accidents and illness at work, have limited opportunities to gain skills, are not assured of a stable income and do not possess a collective voice in the labour market. The findings from the study seem to concur with the majority of these defining features of the precariat.

It is however their interpretation of these insecurities that forms the basis of the arguments presented in this research report. Contrary to claims made by Standing that those in the precariat lack an occupational identity, it emerged from the study that security guards in general and Zimbabwean migrant security guards in particular in the PSI can easily be identified as security guards because of their uniforms and other equipment's that they use and thus to argue that those in the precariat lack an occupational identity (Standing, 2011) is to render some occupations useless. More so, security jobs, the study has shown, masks other forms of identities such as citizenship statuses and under many circumstances, protect individuals from potential harm and violence particularly from members of the police and some societal members who appreciate the contributions that security guards make in combating crime and violence.

Contrasting Standings' claims that precariously employed workers' actions are impervious to the 'shadow of the future' (2011:12), the findings from this study reveal that Zimbabwean migrant security guards view their current situation as temporary and are more concerned about their long-term security including that of their families. It is for this reason that these workers invest more in long-term sources of security which include among others land acquisition, livestock, family and societal relations and some income generating projects that are run by their families back home whilst they labour in the PSI. Writing about labour, livelihoods and the decline of work in post-apartheid South Africa, Scully (2013) also reached to the same conclusion that precarious workers are conscious about their future and as such, they invest in this future through various means.

Another striking revelation that emerged from the study is that migrant security guards' collective action is not generally centred on work as generally presented in precarious literature. To borrow from Standing for instance, those in the precariat lack representation security, a collective voice in the labour market. For migrant security

guards however, this study has shown that collective action is mainly centred on religion, sport and nationality among other variables. Interestingly, literature on precarity rarely captures these dynamics, linking collective action to work-related struggles. It is for these reasons that these workers are more sceptical of trade unions and questions their relevance in addressing the challenges that they face in their daily lives. If these challenges can be addressed beyond work-related collective action, as they are very often less interested in confronting capital, the respondents questioned the rationale behind wasting time focusing on irrelevant issues like joining trade unions.

In tandem with the foregoing, this study has unearthed a different form of structural power employed by migrant security guards. The strategic exercise of structural power which they draw from the control of labour supply through their networks, this study has shown; coerce their employers into succumbing to some of their work-related demands. This form of power (structural) is mainly exercised during winter and festive periods like Christmas holidays. Because of the nature of security work which requires one to work in open spaces and do routine patrols, many people avoid working in this sector during extreme weather conditions as is the case in winter. As such, some workers look for other options like working in other sectors where they are not exposed, to a large extent, to extreme weather conditions since they work in closed spaces such as in the retail sector.

Whilst others resort to changing sectors, some prefer to go back home and spend time with their families as is the case during Christmas holidays. There is a relatively high demand of labour during these periods in the PSI. Knowing very well that their employers rely on their networks for accessing new recruits (snowball recruiting), the study has shown that migrant security guards, who in this case act as intermediaries, capitalise on their position and turn these networks to their benefits. By controlling labour supply, they determine who should be hired and under what conditions. They often use new recruits as leverage for improved working conditions including salaries. Because they are constantly flaunting the law, fly-by-night security companies rely on their employers' networks instead of hiring through formal channels.

The strategies and tactics employed by migrant security guards to overcome insecurities are often covert, hidden and are rationally timed and are not intended to disrupt power structures like the state and capital, but instead, to survive within these structures. It is

for these reasons that these workers engage in strategies like inaction, provide free labour, and use fake documents among other strategies just to survive within structures. Like other migrant workers and subordinate classes working and living in South Africa and beyond, these strategies and tactics are strategically employed so that they do not jeopardise their main source of livelihood, wage employment.

By targeting marginalised workers in the global South, this study has challenged precarious literature, the majority of which is Eurocentric (see for instance Standing, 2011) and has provided a different perspective, a perspective that emanated from the subjective experiences of the workers who experience and interpret existing conditions differently. Marginalised workers in the global South in general and migrant security guards in particular, this study has shown, believe that low paying jobs are better than no jobs at all and the study has indicated that upward mobility does not only entails material or monetary benefits. Improvements in one's social or political status also embraced the concept of upward mobility. Considering that the respondents' backgrounds and life histories were more precarious than the existing situation that they find themselves in, migrant security guards in South Africa understand and interpret the concept of precarity differently.

At a methodological level, this study has shown that there are several implications faced when conducting a study on a particular group to which one is/was a member of. In as much as this may aid accessibility, rapport and trust among a plethora of issues, this may also be a methodological challenge. Having worked with some of the respondents who participated in this study, it emerged that certain levels of suspicion were noted which culminated in some of the respondents deciding to withdraw their participation because they felt this researcher no longer shared similar interests with them and hence had ceased to be one of their own.

This qualitative research has interrogated the disconnects between the major academic understandings of precarity and the way precarity is perceived, understood, interpreted and responded to from the perspective of those who are prone to more precarious lives-Zimbabwean migrant security guards in South Africa's PSI. The findings illustrated in this study illustrate a connection between precarious backgrounds and life histories and present realities. Linking the past and the present, the migrant security guards who

participated in this study believed that despite some challenges that they come across both at workplaces and beyond, they find themselves in relatively better positions from their own interpretation of life in general.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics clearance certificate

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Murahwa

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H15/06/60**
PROJECT TITLE	Rethinking precarity: Investigating immigrants' understanding of and responses to precarity in the private security industry. A case study of Zimbabwean migrant security guards in Pretoria
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mr B Murahwa
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Sociology/
DATE CONSIDERED	26 June 2015
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	02 July 2017

DATE 03 July 2015 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr B Scully

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet

My name is Brian Murahwa. I am an enrolled for a MA degree in Labour Policy and Globalisation at the University of Witwatersrand. I have decided to study the understandings of and responses to precarity by Zimbabwean migrant security guards in the Private Security Industry. The full title of my research is: *'Rethinking precarity: understandings of and responses to precarity by Zimbabwean migrant security guards in South Africa's PSI in Gauteng Province.'* I am inviting you to participate in this study. I want to find out about your understandings of precarity the responses you employ to navigate precarious situations both at workplaces and beyond as foreign migrants working in the PSI.

As part of this study, I would like to interview you. Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue for any reason any time. I would like to tape record the interviews which I would type out with your permission. All the information will be kept safe in accordance with the University of Witwatersrand rules. In writing up this information, I will use pseudonyms to protect your identities. There are no monetary rewards for your participation in this study. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will help me understand this important matter sociologically.

Thank you for considering my request. If you agree to participate please sign the informed consent form below. If you require any information, you are free to discuss with me any time or you can contact my supervisor Dr Ben Scully at the Sociology Department, University of Witwatersrand (Ben.Scully@wits.ac.za, 011-717-4331).

Brian Murahwa (mrahwa@gmail.com, 0612459771)

Appendix 3: Informed Consent form

I hereby agree to participate in the research project conducted by Brian Murahwa, a Masters student at the university of the Witwatersrand entitled *'Rethinking precarity: understandings of and responses to precarity by Zimbabwean migrant security guards in South Africa's PSI in Gauteng Province.'* I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so freely. I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary.

I agree that the interview may be tape recorded and typed out. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity. I am aware that there are no monetary rewards with regard to my participation. I have been informed that the findings of the study are strictly for academic purposes and will be kept safe by the researcher. If I have any questions, I am free to contact the student researcher or his supervisor. I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, and have been acquitted of its contents. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature ----------

Interviewer's signature ----------

Date ----------

Appendix 4: Interview guide

My name is Brian Murahwa and I am a Masters student in Labour Policy and Globalization at the University of Witwatersrand. I am studying Zimbabwean migrant security guards' understanding of and responses to precarity in the PSI in Gauteng Province. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. In an attempt to maintain your anonymity, your name will not be recorded. Furthermore, let me inform you that you have the right not to answer any question on the interview and you are welcome to withdraw from the interview at any time. More so, let me clarify to you that there are no immediate monetary benefits for your participation in this study. The outcomes of the study will be used for academic purposes as indicated in the consent form. Once again I thank you for agreeing to participate. I will begin the interview by asking you a few closed questions, and then I will ask you some open ended questions regarding your understandings of and responses to precarity. If there is a question that you do not understand, please ask for clarification**.**

Biographical Information

1. How old are you?
2. What is your marital status?
3. Which languages do you speak?
4. How long have you been living in South Africa?

Educational Profile and Working Experience

5. What is your highest educational qualification?
6. Before you came to South Africa were you working and in what capacity?

Entering the labour market

7. Can you please explain why you came to South Africa?
8. Did you have any friends or relatives here?
9. How long did it take you to find a job?
10. Have you ever applied for amnesty documents?

11. Please explain how you got a job here in South Africa?

12. Is this your first job here in South Africa? If not would you to tell me about your experiences on your previous workplace(s)? Why did you leave?

13. How difficult is it to get a security job?

14. How difficult is it for someone to take over your job?

15. Are you afraid of losing your job?

16. Do you have a contract of employment? If so what does it say?

Work experiences

17. For how long have you been working for this company?

18. Are you affiliated to any trade union? Please give details.

19. Can we talk about health and safety issues in your company?

20. How much do you earn per month?

21. Do you earn the same amount every month?

22. What do you think about your salary?

23. Are there any other benefits you get from the company?

24. How do you supplement your salary?

25. Have you ever been promoted at your company or any other company in South Africa?

26. How do you express your grievances with your employers?

27. Do you think that wage employment is important? If yes, why, if no why?

Working conditions

28. How do you see the job of being a security guard?

29. How do you describe your working conditions?

30. What are some of the challenges you face at work?

31. Does the work you do have any negative effect on your health?

32. Do you feel safe at work?

33. What equipment do you keep with you for guarding?

34. Has there been a robbery or attempt in your presence?

35. What did you do?

36. What would you do if they come with a gun, knife?

37. Let us talk about your uniform as a security guard. What does it signifies?

Resistance

38. How do you resolve grievances with your employers?

39. What organizing strategies do you employ either individually or collectively?

40. Are you a member of any societal organization?

41. How best can you describe your relationship with your Zimbabwean workmates?

42. How do you spend your time when you are not on duty?

Community experiences

43. Do you feel integrated in the community?

44. Have you ever had any misunderstanding with the police? If so, how was it solved?

45. Do you participate in any community activities?

46. How best can you describe your relationship with other societal members?

47. Do you feel safe in your community?

Appendix 5: Participants

Name of Interviewee (pseudonym)	**Age**	**Interview date**
Madala	52	11/09/2015

Tindo	34	26/06/2015
Joe	35	20/07/2015
Tawa	34	10/08/2015
Godknows	37	10/08/2015
Jah Bless	29	12/08/2015
Shingi	38	16/09/2015
Arty	29	19/09/2015
Sam	39	11/09/2015
Tanya	41	13/10/2015
Keny	43	13/10/2015
Frank	46	17/09/2015
Lee	47	03/11/2015