

CHAPTER SEVEN

STRATEGIES FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVIVAL

INTRODUCTION

West African immigrants appear to be trapped and excluded from the socio-economic opportunities that could benefit them in South Africa. Against their aspirations and hopes, the situation in South Africa is not as they had imagined. Xenophobic hostility, discrimination, the South African affirmative action, and the inability to work or study have forced West African immigrants to exploit different means of economic survival in the country. These immigrants adopt different strategies to ensure their socio-economic survival in the country. These strategies include engaging in small businesses and other activities outside the margins of the law. This Chapter argues that, although West African immigrants in South Africa suffer from xenophobia (West-a-phobia), discrimination and exclusion, they resist and exploit the situation to their own advantage.

‘West-A-Phobia’ is the term used in the previous Chapter to describe the fear and hatred of West African immigrants in South Africa. In order to resist the negative effects of ‘Westaphobia’, West African immigrants have created their own socio-economic order, which enables them to succeed despite their exclusion in the country. This Chapter illustrates how from an economic point of view, West African immigrants survive ‘Westaphobia’, in South Africa through engaging in different activities, including those outside the margins of the law. The first section of this Chapter examines the factors that contribute to immigrants’ economic success despite the fact that they suffer from discrimination and exclusion in South Africa. The second section of this Chapter will examine immigrants’ activities outside the margins of the law. This section will argue that, immigrant activities outside the margins of the law are an everyday resistance practice common amongst marginalized immigrants.

Success through exclusion

There is abundance of literature in South Africa on immigrants’ entrepreneurs and their contributions to the South African economy (Cohen, 1991; McDonald *et al.*, 1999;

Plender, 1986; Rogerson, 1997a). Little has been researched on how immigrants survive the harsh realities of xenophobia and discrimination in South Africa. The much-researched works on African immigrants in South Africa are centered on immigrants as crime perpetrators (Minaar and Hough, 1996; Leggett, 1998 and 1999), immigrants as entrepreneurs and better educated than those from SADC countries (Hussein, 1993 and 1995; Rogerson, 1997a; Peberdy and Rogerson, 2002), and/or immigrants as drug dealers and in prostitution (Leggett, 1998; Leggett, 1999). How immigrants who do not fit into these categories survive exclusion and discrimination in the country is very much under-researched in South Africa. Elsewhere, Waldinger *et al* (1990: 35) observed on how immigrants survive discrimination and exclusion:

Immigrants may be vulnerable and oppressed, but, because they can draw on connection of mutuality and support, they can also create resources that offset the harshness of the environment they encounter.

Although West African immigrants are socio-economically disadvantaged⁷⁵ in South Africa when compared to South Africans, I observed that they at the same time enjoy certain advantages by virtue of their status as immigrants, their connections and networks⁷⁶ within their immigrant communities. I found certain factors that contribute to their economic successes despite their exclusion from the broader South African society.

First, because they lack access to financial institutions, and hence have difficulties in raising initial capital, I found that such capital is often accessed through community connections. In times of financial hardship, immigrants seek support from their associations, close relatives and/or from fellow immigrants. Elsewhere, solidarity amongst immigrants has been observed. In America for example, Gold (1992) pointed out the economic benefits of immigrants by virtue of their attachment to their ethnic communities. Several studies in the United State have shown how immigrants' communities have helped fellow immigrants overcome discrimination and survive the economic hardship in their host societies. In South Africa as in the United States,

⁷⁵ The problem of speaking the local South African languages, lack of capital and credit facilities, limited connections compared to South Africans and little knowledge about the South African culture.

⁷⁶ Defined as "a set of linkages which exist simultaneously on the bases of specific interest and persist beyond the duration of a particular transaction. They are used for all sorts of purposes and many different kind of transactions in an individual's life" (Mitchell, 1969: 39).

immigrants equally enjoy these benefits more especially as they are highly concentrated in the Hillbrow neighborhoods. Apart from their concentration in Hillbrow, owned savings, family sources, money from immigrants' associations, rotating credits and savings associations are some of the economic benefits enjoyed by discriminated West Africans in South Africa. This has parallels with immigrant communities elsewhere. In a study of Vietnamese businesses in Orange County in the United States, 37% of initial capital were own savings, 27% from family sources and 13% each were from moneylenders and rotating savings organizations (Gold, 1992). The interviews I conducted with West African immigrants in South Africa suggest that, immigrants' associations, relatives and close friends in and out of South Africa, as well as rotating credits and savings organizations are the main sources of generating capital. Through these sources, West African immigrants are able to succeed in their economic ventures despite their exclusion in South Africa.

Second, immigrants enjoy a flexible and responsive capital formation network, which relies on trust-based support for one another. Eisentadt and Roniger (1984) affirm that all human societies develop different ways of interweaving trust, which is a strong base of all social organizations. Trust facilitates the flow of resources amongst kin, friends, compatriots and clients. I found out that the flow and exchange of goods, services, information, and family labour are some of the hidden benefits West African immigrants enjoy in their economic ventures in the country. In addition, trust defines and unites these immigrants in a common solidarity. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 13) observed:

Networks appear especially where there is need for efficient, reliable information which is not otherwise readily available; people put most trust in information that comes from someone they know well, and trust and mutual dependency result in rapid communication of information.

Research conducted elsewhere showed that Congolese networks are not as powerful as those of Islamic networks of West African immigrants where religious sanctions are put in place to enforce compliance with the norms of cooperation (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000). Similarly amongst West African immigrants in South Africa,

I found out that there are no sanctions formerly put in place to enforce compliance. However, due to a common solidarity amongst these immigrants, capital formation networks rely on trust and friendship with no obligations attached. I observed that the immigrants in this study who are in need request financial assistance from rotating credits and savings associations, and/or from compatriots. The decision to lend money to a fellow compatriot is discretionary and depends on the relationship between the lender and the borrower. I also observed a higher degree of cooperation and exchange amongst immigrants in the same business activity than with those whose activities are not clearly defined. Providing financial support to a fellow immigrant also largely depends on the strength of the friendship, familiarity with the immigrant in their home country, and whether or not the requested amount is available or not. In most cases, depending on the amount requested, more than one compatriot will be contacted for such assistance. Although contributions or financial assistance to a fellow immigrant in case of serious personal problems are not obligatory, cooperation is often high. The immigrants often say as they contribute: *“today is your day, tomorrow will be my turn”*.

Observations on Cameroonian immigrants showed that, in case of a serious illness, arrest, or the death of one of the members, general notices are often posted up in major meeting points of Cameroonians asking for their contributions. Such meeting points include popular business locations owned by Cameroonians. This is dissimilar to Congolese immigrants in Paris where reliance for financial assistance is obligatory and strongly based on kinship, religious, ethnicity and nationality (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000). This study found that many factors account for the lack of this kind of obligatory financial assistance amongst Congolese immigrants in Paris. First, I observed that kinship ties amongst West African immigrants in South Africa are not as strong as those of Congolese immigrants in Paris. Second, the history of West African immigration into South Africa is very recent compared to Congolese immigration into France. Third, the dominantly Christian immigrant population in South Africa does not attach the obligatory factors existing amongst the Congolese immigrants in Paris. Finally, the many West African ethnic groups in South Africa limit the obligatory factors of financial contribution to the ethnic groups, while in France, the small numbers of Congolese

immigrant ethnic groups increase the need for ethnic cohesion, making contribution more obligatory. For West African immigrants in South Africa, contributions are based on sympathy amongst immigrant. I observed that, through these contributions, immigrants are able to survive and succeed economically even though they are excluded.

Third, immigrant businesses also enjoy the socio-economic and cultural advantages of using family labour. The use of family labour and/or compatriots helps immigrant business owners to minimize labour cost, while also providing loyal services. In a fruit and vegetable shop owned by a Cameroonian immigrant in Braamfontein, I found that four out of the six workers in the shop were Cameroonians of which two were blood relatives of the proprietor. In response to why so many Cameroonians are working in his shop, the shop owner replied: *"I can trust them and they trust me too"*. In the United States, similar advantages were observed amongst Soviet Jewish and Vietnamese entrepreneurs (Gold, 1992). Notwithstanding, it is understood that family labour could limit growth and employment potential of refugees' enterprises especially if such businesses were designed to employ relatives rather than for profits motives. Most immigrants' enterprises investigated for this study are solely run on the basis of the profit motive, with a strict business relationship between the owners and the workers. Gold (1992) pointed that family labour could act as a disincentive to efforts, savings, and investments since extra returns might often be set aside for family demands. The situation with West African immigrants in South Africa is different. While these immigrants do not have large families as was observed with immigrants in the United States, both immigrant workers and owners strive to raise enough money to meet their contributions to their respective rotating credits and savings organizations. Amongst the immigrants in this study, a direct relationship exists between membership of rotating credits and savings organizations and sources of income. In addition, the amount of contributions made to the savings organizations depend on immigrants' ability to pay. This notwithstanding, reliance on co-workers and consumers, as well as the general public remained some major advantages enjoyed by immigrants who engaged in business activities.

Finally, immigrants also have a supplier network, which is based on cooperation and collaboration amongst themselves. Some immigrants receive ethnic goods from their home countries and supply these goods to compatriots who in turn retail such goods in South Africa. Immigrants' ethnic foodstuffs for example are sold to the many West African eating houses in Hillbrow. It is as a result of the advantages immigrants enjoy as discriminated people in South Africa that led some researchers to note that: "*Although many traders enter the informal sector to survive, they are now anxious to remain self-employed entrepreneurs and see their future in developing their business*" (Peberdy and Rogerson, 2002: 33). The next section examines the ways in which West African concentration in Hillbrow contributes to their economic successes in the country.

HILLBROW: The West African enclave

The marginalized Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants living in South African are largely concentrated in Hillbrow. These immigrants reside near each other, share common values, and engage in frequent common interactions. Because they are discriminated and excluded from the broader South African society, the majority of these immigrants remain formally unemployed in South Africa. As a result, they are forced to stay in neighborhoods, which are affordable and convenient for their day-to-day activities. Interviews conducted with Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in Hillbrow showed that approximately 94% of the interviewees are unemployed. Nigerians and Cameroonians find jobs hard to obtain in South Africa:

All of us here are unemployed; we don't have the work permit to work in South Africa. The section 41 document⁷⁷ which we have is not recognized by anybody even the police will arrest you if you show it to them.

An immigrant from Cameroonian gave similar reasons explaining why he was rejected for the post as a store assistant:

I showed him my papers, he asked for my ID and I showed him my temporary permit, when he realized that I am not a South African, he asked me if I can speak any of the South African languages which he know I can't.

⁷⁷ This section 41 document of the Refugee Act 1991 has now been amended to Section 22 of the new Refugee Act (see Chapter Five).

West African immigrants have high rates of unemployment in South Africa despite having high levels of educational qualification. Even though some of the immigrants have actually upgraded their educational status, I found out that that immigrants still remain unemployed in South Africa. According to the interviews conducted with immigrants who have upgraded their educational status in South Africa, 55% of Cameroonians and 75% of Nigerians did so in order to gain employment in South Africa. Although this was the main reason for upgrading their educational status, none of them were employed at the time this research instrument was administered. Tables 10 and 11 below present immigrants educational status before coming to South Africa, and their upgraded educational status in South Africa respectively.

TABLE 10: Educational status of immigrants before coming to South Africa

Educational Status Before Coming to South Africa	Cameroonians (N=72) %	Nigerians (N=40) %	Total (N=112) %
Postgraduate degree	05	20	10
First degree	22	30	25
Diploma certificate	11	30	18
Advanced Level certificate	28	-	18
Ordinary level certificate	17	20	18
Never been to school	17	-	11
Total	100	100	100

TABLE 11: Acquired skills/educational status in South Africa

Acquired Status in South Africa	Cameroonians (N=72) %	Nigerians (N=40) %	Total (N=112) %
Post-grad studies	06	10	07
First Degree	11	10	11
Diploma	44	10	32
None	39	70	50
Total	100	100	100

Though these immigrants have a certain level of education, they remained unemployed, allowing them with little option other than to stay in cheaper and affordable neighborhoods that could support their business activities. In an interview with an immigrant, a former translator in the Governor's office in his home country, he said that despite his professional qualification as a translator, he had no option better than staying in Hillbrow more especially as he is unemployed in the country: *"This is the best place for me to stay since I am not working. If I get a job which I am hoping to then I can go somewhere more decent than this place"*. In a similar discussion with the President of the Association of English Speaking Cameroonians in South Africa (AESCA-SA), the following reasons were advanced as why the Hillbrow Recreational Center is convenient for their monthly meetings:

From the start the recreational center was chosen because most Cameroonians stay in Hillbrow, After some time, its location was changed to Yeoville because most Cameroonians drink and spend their leisure time there, but people were not coming for meetings so we took it back to Hillbrow and people started coming to meetings again. The low cost of renting the center is also one of the reasons why we decided to remain in that place.

A Nigerian immigrant who owns an ethnic restaurant in Hillbrow, but stays in Braamfontein explains why he opened his restaurant in Hillbrow:

I think Hillbrow is the best place for my kind of business because, most Nigerians stay and work in Hillbrow. That is where they do their business. The types of food I prepare attract mostly Nigerians and some Cameroonians why should I open a restaurant in a place when I know I would not have customers.

Thus, there is strong evidence that most Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants are living in the Hillbrow neighborhood because of its affordability, and the support and solidarity of the immigrant community in the neighbourhood.

The reasons why these immigrants are attracted to Hillbrow have been discussed in Chapter four. The low cost of living, the presence of relatives and friends as well as the commercial potential of Hillbrow were amongst the popular responses as to why these immigrants preferred to reside in the Hillbrow neighbourhood. The cheap and affordable accommodations and lifestyle in Hillbrow are amongst the economic advantages enjoyed by the immigrants. Most immigrants interviewed for this research praised the low cost of living, and the commercial potential of Hillbrow as some of the benefits they enjoy staying in the neighbourhood. For some immigrants, savings and remittances to their home countries would not have been possible if they were staying in more affluent and expensive neighborhoods like Rosebank and Sandton. These immigrants therefore enjoy a locational advantage, which is a resultant of their being marginalized by the larger society: *“Here life is not expensive like in some areas. I can afford my rents, I don’t pay taxis and I do my business well. If things move well for me I can save money and start a bigger business like an Internet café,”* observed a Cameroonian immigrant who sells fruits and vegetable in Pretoria Street in Hillbrow. The locational advantages enjoyed, emerged from immigrants’ greater potential to save, either to open up bigger businesses, or to send remittances to families members in their home countries.

Trading as last resort: Employing family labour

Exclusion of immigrants from formal employment creates special opportunities for economic gains for entrepreneurial members of the discriminated group. Insiders of the discriminated group can reap extra profit by employing or managing members of the discriminated group. Most Cameroonian and Nigerian businesses researched for this

study enjoy this benefit. In one of the fruit and vegetable shops owned by an immigrant, two of the Cameroonians working in the shop had degrees in business economics with previous job experiences. Their services and job experiences facilitate proper management, and ensure economic gains for the shop owner. Elsewhere, employed migrants have been the driving force behind the economic successes of Italian and Mexican American businessmen in the United States. Sowell (1981: 29) pointed out thus:

A special case of intragroup reaction to external misperception is individual self-employment. If outsiders have higher knowledge costs of correctly assessing either individual or group capability, there is an extra incentive for misjudged individuals to be employed by those with lower knowledge costs- notably themselves. This self-employment may range from business proprietorship to...freelancing activities like crime... All these occupations and activities let an individual's capabilities find their own reward, more or less independently of outside institutional assessments (Sowell, 1981: 29).

Apart from discrimination, the South African affirmative action does not benefit immigrants in South Africa. Elsewhere in the American society, affirmative action remains controversial even among their intended beneficiaries (Crosby and Clayton 1990; Sowell, 1980). In South Africa, it renders the hopes and aspirations of West African immigrants useless more especially as their qualifications and skills cannot help them find jobs in South Africa. Crosby and Clayton (1990: 61) warned that such a situation could lead to: *“negative effects on expectancies and behaviors”*.

To contest these odds, West African immigrants in South Africa have engaged in trading, small business activities and others outside the margins of the law. Their skills and qualifications, which are being undermined by the South African Affirmative Action Policy, gives them an edge in their business and other activities outside the margins of the law. Speare (1983) had noted the skill selectivity of migration at point of origin. Such skills selectivity supports some of the superior qualities of West African immigrants in South Africa. Elsewhere, immigrants' successes are surrounded with a lot of controversy. Questions relating to their degree of success, success due to overexploitation of

customers, workers and family members, and the generalisability⁷⁸ of immigrants' successes have been raised (Gold, 1992). This dissertation is not to give such judgments, but to show that immigrants make economic and other gains as a result of discrimination and xenophobic hostility.

In South Africa, immigrants' successes especially in small business activities can be linked to discrimination in the country. Findings from this research showed that rejection and discrimination in the job market, has increased immigrants determination and zeal to succeed. Interview conducted with a Nigerian immigrant for example, to find out if he was a cell phone dealer and repairer in his country is illuminating: *"No, not at all. If I can't get a job here what must I do to survive? I have to survive so I deal in cell phones to survive"*. Although Rogerson (1997a) has argued that the enterprising and competitive qualities of these immigrants could be attributed to their better education than most immigrants from the SADC region, I would argue that education is just a secondary and not the primary factor. The development of these qualities is simply a resultant of exclusion and discrimination by the broader society in which they live. The type of immigrants' business activities, ethnic goods⁷⁹ from West Africa are all contributing towards the development of these qualities, and their successes in their business undertakings. Research conducted by MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) observed similarly that, exclusion and discrimination have forced several Congolese immigrants to engage in trading activities in Paris. For Congolese immigrants, trading and small business activities are means of fighting discrimination and exclusion in the French society. Their study further found that their successes in trading and other business activities were largely because of exclusion and discriminated from their host society. However, unlike Congolese immigrants in Paris who engaged in trading because of the social and cultural status attached to trading, Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in Johannesburg are forced to take-up small trading activities because they are marginalized, and as a means of survival in their host society.

⁷⁸ Questioning the extent of which groups without unique resources, connections and environmental facilities can also reap major rewards in terms of economic mobility and community development from self-employment (Gold, 1992).

⁷⁹ They include goods like West African foodstuffs, dresses, beauty products and music.

Literature on the propensity for immigrants to be self-employed have been grouped into two major arguments namely, ‘the cultural theory’⁸⁰ and ‘the disadvantage theory’⁸¹, (Light, 1980, 1984). While both theories can be used to explain why Congolese immigrants are involved in trading activities in Paris, the ‘Disadvantage Theory’ best explains why Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants are engaged in trading activities in Hillbrow. This research for example found that, 56% of the immigrants were employed in their home countries. Only 44% of the immigrants interviewed were previously unemployed in their home countries. Of those immigrants employed in their home countries, 50% of Cameroonians were teachers and 70.6% of Nigerians were attorneys. None of the immigrants previously employed in their home country earned above Rand 5000. From my interviews, 52% of Cameroonians and 41% of Nigerians who were working in their home countries earned between Rands 500 and 1000, and 1100 and 1500 respectively. I interviewed an immigrant who was working as a banker in Cameroon but operates a small shop in South Africa and he reported as follows: *“I used to earn about 400,00frs cfa as a qualified banker, but here, because I can’t get a job, I have to open this small shop to survive me”*. It is very unlikely that, immigrants left their jobs in their home countries to engage in small businesses in South Africa. Immigrants would want to continue with their previous profession or look for better jobs opportunities, which could earn them better salaries than they had previously earned in their home countries. The banker further reported that, he has attempted several times to get a job in South Africa but failed: *“I decided to open this shop because I can fine a job here. I applied to many places and was unsuccessful, that is why I decided to open this shop, to keep me busy and be able to make a living”*. Even immigrants who were unemployed in their home countries would at least want to get employment in South Africa, more especially those immigrants with some form of formal education (Reference Table 10). It is only when employment is not forthcoming that immigrants will turn to trading and other business activities as a last resort. Hence, immigrants are involved in trading and business

⁸⁰ This theory claims that certain ethnic groups such as Jews, Chinese possess cultural attributes that encourages and facilitates their participation in business activities. Access to raise capital from cultural institutions, family Labour, and economic cooperation are all contributing factors for such attributes (Light, 1980; 1984).

⁸¹ The disadvantage theory asserts that certain immigrants and minority groups engaged into small business because they are disadvantaged in the general Labour market due to discrimination and other cultural deprivation (Light, 1980; 1984).

activities because they are favored by the disadvantaged theory and not by the cultural theory of self-employment.

Amongst other immigrants' communities research has shown that when immigrants work for themselves, they work for longer hours, harder and save more to improve on their business than if they were working for a company or the government (Gold, 1992). These economic gains as a result of discrimination and xenophobia parallel observations made on West African immigrants in South Africa. The immigrants make good use of their resources due to the independent nature of their business activities, in order to fulfill goals that would be otherwise unattainable. A detailed study of immigrants' trading activities follows below.

Immigrants' traders and their trade

The immigrant traders discussed in this study are Cameroonians and Nigerians who were observed and interviewed in Hillbrow and its surroundings. They included legal, illegal and undocumented immigrants. In South Africa, African immigrants suffer from the common problems of discrimination and xenophobia. To resist these problems, and to survive economically, immigrants engage in small businesses and other activities outside the margins of the law. As observed elsewhere, discriminated immigrants with the ambitions of improving their lifestyles, developed an economic consciousness, which act as a motivating factor for profit making (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000; Schiller, 1999a; Schiller, 1999b; Schiller *et al.*, 1992). Despite xenophobia and discrimination West African immigrants in South Africa still make a living and profit out of their business and other activities outside the margins of the law. Restaurants and bars, hairdressing salons, Internet cafés and phone booths are amongst the small business activities discussed in subsequent sections of this Chapter.

Restaurants and bars

West African eating and drinking houses are well established in Hillbrow. These niches provide consumption services including ethnic goods (foodstuffs, beauty products, dresses and music from the sub-region), and economic livelihood for most immigrants in

the city. Scholarly literature on immigrant entrepreneurs and employment in United States cities have established similar trends, as major employers of immigrants and suppliers of ethnic goods in the city (Foner, 1987a, 1987b; Stafford, 1987; Wong, 1987). West African entrepreneurs in South Africa operate in similar styles. They create employment opportunities for other West African immigrants by employing them in their ethnic and other businesses, as well as provide ethnic goods especially foodstuffs, clothing and beauty products to the immigrants' population in South Africa. What follows is a case study of a typical West African bar, which illustrates my argument that, immigrants' businesses succeed despite their exclusion, and are major employers and sources of economic survival for immigrants.

The Piccadilly Center (Bar/Restaurant)

Located on the corner of Cavendish and Rockey Street in Yeoville, the Piccadilly is a popular West African bar especially for French speaking West African immigrants in Johannesburg. The bar usually operates from as early as 7 am until as late as 3 am from Mondays to Sundays. West African immigrants from all over Johannesburg visit this bar, which forms a substantial market population unified by their West African origin. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000), observed with Congolese immigrants in Paris that such unity is due to cultural commonality, and their demand for particular goods are mainly to satisfy their culturally determined needs. In a similar context, Heath (1987) observed among American Indians that drinking in public places is not just a pleasant and sociable act, but unites Indians as Indians. In much the same way West African public drinking and ethnic eating places around Johannesburg are not just spots for pleasant and sociable activities but also unites immigrants as West Africans. Such public places act as unifying milieu for immigrants, and create opportunities for them to express their identities as well as identify with one another.

Piccadilly Bar/Restaurant was visited several times; observations, and informal interviews were conducted with some immigrants who frequent the bar. On several occasions, informal interviews and discussions were held with the owners of the bar. The majority of the immigrants under discussion spend most of their free time in this bar. The

significance of Piccadilly Bar for these immigrants goes far beyond its leisure services. First, it is a place for meeting people from their home countries and elsewhere. Douglas (1987: 4) notes that: *“Drinking is essentially a social act, performed in a recognised social context”*. In Johannesburg, as elsewhere, such social context prepares a platform for immigrants to meet other immigrants, serve as sources for extracting information about their homes and host country. In much the same context, Heath noted that amongst Native Americans in the United States: *“...some of the bars which are almost exclusively frequented by Indians serve a variety of informational and adaptive functions for clients who have recently migrated to the city”* (Heath, 1987: 35). In addition, social meetings points of West African immigrants in South Africa are also places for consuming ethnic goods, and engaging in business activities outside the margins of the law. The bar is a joint venture (bar and restaurant), each with component owned by a Cameroonian. The proprietors share the cost of renting the location, which is less expensive than if one person had owned it. They also enjoy economies of scale, which involve a variety of other economic activities. In this bar, most of the workers are newly arrived immigrants.

Workers/ newly arrived immigrants

Cameroonians especially friends and blood relatives of the proprietors work on Piccadilly bar. Other employees are recent arrivals who need initial capital to start a business of their own. The recent arrivals do not only enjoy the benefits of social cohesion, but also form a significant part of the community's social capital. In support of this fact, Bayart (1999) argued that social capital depends on features of social organization such as trust; norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions. Bayart states: *“like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that could not be attainable in its absence”* (Bayart, 1999: 32). Immigrants are usually financially handicapped, not well informed about their new society, and lack accommodation and basic needs to sustain their lives. Despite these initial problems, newly arrived immigrants work for free in Piccadilly bar, in return for free food and accommodation as compensation. One of the proprietors of Piccadilly bar is accommodating three such newly arrived immigrants. Financial difficulties, lack of accommodation and others are common problems faced worldwide by

recently arrived migrants. Recently arrived migrants experience a temporary period of socio-economic hardship. This temporary situation for West African immigrants in South Africa still needs proper research. In a similar study, Gold (1992) made the following observation about the hardships faced by recently arrived Vietnamese immigrants in the American society:

Recently arrived Vietnamese refugees suffered from ghettoization, broken families, difficulties with English, and a lack of economic opportunity. Drawing on common origins, shared experiences, and mutual feelings of alienation from established refugees, recent arrivals banded together to share social and economic support. In so doing, they developed a unique identity and way of life (Gold, 1992: 126).

With time, as the socio-economic situation of recently arrived-immigrants improved, and as they familiarize themselves with their new environment, they create their own networks, which might lead to activities that are more profitable. For West African immigrants in South Africa such networks involve making new friends with South Africans and fellow immigrants, visiting and attending ethnic and immigrants' meetings, as well as maintaining strong contacts with their home countries. For the workers and the owners of the bar, real business starts on Friday afternoons and goes on till early Sunday mornings. According to the owner of the restaurant section, business only flourishes during weekends and she expresses it as follows: *"During the week we don't get a lot of customers so I don't cook much food. The real work starts from Friday afternoons when I cook continuously until late in Sunday nights"*. The owner of the bar section equally observed that more sales are made during weekends than on weekdays.

Ethnic dishes

The notion that identity and place travel together in the concept of translocality (Mandaville, 1999) is evident amongst Cameroonians in Piccadilly bar. The bar plays a major role in the lives of Cameroonian immigrants in many ways. First it is the spot where they come to eat their traditional food. As mentioned earlier, this bar is often full during weekends with Cameroonian immigrants dominating the scene. Traditional West African dishes are the favorite meal consumed in this bar. Their eating settings, what they eat and how they eat are all very symbolic for these immigrants and also very suggestive

of their provinces of origin from their home countries. A variety of ethnic dishes are sold in this bar but the most commonly consumed include, '*Achu*' which is produced from pounded cocoyams, a popular root crop in the West and Central African sub-region. The sauce is normally yellowish in colour, heavily spiced and often accompanied with a lot of meat and sometimes mushrooms. Serving this dish need some special skills, more especially as a hollow needs to be formed in the crushed cocoyams to make space for the sauce. Consuming this dish is often more enjoyable when it is done in a group usually of friends and often accompanied with lots of beer. Though there is nothing wrong if an individual sits and eat alone, it is not common in Piccadilly bar. This ethnic food is very typical and symbolic in the English-speaking province of the North West of Cameroon. For most cases, this dish is often served in very important occasions, on Sundays and/or during celebrations of any type. In Cameroon, this dish is highly preferred by the elderly and commands a lot of prestige in the community. In Piccadilly, some immigrants meet to consume this dish, and in the process, they are reminded of their identity.

Also commonly consumed in this bar is, '*Water-fufu and Eru*', another popular ethnic dish and one of the staples of the South Westerners of Cameroon. It is produced from fermented cassava (Manioc) another popular root crop in the sub region. After fermenting the cassava (Manioc), it is then prepared as porridge, and serve with some specially prepared vegetables known as '*Eru*'. This vegetable is not grown in farms or in gardens in Cameroon; usually it is harvested in the forest to supply the local markets in Cameroon. '*Water-fufu and Eru*' attracts mostly English speaking Cameroonians and some Nigerians who happened to have known the dish either in Nigeria or Cameroon. Immigrants from other parts of the country and sub-region are equally attracted to these dishes discussed above. Other popular dishes in this bar include special roasted fish with 'crushed and boiled' cassava wrapped in special leaves, served on demand. This is a sort of staple for the French speaking Cameroonians and attracts mostly French speaking (as well as some English-speaking immigrants) to Piccadilly Bar.

Ethnic music

Usually, during the week, the bar looks deserted with isolated immigrants either drinking or eating some specially prepared meal. In the process, they are either watching a TV program, or some musical-clips of popular West African musicians. Music not only entertains these immigrants, but also helps strengthen them and remind them of their ethnicity and identity in South Africa. Commonly heard types of music in Piccadilly bar include the country's favorites, '*Makossa*'⁸² and '*Bikutsi*'⁸³. Makossa and Bikutsi are usually sung in the local Douala and Yaounde languages respectively. These languages are major and prestigious languages in Cameroon and are assumed people from these ethnic regions are the most 'civilized people' in the country. These assumptions stem from the fact that, Douala, the economic capital is located in the coastal region of the country, while Yaounde the political capital, constitutes the (les Yaounde) 'Beti' and 'Bulu' people of president Biya's ethnic tribe. Some English speaking Cameroonian immigrants assume these identities when they mime music from Douala or Yaounde regions as the dance and/or drink in Piccadilly bar. In this way, other compatriots regard them as Douala or Yaounde locals hence, more 'civilized Cameroonians'. Identifying with particular ethnic groups in their home country, either through eating, dancing or singing re-assures and redefines immigrants' identity in South Africa. Additional popular music played includes music from the Democratic Republic of Congo, like those of Papa Wemba, Kofi Olomide, and Wengue Musica⁸⁴. This music generally attracts and entertains immigrants from the West African sub-region, unifying and reminding them of their identities and their objectives in South Africa. In one of my many occasions in Piccadilly Bar, an immigrant said to his friend after dancing a popular *Makossa* music in pidgin English: "*Make man make and go back for he paye*". The interpretation is simple for any pidgin speaker. First, the music reminds the immigrant of his identity, making him aware of his roots and where he is coming from. The music reminds the immigrant

⁸² This type of music is the most popular in Cameroon and is among the most popular in Africa. '*Makossa*' is adaptable to a wide variety of instrumentation, from traditional thumb pianos to guitars and synthesizers. This music gained international prominence in the early 1970s by the world's famous jazz musician Manu Dibango.

⁸³ Bikutsi is also another traditional music in Cameroon, which is equally gaining international prominence and is typically sung in Ewondo language. The Ewondo are the people from the central part of the country.

⁸⁴ They are popular Zairian (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) Musicians and amongst the best in the Africa.

that he is uprooted from his origin, and needs to return to his home country. But most important, the music reminds the immigrant of the urgent need to achieve his goal in South Africa, and return to his country and enjoy the socio-cultural facilities he is missing as a result of living away from his homeland.

Literature on refugees as uprooted people suggests that in uprooting, the orderliness of transplantation disappears; hence refugees cannot have their original identity. The literature also suggests that in their uprootedness, they adopt a new identity (Malkki, 1992). Contrarily to this research findings, the immigrants exhibited strong attachments to their national identity, and the forms of its territorialisations. The immigrants do not simply cast off their national identities to absorb new ones in South Africa. I observed that immigrants preserved their national identity, and adopt new ones to cope the prevailing situation in the country. It is worth noting here that culture (music, language and food), are major components of any territorialisation, and the immigrants in my study have their own culture. In addition, the transnational thesis⁸⁵ rightly presents transnational immigrants as people who adopt multiple (hybrid) identities, and not just people who cast off the old and absorb the new (Crush and McDonald, 2002). Rather, they preserve their identity and adopt new ones and not abandon it. This is not to suggest that the immigrants studied for this research are transmigrants, but there are all indications that most of the immigrants interviewed and observed for this study meet some of the characteristics of transnational migrants.

Meaning of Food and drinks for West African immigrants in South Africa

Friedman (1990: 314) observed that: “*Eating is an act of self identification*”. In a similar study to Friedman’s, MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 61) observed that: “... *eating the foods they used to eat at home is an important token of cultural and self-identification*”. Dancing, drinking and eating ethnic foods are not only stress reducing agents for West African immigrants, but also have a unifying effect which help in understanding their cultures and their problems in South Africa. It also reminds immigrants of their identity and origins. Gusfield (1987) pointed out that, eating and

⁸⁵ The concept of transnationalism will be examined in a later section of this Chapter.

drinking are not just symbols of social position and status. The content, context, setting and participants could provide symbolic interpretations. Such interpretations for West African immigrants in South Africa could be seen as a way of creating their identity, resisting oppression and exclusion, as well as a kind of celebration of their achievements in their new society. In the process of eating, drinking, and meeting other compatriots, they discuss about their home country, business ventures, problems and possible solutions to such problems. Commonly discussed topics about their home countries include politics, improvements in developmental projects, sports and news about the death of relatives, and/or some one familiar to them.

Clothing and beauty products

Other ethnic goods such as clothing, mainly traditional outfit from the different provinces are sold in this bar. Occasionally immigrants bring jean trousers and skirts, French t-shirts and tennis shoes for sale to other immigrants in this Bar. Video and audiocassettes of popular African musicians, and beauty products from the sub region are sold as well. Amongst the beauty products locally produced bathing soaps and body lotions are also common. These beauty products usually have a lightening effect on the body and are often in high demand by the female immigrant population. Eating traditional food, meeting compatriots, buying other ethnic goods from home country, and finding solutions to problems encountered, are socio-economic survival strategies, which as well construct their identities in South Africa. It is noted elsewhere that: *“The process of constructing and making identity requires material goods”* (Friedman, 1990: 314). Through immigrants’ networks, ethnic goods are sent from home country to immigrants in South Africa, who in turn sell them to West African restaurants and other businesses in and around Hillbrow. Such ethnic goods are either transported as freight goods, or brought in by a returning or a newly arrived immigrant. Through these strategies, immigrants are able to survive in the country even though they are marginalized.

From Asylum seekers to transmigrants

The concept of transnationalism has only recently been employed in migration studies in South Africa (Crush and McDonald, 2002; Peberdy and Rogerson, 2002).

Transnationalism involves the back and forth movements of migrants between host and home countries. Crush and McDonald (2002) identified five distinct features of transnationalism. First, it represents a high intensity of exchange on the part of the migrants between the host and home countries. Second, its activities tie into the experiences and internationalization of capital production. It is employed as a new way of understanding and describing migrants' identity. This is in direct contrast to the assimilation hypothesis that sees migrants as casting off the old and absorbing the new. Transnational researchers see identity as hybridity, where migrants assume multiple identities such as combining the host and home country's identity. Fourth, that migration is an interactive process, and becomes increasingly independent of the forces that initiated it. Finally: *"new cultural strategies of adaptation, the sheer size and diversity of migrant communities and new technologies of communication and transportation offer new modes of resistance to exploitation and discrimination for migrants"* (Crush and McDonald, 2002: 10). How these characteristics fit the present study will be examine below.

In order to survive the hardships that follow asylum seekers in South Africa, some West Africans import ethnic goods from their home countries for sale in South Africa, and export electronic goods from South Africa for sale to their respective countries. Most of the immigrants interviewed for this research who claimed that they are engaged in cross border trade of this nature, agreed they make reasonable profits from such business, which enable them to make remittances to their home countries. According to an immigrant engaged in cross border trade: *"Without jobs, this is the only way to survive in this country, or help your family back home"*. My research findings show that this immigrant import ethnic food like 'gari'⁸⁶, ethnic spices, red-oil (cooking oil made out of palm kernels), dresses and sport wears for sale in his shop, in return, he buys computers, cell phones and other electronics like radios and video cassette recorders for sale in his home country. He claims it is a good type of business but lack the necessary capital to undertake it on a larger scale. *"If and only if I have enough money I will concentrate on buying from here and sending them to Cameroon for sale. There is money in it"*.

⁸⁶Gari is Cassava flour, which can be eaten as corn flakes or prepare as porridge.

Elsewhere, immigrants who engaged in cross-border trade have been termed ‘transmigrants’⁸⁷ who enjoy the benefits of participating in the socio-economic processes of two or more states. Schiller (1999a), observed a similar trend with Asian emigrants in the United States, stating that:

A significant sector of contemporary emigrants is transmigrants who participate in the political process of more than one state. At the same time, through their presence in other lands, these transmigrants serve as racialized others against whom political leaders can develop narratives that link state and nation and unite an engaged citizenry in an age of globalization (Schiller, 1999a: 205).

Studies of immigrants’ communities in the United States observed that many Japanese and Chinese resist discrimination and exclusion by keeping their stake in America but also maintaining their home ties through a complex system of cultural practices (Schiller, 1999a; Schiller, 1999b). Home ties are usually reinforced when immigrants confront unfavorable socio-economic conditions in their host country. The situation with West African immigrants in South Africa is not very different. Immigrants’ dream that South Africa is the “*America in Africa*” has been eroded by the difficult socio-economic conditions they encounter in South Africa. This has no doubt reinforced relationships with relatives in their home countries and to a greater extent acted as major aid to immigrants’ cross border trade in South Africa. Interviews conducted with one of the proprietors of Piccadilly bar is illuminating:

When my family sends me foodstuffs and other things to sell I make a lot of money because I pay only the cost of transportation. So I usually send them money every end of month or I send them something to sell and make money. They are very expensive when I buy from other Cameroonians around, but I still make good profit to pay my rents and still send money to my family in Cameroon.

Immigrants, who receive ‘ethnic’ goods including foodstuffs from families in their home countries to sell in Johannesburg, are making reasonable profits. The strong family links immigrants have with their home countries greatly supports this sort of trans-trading. A brief look at one of such immigrant will throw more light. An immigrant, a teacher by

⁸⁷ Persons who live their lives across borders, developing social, familial, political, economic and religious networks that incorporate them into two or more states (Schiller *et al.*, 1992). Immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation state.

qualification in Cameroon came to South Africa in 1998. He was unemployed and stayed in Hillbrow. He started selling foodstuff and other ethnic goods sent to him by his family to immigrants and immigrant restaurants in Hillbrow. In 2000, he got a teaching job in Balmoral College in Germiston with a salary of Rands 3500 per month. Early in 2001 he resigned from his job in order to concentrate with the selling of ethnic foodstuffs and goods. The immigrant claims he made the right decision because he is making more profit than when he was a teacher:

I make more money now than when I was teaching. I was only paid Rands 3500 a month. By the time I pay my rents, and calculated my transport cost to and from work⁸⁸ I have nothing left. I can't help my family back home and they expect me to. What I am doing now is quite good. I have a car of my own; I am now married with two kids and I still send money to my family in Cameroon, I pay the school fees of my kid-brother in Cameroon all because of my business activities. I don't regret resigning from my formal job. Business is the only way out here.

In the Piccadilly bar, and else where in Hillbrow, immigrants speak more French than English. The importance of cultural traditions to immigrants abroad has been noted thus: *"They use their cultural backgrounds as framework for living and as repertoires of symbolic resources for interpreting all aspects of their lives"* (Willis, 1990: 8). The background of such traditions contributes towards the development of immigrants' identities, and also helps affirm and assert themselves against pervasive laws that exclude them from full participation in a culture, which is alien to theirs (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000). Though Cameroon is a bilingual country with French and English as the official languages, many English and French speaking Cameroonians do not speak both languages fluently. I observed that in South Africa, those Cameroonians who could not speak French fluently often use the French language to communicate with their compatriots. On occasions where other immigrants from the West African sub region are together, for example Nigerians, the lingua franca⁸⁹ of the sub-region is often used as the means of communication. The dichotomy between these categories of immigrants (French, and English speaking Cameroonians as well as Nigerians) is often

⁸⁸ This immigrant stayed in 72 Churchill adjacent Hillbrow hospitals. When he was employed as a teacher, he takes a taxi to the train station from there he takes a train to Germiston. After school, He walk to the train station, take a train to Johannesburg and from the train station he take a taxi to Hillbrow.

⁸⁹ Pidgin English is a common lingua franca spoken in Nigeria and Cameroon. It is a mixture of English words local words in Cameroon it also include some French words combined together.

manifested in their phonetics, articulations and pronunciations. Elements of their cultures other than the differences in their language characteristics exhibit only minor differences. Elsewhere Cohen (1978: 395) observed that:

Cultural identity is subjective and situational. Groups are not defined by innate permanent cultural characteristics: 'we' is defined by 'they'. The identities to members and categorizations by others are more or less fluid, more or less multiple, forming nesting hierarchies of we/they dichotomizations.

Though Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants do not intermingle very much in their daily lives they do identify with each other as coming from the West African sub-region. For example, whenever Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants are together, they often speak in Pidgin English, a popular lingua franca of the sub-region. Group identification based on geographical characteristics and commonality in language is common amongst minority groups. In South Africa for example, East Africans often identifies with each other because of their common geographical origin, and language (Swahili). A similar trend was observed with Congolese immigrants in Paris. Immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire) and those from Congo Brazzaville often integrated because of their commonality in language and geographical location (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000).

Hairdressing and beauty salons

Barbering, hairdressing and beauty salons are amongst the most common immigrant business activities in Hillbrow. The South African Affirmative Action and discrimination in the job market have forced some immigrants to turn to barbering and hair dressing salons as a last resort. These salons usually start operating along the streets, or by the side of buildings. In most cases, the immigrant uses a car battery to generate electricity to run his shaving machines. Lack of initial capital often prevents immigrants from getting a permanent place; hence, they locate themselves under big trees along the streets or by the side of buildings. With time, when enough money is saved, a permanent place will be established with a compatriot who is willing to establish a dressing/beauty salon for women. I observed that business integration is a common strategy used by immigrants to meet up with their economic expectations despite being marginalized. Some of the join

businesses observed for this research includes bars/restaurants, barbering/beauty salons, fruits and vegetable shops/telephone-booths/internet cafes. Interviews conducted with the proprietors of these businesses showed that, the main motive for integration is to reduce the cost of renting the business location: *“We are operating three different businesses here so that we can share the rents. This is the only way you can make profits out of this business”*. Hence by sharing the costs of renting business locations with a co-business proprietor, the immigrants in my study are able to maximized profits, even though they are excluded in their host society. Similarly in the US, literature on economic integration provides evidence of successes of immigrant entrepreneurs (Gold, 1992; Kim, 1981; Light, 1972; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Portes and Manning, 1986).

Writers such as Wilson and Martin (1982) have observed that immigrant entrepreneurs facilitate success through horizontal⁹⁰ and vertical⁹¹ integration. For this study, interviews conducted demonstrated that the dominance of immigrant barbering and hairdressing salons in Hillbrow is because the business is easy to establish and to learn. Additionally, because they operate close to one another, cooperation is assured. Comments from an immigrant barber are illuminating:

I was not a barber in Cameroon. I was working in a telephone booth before I came here. When I came here there was no work for me so I had to learn barbering which took me just two weeks to learn. I bought my machine for Rands 400 and pay the initial rents of Rands 500 to start this studio.

The enclave model best explains the benefits immigrants enjoy from economic integrations of small business activities. According to the model, the successes of ethnic businesses lie in the ability to sell goods and services to both members of the larger society as well as to ethnic compatriots. In the United States, Gold (1992: 169) observed amongst Vietnamese entrepreneurs that: *“Almost every immigrant population, even those with low rates of self employment, supports some ethnic restaurants, bars, travel agencies, and other small shops”*. This is precisely the same situation with West African ethnic businesses in Hillbrow. They sell their ethnic goods to both South Africans and the

⁹⁰ When ethnic business owners cooperate to choose store location, avoid competitive prices, pool information and engage in collective buying.

⁹¹ When business services such as credits, transportation etc are provided by co-ethnics (Gold, 1992).

immigrant population in the neighbourhood. In addition, through horizontal and vertical integration, West African immigrants' businesses support each other, strengthen ethnic ties, share information, avoid destructive competition, and generally contribute to the interlocking business orientation of the entire immigrant community.

Another factor leading to the success of immigrant business activities is their close physical proximity to one another. In almost every street in Hillbrow for example, I observed small business establishments owned by immigrants from the West African sub-region. One would imagine that a high concentration of similar business activities in any region might lead to business failure. But my interviews with immigrants showed that a high concentration of immigrants' business activities facilitates exchange of information, easy access to ethnic sources of credits, working materials and labour. Scholarly research in the United States on small immigrants' businesses have shown that immigrant groups that have been most successful in small business activities tend to have highly concentrated population as opposed to diffused populations (Kim, 1981; Light, 1972; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Portes and Manning, 1986). It has also been shown that geographical concentration alone is not enough to promote the successes of immigrant business (Gold, 1992; Kim, 1981). Notwithstanding, immigrant solidarity, trust, loyalty and cooperation amongst West African entrepreneurs in Hillbrow often ensure that immigrants' business undertakings prosper. I observed a high degree of cooperation and solidarity amongst immigrants who operate in similar business activities. According to an immigrant barber who claims he enjoys the benefits of operating his business close to his compatriots: *"We work together. For example, when my machine is not working or I lack something, I get it from my neighbours. We charge the same price and the customers don't discriminate"*. Immigrants operating similar businesses charge similar prices for their goods and services, and provide technical and financial support for one another. In this way, they make profits, which ensure their economic survival in the country.

Internet cafes and phone booths

Internet cafés and phone booths are also common business activities amongst Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in the country. These activities are major sources

of income for immigrants, and also function as meeting points for immigrants, as well as mediums of maintaining ties with family members in their home countries. In addition, Internet cafes and phone booths facilitate and help strengthen contacts and trade between immigrant traders and suppliers in their home countries, as well as their South Africa customers. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) observed a similar situation with Congolese immigrants in Paris, and established that personal ties with other immigrants, friends and family are crucial aspects for the successes of immigrants' trading especially those activities outside the law. In South Africa, Internet cafes and phone booths are economic activities that support West African activities outside the margins of the law. In much the same context, Bayart (1999) pointed out that these activities could enable criminals to prosper. Immigrants' Internet cafes and telephone booths in Hillbrow appear to support activities outside the margins of the law in South Africa. A detailed examination of immigrants' activities beyond the margins of the law follows below.

Surviving outside the margins of the law

The setting of this study, Hillbrow, provides a suitable environment for illicit activities in the country, and immigrants take advantage of the situation. Ellis (1999: 50) has observed that:

South Africa has become the target of major international crime syndicates, notably from Nigeria, but also from far afield...South Africa is a leading producer of marijuana and in just a few years has become a leading importer and exporter of cocaine and heroin, as well as an attractive location for money laundering and sophisticated fraud...has become Africa's capital of organized crime..."

In South Africa, immigrants' dreams of boosting their socio-economic status, and those of relatives in their home countries are being frustrated by discrimination and exclusion from the wider South African society. As an effect, some immigrants are forced to cross boundaries of the law to ensure their survival in the country. Amongst the contested boundaries, engaging in activities outside the margins of the law is the most popular. For them, illegal activities are just another means of surviving and making fast money in the country. Other researchers see it as the everyday resistance practice common amongst the

poor and the politically powerless (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000), while others have termed it as a weapon of the poor (Scott, 1985; 1987; 1990).

MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) have shown that when immigrants are discriminated against and deprived of facilities that could improve their lives, they tend to engage in activities outside the law as a means of resisting the problem. They demonstrated in their research that, amongst Congolese immigrants in Paris, *'to fend for oneself'*, is recognized as a sort of formal employment. This sort of employment is popularly known amongst immigrants as *'debrouiller'* and *'l'aventure'* meaning to fight for your own survival even if it means engaging in unlawful activities, and going for an adventure in a strange land (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000). Similarly with Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants in South Africa, idiomatic expressions such as *'bush-faller'*, some one who has travel to another country in search of greener pastures and *'cam-air'*, Cameroonians who travel abroad for economic gains, are suggestive of their potential to engage in activities outside the law if they get the opportunity. It also symbolizes immigrants who have decided to fend for themselves and/or rescue family members back home. The term *'Cam-air'* actually means Cameroon Airlines, but has been used metaphorically to mean Cameroonians abroad in search for greener pastures.

A *'bush-faller'* denotes someone in a land of plenty, who is expected to come home one day with plenty. *'Cam-air'* and *'bush-falling'* reflect the issue of family pride discussed earlier in Chapter Four. In Cameroon as in most West African countries, families with *'bush-fallers'* feel proud and are respected in their neighborhoods mainly because one day, it is believed the *'bush-faller'* will return home with lots of accumulated wealth. Cameroonian and Nigerian immigrants see South Africa as a promised land where they can successfully accumulate wealth and eventually return home as successive *'bush-fallers'*. A Nigerian immigrant staying in Hillbrow observed that South Africa is the *"virgin land"* of Africa. South Africa was described by my interviewees in such terms as *'the land of plenty'*, *'Africa's paradise'*, and the *'garden of Eden'*. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) observed that the use of similar terms by immigrants in Paris symbolize a way of life geared towards self-realization and gratification. That these terms

are used by immigrants to construct their personal identities around their struggle for self-improvement.

CONTESTED BOUNDARIES: Survival of the rejected

MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 7) noted that: “*Boundaries are liminal areas. They are contested spaces and, as such, are areas of potential opportunity and ambiguity because one never knows what will happen*”. For the sake of survival and making fast money in South Africa, some immigrants in my study transgress boundaries in many domains. As mentioned in previous chapters, immigrants from Cameroon and Nigeria suffer from xenophobia, discrimination and are rejected in their new home. These situations have pushed some immigrants into illegal activities of various kinds geared at profit maximization and wealth accumulation. The anticipation is, with such accumulated wealth, they would eventually return home as successful ‘*Bush-fallers*’ and/or boost the socio-economic status of their families.

Immigrants for example, who own business establishments and workshops, evade all forms of commercial taxes except for the cost of renting their business location. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) observed with Congolese immigrants in Paris that tax evasion is a way of resisting discrimination and exclusion. In South Africa, my research showed that tax evasion is an expression of immigrants’ dissatisfaction and their response to discrimination and exclusion. The research also showed that tax evasion by immigrants is a strategy for amassing wealth for themselves. As MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) observed with Congolese immigrants in Paris, evading taxes deprive the state from revenue. Contesting boundaries of the law is not an unconscious act, but a conscious and global trend especially with minority groups that are excluded and discriminated against. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) argue that: “*...those who are subordinated resist the control of the powerful by refusing to abide by regulations...*” (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000: 5). Such refusal to abide by the law is just one way through which West African immigrants in South Africa resist exclusion and discrimination, with the aim of making as much profits and accumulating wealth as possible. Hibou (1999: 83) also agrees with this view stating that: “*Fraudulent*

practices are all the more common in that they are an economic necessity". Contesting boundaries for immigrants is a means of economic survival, and a way of livelihood that enables them to succeed economically even though excluded. Some of the contested boundaries are discussed below.

Taxes and Custom Duties

Taxes and custom duties are some of the boundaries of the law, which are transgressed by West African immigrants in South Africa. Some immigrants involved in the selling of West African ethnic goods in South Africa, and exporting goods from South Africa to their home countries, evade the payment of custom duties, and any related taxes. West African Immigrants' networks and connections within the broader society help them to transgress these boundaries with the aim of surviving and amassing as much wealth as possible. The following statement from an immigrant restaurant owner is illuminating:

I have connections with the airlines people. They always send my things through them or they give it to a Cameroonian who is coming here. Concerning the things I send home, I give them to someone going to Cameroon or I take it to the airport and talk to the airlines people. I only pay duties when I am sending a lot of things to Cameroon.

West African immigrants entering South Africa often carry ethnic goods for relatives and friends in South Africa. In this way they can evade the payment of custom duties as they often declare the goods as personal property. On the other hand, the cost of carrying the goods to South Africa is usually negotiated between the immigrant's family sending the goods and the immigrant traveling to South Africa. In some cases, on arrival in South Africa, the immigrant will negotiate the cost of carrying the goods with the immigrant expecting the goods. However, the level of negotiations between immigrants and/or their families for transporting ethnic goods depends on the familiarity of the relationship. When there is a blood relationship the goods are often carried for free especially if the arriving immigrant is hoping to stay with the immigrant expecting the ethnic goods. An immigrant entrepreneur who sells ethnic goods in Johannesburg and export electronics to his country throws some light on this situation:

Every Thursdays and Sundays when Cameroon Airlines is coming I go to the airport to collect my goods. They send them either to someone who is coming, and he carries them as his personal things, or my family sends them through the airlines workers because they don't pay custom duties. If not, I won't be able to pay the duties charged.

The sole motive for sending ethnic goods through a fellow immigrant leaving for South Africa is to avoid the payment of custom duties and the associated taxes involved. In this way, the goods will yield more profits as taxes and custom duties will not be included as part of the total cost of the goods. This tie with Hibou's (1999: 81) observation that:

Customs evasions or smuggling, then, cannot be considered in isolation as an activity which is simply illegal or criminal, but is better seen as one among a larger variety of techniques designed to exploit opportunities offered by the state and to gain access to the profits generated by operating between the local and international sectors.

Identification Papers

As explained earlier immigrants experience hostility from DHA officials. In order to remain in South Africa immigrants transgress the law by fabricating their own documentation. Some take advantage of the situation by fabricating documents in their Internet cafes and private offices in their homes. One immigrant expresses the convenience and the privacy of his home run Internet café and telephone booth as the major advantages he enjoys in the business. Internet cafes and home-run documentation offices or '*mobile documentation*' as one immigrant called it, play a major role in supporting activities outside the law. For some immigrants, it is the only business activity, which can generate fast and large amount of money.

Several West African immigrants who have been refused legal documentation by the DHA have faked documents to guarantee their security in the country. They are aware of the risk involved and are often ready for any attached consequences: "*All the police people need is a cold drink*" (i.e. a bribe) was the response of an immigrant who was asked, what would be the consequence if he were caught with such fake document. Ellis (1999) feels police corruption and public distrust originate from the legacy of South African history: Immigrants capitalize on this weakness and operate outside the margins

of the law. For example, some immigrants use bogus documents just like any other legal immigrant in the country, and even prefer them to the legal one. An immigrant expressed his preference of fake document to the genuine one as follows:

As long as the police don't realize that I am using a fake paper there is no problem. I don't have to go to the DHA every two months for renewal. I can renew it in Hillbrow for almost nothing. It is better than bribing the people and spending the whole day in that office just because you want to renew your papers.

This remark is a strong indication that contesting legal boundaries of state laws are conscious acts of those who are discriminated against. I came across cases where some West African immigrants had changed their nationality at birth, to that of a country, which is war-torn just to get the status as an asylum seeker. A Cameroonian immigrant who changed his nationality to that of a Congolese explained: *"I changed my country because police people are not arresting people from Congo. They know there is war in Congo, so when they see my papers they will know I am from a war country"*. Another Nigerian immigrant claimed that because the DHA officials were refusing to grant asylum to Nigerians, he was forced to change his nationality to that of an Angolan.

Unlicensed Taxi Drivers and Drivers Licenses

Only a small proportion of the immigrants interviewed own cars in South Africa. In most cases, either they cannot afford a car because of their unemployment status, or because of the red tape involved in getting a driver's license in South Africa. While it is not a difficult task to acquire a driver's license in Cameroon, in South Africa the situation is different. It involves writing a learner's test to obtain a learner's driver's license. With the learner's driver's license one is required to attend a driving school for at least thirty lessons, each lesson usually taking an hour. It is only after these lessons that the learner can actually go to the Traffic Department to write the driving test, and there is no guarantee of passing the test. Also, all these involve huge amount of money, which for most cases immigrants cannot afford. It is therefore only immigrants who are financially well off in South Africa who can either afford a car, and/or a South African driver's license. Immigrants who own cars or are somehow driving in South Africa are either using driver's licenses from their home countries, or bogus licenses faked in Hillbrow. Privileged immigrants skip these

boundaries by either using faked driving licenses or operate with their cars as unlicensed taxi drivers. Based on the interviews conducted, Tables 12 and 13 below present a picture of those immigrants who own cars and the type of driver's licenses they are using in South Africa respectively.

Table 12: IMMIGRANTS WHO OWN CARS

Own Cars in South Africa	Cameroonians (N= 72) %	Nigerians (N=40) %	Total (N= 112) %
Yes	12.5	42.5	23.2
No	87.5	57.5	76.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Immigrants, who do own cars, often operate as unlicensed taxi drivers. For them, this is a way of survival in a system, which excludes and discriminates against them. They resist these obstacles through their illegal activities.

My research showed that immigrants' preference for using compatriots who own cars to run their errands was quite high. In this way, they can support their compatriots' business activities, and also enjoy the advantage of familiarity, and convenience. They are well known by their compatriots, and their services are in high demand from other immigrants involved in business activities. Such unlicensed taxi drivers effectively monopolize customers in their ethnic communities, and have large networks of customers from the immigrants' communities. For immigrants using the services of a fellow immigrant, unlicensed taxis are less expensive, convenient and readily accessible. They can negotiate the cost of the services offered, and in times of financial difficulties such unlicensed taxi drivers always understand the situation and can provide their services even without payments being made. Immigrants who operate unlicensed taxis avoid all sort of taxes involved, yet they operate on a daily bases.

The activities of unlicensed taxi drivers involve carrying other immigrants to and from the airport, picking up newly arrived immigrants, and taking compatriots to the city center and shopping malls for business transactions. When there is an occasion they transport fellow immigrants as well as the goods needed to and from such occasion. In a story recounted by an immigrant who owns a car, the following was recorded about some of his activities as a clandestine taxi driver in Johannesburg:

Cameroonians know I have a car and they know my cell number. When they need me they call me or come to where I stay. I charge them according to where they go, but it is always cheaper than the normal rate. (*Can you give an example of this normal rate?*). Of course, for example it is R 200 from here (*Braamfontein*) to the airport one-way but I take people there and back for only R 150. Everyday I take Marx⁹² to the city center to buy goods for his shop and he gives me R 50 for fuel. He can't get a taxi for that amount. He will have to pay more because taxi drivers charge you on time and even base on the amount of goods you are carrying. I wait for Marx to do all his shopping then I bring him back to the shop. Some times he gives me more than R 50.

Operating an unlicensed taxi business is a common survival strategy amongst immigrants who own cars in South Africa. Unlicensed business activities are not uncommon with immigrants elsewhere. Similar situations were observed with Asian immigrants in the United States (Gold, 1992) and Congolese immigrants in Paris (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000). Evading legal boundaries by operating illegal taxi businesses ensures the immigrants survival in South Africa. An immigrant owner of a fruit and vegetable shop in Braamfontein explains why he prefers unlicensed taxis to the normal licensed taxis:

I use Mr. T when I am doing my shopping because he is like my brother and he understands too. He waits for me to finish my shopping and he brings me back to the shop. He can take me to anywhere I want to go, all he need is money to put fuel in his car and a little more. That is how he survives here so I must support him as he supports me.

Evading legal boundaries by West African immigrants in South Africa has become a popular survival strategy as well as profit yielding activity. For immigrants, it is not only a lucrative business activity, but also a way of emerging as a successful '*bush-faller*'.

⁹² Not the real name, a Cameroonian immigrant who own a fruit and vegetable shop. Mr. T not the real name the unlicensed taxi driver takes him to the shopping center each time he needs to buys goods for his shop.

Table 13: TYPE OF DRIVER'S LICENSE

Type of Drivers license	Cameroonians (N=9) %	Nigerians (N=17) %	Total (N=26) %
South African Drivers license	55.6	35.3	42.3
Non-South African drivers license	44.4	64.7	57.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Immigrants also transgress boundaries governing the use of driver's license in South Africa. They either fake the South African driver's license, or that of their home countries, or they don't use a driver's license at all. Research conducted showed that even though West African immigrants who owned cars face problems⁹³ with the police/traffic cops, all the immigrants interviewed claimed they bribe their way through traffic and police checkpoints in times of problems. According to an immigrant: *"It does not matter which license you are using. If you have money to pay the cops, you will never have any problems"*. The implications are far reaching for the state, as the immigrants continue to take advantage of the system by operating business activities outside the law.

The role of personal ties

I observed that personal ties amongst West African immigrants in South Africa are quite strong. These strong relationships support immigrants' survival strategies, and enable them to succeed despite being marginalized. The importance of personal ties amongst Africans is not a new phenomenon. It exists not only amongst African immigrants out of their countries but also in their countries. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000: 107) state that:

⁹³ These problems include asking for unnecessary documentation, tips, and unnecessarily looking for faults in order to issue fines and tickets.

Personal ties remain powerful throughout Africa today for a variety of political, economic and environmental reasons. They help people cope with risky situations, which seem as prevalent now as they were in the past. These ties bring entitlements that buffer vulnerable people from the full force of natural as well as social calamity and they have to be renewed, modified and remade with a stream of social transactions to keep them active.

West African immigrants have created their own form of order to cope with the prevailing problems through the construction of reliable personal ties. The many problems they encounter in South Africa are intensified by the lack of a means of sustaining their survival. Hence, some immigrants evade state regulation and oppression by operating illegal businesses. Personal ties are an important aspect for immigrants' survival and successes. It reassures their self-confidence, guarantees their security and helps them cope with risks. Personal ties are therefore an investment in social capital, which facilitate transactions, and rely heavily on trustworthiness. Often, business transactions, receiving ethnic goods, sending goods and remittance back home depends heavily on personal and family ties. Similarly, Griffiths (2000) observes with Somalis refugees in London that maintaining family links promotes family and social ties, and contribute to the economic reconstruction of their homeland through the transfer of remittances.

Above all, personal ties are the basis for the organization of business activities outside the law. For example, in an interview conducted with an immigrant concerning bank transactions and Venture capital he said the following: *"It's a whole network of your strongest men, you plan everything on how it will work so that you have one mouth about what you say"*. According to this immigrant, engaging into illicit bank transaction business needs trustworthy people and close friends. This tie with McIntosh (1971: 98) observation that: *"The mutual expectations amongst criminals go far beyond mere honour, and cover all the understandings and agreements necessary to their cooperative activity"*. More details on illicit money transactions follow in subsequent sections. I observed that, through personal ties, immigrants are able to raise money from one another and send remittances back home. The reliability of this strategy strongly depends on the

degree and extends of personal tie with a fellow compatriot. MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga (2000) pointed out the importance of personal ties with Congolese immigrants in Paris, noting that, through personal ties immigrants in Paris can remain in trade as they get a continuous supply of goods back home, easily raise venture capital, look for customers and beat any form of competition. Credit worthiness and the essentials for starting a business depend on personal ties, confidence and trust. Personal ties also play a major role in the heavy influxes of West African immigrants in to South Africa (reference Chapter 4).

Illicit Financial Transaction and Money Laundering: Feymen and 419

Immigrants do transgress boundaries of financial transactions in order to make fast money. This is a common trick in West Africa and has gained international recognition especially with Nigerians. A snapshot of ‘the great deception and the economy of dirty tricks’ in the West African sub-region in particular and sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is presented in Hibou (1999: 102-113) as follows:

False documents are a Nigerian speciality, although forgeries are to be found throughout Africa, in such quantity that banks will no longer accept property title deeds as loan guarantees, while European immigration services routinely suspect African passports of being forged including (or perhaps especially) diplomatic passports.

In Cameroon, deception and dirty tricksters in money transactions are popularly known as ‘*Feymen*⁹⁴’, and are widely admired and imitated by the younger generations in the country. There is a conspiracy theory in Cameroon that Jean Fochive, former head of the security service protects ‘*Feymen*’ (Hibou, 1999). The belief in such protection has gained this illicit activity the wide popularity amongst Cameroonians nationally and internationally. In a similar vein, in Nigeria, illicit money traction is known as “*419*⁹⁵” named after the article of the penal code that penalizes fraud and criminal offences against financial matters. Hibou (1999:104) noted that ‘*419*’ “*flourish in Nigeria*”, and today it has become a surviving and business strategy for most African immigrants

⁹⁴Cameroonian tricksters and money launders operating in illicit money transactions in and out of Cameroon.

⁹⁵Name after the British article of colonial penal code against fraudulent activities in Nigeria. Hence any activity that involves gross fraudulence, double-crossing, swindling and dishonesty in money matters is said to be a 419 move.

abroad. The popularity of 'Feymen' and '419' in the sub region, has classed 'Feymen' and '419' as models for the youths, and have been imported into Europe, America, Asia and of recent South Africa. *Feymen* are seen as mystic men who use supernatural powers to acquire money from their victims. They trick their victims in an assuring way, carrying out fraudulent activities, and financial deceptions in a manner that is nonviolent and guarantees the authenticity of the transaction. Hibou (1999: 105) observed that: "*The Feymen have become widely admired models for the young, among whom trickery is seen as a noble form of activities and deception, a national sport*". I interviewed a newly arrived immigrant from Cameroon about people's attitude towards 'Feymen' and '419' and she reported as follows: "*Most people have the feeling that feymen are thieves. They are only popular amongst the youths because the feymen buy them drinks and take them to nightclubs. They hide their identity but people still know about them*". The immigrant further explained that, one of their neighbours in Cameroon is a feyman, that: "*Even though the parents feel proud about their sons because he bought a house and a car for them, they usually don't talk about their son in public because they feel ashamed of what he is doing*". In South Africa, people's attitude towards feymen and 419 is not very different from those in Cameroon. The majority of South Africans do not approve of such illegal financial operations. I found out in my research that some immigrants also disapproved of such activities. According to an immigrant: "*It is very bad to dupe people of their hard earned money*". The immigrant further explained that: "*When people do these things we suffer because they think all foreigners in South Africa are feymen. There is no way we can be trusted in this country if they have such feelings about us*". However, the prevailing situation in South Africa is such that, it has increased the urge for some West African immigrants in the country to become 'Feymen', and engaged into '419' activities.

Though a difficult section to discuss, the information gathered in this section is based on interviews and close observations on immigrants' activities with regards to their dealings with the banks and/venture capital. It has been rightly observed that: "*people are naturally very wary of discussing activities that can land them in trouble with the police*" (MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000: 25). This research encountered similar

problems with West African immigrants when it involves discussing activities outside the law. Fortunately, as an insider of the immigrants' communities the question of trust and insecurity was almost wiped out. Notwithstanding, it was still very difficult to get people to talk about their activities especially if you are not a close associate. Internet cafes and the homes of some immigrants were visited for detail observations as well as for *'intimate questioning'*⁹⁶. No names have been mentioned here for the sake of security and protecting the identities of the immigrants who were under observation. In several occasions I was closely associated with some of these immigrants to get a clear understanding of how they operate. I was thus able to gain an understanding of these various types of illegal operations, which are outlined below.

Illicit Bank Transactions

The whole operation of illegal bank transactions begins with the creation of a registered company like any normal company. After creating the company, a member of the company is always on standby just in case, to answer all phone calls of that company. The company actually exists only on paper, because there are no offices where this company can be physically located. After this stage, members of the company go all out to get new South African identity booklets. The source from where these booklets are got could not be traced but there were all indication that, it was an insider's affair possibly DHA corrupt officials. With the new identity booklets, the pictures on it will be replaced with those of associates in the business. Interviews with some of the immigrants showed that a booklet cost R 500 each and R 200 for each picture that is transplanted with that of an associate of the business. The associate is then officially employed as a worker in the company with a letter of appointment from the fake company with a stated salary. The salary stated in the employment letter depends on the amount of money the company wants to swindle from the bank. With the appointment letter, the newly employed worker goes to the bank and opens a bank account. After the first month of opening the bank account, the company then pays the stated salary in the appointment letter into that account. The idea is to assure the bank that the company is genuine, and the worker

⁹⁶ Immigrants might only allow you into the inner circle if you show interest in doing a similar activity. The questions were asked in an intimate environment and as if the researcher is interested in these activities outside the law.

receives the salary stated in the appointment letter. In the second month, the associate who is now a client of the bank applies for a loan (the amount the company wants to swindle from the bank). The bank seeing that the company is genuine, pays this loan into the clients account. The client withdraws the money and the company disappears. Interviews with one of such dealers claimed that they usually filed in about two to four loan applications before they closed the company. The immigrant explained: *“It depends on the amount of money. If it is a big sum we send in few loan applications but if it is a small sum, we send in many loan applications. It also depends on the money we have to pay into our workers bank account to assure the bank”*.

‘Feymen’ and ‘419’

These two illicit money transactions though originated from Cameroon and Nigeria respectively, operate in very similar manner. The perpetrators of these activities are people who suffered alienation in their home countries and in South Africa, are alienated. It all starts with what is usually called a *‘Business Proposal’*, which is distributed worldwide to prominent companies, organizations and business people. In the proposal usually written in an official manner using letter heads, the swindlers often claimed they have millions of US Dollars which they have acquired one way or another, and need a foreign account to deposit the money. In some cases, they claim they own companies and/or are relatives of some prominent elite figures, businessman or politicians in Africa, and need partners or share holders who can invest large sum of money from abroad. They name bogus lawyers and companies, or they create a fake office in case their potential investors feel like visiting the company before any such investments are made. The offer is that anyone who is willing to help with his or her bank account, or feels like investing in the company, will get an attractive percentage sometimes as high as 50 percent. The victims are often cautious about the confidentiality of the whole transaction, and if they are willing to cooperate in the business, personal contacts by phone, e-mails and fax will be established between the potential investor or bank account owner and the swindlers. In most cases a code name is established between the potential investor or account owner and the swindlers. After all the necessary arrangements have been made between these two stake holders, the victim is then asked to pay in some money into the swindlers

account for the purpose of facilitating transfer of the millions they want to save abroad. Or in the case of a company, to come and sign the necessary documentation and pay the amount the investor is willing to part with into the company's account. The money needed to ease transfer abroad depends on the amount of money to be transferred abroad. It can be as much as 500,000 US Dollars or as little as 1000 US Dollars. Once this money is paid into the swindler's account, they cut off all contacts with their prey. In some cases, the victims actually come to Africa to see for themselves the veracity of the whole business. Notwithstanding, because some high-ranking individuals often backs and support the activities of '*Feymen*' and '*419*', arrangements made by the swindlers always look plausible and in place. Hibou (1999: 104) reports that:

Western police services have evidence that they are organized by highly organized gangs or guilds whose members are absolutely unscrupulous (some foreigners have gone to Lagos to recover their assets have been murdered), and enjoy the active or passive complicity of public officials.

Another popular trick particularly of *feymen* is one where they promise to use mystical powers or strange chemicals they claim to have, to turn plain papers into United States Dollars. The victim is enticed into believing the effectiveness of this means of producing United State's Dollars. Once convinced the victim will be asked to supply as much money as can be extracted from him or her. Once the money is in the possession of the swindlers, they disappeared into thin air. In this ways, immigrants are able to make fabulous amount of money within a short space of time.

CONCLUSION

West African immigrants in South Africa suffer from serious xenophobia and discrimination from the broader South African society. They are trapped in South Africa as their hopes and aspirations are dashed into desperation and despair. Xenophobia, discrimination and the South African affirmative action are the main frustrating factors preventing these immigrants from achieving their goals in South Africa. Although they are excluded from the broader South African society, West African immigrants strive to survive in the country. Amongst these struggles some immigrants have adopted strategies

such as engaging in trading and small business activities, and others have involved in activities outside the margins of the law.

Xenophobia, discrimination and the South African affirmative action are the realities in South Africa, which prevent West African immigrants from achieving their goals in the country. These notwithstanding are motivating factors, forcing most West African immigrant in the country to strive for economic success. For example, Hillbrow a West African stronghold does not only favours immigrants' economic activities but also present a protective setting for activities beyond the margins of the law. Xenophobia and discrimination also help unify these immigrants thus giving them an added advantage towards their socio-economic successes. It is in this light that Sowell observes that:

Discrimination in labour markets, whether anticipated or perceptual discrimination creates additional incentives for self-employment, including owner-operated businesses. Knowledge of the special consumer preferences of ethnic communities provides another incentive for ethnic businesses (Sowell, 1981: 61).

Immigrants' successes are also as a result of the strong ethnic and family ties they have established amongst themselves. These ties not only facilitate business transactions of various types, but also unite them under a common solidarity as discriminated people. This parallels Sowell's observations of Chinese, Japanese and Jewish immigrants communities: *"Groups with strong family and community ties...have been prominent as entrepreneurs, setting up businesses with resources drawn from within the ethnic community, even during their early years in poverty"* (Sowell, 1981: 63). In South Africa, this is the kind of path that West African immigrants are passing along. They also enjoy the advantage of possessing the social and human capital, and of mutual reliance. Mutual trust amongst these immigrants is a crucial ingredient for financing their business activities. Newly arrived immigrants can easily raise sufficient amount of capital for their purposes when they bring their resources together. In addition, some discriminated West African immigrants in South Africa are involved in transnational trading which gives then the advantage of operating in the socio-economic processes of more than one state.

Above all, West African immigrants contest legal boundaries in order to secure their safety and security in the country. Perhaps without xenophobic hostility, discrimination, and the South African affirmative action, the impact of unlawful activities and illicit financial transactions would be less felt in the country. The rationale is that, since these immigrants need to survive in South Africa, and also take care of their families back home; they have a strong desire for making huge and fast money. Without readymade jobs available for these immigrants in South Africa, made worse by discrimination and the South African affirmative action, they are forced to turn to other alternatives of which, activities beyond the margins of the law are the most readily available. With the help of technological advances, such as Internet cafes and telephone booths, strong ethnic and family ties these immigrants are able to succeed especially with those activities beyond the margins of the law. For these immigrants, these activities enable them to amass fast wealth, and yield large profits.