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Cameroonian Migrant Women in Cape Town, South Africa and Cross-Border Family Life

TESIS DE MÁSTER

MARGARET KONG AKWO

Directora: Dra. Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo

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Dª.:/D.: Margaret Kong Akwo

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DIRECTOR/A: Dra. Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo

1. Resumen en español

El tema de la vida familiar transfronteriza en el contexto de Camerún ha sido ignorado en gran medida por el mundo académico; utilizando el método de la historia oral, me centro en la creación de significado en relación a las relaciones familiares por parte de las mujeres migrantes camerunesas. La mayor parte del trabajo alrededor de este tema ha tendido a reflejar la idea de que la migración de las mujeres lleva a la desintegración familiar y los niños y niñas abandonados sufren un déficit de cuidados. Basándome en la investigación que llevé a cabo en Ciudad del Cabo, Sudáfrica, sostengo que la migración de mujeres de Camerún a Ciudad del Cabo no conduce a la desintegración familiar ni tampoco a que los hijos/as que dejan en sus hogares sufran déficit de cuidados. En cambio, estas mujeres negocian su pertenencia para poder cuidar y sostener a sus niños/as y familias. Lo hacen mediante estrategias para obtener documentos legales en Sudáfrica, lo que les permite invitar a sus hijos y familiares a unirse a ellas; por tanto, consiguen desarrollar su maternidad de otra manera a pesar de mantener la percepción hegemónica de ser las cuidadoras principales de sus hijos.

2. Resumen en inglés

The topic of cross-border family life in the Cameroon context has been largely ignored by scholars; using the oral history method, I am focusing on Cameroonian women migrants' creation of meaning around family relationships. Most scholarly work around this topic has often reflected the idea that the migration of women leads to family disintegration and children left behind suffer a care deficit. Based on the research I carried out in Cape Town, South Africa, I argue that the migration of Cameroonian women to Cape Town, South Africa does not lead to family disintegration and Children left back at home do not suffer care deficit. Instead these women negotiate their belonging in order to be able to care and provide for their children and families back home. They do so by strategically obtaining legal documents in South Africa, which enables them to invite their children and family members to join them, thereby performing motherhood in another light while maintaining the hegemonic perception of being the main caregivers to their children.

VºBº

EL/LA DIRECTOR/A DE LA TESIS

Fdo.: Alicia Menéndez Tarrazo

LA AUTORA DEL MÁSTER

Fdo.: Margaret Kong Akwo

DECLARATION

I declare that *Cameroonian female migrants in Cape Town, South Africa and Cross border Family Life* is my creation and has not been submitted for another degree or examination in any other university and that all the sources I have quoted or used have been fully acknowledged by means of complete references.

Oviedo, June 2013

Signed: Margaret Kong Akwo

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thoughts about this study started during my final year as an undergraduate in Gender Studies when we were asked to identify our area of interest. In a process of intensive reading, literature on gender and migration caught my interest as a migrant woman. I discovered that migration researchers have mostly reported on negative effects of migration on children and other family relationships left behind, for example the care deficit suffered by children whose mothers migrate leaving them behind, and the family disintegration due to female migration.

Reports on the migration of Cameroonian women to South Africa show that South Africa has become a preferred destination country for Cameroonians. This choice is not voluntarily but is influenced by their financial capacity. Most of the Cameroonians migrants women in South Africa are concentrated in the care industry such as Cameroonians (Pelican et al, 2008:120).

Despite reports about this recent trend of migration, little scholarly research has been carried out in Cameroon focusing on the gender aspects of this issue from a feminist perspective. Migration in the Cameroonian context has often been studied from the perspective of migration statistics, remittances, migration routes and history of migration. All of these studies have been gender-blind.[1]

Looking at migration from a gendered perspective, I realized that important issues related to women were not being examined. For example: Why is women's migration only examined in relation to the family and children? Does being a woman equal having children and being married? What are the specific problems surrounding women's migration? What are the different ways in which migrant women deal with their situations? What are the different ways in which migration changes mother-child and other family relationships?

Following from this, I argue that it is worth examining the Cameroonian and South African contexts to investigate the effects of migration on family relationships.

[1] See, for example, Pelican et al, 2008: 120; Nyamnjoh, 2002; Adepoju, 2004; Pinteh, 2005.

This will help us understand some of the push factors and pull factors that have prompted the flow of women from Cameroon to South Africa. My study concentrates on family relationships across borders. Some scholarly work on this topic has reported that migrant women abandon their children and families back home to search for employment opportunities abroad leading to family disintegration and care deficit.[2] Focusing on the gendered aspects of migration, I will pay attention to women migrants' personal experiences regarding family separation, child abandonment and motherly care.

Based on my interviews with Cameroonian women migrants in Cape Town, South Africa, I argue that children of migrant women do not suffer care deficit and their migration does not lead to family disintegration. Instead, these women invent strategies that I term within the parameters of this study as *split belonging,* which is the formation of new social ties that enable them to legally settle down in the receiving country and invite their children and family members to live with them.

Cameroon is one of the most patriarchal African countries with very minimal rights for women. Domestic violence such as sexual, physical and emotional abuse takes place within the parameters of the home. The continuous political and economic instability forces women and girls, who are the most vulnerable, to move to other countries or to other areas within Cameroon.[3]

My personal experience is an example of this situation. While I lived with the father of my children, I was subjected to continuous physical and emotional abuse. After his death in a car accident, I had to resort to medication and counseling. I came out of this situation with very deep sores but strong and independent. I opened a hair salon, rented an apartment and moved in with my children. After three years of running this business I decided to further my studies.

The idea of finding a better future elsewhere had always been my dream. After Cameroon's political and economic liberalization of the 1990s and the structural adjustment program, there was a significant decrease in employment. I understood that

[2] See for example Parrenas, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotello, 2003; Hondagneu-Sotello and Avila, 1997; Hochschild, 2000.

[3] Domestic violence is common amongst the childless: 77 % of women without a child and 53 % of those with children are victims of domestic violence (Gender Empowerment and Development, 2010: 37).

economically, intellectually and as a politically aspiring citizen, Cameroon had little to offer me. I started thinking of alternative ways to make a living elsewhere. My first choices were the United States of America and Europe because I understood there were many economic and educational opportunities. However, with increasing restriction of migration to these countries, and the huge amount of money required for visa processes, South Africa became my next option. Moving to South Africa meant breaking away from a child-to-parent relationship, sister-to-sibling, mother-to-child relationship in the context of the family, and other relationships. My sister and mother looked after my children while I worked as a florist, an actress and as a hair stylist. I remitted to my family in Cameroon monthly; I in turn received money each month from my boyfriend's brother who is based in the Netherlands, and I communicated regularly with his family in Namibia. Four years later, I was able to facilitate the migration of my brother, two cousins and my children to South Africa.

Despite the several years that I lived in South Africa, I never felt at home. This was partly because the citizens often asked about my plans to return to my country. Similarly, when I travel to Cameroon, my family and friends ask the same question. I often consider myself as belonging nowhere and not having a home.

I have been motivated by this experience to find out about other Cameroonian migrant women who are living in Cape Town, South Africa. Besides, as a researcher, this lived experience has been the driving force of my concern about the politics of knowledge production. I understand that what has traditionally been defined as human knowledge is, in fact, male knowledge. I appreciate feminism because of its attention to the social inequality that females experience and its critique of the whole social system. My personal experience connects with the disempowerment I have felt of my voice being suppressed and knowing that it is because I am a woman. As a black woman struggling to make my voice heard I understand that it is only through academic achievement that I can legitimize and give social value to my knowledge.

My research answers two fundamental questions: Does the migration of Cameroonian women to Cape Town, South Africa, lead to the formation of new cross-border families? What effect does migration have on children and other family members left behind? These questions will be discussed with reference to the experiences of seven Cameroonian migrant women in Cape Town, South Africa.

I will firstly present an outline of some reasons why I have chosen the qualitative research method, and particularly the interview approach, despite its limitations and challenges. Chapter 3 will provide a detailed literature review that reveals previous scholarship on cross-border migration. Here I will examine the existing literature on women's migration and cross-border family relationships, and on disintegrated family relationships due to migration. Chapter 4 will present the findings from my seven interviews. Chapter 5 will look at the information gathered from my findings and discuss it in relation to the literature reviewed. Finally, Chapter 6 will present my conclusions. I suggest that a gendered perspective allows for a redefinition of cross-border family life, and that the family should not be seen exclusively as a household unit, as this may leave out the various contributions that migrant women make to their family's well-being and to their country's economy.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHOD

Information in this study was collected through interviews with seven Cameroonian women migrants in Cape Town, South Africa, and intensive literature reviews. The respondents were between the ages of 30 to 35. They were from different backgrounds, profession and marital status, and they were selected according to a variety of common experiences. I have categorized them as documented migrants (students and those with legal employment) and undocumented migrants (refugees and asylum seekers, who have been forced to leave Cameroon for non-economic reasons). I had a one-on-one structured interview with each of the participants, with open and closed questions. I asked them about their background in Cameroon, where they lived, what their family set up was like, and how they were gendered – that is, what gender roles or expectations were instilled in them as children, and the kind of activities and functions they were exposed to in the course of growing up. I also asked the participants about their hopes, dreams, experiences and what had made them come to South Africa and not some other country; how they got there, where they lived in Cape Town, what kind of job they did; what were some of the challenges they faced in Cape Town, and whether they had achieved their objectives. My reason for asking these questions was to get a window picture of some of the situations surrounding female migration, how they dealt with these situations and the different ways in which cross border-migration changed mother-child and other relationships for them. I also intended to get an understanding of the political and socio-economic situation of Cameroon and South Africa through the experiences of these women.

I am aware of the unequal power relations in conducting interviews. However, I have addressed the imbalance in power relations between the researcher and researched by changing the language of research and involving the participants at all levels of the research process. I spoke in Pidgin English (Cameroon common-place language). It is possible that my identity as a Cameroonian and as a student had an important impact on the structure of power relations in all my interviews – at some point each of the respondents were open and informal. But there were times in each of the interviews

when they would hold back and be cautious of what they had to say – I am aware of some of the problems that may arise from conducting an interview with people I speak the same language with. However, I gave the participants the freedom to express themselves. This is because I understood it was a means through which I would achieve the open and somehow honest interview that I was hoping for.

I have chosen the qualitative research method because it values subjective personal meaning and definition, commonalities, and it gives voices to the oppressed. According to Kum-Kum Bahvnani "there are important issues pertaining to relations of power within the context of interview" (1994: 30). Cynthia Pelak questions "the notion of value-free objective researcher who stands outside the research process" and recognizes "the interplay between the researcher and the participants in producing knowledge" (2005: 579). Although there can never be a complete power-free interview process, Steinar Kvale states that "a qualitative research interview entails a hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution of interviewer and interviewee. It is a one-way dialogue, an instrumental and indirect conversation, where the interviewer upholds a monopoly of interpretation" (Kvale, 2006: 483). I agree with this because the fact that I was the one asking questions to obtain information about what was important for me meant I was the one controlling the direction and outcome of the results. Nevertheless, the following remarks by Micheal Gunzenhauser were also taken into consideration: "a critical researcher who is interested in giving voice to the oppressed, uncovering differential power relations, and connecting lived experiences to social critique (…) should also be self-reflexive and non-exploitative of their participants" (Gunzenhauser, 2006: 625).

2.2. LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

I found the process of finding respondents a difficult task. Each time I made appointments with participants some did phone to decline later on. However, I learned that this was partly due to the nature of their jobs, as most of them worked on weekends as well. I also found out that migrant women do not want their stories to be known for fear that they may get in trouble with the Department of Home Affairs. Some of the participants withdrew from the project, while others preferred to remain anonymous.

However, I learned that in future I would need to be aware of all the dynamics related to my study population early enough in order to plan better and minimize such difficulties.

It was difficult to find materials pertaining to Cameroonian women migrants in South Africa in particular. I did rely more on materials on migration to Europe and America. The significance of this study lies in the fact that although there is considerable information and knowledge about women's migration, and although it is apparent that Cameroonian women are increasingly migrating to Cape Town, South Africa, leaving their families behind, very little is currently known about the dynamics and implications of this migration. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

Due to lack of resources, I did not tape record and transcribe my interviews. Instead, I typed as each of the participants spoke.

2.3. RESEARCH ETHICS

I promised the participants that I was going to adhere to the ethical code of professional conduct as outlined in the consent forms. Because of this, I followed certain steps in order to make sure that this project was conducted in those lines. I firstly asked the participants if they would want to help in my project. I honestly told them what I was going to change the language of research by speaking in Pidgin English so as to get them involved in all the levels of the research process. Consent forms were handed to the participants to indicate whether to use their real names in this project. They all have a copy as well.

I tried to refrain from referring to the participants as *my interviewees*, as I had become aware of the power relations involved in conducting interviews. Nevertheless, I struggled with ethics as a result of my assumption that if I *meant well* and reflected on my positioning, I would not be in any danger of exploiting the participants. But while putting this project together, questions like 'was our conversation mutual?' came to my mind. And I understand that I had my own agenda which I somehow pushed during the interviews.

2.4. TAKING GENDER SERIOUSLY

I have taken gender seriously by creating this project that examines the experiences of migrant women in those areas where they have been marginalized and overlooked. I have taken their individual and collective power seriously in line with Kum-Kum Bahvnani's conceptualization of what constitutes feminist research (1994: 30) and with Cook and Fonow's statement that "attending to the basic significance of gender involves accounting for the everyday experiences of women which have been neglected in traditional sociology" (1986: 22).

I found out that most Cameroonian women face some form of oppression and/or exploitation. I understand that women's experiences are being left out in institutions and the economic. Their enormous contribution to development is ignored as the work they do is reproductive work. Furthermore, because these are real life stories of women (Lugones and Spelman, 1990: 21), I consider it as academic knowledge that is vital in understanding the situation of females in Cameroon, as feminist research must be based on female culture and experience (Dubios, 1983).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. DEFINING FAMILY, CROSS-BORDER FAMILIES, AND CROSS-BORDER FAMILY LIFE

The family is usually known in social theory as a "group of people who love and care about each other, regardless of blood relation or marital status" (Köstenberger, 2006: 1). However, according to some feminist theorists, a family is a household unit of production (Anthias, 2000). Seeing the family as a household unit has led to problematic analysis in migration research since "the absence of fathers or parents of one gender does not necessarily have negative effects on 'family life' and children (…). Fathers are not essential for raising children in a family as long as there is at least one stable adult influencing the child" (Köstenberger, 2006: 1). Analysis that interpret migration and separation as leading to the breakdown of the family (Hochschild, 2003:22) sustain that the global transfer of care work, which is predominantly carried out by females, has a negative impact, especially on the children and families of migrant women.

In Western societies, a "family is understood to be made up of a minimum of two members who are married and living together with their child or children" (Köstenberger, 2006: 1). This may comprise single parents and their children or relatives living together or related to each other in general. Those not considered as part of the family are those having no relation with the other members. Unlike the Western understanding of the family, which is made up of small, nuclear units with focus on married relationships, in West Africa and Cameroon most communities and cultures consider 'family' to include

> a large network of kinsmen living in the same village or community (...). Families in Cameroon are formed around descents, such as sisters and brothers living jointly. Depending on the norm, on marriage the wife moves in with the husband. They may be an independent unit of consumption and production but they do not form an independent household. It may be difficult sometimes to differentiate between who is family and who is not because wives are usually not taken to be part of the family but are bound by kinship ties. (Oyewumi, 2004: 2).

Cross-border families are "those whose members live some or most of the time separate from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely, 'familyhood', even across national borders" (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002: 3). This definition shows that a common link and bond among family members who are spread over more than one country is vital. Cross-border families maintain joint kinship relations while living in more than one country. Their residential units can be fluid in relation to structure, depending on members migrating and returning.

"Cross-border families, although not co-resident, form a bond of unity and support. They have multiple identities and residences and are similar to other families in that they strive at equality and access to resources among its members" (Bryceson and Vuoerela, 2003: 3-7). Unlike conventional family, cross-border families are bound by very strong forces. Their exposure and huge social network may bring about experiences that lead to harmonious life among multiple countries (Herrera Lima 2001: 89). With the help of modern communication links and occasional visits, dispersed family members are bound emotionally and financially (Appadurai, 2003: 42).

Tight migration laws and a segmented labour market make family life across borders difficult. This may influence migrant women to create social ties that will facilitate their entry and settling in the receiving country (Anthias, 2000: 20-23). These may lead to new forms of cross-border family relationships in which the home country (in this case, Cameroon) may not be a reference.

In his discussion of the changes that have taken place in the family institution in the twentieth century, Goran Therbon examines both the global sociological and historical dimension of the family to show that the development of different family systems has not changed. He concludes that although changes have taken place in the family institution, there is not enough proof to conclude that we are living in a post-family era (2004: 1). Although his analysis deals primarily with Creole families that migrated from Africa to America, it includes the influence that cross-border migration has on historical changes in the family (2004: 35). But because of the territorial focus of his analysis, it has not really dealt with cross-border family life whereby family activities are carried out across borders. Therbon's review shows that migration is not only a platform through which family value, gender roles and family functions could be re-defined, as the 'family' encompasses various connections and relations such as mother-child bonded family forms whereby the mother is the sole breadwinner and

caregiver to the child and where a married relationship is not necessary to form a family or to bring up a child (2004: 9). This dimension is important in this discussion because single-mother-breadwinner family forms are often found throughout Cameroon. Perhaps this is as a result of poverty or a culture that attaches much value to maternal family, even though the Cameroon society assigns values to femininity and masculinity that situate men as breadwinners and family heads.

Glick and Schiller examine migrant populations' ethnicity and geography to show that living across borders is not "stretched out nationalism" (1994: 238). They further state that situating migrants in the middle of nowhere between settlers and visitors questions the notion of belonging in a nation (1994: 238). Despite the fact that their study limits 'family' to the conventional sense of mother, father and child, it suggests that it is important to focus on family relations across borders to be able to understand why people initially get involved in cross-border activities.

Thomas Faist presents the concept of "cross-border social spaces" as imaginary spaces created both by the activities of migrants and those back at home. These activities link the sending and receiving countries and the institution of the nation-state that strive to monitor these spaces. Migrants' activities in cross-border social spaces bring about changes in migration and in mobility, such as informing and supplying those planning to migrate with resources in the form of remittance. These cross-border social spaces are not even because they are exposed to different power relations. Migrants who travel without genuine papers may be caught in the battle for rights and obligations in the receiving country (Faist, 2000).

Despite restrictions from South Africa Immigration, Cameroonian women have continued to migrate to South Africa. They seek asylum and refugee permits, which allow them to work even before being granted the permit (Pineteh, 2005: 21). These women are mostly working in the service sector such as hair salons, restaurants, hotels, and street vending (Pelican et al, 2008: 120). All these fall below the conventional meaning of living a proper family life, especially in Africa. However, working in these sectors changes their roles from being dependants to providers to their families, hence their traditional roles as unpaid family workers changes to paid family workers. "Questioning the role of migrant women as mothers suggests an acceptance of the nuclear family as the sole practical option to solve children's emotional problems in cross-border families" (Kostenberger, 2006: 1). The nuclear family is eurocentric in nature and problematic, as it does not fit into the Cameroon context.

3. 2. EFFECTS OF FEMALE MIGRATION ON CROSS-BORDER FAMILY LIFE

> Space invites movement, and is inscribed in a sphere much vaster and in continuous expansion, in which the stars and planets outline their trajectories and orbits, sketching polygons and arborescent constellations, algebraic expressions and syllabaries. Our ancestors wandered beneath this protective dome and entrusted their destinies to the breadth of their wonderings. Everything points to the mobility of our ancestors. Their collective migrations from north to south and vice versa. Across the whole spectrum of the wind- rose. On foot with neither guide nor compass. Driven simply by their innate instinct and their longing for surroundingss uitable for the satisfaction of their elemental needs. (Goytisolo, 2004 : 19)

Women may travel to a particular country leaving their families back home for various reasons. Perhaps to search for opportunities to make money and to challenge their traditional dependent role as wives and mothers. Far from abandoning their families back home, they venture in unlawful activities risking their lives in order to provide for their families.

Globalization and the high economic disparity between the North and the South have changed the direction of migration, leading to various migration processes, activities and practices. One of such practices is the reversal of traditional migration routes by Cameroonian women from the United States of America and Europe to intra-continental migration to South Africa (Adepoju, 2004: 59-62). Another of such practices is the entry of Cameroonian women from diverse backgrounds to South Africa through unlawful ways, to look for (often informal) jobs, leading to an increase in informal labor and class variation in migration (Pelican et al, 2008). Since this practice is seen in the growing number of female migrants, concern has been raised on the family leading to different analytical discussions on family life across borders. For example, transnational fatherhood (Pribilsky, 2004), transnational motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotello and Avila, 1997) and transnational childhood (Salazar Parreñas, 2003).

Pierette Hondagneu-Sotello and Ernestine Avila examine Latina women immigrants in Los Angeles, who are working as housemaids leaving their children back home. Through in-depth interviews, surveys and ethnographic studies in Los Angeles, they look at how Latina women work as housemaids and change the meaning of

motherhood to fit into their daily lives as immigrants. While mothering is generally understood as a practice that involves the care and training of children for adult life, there are many contemporary variants distinguished by race, class and culture. Latina immigrant women who work and reside in the United States while their children remain in their countries of origin constitute one variation of the organizational arrangements, meanings, and priorities of motherhood, which they refer to as *transnational motherhood.* They explore how the meanings of motherhood are rearranged to accommodate these spatial and temporal separations. These women migrate to the United States because of the demand for labor, especially in care services, leading to female-headed households. Their study explores women's creation of new meanings of motherhood by transforming motherhood to incorporate caring from long distance (Hondagneu-Sotell and Avila, 1997:139).

Ivo Ngome and Judges Mpako report that altruism, "a genuine concern for the home family, motivates the majority of remitters to send money to Cameroon. Emigrants are aware of the economic difficulties their relatives face back at home. For example, the rate of unemployment in Cameroon currently stands at over 30 percent" (2009: 1). Even though their study concentrates on the remittance of the Cameroonian diaspora community in general and does not present a gendered account of remittances to Cameroon, it highlights that remittances play an important role in poverty alleviation within families and the economy of Cameroon.

Salazar Parreñas analyses the case of children of Philippine immigrants who migrate leaving their children behind, principally because of the demand for care labor in developed countries. They take care of children and families in developed countries and look after the sick and the elderly. This leaves children in developed countries in the comfortable position of having two mothers – their biological mothers and their nannies – while the children of the immigrants are left back home with neither a mother nor father to take care of them (Parreñas, 2003: 39). The author allows the Phillipine workers to express their migration experiences. Her study exposes the negative circle brought about by the demand for care labor, especially in developed countries. She also provides a global and comparative point of view on care drain that has often remained focused on the developed countries. She further states that:

> A growing crisis of care troubles the world's most developed nations. Even as demand for care has increased, its supply has dwindled. The result is a care deficit. to which women

> from the Philippines have responded in force. Roughly two-thirds of Filipino migrant workers are women, and their exodus, usually to fill domestic jobs, has generated tremendous social change in the Philippines. (Parreñas, 2003: 39)

However, Jason Pribilsky examines cross-border family life, co-parenting and married relationships within Ecuador migrants in New York and the Azuayo-Cañari highlands in Ecuador and concludes that migration instead helps to improve family relationships: "How intact couples work to redefine roles, relationships and family life; how they learn to live side-by-side (aprender a convivir) (…). How they handle remittances, communication, child-raising and their own relationship (…). But, despite hardships, such couples often state that their relationship improved after migration" (Pribilsky, 2004:313). His studies show how men and women migrants in New York and their partners in Ecuador learn to live without their partners. He draws attention to the implications that living across borders has on family relationships. He also exposes the separation that occurs within the household when women leave their children at home to work in other countries (Pribilsky, 2004).

I argue that the the migration of the Cameroonian women that I interviewed does not lead to family separation, child abandonment and subsequently, family disintegration (Hochschild, 2003:315; Parrenas, 2003; Gamburd, 2000). I agree with Pribilsky (2004) that the migration of women does not lead to family disintegration and that paying much attention to disintegrated families may lead to ignoring some of the problem that migrant women have to deal with, such as their invention of new ways of performing motherhood and family responsibilities from long distance places. Also, it may leave out the contribution that migrant women make to the economy of the sending and receiving countries (Pribilsky, 2004: 315).

3.3. THE DISINTEGRATION OF FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS DUE TO MIGRATION

Although literature on cross-border migration describes migration as good in holding family bonds and loyalty through the occasional movement of family members, discussions on the global care chain suggests that cross-border relationships are not

good for children and other family members who are left behind, as they may be subjected to care deficit.

Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild introduce the term ‘care deficit’ to mean a chain whereby women, especially from poor countries. trade their domestic labor by providing care services to families in developed countries. They state that “the care deficit that has emerged in the wealthier countries as women enter the workforce pulls migrants from the Third World and post-communist nations; poverty pushes them” (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003: 535). The chain shows how a working-class woman would employ a poor woman to serve as a nanny in her home and the nanny would in turn employ a poorer woman to serve as a nanny in her home. The chain continues to the bottom where these services may end up being rendered for free.

The disparity in wages between countries of the North and the South, the increase in female-headed households in countries of the South and the tight control in social movement are causing females to migrate Anthias, 2000:23). In the case of my study, the labor demand for caretaking jobs pushes Cameroonian women to South Africa believing that there is a better future awaiting them there. The traditional female traditional role back home as wives and mothers is transferred to South Africa, leading to a care deficit back home.

Female migrants also bear the frustration of men who are themselves caught in-between the politics of heritage and opportunities in far-off contexts and different forms of culture. Although these women may want to support their families, state policies and activities affect gender politics within the level of the family (Golding, 2001).

4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section will present my summaries of the seven interviews I conducted with Tessa, Nana, Ayuk, Bume, Tiki, Seme and Benny. The questionnaire and the transcripts of each interview can be found in the Appendix.

4.1 TESSA

Tessa was born in rural Matoh. She grew up with her parents who are subsistent farmers. She has five siblings, three boys and two girls and she in the fourth child. She grew up accompanying her mother to the farm, fetching fire wood, cooking, and cleaning. No one cared for her; she barely had clothes to wear. Her sitting space was the kitchen where all the women in her home discuss freely and tell folklores while waiting for food to get ready. Tessa left Cameroon and migrated to Cape Town, South Africa in 2004 at the age of 23. Another Cameroon woman who lives in South Africa and has a resident permit processed documents for her entry in to South Africa by claiming her as her biological daughter. The plan was for Tessa to come and manage one of her hair salons. Tessa left her child in her parents' care in Cameroon. Months later in South Africa, she confided to a South African friend about her boss not being her biological mother. News got to the South African Immigration Office. After a process of questioning, she lost her resident status and was repatriated to Cameroon. In Cameroon, her parents took a loan from their local community group to finance her trip back to South Africa together with her child. Three months later, in South Africa, she found a job as a hairdresser at a beauty salon in Mowbray. In South Africa, Tessa's child attends school for almost no fee because she applied for and was granted a single parent subsidy. Two years later, her relationship with a German living in South Africa produced her second child (by the time of this interview they were living as married couple). Her husband's family had lived in South Africa for a long time. He holds South African citizenship. Tessa and her husband visited Cameroon some years back. Her husband attempted to find possible means for them to settle in Cameroon, but because Tessa did not like the socio-political situation in Cameroon and the poor schooling system, they returned to South Africa after two months. Tessa has made it possible for her sister and brother to join her in South Africa. Her parents and three siblings are back in Cameroon. Tessa remits to Cameroon monthly for her family to earn a living. Her in-

laws in Germany who are economically well off, remit to Tessa's family in South Africa occasionally, especially after the birth of their grandchild. She uses part of the money to pay a nanny who looks after her children while she goes to work. She also makes regular calls to Cameroon and Germany. She is now applying to obtain the South African resident permit based on being married to a citizen. She has no plans to settle in Cameroon, even though South Africa is becoming very difficult to live in with the continuous decrease in jobs and increase in house rents.

4.2. NANA

Nana was born in Diongo, a village in Cameroon. Her parents were subsistent farmers. She has five siblings. She is the oldest. She grew up cooking, cleaning, looking after her siblings, going to fetch water miles away from her home and working in the farm. She was repeatedly told by her mother that a woman has to be hard-working and must not complain. Also that all the tasks she performed were for her advantage because by the time she got married she would make a good wife. Nana's mother migrated to South Africa first. Her mother's health deteriorated after the death of her father. But Nana could not help her mother's situation financially because she did not have a job. News on the radio and from friends regarding the end of apartheid and a revival of South Africa's economy made Nana's mother believe that she was going to live a better life in South Africa. Nana's grandmother and siblings took care of her till she was seven years old. Her mother found a South African boyfriend whom she later got married to for the sake of obtaining a resident permit. The purpose was to get Nana over to South Africa. Years later, Nana joined her mother in Cape Town. After some years, Nana's mother enrolled at a Technikon to further her studies, where she graduated with a diploma in hotel management. She later found a job as a manager in a guest house. At the age of nineteen, Nana visited Cameroon but did not like the experience because she was not treated as if she belonged there. She was treated as a visitor throughout her three-month stay in Cameroon -- being asked repeatedly when she was planning to return to South Africa. This made her very sad because these were the same questions she was often asked in South Africa. On completing her degree in computer science, Nana was hired by a company which allowed her to travel a lot especially around Africa. She gave birth to a baby girl as a result of one of her trips to Kenya. Despite many years of living is South Africa, Nana did not have it easy with the South African Immigration officers

during the course of traveling, he was often checked as a foreigner. She had her second child with a Turkish man she met at a conference in Malawi. He resides in Portugal. After the first and second trimester of her pregnancy, Nana joined her boyfriend in Portugal to have the baby and settle there, but because of the long process of learning the language and legalizing her stay, she decided to return to South Africa and resume her job there. She lives with her two children in South Africa. Nana remits monthly to her family in Cameroon. She in turn receives money from her child's father in Kenya and from her boyfriend in Poland. She uses the money to pay her bills and her house help. She exchanges calls and visits with both her ex-boyfriend's family in Kenya and her boyfriend's family in Turkey.

4.3. AYUK

Ayuk grew up with her family in the Town of Bafia. She has four siblings, two girls and three boys; she is the second girl. Her parents are subsistent farmers. She and her mother did all the house chores while her brothers went out to play football and chat with friends. Her parents constantly reminded her not to complain because house chores are meant for women. On completing primary school, she got married and had a child, but later she separated from her husband because of physical abuse. She went to live with her mother after the death of her father. She learned from her friend who came to spend the Christmas holidays in Cameroon that South Africa had a lot to offer in terms of a better life. Ayuk and her mother decided to take a loan with their farm as a collateral security to pay for the travel expenses. She left her child with her mother. She paid a Cameroonian woman who was living in South Africa and had legal status to process her papers. On arrival, she went to the South African Home Affairs to seek asylum. After thirteen days she was granted a refugee status which allowed her to work and study in South Africa. The first job she found was working as a waitress at ST. Elmos restaurant in Waterfront.[4] She lived as a refugee for five years within which she had to go to the South African Department of Home Affairs every three months to extend her refugee status. It was becoming more difficult to acquire a permanent resident permit from the South Africa Department of Home Affairs after five years as the constitution states. The application process was slow. Later, she decided to apply for

[4] Waterfront is an area where immigrants often find work especially as waitpersons and sales personnel.

a permanent residence status through the United Nations High Commission of Refugees UNHCR office in Cape Town as the constitution states.[5]

She appeared in court for questioning as to why she wanted to stay permanently in South Africa. She was denied the papers on the grounds that her reasons for wanting to stay were not tangible especially because Cameroon is not a war-plagued country. This left her with no option but to pay an agent to get married to a South African man to have a legal status. This was to enable her to bring her child over to South Africa. She obtained her South African resident permit and her child joined her in South Africa. She is currently saving and planning to establish either a hair salon or an African food restaurant in the future for her child to earn a living while she travels to Europe. Ayuk believed the only way out was to get married to a South African man for papers because most of her friends who had been living as refugees in South Africa for more than ten years were still on the process of requesting a permanent resident permit from the Department of Home Affairs. She states that it is not only tiring to repeatedly visit the office of Home Affairs but it is also degrading, as foreigners receive poor treatment.

4.4. BUME

Bume was born in Nkole Bisong - a neighbourhood in Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon. Her parents are subsistent farmers. She has five siblings, four girls and a boy. She grew up cooking, cleaning, and looking after her siblings, fetching water and fire wood and working in the farm. She was repeatedly told by her mother that a woman has to be hard working and must not complain. On completing primary school, her parents paid for her to learn hairdressing. Two years later she graduated and started cohabiting with her boyfriend with whom she had a son. She separated from him because she was being physically abused, and she went back to live with her parents who helped her in caring for her son. Over the years, she decided to move to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, to look for a job in the beauty industry as a hairdresser. She found a job, saved some money and decided to travel overseas. But because of the

[5] You can apply for a permanent residence permit if you have lived in South Africa for more than five years on a refugee status permit and have been granted a certificate confirming that you will remain a refugee indefinitely.

huge amount of money required to travel to Europe or America, she decided on South Africa, which was less costly. Her mother supported her financially with her travel requirements. Her travel documents were put together by a Cameroonian woman who had established herself in South Africa and worked as a private travel agent. In Cape Town, Bume found a job at a hair salon owned by an older Cameroonian woman. She met a Nigerian man who became her boyfriend, and with whom she cohabited. This helped her to save the money she would have had used to pay rent; instead for remittance to her family in Cameroon. While living with her boyfriend, she paid an agent to get married in order to obtain a resident permit. This was to enable her to legalize her stay and to bring over her family to South Africa. Three years later, she invited her son to South Africa. In Cameroon, her parents are putting aside some of the money she remits with a future plan to buy a cocoa farm as another source of income. She intends to leave South Africa in the future for Europe preferably Germany while her son stays in South Africa. She owns a hair salon which she plans to leave with him because finding a job in South Africa is becoming very difficult. Being self-employed will help her son to remit to his grandparents in Cameroon.

4.5. TIKI

Tiki was born in Lobe, a small village in the South West Province of Cameroon. She and her twin sister Menge were raised by their mother. Her father died when her mother was only twenty- three years old. When Tiki was above teenage age, her mother sold the farm she had inherited from her late husband and bought a house in a Town, Mutengene, were they relocated. The unstable political situation-operation Ghost Town in Cameroon, which caused loss of lives and property caused fear in her. Movement was difficult around the Town and the high rate of robbery and violence forced her to start thinking of migrating. Considering the amount of money required for traveling, she chose South Africa, which is cheaper. Her mother sold their house in the village in order to finance her migration. It was very hard to obtain a visa because there was no South Africa embassy in Cameroon. She had to travel to Gabon to apply for a visa. At the embassy in Gabon, a man who worked as a private travel agent-helping people to put the visa requirements together-advised her that she would not obtain a visa to South Africa because she did not have tangible reasons for wanting to travel. For a fee, she made arrangements with the man for a fee to include her as a member of a team who

were to attend a conference in Durban, South Africa. This was how she obtained her visa and migrated to South Africa in 2000. After two weeks in Cape Town, she found a job as a waitress at a restaurant in waterfront where she worked for a year. She later found another job as a care provider at an old age home in observatory. But finding a room to stay was very difficult. But fortunately she met a Zimbabwean man who had a room to let in his apartment. She paid for the room and moved in. On learning from her peers about the possibility of paying an agent to get married for paper, she traveled to Johannesburg where she paid an agent and got married to a South African man in order to obtain a resident permit. The permit helped her to get a lease for an apartment in the Sea point area. Years later, she facilitated her son's and her mother's entry to South Africa. On one occasion, her pregnant sister from Cameroon visited Seme. This was to enable the child to have South Africa citizenship, even though having a child who is born in South African does not grant any immigration rights neither to the parents of the child nor to the child until he or she attains eighteen. Her sister and husband are planning to come back and settle in South Africa because of the unstable socio-political situation in Cameroon.

4.6. SEME

Seme was born in Mamfe in the South West province of Cameroon. At the age of ten, she was taken in by a middle class family in Kumba to help with house chores and selling in a kiosk after school. She was treated with love as their own child. On completing primary school, she was sent to learn sewing, which she completed after two years. At the age of eighteen, Seme went to live with her guardian's eldest daughter who needed someone to look after her six-month-old daughter so that she could continue with her studies. A few months later, Seme went back to live with her parents because her foster aunt left for South Africa. Years later, her mother and older sister died after protracted illnesses while she was four months pregnant. Two years later after having her baby, who later died, she was asked by her formal guardians to join their daughter in South Africa to manage her hair salon for a fee and she accepted the offer. Her travel requirements were put together, and she arrived in South Africa in 2004. She worked at the salon while co-habiting with her boss for three years. She was pregnant by her Cameroonian boyfriend who physically abused her daily. It got to climax when

after having her baby; she was physically abused once again. A Christian friend referred her to a shelter for abused women in Mannenberg,- a neighboring residential area in Cape Town, where she was allowed to live free of charge for four months, after which she was asked to start paying rent. At the shelter, she reported her case to the police, but nothing was done except for extending her free stay period at the shelter from four to seven months. She thinks her case was not given much attention because it concerned two immigrants from another African country. At the moment, she sells cooked food and smoked fish while raising her son alone.

4.7. BENNY

Benny is a teacher by profession. She migrated primarily because she could not continue living in Cameroon after series of abusive relationships with Cameroonian men. She decided to migrate to South Africa to stay away from friends to her previous relationships who are concentrated in the United States of America and Europe. In order to get to South Africa, She left Cameroon to Gabon, and then traveled through Mozambique to South Africa by road because she could not afford a visa and a flight ticket. In South Africa, she discovered that the only means to survive was to work at a restaurant and do African braids on street corners. She applied for a teaching position which was advertised, but she did not get the job due to lack of legal papers. Because of this, arranges with a South African man to help her obtain a resident permit. . The man's family lives in Nyanga, a Township in Cape Town. His family visits Benny regularly in Sea Point where she lives; she visits them occasionally and they exchange calls. Although the man's family is aware that Benny's relationship is based on convenience – to help her obtain her papers - they were in support of it. They co-habited peacefully at the early phase of their relationship. This was because Benny often gave money to him and his family. But he later became violent: She was subjected to physical abuse and regular demand for money. She thinks it was so because the South African Immigration officers and police came around regularly to investigate whether they were actually married. Benny states that this usually goes on for some time, after which a resident permit is issued only if the officers are convinced about the marriage. She was pregnant during this period. Angry and frustrated, she moved out. Her husband's family threatened to reveal the story to the Department of Home Affairs and finally she did not get a permanent resident permit. She was referred to a shelter for abused women in Mannenberg by the police, where she was asked to start paying rent after three months.

5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND LITERATURE

This chapter examines some of the reasons why Cameroonian women migrate and why South Africa has become a popular receiving country for Cameroonian women. It also analyses both the Cameroonian and South African contexts in order to understand the effects of migration on the family lives of Cameroonian women. In doing so, I examine the information gathered from my findings and discuss it in relation to the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. My analysis of the lived experiences of the women I interviewed is interpretive from my perspective as a Gender student and as a migrant woman from Cameroon who lived for twelve years in Cape Town, South Africa, and understands both contexts.

5.1. REASONS FOR MIGRATING

South Africa has become a preferred destination for many Cameroonian women migrants. Some of the women that I interviewed were forced to migrate to South Africa after what was popularly known as Operation Ghost Town.[6] This situation is summarized by Tiki: in the interview she mentioned that movement was difficult, there was a high rate of robbery and violence, and the unstable political situation in Cameroon caused loss of lives and properties (§ 4.5). This situation became an adverse environmental and physical threat for Tiki, who was forced to start considering the possibility of migrating.

The report on *Gender Empowerment and Development* shows that most Cameroonian women are subjected to one form of violence or another. And 36% of these cases are perpetrated by the husbands. 55% of women who have been subjected to violence do cohabit with their partners while 19% are living separately. And among women who have been assaulted, 53% are mothers with children while 77% are those without children (2010: 3). It becomes evident that this has had a strong impact on the migration decision of most of the women that I interviewed. Some of the women decided to stay away from their husbands and partners to put an end to this situation.

[6] Laurean Mbahpndah recounts how the October 11, 2004 presidential election in Cameroon turned into a violent demonstration that engulfed all the major towns and cities leaving the country's economy in crisis. In order to calm the situation and restore peace, the police and the law enforcement officers resorted to the use of armament such as teargas and rubber bullets. This ended in loss of lives, businesses and properties (Mbahpndah, 2004: 2).

For example, for Benny, migration was a means to run away from domestic violence, as she could not continue to live in Cameroon after series of abusive relationships with Cameroonian men (§ 4.7).

Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ernestine Avila argue that women's migration leads to family disintegration (1997: 549), but it is evident from my findings that Benny was forced to migrate because of family disintegration itself, and not the other way round. Having gone through abusive relationships, Benny constructed a migration plan through which she would be able to live a violence-free life. Something similar happened in the cases of Bume and Ayuk, whose decisions to migrate were taken prior to their separation from their partners. Bume later separated from her partner because of physical abuse. She went back to her parents, who helped her to raise her son (§ 4.4). Ayuk got married on completing primary school and had a child, but she later separated from her husband because she was being physically abused (§ 4.3). This seems to indicate that the migration of Cameroonian women to Cape Town does not always lead to family disintegration. In some cases, family disintegration was a push factors for the migration of the women that I interviewed.

Some women do not voluntarily choose to migrate to South Africa, but do so constrained by their finances. Micheal Pelican, Peter Tatah and Basil Ndlio provide information on the fact that the election of South Africa as a destination country for migrants is influenced by their financial situation (2008: 120). My findings support this point. Considering the fact that most of the women that I interviewed come from poor families, paying for travel expenses to Europe or the United States would have becomes a heavy load. Tiki, Bume and Ayuk highlight this situation. It was less expensive for Tiki to arrange her travel requirements to South Africa despite the fact that she had to travel to Gabon to apply for and obtain a visa (§ 4.5). In Bume's case, financial difficulties prevented her from traveling to her preferred destinations, which were Europe and the United States (§ 4.4). As for Ayuk, her parents took a loan from their local community group in order to finance her trip back to South Africa together with her child. Ayuk and her mother decided to take a loan with their only farm as a collateral security to pay for the travel expenses (§ 4.3). From my findings, these women are from middle-class and lower-class families in Cameroon. South Africa became an option for the women that I interviewed because they could not afford

migrating to Europe or to the United States of America. Financial constraints determined their migratory route.

5.2. THE MIGRATION PROCESS

Pelican et al. argue that the family plays an important role by providing financial support to a family member who wishes to migrate (2008: 5). Based on my findings, families make the decision, although not all the members participate. Often it is the head of the family, together with the person to migrate, who make the decision and financial arrangements to migrate. Other family members are often left out of this decision. While in Cameroon, Bume's parents took a loan from their local community with her child (§ 4.4). Ayuk and her mother decided to take a loan to pay for her travel expenses (§ 4.3). In both cases, other family members were left out of the decision-making process.

Pelican et al. further state that most Cameroonian women migrants in South Africa are often employed in the care services, such as hairdressing (2008: 120). My findings support that most women leave Cameroon poorly equipped for professional jobs. This may be the reason why, in South Africa, most of the women could only find care work such as hairdressing and waitressing. However, care work provides them with income for a better life. This is illustrated by the cases of Ayuk, Tessa, Bume, Tiki Benny and Seme. Tessa has no higher educational qualifications or a formal training (§ 4.1). Similarly, with no formal education or training from Cameroon, Ayuk's primary school education helped her find her first job was working as a waitress. She is saving and planning to establish either a hair salon or an African food restaurant in the future, so her daughter can earn a living from it while she relocates to Europe or the United States (§ 4.3). The hairdressing course that Bume did while she was in Cameroon equipped her for her position as a hairdresser at a hair salon owned by an older Cameroonian woman (§ 4.4). Tiki’s first job as a waitress at a restaurant in waterfront and her second job as caregiver to the elderly (§ 4.5). Finally, even though Seme received training as a seamstress after her primary school education, she did not find an opportunity to work as a seamstress, and ended up as manager at a hair salon alongside cooking and selling food for a living (§ 4.6). From my findings, most Cameroonian women migrate with minimal skills which only leave them the option of accepting care jobs. However, some also acquired professional skills prior to migrating, as we can see

in Benny's case: her lack of resident permit stopped her from working according to her professional qualifications. She left her job in Cameroon which perhaps offered her some satisfaction – although limited benefits – to escape from domestic violence (§4.7).

Writing about the context of Johannesburg in South Africa, Sally Peberdy and Natalya Dinat state that:

> Available evidence suggests that domestic work has traditionally been, and remains, a significant area of employment for internal and cross-border female migrant workers. Domestic work, although often characterized as "atypical work" in the service sector, provides significant opportunities for employment for black women in South Africa. In 2004, it was the second largest employment sector for South Africa's black female workforce, employing some 755,000. Census 2001 found that work in private households is the largest source of employment for black South African women (…) with 88,000 women so employed (31% of employed black women). Many domestic workers, particularly those who live on their employers' premises, are migrant workers. (2005: 5)

My findings confirm that most Cameroonian migrant women work as caregivers in old-age homes, hair salons and restaurants. Although there is a shift from women's traditional role as caregivers to a new role as breadwinners, while in South Africa, the women that I interviewed still assume some traditional roles, such as hairdressing, which is traditionally considered as women's work.

The process of migration for the women that I interviewed was facilitated through family friends, women claiming others to be their family, and women applying and obtaining visas for themselves. Several cases show this. Tessa was claimed as a biological daughter by a Cameroonian woman who was resident in South Africa and owned salons, to facilitate her entry to South Africa (§ 4.1). Seme's guardian made the arrangement for her to join their daughter in South Africa (§ 4.6). Ayuk, Bume and Tiki (§ 4.3, 4.4, 4.5) obtained visas for their entry to South Africa, while Benny (§ 4.7) traveled by road.

My findings show that while in South Africa, these women often cohabited with their bosses and boyfriends in order to save money for remittance to children and families back in Cameroon. For example, Seme (§ 4.6) lived for three years with her boss, while Bume (§ 4.4) cohabited with her Nigerian boyfriend. This helped them to save some of the money for remittance to their families in Cameroon.

The migrant women that I interviewed carefully planned and decided to migrate to South Africa. While in South Africa, they made plans for their children and family members to join them. Their social ties (which included becoming part of a boyfriend's, and/or partner's family) enabled them to obtain their resident permits. Compromising their belonging is a fundamental means of survival for the migrant women. Five of the Cameroonian migrant women that I interviewed had obtained a South African resident permit (Tessa, Nana, Ayuk, Bume and Tiki, § 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5). Two are still under the status of refugees (Benny and Seme, § 4.6, 4.7). Having a South African resident permit is a desired goal, firstly because these women can then have their children, mothers and their siblings next to them. The experience of Nana, Seme and Benny suggests that the formation of social ties that is important in the lives of these women.

In cross-border migration, the sharing of financial and material resources, which is a vital element of families, is done across nations for families living in two or more countries (Ngome and Mpako 2006: 1). Cross-border migration makes it possible for the women to contribute economically to their families, as they are able to remit regularly for their children's education and their family's needs, thus breaking the poverty cycle even if their own lives may not necessarily change for the better. For the purpose of this study, I draw on Ngome and Mpako, who define remittance as "the repatriated earnings of migrant workers predominantly from developed economies to developing economies" (2006: 1). In this context, women's cross-border flows in the form of remittance and packages become an important support for their family members and for Cameroon's economic growth as it helps to stabilize the crisis. My findings show that migrant women send part of their earnings to Cameroon for the well being of their families and their families use the income for investments and consumption. Tessa and Nana remit to Cameroon monthly for their families to earn a living (§ 4.1, 4.2). The income that Bume sends to her family in Cameroon is saved with a future plan to buy a cocoa farm, which would generate more income for the well being of the family (§ 4.4).

5.3. CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION

Susie Jolly and Hazel Reeve report that migration may lead to a change in the traditional set up of families (2005: 1). The migration of the women that I interviewed led to a shift in the traditional structure of caregiving in their families**.** Nana's

grandmother and siblings looked after her until the age of seven (§ 4.2). Tessa left her child in Cameroon in her parent's care (§ 4.1). Ayuk left her child with her mother (§ 4.3). Bume's parents cared for her son while she migrates to South Africa (§ 4.4). Caregiving shifted from parents to grandparents or relatives, from children who often have to look after their siblings to parents taking care of migrants' children.

Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila depict migrant women as abandoning their children to undertake jobs overseas (1997: 549). In line with this, Pribilsky states that children who have to stay behind as their mothers migrate constantly miss their mothers and may have a feeling of abandonment (2004: 185). The results of my findings show how Cameroonian women migrants are often the ones who single-handedly provide for their children and family. Even though both mothers and children may undergo emotional drain due to the separation, care deficit may not occur for the children because they have their grandparents, aunts and uncles to care for them. They may even receive more love knowing that their mothers are the ones providing for the family financially.

Some migration scholars such as Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) and Parreñas (2001) have attributed various meanings to the notion of motherhood. The authors give accounts of migrant women who, in the quest to support their families and their children financially, abandon their families back home and travel overseas where they often find employment in the care services. Migrant women thus form part of the team for socio-economic provision through their care work. It follows that the link between the family, the labor market and the national community is part of what *transnational motherhood* is made up of. Scholarly work on the effects that migration has on the social order concludes that the link between the family, the labor market and the national community is what controls migrant women's redefinition of motherhood (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997: 550). I do not agree that migrant women redefine motherhood; instead, they try to fit in the socially accepted criteria of being a mother. However, migrant women may introduce other ways of performing motherhood (which include caring from long distance) through devising survival strategies. By survival strategies, I mean the manner in which women migrants search for ways to fit into societal norms and values related to motherhood. Far from redefining the notion of a mother as a caregiver for her children and family, Cameroonian migrant women's cross-border lifestyle prevents them from living jointly with their children and families. In

trying to make up for this separation, Cameroonian women migrants provide care and love to their children and their families through what I term as split belonging, which serves as their claim for performing motherhood.

For the purpose of this study, I employ Ricky Van Oers, Eva Ersboll and Dora Kostakopoulou's definition of belonging: the fulfillment of requirements that will enable one to be recognized as part of a system (2010: 1). I add that belonging is also a way of being included or excluded from a system such as a group. From these notions, I argue that the Cameroonian women migrants that I interviewed negotiate their belonging through their cross-border activities, which include creating networks that will enable them to legalize their stay in Cape Town, South Africa, and to obtain a South African resident permit.

The experience of Nana, Ayuk, Bume, Seme and Tiki suggests that establishing a relationship and paying for a marriage contract with a South African man are often their only options. Nana's mother's marriage to a South African man opens her to new family relationships in South Africa. Nana has new family members in Kenya, Turkey and Cameroon (§ 4.2). Seme now has new family members who are Nigerians (§ 4.6), and Benny has new family members who are South Africans from her relationship with a South African man (§ 4.7). Thus, the migration of Cameroonian women to Cape Town, South Africa leads to the formation of new family relationships, often across transnational borders.

Social ties have an important role to play in women's decisions regarding the obtaining of legal papers in South Africa, provision of financial support to their families, and performing motherly duties to their children. Their networks provide them with some form of social capital, which enables their mobility and that of their families. Most of these women maintain links with their families back home; however, sometimes these links could be broken up. Seme's and Benny's cases illustrate this: for Seme, the death of her mother, sister and her child may mean a loss of family in Cameroon and she may consider her child in South Africa to be her only family (§ 4.6). Benny`s entanglement with abusive relationships made her cut off links from Cameroon (§4.7).

Furthermore, cross-border families, although not co-resident, form a bond of unity and support (Bryceson and Vuerela, 2003: 3-7). Their exposure and huge social

network bring about experiences that lead to harmonious life among multiple countries (Herrera Lima, 2001: 89). With the help of modern communication links and occasional visits, dispersed family members are connected emotionally and financially. Family life across borders is evident in the cases of Ayuk, Tessa and Benny. They keep in contact with their family members and exchange emotional and financial support. Nana exchanges calls and visits with both her ex-boyfriend's family in Kenya and her current boyfriend's family in Turkey (§ 4.2); Tessa calls her family in Cameroon and her in-laws in Germany (§ 4.1), and Benny exchanges visits and calls with her boyfriend's family in Nyanga, Cape Town (§ 4.7).

Cross-border families have multiple identities and residences; they are similar to other families in that they strive at equality and access to resources among their members (Bryceson and Vuerela, 2003: 3-7). Ayuk's children now hold dual citizenship of different combinations and her family is now made up of people living in multiple countries besides Cameroon and South Africa. Ayuk's daughter is Kenyan, Cameroonian and South African while her son is Turkish, Cameroonian and South African (§ 4.3). Their family members are people who are scattered all over different cross-border spaces and they have multiple nationalities. Tessa's case illustrates the spread of family members in Germany, South Africa and Cameroon (§ 4.1). In Nana's case, money is sent to Cameroon and money is received from Kenya and Portugal. Emotional support comes from multiple directions (§ 4.2). Although separated, these women hold on to their family relations and keep the harmony just like conventional families.

Often, these women bring their children and other family members to live with them in South Africa after a brief period. Thus, migration is for some women a means of finding a way to relocate their family members who may be vulnerable to domestic and political violence. Tiki's case illustrates this: Tiki invited her son and her mother to live with her in South Africa and she has made it possible for her sister to visit her there (§ 4.5).

At the same time, some relationships that were created after relocation to South Africa may be maintained because they have a positive effect on Cameroonian migrant women's life conditions and lifestyle. Thus, the social capital gained through social ties

enables the Cameroonian migrant women that I interviewed to, for example, obtain a resident permit.

Furthermore, migration also transforms the parent-child relationship, and the long distance apart from each other sometimes brings about even more closeness and love among parents and children (Pribilsky, 2004: 330). From my findings, Cameroonian women migrants in Cape Town, South Africa often have a close relationship with their children and family members in Cameroon. Besides, migrant women bring positive change to their families through the income they send.

The families of many of these women earn a living as subsistence farmers. Tessa grew up with her parents, subsistent farmers who took a loan from their local community group in order to finance her trip back to South Africa together with her child (§ 4.1). Tiki was above teenage age when her mother sold the farm she had inherited from her late husband, and bought a house (§ 4.5). Ayuk and her mother decided to take a loan with their only farm as a collateral security to pay for the travel expenses (§ 4.3). Bume's parents are also subsistent farmers and they paid for her to learn hair dressing (§ 4.4). Obtaining resident permits, which enables these women to invite their children and family members to live with them in Cape Town, South Africa, puts an end to the cycle of reliance on family farms. Tessa's child was able to receive good education in South Africa, almost free of charge (§ 4.1); Nana's mother had the opportunity to further her education in South Africa, and the job she got after her studies enabled her to care for and educate Nana (§ 4.2).

Pribilsky states that directing resources to children's wellbeing is in itself an opening to a better future, and that it should be noted that the change that children undergo as a result of cross-border migration – from being monetarily poor to "emotionally poor" – opens up new roles for migrant women (2004: 31). This suggests that parents' migration does not simply lead to disintegrated families and abandonment of children, as children are educationally equipped for a better future. These women work for their children and families by sending money back home monthly for bills, food, and other family developments.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study has been on examining cross-border family relationships in the context of Cameroon and Cape Town, South Africa, by taking on women's experiences and the feminist aspects of cross-border family relationships. In doing so, I have examined Cameroonian women migrants' experiences and inventiveness regarding carrying out motherly and family responsibilities from far off places

Cameroonian women migrants in Cape Town, South Africa singlehandedly provide and care for their children and families through social capital acquired from their cross-border relationships. From my findings, these women involve themselves in *split belonging* as a means to justify their cross-border activities. First, they try to fit in the hegemonic conception of being a mother without redefining it. They do so by creating social networks which enable them to acquire a resident permit in South Africa and invite their children and family members to live with them. Thus their migration leads to family reunion, formation of new family relationships. Also, children left behind do not suffer care deficit as they are often left with their grandparents, aunts and uncles who take care of them.

The focus on how state policies and activities affects gender politics within the level of the family has ignored the fact that discourses on family life across borders in the era of female migration has been generally formed in line with gender relations within the household and the family. This may leave out the enormous contribution and support that these women make to Cameroon‘s economy and to their families. Questioning the role of these women as mothers suggests an acceptance of the nuclear family as the sole practical option to solve children’s emotional problems in cross-border families.

The idea of a nuclear family risks leaving out the meaningful transformations that these migrant women make in the domain of motherhood that harmonizes both long- and short-term separation. Furthermore, the idea of a nuclear family may ignore the role played by the labor market in cross-border family formation in Cameroon and in South Africa. Whether marrying strategically for papers or for true love, tight migration policies and border control are continuously causing an increase in the number of families with double or multiple nationalities. Thus, in defining cross-border families, it

is relevant to take into consideration the fact that cultural, economic and social differences do exist both between and within various groups of migrants.

My analysis throughout this thesis has shown that there is a pressing need for reshaping gender and family concepts in Cameroon and by extension, South Africa. I suggest that a start would be to acknowledge, within the domestic and foreign policy levels, these women's economic contributions to their country and families, and their transforming and broadening motherhood to encompass economic provision to their families.

But women are often marginalized as the world of human rights and the rights to seek for a permanent residence and asylum continue to shift issues of domestic violence to the private sphere, thus out of international protection. A good start would be to stop looking at the family idealistically as a household with its members sharing blood ties, and start understanding that people may decide to migrate in order to provide support to their families as well as to run away from family relationships.

In a wider context, this study has opened a possible path for further research and examination of the effects of women's migration on cross-border social ties.

7. APPENDIX: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 1: TESSA

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in rural Matoh in 1975. I grew up with my parents who are subsistent farmers. I have five siblings, three boys and two girls. I grew up accompanying my mother to the farm, fetching wood, cooking, and cleaning. I almost did not have clothes to wear and often walked around bare footed. My sitting space was the kitchen where all the females in my home chart freely and tell folklores around the fireside while waiting for food to get ready.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: To work and earn money.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: A Cameroon woman who have lived in South Africa and has the South resident permit arranged for my entry in to South Africa by claiming me as her biological daughter. The arrangement was for me to come and manage one of her hair salons. I left my child in Cameroon in my parent's care. After some months in South Africa working in the hair salon, I confide to a South African friend that I do not have any blood relationship with my boss. This news reached the South African immigration officers and I lost my resident status after some interrogations, I was repatriated to Cameroon. While in Cameroon, my parents took a loan from their local community group in order to finance my trip back to South Africa together with my child. Three months after I came back to South Africa.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: I got a job as a hairdresser in a saloon. In South Africa, my child attends school for almost no fees because I applied and got a single parent subsidy. Two years later, my relationship with a German living in South Africa produced my second child.
I am now married to a German who has a South African resident. His family settled in South Africa for a long time. I and my husband visited Cameroon some years back to

see if we could settle down in Cameroon and establish a business. But I did not like the socio-political situation especially the poor schooling system for my children. After two months, we returned to South Africa. I have brought my sister and my brother in South Africa. My parents and three siblings are still in Cameroon. I remit to Cameroon on a monthly basis for my family to earn a living. My in-laws in Germany, are better off economically, they send me money occasionally especially after the birth of their grandchild. I am now applying for a South African resident permit based on being wife to a citizen but it is taking very long with too many procedures. I have no plans of going to settle in Cameroon although South Africa is becoming very difficult and dangerous to live in with the continuous decrease in jobs, increase in house rents and random stabbing and robbery.

Interviewer: Why?

Respondent: Ha ha ha places are clean and I get free medical care. I only worry about the high prices of foodstuff, rentals and crime wave. Once, thieves break in to my room in Mannenberg and stole some my valuables. Although I struggle to get a resident permit as it is difficult to go to Home affairs each time to extend my refugee permit.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 2: NANA

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in the village of Munya. My parents are subsistent farmer. I have five siblings, - four girls and a boy who is the last child in my family. I am the oldest. I grew up cooking, cleaning, looking after my siblings, going to fetch water miles and fire wood miles away from home and working in the farm. I was repeatedly told by her mother that a woman has to be hard working and must not complain.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: My mother's health continued to deteriorate after the death of my father. But financially I could not help her situation because I was not working. News on radio and word of mouth about the end of apartheid and a revival of South Africa's economy made my mother to believe that there was a better life in South Africa for her. My

grandmother and siblings looked after me until the age of seven when my mother processed papers for me to join her in Cape Town.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: My mother got married to a South African for paper in order to legalize her stay in South Africa. After some years, she enrolled in Cape Technikon to further her studies where she graduated with a diploma in hotel management. She later found a job as a manager in a guest house. At the age of nineteen, I visited Cameroon but I did not like the experience because I was not treated as one of them. I was repeated asked when am I returning to South Africa. This made me very sad because I get the same treatment and questions while in South Africa. On completing my degree in computer science, I got a job with a company which allowed me to travel a lot especially around Africa. I got a baby girl as a result of one of my long stay trips to Kenya.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: Although I have stayed in South Africa for a long time, I never get my way easily with the South African immigration. I am always treated with suspicion and as a foreigner. I got my second child with a Turkish man whom I met at a conference in Malawi. During the second trimester of my pregnancy I joined my boyfriend in Turkey to have the baby and to see if I can settle there with him. But because of the long process of learning the language, I decided to return to South Africa and continue with my job. I live here with my two children. I remit on a monthly basis to my family in Cameroon. I in turn receive money from the fathers of my children in Kenya and from my boyfriend in Turkey . I exchange calls and visits with both my ex-boyfriend's family in Kenya and my current boyfriend's family in Turkey although I struggle often to speak with them.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 3: AYUK

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born and grew up with my family in the Town of Bafia in Cameroon. I have four siblings, two girls and three boys. I am the second girl. My parents are subsistent farmers. My mother and I did all the house chores while my brothers went to play football or chat with their friends. My parents constantly remind

me not to complain because house chores are meant for women. As soon as I completed primary school, I got married, had a child but later separated from my husband because of physical abuse. I returned to live with my mother after the death of my father.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: I learned from my friend from South Africa who came to spend Christmas holiday in Cameroon that South Africa has a lot to offer in terms of better life. I migrated to South Africa in search for a better life. I and my mother decide to take a loan with our only farm as a collateral security to pay for my travel requirements.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: I paid a Cameroonian woman who has lived and established in South Africa to process my papers. On arrival, I went to the South African home affairs and seek asylum which gave me thirteen days after which I was granted an asylum then next a refugee status which allowed me to work and study in South Africa . The first job I got was working as a waitress in St Elmos restaurant in Waterfront. Five years later, I did not see any possibility of having a permanent resident permit as the constitution states. I became so frustrated with visiting the home affairs department.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: I will tell you my struggle: after five years I did applied for a permanent residence status through the United Nations High Commission of Refugees UNHCR office in Cape Town as constitution states, I appeared in court for questioning as to why I wants to stay permanently in South Africa. I was denied the papers on the grounds that, my reasons for wanting to stay were not good enough especially because there is no war in Cameroon. This left me with no option than to pay an agent to get married to a South African in order to get a legal status and be able to bring my child over to live with me in South African. My child joined me in South Africa, here is she. At the moment I am saving and planning to establish either a hair salon or African food restaurant in the future so that my daughter will earn a living from there while I moves somewhere in Europe . I think the only way out is to get married to a South African for papers because most of my friends who had refugee status before me are still visiting the department of home Affairs every three months to renew their papers. It is not only

tiring to be going repeatedly to the home affairs but also degrading as us foreigners get treated there as outcasts.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 4: BUME

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in Nkole Bisong, a neighborhood in Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon. My parents are subsistent farmer. I have five siblings, I am the oldest. I grew up cooking, cleaning, and looking after my siblings, fetch water and fire wood and working in the farm. I was repeatedly told by my mother that a woman has to be hard working and must not complain. After completing primary school, my parents paid for me to learn hair dressing, two years later I finished and started cohabiting with my boyfriend with whom I have a son.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: After separating from the father of my child because of emotional violence, I went back to live with my parents who helped me in raising my son. Over the years, I decided to move to Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon to look for a job in the beauty industry as a hair dresser. I got a job, saved some money and decided to travel overseas. But because of the huge amount of money required to travel to Europe or America, I took the option of South Africa which was less costly.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: My parents supported me with the little savings. My travel documents were put together by a Cameroonian man who had established in South Africa and works as a private travel agent to South Africa and to get jobs and accommodation on arrival.

Months later, I found a job in a hair salon owned by a Cameroonian woman where I met a Nigerian boyfriend with whom I later moved in with. This helped me to save the money I would have had used to pay rents for remittance to my family in Cameroon on a monthly basis. While living with my boyfriend, I paid and got married to a South African man in order to legalize my stay and be able to bring over my family to South Africa. Three years later, I brought my son over. In Cameroon, my parents put aside

some of the money I send to them with a future plan to buy a cocoa farm as another source of income. I intends to leave South Africa in the future for Europe preferably Germany while my son stays in South Africa. I do have a hair salon which I plan to leave with him

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: Finding a job in South Africa is becoming very difficult as the years go by. Being self-employed will help him to remit to Cameroon while I will be gone to Germany.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 5: TIKI

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in Lobe. I and my twin sister called Menge were raised by our mother (Elinge) our father died when our mother was twenty three years old. When I was above teenage age, our mother sold the farm that she inherited, bought a house in an urban town, Mutengene were we relocated.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: The unstable political situation (operation ghost Town) in Cameroon forced me to start thinking of migrating. Movement was difficult around the Town and high rate of robbery and violence forced me to start thinking of Migrating. Considering the amount of money required for travelling, I decided on South Africa which was cheaper. My mother sold our house in the village in order to finance my travel.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: It was very hard to get a visa because there was no South Africa embassy in Cameroon and I had to travel to Gabon to apply for a visa. While at the embassy in Gabon, a man who works as a private travel agent helping people to put the visa requirements together advised me that I will not get the visa because I do not have tangible reasons for wanting to go to South Africa. I arranged with him for a fee to be included in the list of conference goers to South Africa. In 2000, I got my visa and migrated to South Africa. After two weeks in South Africa, I got my first job as a

waitress in a restaurant in waterfront where I worked for a year. My second job was taking care of the elderly at in observatory.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: Finding a nice place to stay could be very difficult. Each time I phone for accommodation, on knowing from my accent that I am an African immigrant, the land lord or lady will say it has been taken. Fortunately I met a Zimbabwean man who had a room to let in his apartment. I paid for the room and moved in. I learned from my peers about paying an agent to get married for paper. I travelled to Johannesburg to pay and get married to a South African man I do not know and has never met before so as to get a resident permit. However, the permit helped me to get a lease for an apartment in the Sea point area. Years later, I facilitated my sons and my mother's entry to South Africa. My sister in Cameroon got married and visited me and family in South Africa to have her child in South Africa so that the child will have South Africa citizenship although having a child who holds a South African citizenship by birth does not grant any immigration rights to the parents of the child. My sister and husband are planning to re-visit and perhaps settle in South Africa because of the unstable political and security situation in Cameroon.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 6: SEME

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in Mamfe, in the South West province of Cameroon. A middle class family, friend of my aunt took me at the age of ten to live with them in Kumba to continue school, help with house chores and selling in their kiosk after school. On completing primary school, I was sent to learn sewing which I completed after two years. I was treated with love like their own child. At the age of eighteen, I moved to live with my guardian's eldest daughter who needed someone to look after her child so that she could continue with her studies. Few months later, I moved back to live with my parents because she left for South Africa.

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: I am a teacher by profession; I migrated primarily because I could not continue staying in Cameroon after series of abusive relationships with Cameroonian men.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: I left Cameroon for Gabon then Gabon to Mozambique. In Mozambique, I paid an official at the border to let me get in to South Africa on a private car.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: I discovered that, the only way to make it is to work in a restaurant and doing African braids by street corners. While working in the restaurant in Waterfront, I applied for several teaching positions but could not get any because of papers. Through advice from my friends I paid, and signed marriage to a South African man in order to get a resident permit. His family lives in Nyanga – a Township near Cape Town , they visit me in Sea Point regularly, I go to visit them occasionally and we exchange calls. His family is aware of the fact that our relationship is based on convenience – helping me to get my papers, and they are fine with it because I often give them money. The first few months of my strategic marriage with my "husband" were great I think it was so because he had to behave himself as the South African immigration officers and police came around from time to time to investigate if we were really couples. This is done within a space of time after which you get your papers if the officers are convinced. But he later became violent. I was subjected to physical abuse and extortion of money daily. I got pregnant. Angry and frustrated, I moved because I got tired of their regular demand for money they threaten to reveal the secret to the Department of home affairs. We had lots of arguments and I finally did not get my papers. It was terrible. The police referred me to a shelter for abused women in Mannenberg; I was asked to start paying rents after three months.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT 7 BENNY

Interviewer: What is your background in Cameroon?

Respondent: I was born in ….. Please could you leave that out, I am an orphan

Interviewer: Why did you leave Cameroon for South Africa and not somewhere else?

Respondent: I am a teacher by profession; I migrated primarily because I could not continue staying in Cameroon after series of abusive relationships with Cameroonian men.

Interviewer: How did you finally get to South Africa?

Respondent: I left Cameroon for Gabon then Gabon to Mozambique. In Mozambique, I paid an official at the border to let me get in to South Africa on a private car.

Interviewer: What are some of the chalenges you face?

Respondent: I discovered that, the only way to make it is to work in a restaurant and doing African braids by street corners. While working in the restaurant in Waterfront, I applied for several teaching positions but could not get any because of papers. Through advice from my friends I paid, and signed marriage to a South African man in order to get a resident permit. His family lives in Nyanga – a Township near Cape Town , they visit me in Sea Point regularly, I go to visit them occasionally and we

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