

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU- NATAL

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

School of Social Science: Culture Cluster

**The Role of ‘Home Food’ in Maintaining Identity through Social
Network Ties: Sierra Leone Migrants in Durban**

207524241

Nokwanda Yoliswa Nzuzwa

Supervisor:

Dr M Naidu

2012

Submitted for the fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Social Science in Anthropology

DECLARATION

I Nokwanda Yoliswa Nzuza confirm that this work is my own and is expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of the words of other authors in any form is properly acknowledged at the point of their use, a full list of the references employed has been included.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the people who were once told they can never be what they want to be. Whose dreams were once shattered due to their family backgrounds, sickness, loss and low self-esteem. I too am a victim of all these negative circumstances. There were times where I thought I would never make it. But here I am! Through the grace of God I never allowed my background to put my back on the ground. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.

‘Pursue excellence, and success will follow ‘pants down’ (Rancho: *3 Idiots*, 2009)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This has been the most challenging year of my academic career and writing this dissertation has been the most significant academic challenge. Without the support, love and encouragement of the following people I would have given up. I owe you all my sincere gratitude.

Firstly, I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for loving me. I would never have achieved anything in my life without Him as my strength. Even in the darkest of all days He brought me light. I will forever love and serve Him. Your mercy endures forever, *El shaddai Aldonai nguwe!*

To Dr. Naidu, thank you for being YOU! You have been my best critic, guided me to the best of your abilities, and taught me to think critically. You have been the most supportive, friendly, appreciative and honest supervisor, ever. You have seen me through the worst and the best. The smile you had when you agreed to be my Masters supervisor last year January is what has motivated me to work hard just so you can always have it. Thank you for the countless things you have done for me and my family, the great opportunities you have blessed me with, for believing in me and never allowing me to give up. I will forever be grateful to the God I serve for blessing me with you. Thanks Dr.

To my family, thank you for loving me even though I spent most of my time away. Each time I came home I felt love and joy my heart. I pray that no degree may ever make me too proud to consider myself one of you. I love you all.

To the Durban Sierra Leonean Association, especially Claudine Hingston, thank you for allowing me to intrude into your lives and for sharing your memories of home with me. This study could not have been completed without your valuable contributions.

To the anthropology lecturers, thank you for the most valuable knowledge. You did not just teach me theories you taught me values. Thank you.

To my fellow anthropology students, thank you for sharing your knowledge with me and encouraging me to press on.

To UTI, your financial support of four years has given me the opportunity that I had never dreamt of. Thank you for being the carrier of one of my greatest blessings.

To Lesego Jenkins, thank you for being a supportive bursary manager.

To the late Pastor N.J.Sithole, you may be gone but your teachings will forever live. This is the fruit of your labour.

To Dr. MT Sithole, thank you for carrying the vision and never compromising the Word. You are an inspiration. May you never let go of the gospel 'laBaba'.

To my local pastors, Mr. and Mrs. Gumede. Thank you for being more than my spiritual parents, when I was in my weakest state, you extended love and care. God could not have blessed me with better spiritual parents.

To my friends, thank you for nagging me about my thesis and leaving varsity. Your repeated questions and myths about bald hair pushed me to spending all my days working on this. I love you all!

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of 'home food' in the lives of Sierra Leoneans living in Durban who are members of the Sierra Leonean Association. Another aim was to find out if communal sharing of 'home food' in social networks assisted migrants in maintaining their home identity. To collect thick descriptive narratives from the twenty six members of the Sierra Leonean Association, this qualitative study used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions, participation observation and focus groups. The preliminary results of this study showed that for this group of migrants, 'home food' such as cassava leaves, *egusi* and okra play a significant role in mentally transporting these migrants vicariously back to their home country. Narratives showed that 'home food' acts as an 'agent' for maintaining home identity for Sierra Leonean migrants. The atmosphere in which 'home food' was eaten was said to have contributed to minimizing their longing for home as through food-related routines migrants brought 'home' to their current living places. The conclusion can also be drawn that 'home food' plays a crucial role in preserving identity for Sierra Leoneans. It is one of the means by which culture can be maintained even when migrants are very far from home.

Key words: migration, networks, 'home food', identity and Sierra Leone

Contents

DECLARATION.....	0
DEDICATION.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
ABSTRACT.....	5
CHAPTER ONE:	8
INTRODUCTION.....	8
1.1 PREAMBLE	8
1.2 BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	11
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR STUDY	12
1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND KEY QUESTIONS.....	13
1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	13
1.6 SURVEY OF EXISTING RESEARCH	14
1.6.1 <i>Sierra Leone</i>	15
1.6.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	17
1.6.2.1 <i>Social capital theory</i>	17
1.6.2.2 <i>Social identity theory</i>	18
1.6.3 ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD	19
1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION	20
CHAPTER 2:.....	22
METHODOLOGY	22
2.1 INTRODUCTION	22
2.2 METHODOLOGY: RESEARCH DESIGN	22
2.2.1 <i>Methods of data collection</i>	23
2.2.3 <i>Sampling and sample selection techniques</i>	27
2.2.4 <i>Data processing and analysis</i>	28
2.3 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY	30
2.4 ETHICAL ISSUES.....	31
2.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY	32
2.6 CONCLUSION.....	33
CHAPTER 3:.....	34
‘HOME FOOD’: EVOKING MEMORY AND EMOTION	34
3.1 INTRODUCTION	34
3.2 SENSORY MEMORIES OF ‘HOME FOOD’	35
3.3 MOTHER-MEMORIES ASSOCIATED WITH (HOME) FOOD.....	39
3.4 MEMORIES OF ROUTINE (RITUAL) ACTIVITIES	41
3.5 MEMORIES OF LEARNING TO PREPARE (HOME) FOOD	45
3.6 CONCLUSION.....	47
CHAPTER 4:.....	48
FOOD NETWORKS FOR SIERRA LEONEANS IN DURBAN.....	48
4.1 INTRODUCTION	48
4.2 HOW SIERRA LEONEAN MIGRANT NETWORKS WERE FORMED	48

4.3 THE SIERRA LEONE MIGRANT ASSOCIATION AS A NETWORK	51
4.4 NETWORKING: FRIENDS WITH (FOOD) BENEFITS	55
4.5 CONCLUSION.....	59
CHAPTER FIVE:	61
FOOD AND MAINTAINING IDENTITY FOR SIERRA LEONEANS	61
5.1 INTRODUCTION	61
5.2 ‘HOME FOOD’ AS AN IDENTITY MARKER (AND POSSIBLE) BOUNDARY MARKER	61
5.3 COLLECTIVE IDENTITY.....	65
5.4 USING (HOME) FOOD TO MAINTAIN HOME IDENTITY	66
5.5 IDENTITY (FOOD) SHOCK.....	69
5.6 CONCLUSION.....	74
CHAPTER 6:.....	75
CONCLUSION.....	75
6.1 INTRODUCTION	75
6.2 STUDY CHALLENGES.....	75
6.3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE	76
6.4 CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF CHAPTERS.....	78
6.4 CONCLUSION.....	82
REFERENCES.....	83
REFERENCES: PRIMARY SOURCES:	83
REFERENCES: PUBLISHED RESEARCH	83
MAP OF AFRICA.....	95
APPENDICES	96
APPENDIX ONE: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY	96
APPENDIX TWO: INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	98

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

The geographic movement of people is a global phenomenon which has attracted the critical study of many academic disciplines such as politics, economics, geography, sociology and anthropology. Migration studies have become of interest to the anthropological field of study as people relocate with their unique identities, backgrounds and cultures. Anthropologists in the last decade, (Dannecker, 2005; M orokvasic, 2007; W hitehouse, 2009) have shown heightened interest in notions of ‘transnationalism’, ‘gender’ and ‘re-territorialism’ within the context of migration and migration studies. Moving from one country to another has a cluster of implications for migrants and these may include adjusting to the new environment while having to preserve their identity. It is such implications that have attracted social scientists as people are continuously migrating.

Migrants leave their homes and relatives and move to a foreign country where they may not have any family and support networks. This movement is far from easy as people wish to live in areas where there are people with whom they can identify, such as family members, friends, or so-called ethnic group members. When this is not always possible, migrants tend to look for networks and sometimes construct fictive kin for support and to build support structures (see Muthuki, 2010; Hu and Salazar, 2005 and Poros, 2001). Such networks are ‘tools’ that help facilitate the reception and integration of migrants into host societies; hence, they provide social capital as they assist new migrants in settlement and adaptation as established migrants offer guidance to the new network members (see Fukuyama, 1995; Bretell, 2000; Poros, 2001 and Hu and Salazar, 2005). The assumption is that these networks also help in maintaining identity, and in so doing, strengthen and (re)construct social ties amongst the migrants.

This study focused specifically on ‘home food’ and how the communal sharing of this ‘home food’ in social networks assists in maintaining identity. By ‘home food’ one means that type of food or food prepared in a particular way that the Sierra Leoneans would normally consume in their homeland. To link ‘food’ with migration studies one has to look at the socio-cultural implications that accompany food and eating. Lupton (1996:25) argues that, “many beliefs about food are culturally produced from generation to generation [and that]

food beliefs and behaviours are absorbed from early childhood". Fieldhouse (1995) shares the same argument with Lupton (1996:3) as he also feels that, "culture is learned [and] food habits are acquired early in life and once established are likely to be long lasting and resistant to change". Through this argument, Lupton (1996) and Fieldhouse (1995) are emphasizing that consumer behaviour is influenced by socialization which Fieldhouse (1995) sees as the term which, "describes the process by which culturally valued norms of behaviour are passed from generation to generation" (3). This shows that food, like any custom and practice is learned. Hence, the assumption is that migrants grow up having acquired certain tastes and eating habits from their home country, which may make it difficult for them suddenly to adapt to the food that host countries have to offer.

The study is located within the context of a group of Sierra Leonean migrants in Durban, South Africa. The study is premised on the assumption that 'home food' sharing helps preserve social identity. It is also premised on Lupton's (1996, 37) argument that, "the sharing of food is a vital part of kinship and friendship networks in all societies".

Nguyen and Polonsky (2003) explore the idea of 'food and culture' a step further. They suggest that even though people may be socialized into eating certain foods, they may, due to constant contact with people from different cultures and societies, migrants begin to acquire certain tastes which are different from their accustomed 'home foods'. This links well with the experiences that migrants often have as they move to host countries and begin to realize that the foods, which they were accustomed to, are no longer easily accessible.

Due to the need for nutritional nourishment, migrants end up having to adapt to the eating habits of the host countries' population and they begin to eat the foods that are at their disposal. Even though this may not be the ideal food substance, migrants end up acquiring certain tastes. This process of adapting to home country's behaviour patterns is referred to as acculturation. Nguyen and Polonsky (2003:1562) state that, acculturation "describes changes in attitudes, values or behaviours of members of one cultural group manifest as they move towards the standard of another, host-country [or] group." Weinreich *et al.* (1996) sees acculturation as the "modification of a culture of an individual or group through prolonged contact with a different culture". Bhugra (2004) argues that during the process of acculturation, some aspects of a person's identity may change. One such aspect may be the concept of 'self'; however, this is dependent upon the cultural context. By the concept of

'self,' Bhugra (2004) is referring to how people think of themselves and how they perceive themselves. Thus, he argues that, with time and exposure, to different people and cultures, people may in some cases change the way they understand themselves and others. Not only do migrants end up being 'honest victims' of acculturation, but assimilation also takes effect in the lives of migrants. Nguyen and Polonsky (2003) state that assimilation refers to the gradual process whereby cultural differences between groups of people tend to disappear. Both these definitions attempt theoretically to make sense of the possible changes that are often observed in migrants after a couple of months or years of living in a different country. These changes, especially those related to the Sierra Leonean food preferences were observed in this study.

While it is assumed that migrants from different African countries will have a strong attachment to what is 'home food' to them, this study limits its focus to a sample community of Sierra Leonean migrants. This is simply because the premised assumption (for the study) is that Sierra Leoneans are attached to certain food types and kinds of food preparation. Also, unlike countries such as Zimbabwe and Botswana, Sierra Leone is relatively far from South Africa, which makes visiting home more difficult for this study's participants. Due to this, the majority (as the empirical research and narratives of the participants reveal) have not yet saved enough money to travel to their home country to purchase their 'home food' as often as they wish.. Considering the fact that some of these migrants are not formally employed, this makes travelling more difficult as they cannot afford the high travelling costs.

Scholars such as Philip and Ho (2010) and Cuba and Hammon (1993) have shown that, in satisfying their longing for home, migrants generally attempt to 'bring home' artefacts that remind them of their home and culture, often gathering together on culturally significant days, and eating 'home food', and in so doing they attempt to re-territorialize their space. Even though such acts do not, literally bring them 'home' artefacts and social events do evoke powerful memories of home. Through re-territorializing their space in this fashion, the assumption is that they are attempting to re-create and strengthen their identities within the host society. 'Home' is evoked through 'indigenous' or 'home food'. It reminds the migrants 'who they are'. (Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997). Migrants are using food, then, as a way of reaffirming their 'home cultures' and identity. The study probed this assumption in the context of 'home food' in social networks, where groups of Sierra Leoneans gathered together regularly, and shared food.

1.2 Background and significance of the study

Migration as a phenomenon is multi-faceted, even though researchers have explored it both from etic and emic perspectives, (conducting studies of one's own group and from the point of view of an 'other' group); there is still room for more studies to be conducted. Over the years, researchers have focused on gender and remittances when studying migration as in most cases people were migrating for the purpose of better employment opportunities. Bhugra and Becker (2005: 19) argue that, "migration can be classified in a number of ways; [for example] by the reasons for the migration, the social class and education of the migrating people, the duration of relocation and the geographic distribution of the resettlement". This study investigated Sierra Leonean migrants living in Durban; it interrogates issues concerning identity through examining the food eaten by this group. This study is considered vital because, even though migration has become a popular field of study in anthropology and sociology (see Boyd, 1989; Bretell, 2000; Poros, 2001; Muthuki, 2010; Vertovec, 2002 and Nguyen and Polonsky, 2003) there is a shortage of research regarding migrants' adaptation in host countries in the context of food, food choice and manner of preparation, especially in the context of migrants who relocate to South Africa. This study is thus an addition to literature on migration and identity with regard to 'food', and more specifically home food and identity maintenance. Countries such as Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria and South Africa have been extensively studied from a number of perspectives (see Shaw, 2007) while others such as Libya and Sierra Leone have not been given much attention except with regard to wars and independence (see Gberie, 2005). This is also true for the Anthropology Department at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, which is considered a hub for work on migration and transnationalism. It has engaged in studies related to countries such as Ghana, Cameroon, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya and Congo (see Ojong, 2007 and Ojong and Muthuki, 2010). This study is thus a good addition to the limited literature that is available on the 'culture' of Sierra Leoneans, their dietary patterns and the connection between the home and host countries.

The role of migrant networks has been discussed by many scholars (Boyd, 1989; Bretell, 2000 and Vertovec, 2002). Bhugra and Becker (2005: 19) assert that there are three migratory stages, these they refer to as 'pre-migration', 'migration' and 'post-migration'. These three stages reflect the key roles which are played by migrant networks. Even though reasons for the increase in migration and networks as facilitators of migration processes have been studied, issues concerning food as the main strength of relationships have not been given

much attention. The assumption has always been that such networks are maintained by friendships, kin and regional ties. This assumption has overlooked the cultural commitments (such as the need to maintain identity) of migrants, which is best seen through the manner in which migrants identify themselves in host countries. While it may be argued that re-territorialisation is one of the ways through which identity is maintained, scholars such as Weinreich (2000) and Bhugra (2004) have shown that language and cultural attire are the key tools and artefacts of maintaining home countries identity. This study explored beyond these well-researched tools and artefacts and places importance on food, specifically 'home food' as a way of re-territorialising and of maintaining one's culture and identity, placing emphasis on the role of 'home food' in maintaining such identity.

Through this study, I hope to have contributed new ethnographic material in the context of the role of food in social networks, or 'social food networks'. Fomunyam (2010) argues that migrants use food as one of their 'adjustment tools' in host countries, which enables them to re-territorialize their space. 'You are what you eat' (the belief that people take on the properties of the food they eat, (see Rozin, 1991). Counihan and Van Esterik (1997) perceive food as one of the ways which serve as acknowledgement of 'origins' and the embodiment of cultural identity. The study thus interrogated such assertions in the context of 'food networks' in the lives of Sierra Leone migrants. It explored the cultural role of 'home' food in strengthening social ties, and maintaining an identity for the Sierra Leoneans.

1.3 Motivation for study

The motivation for this study arose from a casual conversation with some of the migrants I am acquainted with, where I learnt that for them, food and especially 'home food' plays an important role in maintaining their identity, and in the construction of friendships through 'home food' sharing. This steered my interest toward how food and food habits are socially constructed, and possibly used to construct new social networks, or even strengthen existing ones for foreign migrants living away from home as they attempt to 'hold on to' their identity. While delving deeper into this topic I became aware of the noticeable gaps in the literature with respect to food in the context of migrants and the use of 'food' to forge relationships around the maintaining and articulating of identity.

The bulk of existing literature on food and the anthropology of food dealt with classic themes such as food taboos, ritual food and religion, and food and gender (see; Fieldhouse, 1995; Lupton, 1996; Caplan, 1997 and Warde, 1997). Cultural inclinations in the choice of food of

transnationals, especially in the context of Sierra Leoneans is relatively under-researched. This study offers a new area of focus as there is not much information about the social role of food in terms of network formation and re-territorialisation. Hence, the need for a study of this nature.

1.4 research problem and key questions

This research aimed to explore how ‘home food’ shared communally in social food networks helps maintain identity for Sierra Leonean migrants.

The following questions reflect the main issues that this study investigated:

1. What is ‘home food’? How do migrants experience the eating and sharing of ‘home food’?
2. How does the sharing of ‘home food’ in social networks help maintain identity?
3. How does ‘home food’ act as a n identity marker in helping to construct and strengthen social ties within the networks?
4. How is food shared communally used as a means to re-territorialize space in the host society?

1.5 Objectives of the study

While food and eating is extremely important for human existence, eating can also be seen as a significant social activity as it draws people together in groups or networks. For transnationals and migrants, eating and communal sharing of ‘home food’ is one of the ways in which identity is preserved (see Fomunyam, 2010). People also connect to their cultural groups through similar food patterns. Mintz and Du Bois (2002, 109) argue that, “food serves both to solidify group membership and sets groups apart”. Thus, this study investigated the broader issue of whether or not food is used by migrants as a n identity marker which constructs and promotes unity or a common identity amongst network members. It has also probed, as a broader issue of whether or not the communal sharing of food is perhaps used simultaneously, to erect a ‘boundary’ against local Africans.

Thus, two broader issues can be summarized as:

1. Re-territorialisation through food and food sharing.
2. Boundary formation or the articulation of ‘difference’ through ‘home food’ and ‘home food’ sharing in social networks.

1.6 Survey of existing research

Over the years migration has become a worldwide phenomenon attracting the poor and the rich, young and old, and as more recent scholarship has revealed, involves both men and women. Migration is a phenomenon that involves moving within cities and from country to country. Globalisation and technological advancements have heavily contributed to this phenomenon. Hossain (2001) refers to migration as the permanent or temporary movement of people from one place to another for various reasons. Such reasons can be classified broadly into push and pull factors. Kumar and Sidhu (2005) state that, the push-pull model is useful in the explanation of the causes of migration. de Haas (2010) argues that the push-pull model consists of a number of undesirable factors in the country of origin that cause people to relocate from their home countries, in combination with a number attractive influences (pull factors) which are desirable for migrants in another country.

There is limited scholarly work on Sierra Leone as a country (Hoffman and Lubkermann, 2005; Shaw, 2007 and Coulter, 2008). The majority of the limited existing literature deals mainly with the war with very little investigation and discussion of social issues such as the national heritage. It is only through blogs¹ that one finds articles on the lifestyles of Sierra Leoneans. Informants have shared that this is largely due to skilled persons migrating to other countries for financial reasons. Economic factors are the most prevailing reasons that caused these informants to move to South Africa. While there are a number of push and pull migration factors, Sierra Leonean emigration is mostly due to the political factors which have also led to negative economic factors (see, Adepoju 2003 and Dzvimbo, 2003). The majority of African countries were, and some still are victims of war. These countries include Mozambique, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Zimbabwe, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Sierra Leone (Dzvimbo, 2003).

¹[Online]. Available at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/sierra-leone/travelblogs>
<http://sierraleonefreetownmission.blogspot.com/>
<http://blogs.visitsierraleone.org/> Accessed 08/08/12

1.6.1 Sierra Leone

Due to the civil war that began in 1991 and only ended in 2002, Sierra Leone as a country is in the process of strengthening its independence. “Sierra Leone, situated on the bulge of West Africa, with a population of about six million, gained its independence from Great Britain on 27 April 1961” (Ibrahim and Shepler, 2011: 3). The country enjoyed relative peace until the outbreak of civil war in 1991 (Ibrahim and Shepler, 2011). According to Shakya (2009: 5), “the decade of ruthless war was responsible for the destruction of the basic infrastructure, disintegration of institutions, and human and capital flight away from the country”. Shakya (2009: 4) argues that, “tourism is an industry that is key to long-term growth and competitiveness in Sierra Leone”. Shakya (2009:4) further states that, “despite being eliminated during the violent civil war of the 1990s, tourism was one of the few industries which rapidly bounced back in Sierra Leone once the turmoil was over.” This gives the impression that Sierra Leone as a country is in a process of branding itself and restoring its culture. This suggests that this nation is placing less importance on its political challenges that have led to the majority of Sierra Leonean men leaving their home country.

International migration flows have increased over the past decades. Nowadays people migrate for many different reasons. Kainth (2010:1) states that, “migration a[is] the third component of population change, the other two being mortality and fertility which work in a biological framework whereas migration is influenced by the wishes of the persons involved”. Ghosh (2009:4) argues that, “women are increasingly significant as national and international migrants, and it is now evident that the complex relationship between migration and human development operates in gender differentiated ways.”

Writers such as Ghosh (2004) in their work on migration studies have increasingly focused on the rise of women moving between countries for employment opportunities, to pursue their academic careers, to mention a few pull factors. However, this appears to be less true for the Sierra Leoneans. This study has gathered that it is very rare for women to emigrate alone. Two of the females who were part of this study emigrated with their husbands. Informants have shared that even in other countries; there are very few Sierra Leonean women who have relocated on their own as most of them move with their partners. Men, however, do migrate on their own, and in most cases (in the Sierra Leonean context) end up marrying South African women or other African foreigners. It has been argued by many writers such as

Fukuyama (1995) that migrant associations are the main support structures and the closest kin that migrants have in host countries.

Nodes, hubs, actors and bridges are some of the ways through which we can understand a network. These are some of the operational terms associated with networks. The meaning of these terms differs between disciplines. Reeves (2006: 2) asserts that “a node as any single point of contact in a network; within an organization of people, a node is one individual.” While Wasserman and Faust (1999) argue that nodes play a vital role in networks as their relationships with other nodes allow for growth in networks. Hubs are individuals or nodes in a network with the most influence. Reeves (2006:2) sees a hub as, “a node with multiple connections to other nodes.” Hence, Hubs are essential to connecting networks and forming a strong network density. The fourth chapter of this study illustrates how migrants, with the assistance of networks, are able to make, join and strengthen their relationships using ‘home food’.

Relocating is a sensitive issue it does not only include finances, but emotional challenges as well, and it is for this reason that some migrants prefer to relocate to countries where they have connections with other migrants. Vertovec (2002) argues that this reduces the risks and costs of migration in terms of emotional solidarity. Social networks are thus ‘key’ in assisting migrants in settling into host societies. This option is not always feasible for the Sierra Leoneans who move to South Africa as they often migrate alone, leaving their families behind. Bretell (2000) argues that networks provide social capital as they assist new migrants in settlement and adaptation. Social capital offers migrants the opportunity to invest in relationships where they stand to gain support in what one assumes, is their bid to find ways to connect to home.

Being a migrant has a number of challenges which migrants face daily; these challenges are further extended by the cultural milieus which migrants bring with them when they arrive in host societies. This is where the role of migrant networks takes effect, as, instead of trying to adapt to the host country on their own migrants find guidance from their network members who may be more established in the host countries than themselves (see Poros, 2001 and Hu and Salazar, 2005). Migrant associations are crucial to social support for migrants as their members are usually people from the same country. As with most voluntary migrant associations, the Sierra Leonean Association has a mission, goals and vision and being patriotic is top of their agenda. In these associations, migrants regardless of age or gender

find fictive kin. These associations can be seen as support structures as they offer support to their members and assist them to satisfy their needs as they arise.

The rise in the number of people who belong to more than one country has added to the complexity of migration. Nowadays, many people are choosing to have strong ties with their homelands while living in receiving countries; it is this arrangement that has led to the notion of transnationalism. *Baschet al.* (1994:7) define transnationalism as “the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlements”. Being a transnational allows migrants the opportunity to live in a foreign country while being able to enjoy constant contact with their homeland. Many academics have explored this aspect of migration as they were interested in issues concerning remittances and identity formation (see *Binfeld 2003, Shehu, 2004*). Being a transnational opens an opportunity for migrants to work and even express their political views in more than one country. *Blunt (2007:4)* states that, “the relationships between places migrated from and to are a central feature of research on the cultural geographies of transnationality.” This increase in the number of people choosing to be transnationals is mainly due to the technological advancements, which now allows people to travel between countries in a relatively short space of time and also allows instant communication between people who may be at the opposite ends of the world (see *Levitt, 2001*). Even though the majority of the Sierra Leoneans who formed part of this study have not visited their home country in years, they regard themselves as transnational migrants. They all have strong ties to their home country and they all have plans to move back to their home country, eventually.

1.6.2 Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the following social science theories:

1.6.2.1 Social capital theory

The theory of social capital is mainly concerned with the relationship between network members who stand to gain from each other. *Lin et al.* (2008) argue that individuals engage in interactions and networking in order to produce benefits. Such benefits could be by means of information and even products. With regard to this study, this theory was used to identify the relationships which were forged through ‘home food’ and how being part of a network enables migrants’ to have better access to ‘home food’ and perhaps ‘better’ company when preparing and eating the food within the group. Since for Sierra Leoneans, foods such as cassava leaves, bitter leaf and potato leaves are considered a delicacy and they have to be

prepared in a certain way, finding such food is particularly important for these migrants. As with economical capital, networks provide room for relationships to be established and forged through food.

Being a network member is like an investment in which one can withdraw from and also enjoy benefits, which in this case would be socialising with other trans-migrants. All informants who participated in this study shared this motivation to belong to the network as it provided them with access to 'home food' which is one of the main reasons for attending Association meetings. For them paying the Association membership fees and attending meetings is of great benefit as they are able to gain access to fictive kin. Also, through investing their money and time they are able to have access to their favourite 'home foods' which helps them to '*feel the warmth*' of their home country whilst in South Africa. Employing this theory has provided me with the theoretical framework upon which to base an understanding of the benefits and capital that migrants' gain as they share their experiences of communal eating. This theory has also shown the importance of networks in terms of sharing information between migrants and to help them remain in cultural solidarity.

1.6.2.2 Social identity theory

Social identification refers to how individuals see themselves as part of a group, and how they may use their common interests in defining themselves. Jenkins (1996:90) defines social identity as, "the constitution in social practice of the intermingling, and inseparable, themes of human similarity and difference". This theory eliminates individualism as identity is derived through group membership. This theory encompasses all necessary groups which an individual may be part of. Such groups may include ethnicity, religion, political affiliations and relationships. It is belonging in such groups that enables people collectively to share ideas and even to maintain their identities. For Bhugra and Becker (2005:4), "identity is the totality of one's perception of self, or how we as individuals view ourselves as unique from others". For Jenkins (1996:5), "social identity is our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and, reciprocally, of other people's understanding of themselves and of others". Bhugra (2004) cited in Bhugra and Becker (2005: 21) argues that, "components of cultural identity include religion, rites of passage, language, dietary habits and leisure activities". Using this theory, this study investigated the role played by 'home food' in identity formation. This theory also allowed this study to probe questions of whether or not migrants use food in constructing a cultural boundary between themselves and the local

Africans from the host country. This has shown that social identity is maintained around communal sharing of food perceived as 'home food'.

Sierra Leoneans take pride in their identity and uniqueness (this, I gathered as during interviews they constantly compared themselves with other nationalities). They consider themselves to be unique from other African migrants. Even though some of the food that Sierra Leoneans eat is the same as that of other West African countries, they see their method of food preparation as being more 'authentic' and tasting better. While they do visit Nigerian restaurants, they declared that they still prefer meals prepared by fellow Sierra Leoneans. For these migrants, maintaining their home identity is very important. As a result, they see the Association as a haven where they can freely express themselves to their fictive families. The Association and the different food networks that these migrants are part of offer these migrants an opportunity to 'fit in'; through these collective organisations and friendships they do not see themselves as individual foreigners, rather, they see themselves as being part of a group.

1.6.3 Anthropology of food

Food is also essential to the social body. Mintz and DuBois (2002) state that, the Anthropology of food is an analysis of food in culture. While the primary purpose for food is nutrition, it also has a cultural dimension by which people choose what they eat not only by nutritional value, but by cultural, religious, historic, economic or social status, and environmental factors (see Palojoki and Tuomi-Gröhn, 2005 and Synder and Fjellström, 2005). These are some of the aspects of human cultures that anthropologists seek to investigate when studying food. Foster & Anderson (1978:265) state that:

“Food is not simply an organic product with biochemical qualities that may be utilized by living organisms to sustain life; rather, food is the substance and symbol of social life, a means by which people communicate with each other, and, an embodiment of that communication itself” .

Quandt (1996) cited in Ing (2011) states that the study of food in anthropology can be subdivided into two major approaches, the anthropology of food; and, nutritional anthropology. The former focuses on the symbolic or structural analyses of food, and the latter is based on

ecological theory and considers human dietary behaviour and requirements within its environmental context, including the physical and social environment (see McGarvey, 2009). Early anthropological research on food centred largely upon questions of taboo, totems, sacrifice and communion (see, Goody, 1982 and Cheung, 2002, Fieldhouse, 1995, Lupton, 1996 and Caplan, 1997). This study considers the importance of the relationship between rituals and taboos in anthropological research, but focuses on how migrants, being away from their homeland are able to continue with practicing their rituals in host countries.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

This study is organised into six chapters. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction, followed by a body, which is divided into sub-sections, all six chapters end with a conclusion which briefly summarises the discussions presented in each chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter includes the background of the study; looks at the dynamics that are involved in the lives of Sierra Leonean migrants as they find support through fictive kin and as they strengthen their relationships through eating ‘home food’ in host countries. This chapter also includes key questions which were used for this investigation, as well as the objectives of this study. This chapter also focuses on the theoretical framework upon which this study is grounded. It discusses the theory of social capital and social network. And, finally, it gives a brief outline of the chapters which are to follow.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approaches which were employed for this study. It discusses the different qualitative tools that were used to gather rich ethnographic data of the relationship between ‘home food’ and maintaining identity. It gives an overview of the sampling techniques, limitations of this study, and ethical issues such as informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality.

Chapter 3: ‘Home Food’: Evoking Memory and Emotion

The third chapter of this study focuses on the memories of home that are evoked by ‘home food’. It discusses how certain food reminds these migrants of their mothers and how eating such food evokes in them childhood memories. All this is achieved using ethnographical data and theorising it with some of the scholarly material on memory and food.

Chapter 4: Food networks for Sierra Leoneans in Durban

Migrant networks are crucial in facilitating the migration process and they play a significant role in assisting new migrants in adapting in host countries. This part of this study investigates how Sierra Leoneans in Durban use their 'home food' to establish networks and how 'home food' is used to strengthen social bonds. It also discusses how having access to 'home food' leads to forging friendships and how nodal actors act as bridges, allowing for the circulation of 'home food'.

Chapter 5: Food and maintaining identity For Sierra Leoneans

This chapter explores how 'home food' is used to maintain home identity. It investigates how 'home food' serves as an identity marker that separates and distinguishes Sierra Leoneans from other migrants. It also discusses culture shock in relation to food. All this is achieved through using data that was collected during fieldwork.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This final chapter presents a critical appraisal of the three main themes that formed part of this study. It also presents some of the ethnographical challenges that were experienced during this study. Lastly, it briefly discusses the two broader issues with this study aimed to investigate.

CHAPTER 2:

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

Ethnography is important in gaining an understanding of any given social phenomenon investigated. Ethnography has its background in anthropology (see Blommaert, 2006). Ethnographic studies require extensive fieldwork using various data collection techniques, which may include interviewing and participant observation. Qualitative research methods are useful in collecting rich data. To collect in-depth narratives, one needs to have established rapport with informants and have to have maintained a good working relationship with them. This chapter discusses the research design that was used for this study, the various methods of data collection and sampling techniques which were used to recruit participants. It also discusses how data was processed and validated as well as ethical issues that were taken into consideration throughout this study are also discussed followed by a consideration of the limitations of this study.

2.2 Methodology: research design

This study is ethnographic in nature and employed qualitative research methods. Such research methods were used to investigate the social behaviour of Sierra Leoneans living in Durban. Qualitative research methods are essential in social science studies as they provide an in-depth analysis of the chosen social phenomenon as it contains rich description and focuses on subjective meanings (see Hancock, 1998 and Sarantakos, 2005). Babbie *et al.* (2006) argue that qualitative research enables researchers to study human action from the perspective of the social actors themselves. Patton (2002) asserts that, the qualitative method produces richer, more valid data and improves validity and reliability. Qualitative research methods are descriptive in nature. Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe qualitative research methods as methods that use non-mathematical procedures during data collection and analysing. While both qualitative and quantitative research methods are useful in gathering data, they have different functions, and they are used in different settings. Abawi (2008) adds that, the goal of quantitative methods is to determine whether or not the predictive generalizations of a theory hold true. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used when little is known about a topic or phenomenon, and when one wants to discover or learn more about it (see Maxwell, 2005; Johnson and Christensen, 2011). Williams (2007)

states that, qualitative research involves collecting, analysing and interpreting data by observing what people say and do. Qualitative research methods are useful when a researcher seeks to better understand the complex reality of a given situation.

Hence, this study utilised methodological tools such as focus groups, case studies and semi-structured interviews. Information gathered through this study assisted in gaining an insight into the Sierra Leonean migrants' lives, and into their opinions of the issues studied. Using qualitative methods allowed this study to be investigated 'from real world settings where the phenomenon of interest unfold naturally' (Patton, 2001:39).

2.2.1 Methods of data collection

Due to this study's qualitative nature, it relied on indirect, open-ended questions, in contrast to direct, structured questions, which are used in quantitative studies. This study was conducted over a period of ten months (August 2011- May 2012) amongst a relatively small number of informants and who were interviewed at length. With the aim of studying the given phenomenon in its natural setting and from an emic perspective, this study engaged in extensive interaction with the research group in its own setting. This took place in the informants own homes, work areas and Association meeting areas, around Durban. It also took advantage of the social gatherings which were organised by the association which included picnics and *braais*.

Qualitative research is concerned with the opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals producing subjective data (Hancock, 1998). Using qualitative data gathering methods allowed me to record verbal and non-verbal notes from participants in detail. Because of the close relationship that is built between informants and the researcher, maintaining objectivity can be problematic for researchers. Objectivity is crucial for all studies. Even though during this study I established a good relationship with research participants, throughout this study I ensured that I was not biased. I employed cultural relativism during data collection and analysis. All data was recorded and transcribed in as much detail as possible. I also recorded the body movements and facial expressions; I attempted to capture all the necessary details.

The majority of data collection and observation occurred during the Association meetings, which were on the first Saturday of the each month. Association meetings were hosted by different members of the Association. In the meetings that I attended I observed that meetings were attended by the same migrants and that the order of events was the same. The chairman,

Johan or rather Mr. Chairman as he is affectionately called by his members, controlled the proceedings. During these meetings, lunch was served, mostly 'home food'.

Qualitative research methods are useful when a researcher wishes to undertake a study in its natural setting. Sandelowski (2000) argues that a naturalistic inquiry implies only a commitment to studying something in its natural state. Participant observation is a research methodology, which is widely used in social sciences, most notably in anthropology. Spradly (1980) defines participant observation as an immersion and participation into the daily activities and interactions of a group. Having an acquaintance from Sierra Leone made it less complicated to for me to be part of their meetings. Attending social gatherings were also helpful as it facilitated introduction to a wider circle of friends. This interaction has been done using the skills of participant observation. This type of observation requires the researcher to spend considerable time in the field participating in the activities whilst also observing the behaviour patterns of participants (see, Whitehead, 2005 and Spradly, 1980).

Through employing participant observation, the aim was to gain greater familiarity with my informants and to gain their rapport, which in turn assisted in gaining rich data. This was done through personal home visits, communal meal sharing and visiting some of the restaurants that serve foreign 'home food', which my informants have visited from time to time. Through casual conversations I furthermore gathered data which filled gaps which had arose from interviews. Home and workplace visits were one of the most valuable moments as I managed to spend a large amount of time with specific informants, which enabled me to probe more into issues concerning the importance of 'home food' in maintaining home identity. The environment was as natural as possible which minimised the gap between myself and informants. Interviews were conducted in the participants' place of choice, where they felt comfortable. I wanted to ensure that they were not going to be intimidated by my choice of place. Also, because most were conducted in their workplaces and homes, they were not detached from their everyday lives, and I could observe some of the activities that they engaged in. Being a participant observer was not easy as I had constantly to negotiate between being a member of the group (participating in activities) and an observer while ensuring that I recorded material in as much detail as possible. I also tried to read body language and mentally code all data as it came about.

For centuries language has proven to be a barrier between the researcher and participants (see Ferraro and Andreatta, 2010). The majority of Sierra Leoneans speak Krio², but most are bilingual. It was expected that some participants would be more willing to express themselves in Krio hence; an interpreter accompanied me whenever it was necessary. Not having full working knowledge of Krio was initially a setback, especially when it came to understanding some of the phrases they used to describe their food and experiences. However, as the months went by I learnt to understand some of the phrases used by informants, which made transcribing the recorded interviews and understanding informants easier. My key informant, who also served as my interpreter no longer had to translate all that was being shared, instead at times I shared with her what I thought was being said, and she corrected me whenever it was necessary.

Qualitative interviews are fairly informal, and this worked to this study's advantage as all interviews were conducted in an informal setting using unstructured interviews. Interview questions were designed to be open-ended for the purpose of allowing informants to express themselves fully and not to be restricted in any way. Such questions were easy to handle as I had known some of the informants for at least a month when I finally interviewed them individually. Using open-ended questions was useful as they are perceived to be less threatening, which assisted in getting unrestrained responses. However, such questions proved to be time-consuming and generated information which I thought was unnecessary at that time, but led to new themes.

The questions were asked in the clearest and simplest manner with the aim of avoiding any ambiguities. My key informant was helpful in constructing the questions as I would often write out a question and ask her to explain what she thought it meant, where necessary I would change the order of words so as to fit into the Sierra Leonean daily language and to make it as relevant to the topic as possible. In some cases I asked for the terms in Krio. The purpose of this was to show my participants that I am interested in their culture and language and to strengthen our rapport. In some instances I mispronounced the terms and my participants would gladly correct me. All these little details made me as a researcher who was an outsider and relatively younger than all of them feel accepted.

²Krio is a native language that is spoken by the majority of the Sierra Leonean migrants (see Worman, 2006)

Babbie *et al.* (2006) see qualitative interviews as an interaction between an interviewer and a study participant whereby the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry. They further state that it is ideally the respondent that should do most of the talking during an interview. With the aim of getting an emic perspective, semi-structured and unstructured interviews were used to collect the bulk of the information. According to Sarantakos (2005), both semi-structured, and unstructured interviews comply fully with the standards and principles of qualitative research. These interview elements allowed me to have open-ended, informal questions which could be manipulated to fit any context or informant. It also enabled me to focus on the informant's perspectives and experiences, making them lead the conversations while I steered it. Using open-ended questions does not only enable the interviewer to suggest responses that are meaningful and directed to the phenomena being studied, but they enable the participant to offer responses which many not be anticipated by the interviewer (Mack *et al.*, 2005). Receiving unexpected responses enables the researcher to probe into other relevant issues which may arise as informants share their thoughts. Indeed, open-ended questions allowed migrants to express their views freely. Even though an interview guide was prepared, in some cases, they were not used as informants expressed different yet critical views that enriched this study.

Semi-structured interviews are made up of a number of open-ended questions which are linked to the key issues which the researcher may wish to cover (Hancock, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were used in situations where I met informants by chance and I was not sure whether or not I was going to get another chance to interview the informant. With the belief that all information collected in the field is paramount and can add value to my research, I made use of all the opportunities that presented themselves before me. An interview guide was used to navigate these interviews (see appendix two); this was done so to ensure reliable and comparable data.).

Unstructured interviews were also used from time to time to 'fill gaps' between literature and data that was present at that time and to compare information gathered from different informants. As with all different data collection tools, this type of interview required me to listen with interest and to record all information that was presented to me. After informants expressed their longing for 'home food' I also shared with them how I long for 'home food' whenever I am away from home and how food has served as a bridge between home and wherever I may be at that particular time. This, I did to build rapport with my informants.

While this worked to my advantage as they realised that I could relate to what they shared, I was careful not to share more of my experiences, and I was cautious not to ask suggestive questions. Even though the interviews were often similar to friendly conversations, I had to constantly remind myself that they had an explicit purpose which in this case was to learn about the informant and the phenomena at hand.

Research tools such as focus groups are most useful when the researcher wishes to elicit data on the cultural norms of a particular group of people as they generate overviews of how the different group members view the different topics covered in a particular study (Clark, 2000). An audiotape and a fieldwork book were used to record the information that was shared during focus group discussions. Since focus groups have a number of participants sharing their experiences on the same topic, participants are able to listen to others while they share their experiences which in turn will stimulate memories, ideas, and experiences in participants (Williams, 2007). This proved to be true when I conducted a focus interview as even informants who were reluctant to be interviewed, upon hearing fellow Sierra Leoneans sharing their 'home food' experiences joined the group, and they also shared valuable information.

Using participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups were all beneficial for this study as all data was collected through these data collection techniques and yielded thick descriptive narratives. Even though not all informants openly shared their experiences during the first interviews, they were eventually keen on sharing information about their memories and past once I had spent more time with them. Also, some interviews were conducted over a period of between four and six sessions as informants had many comments to make. This was at times problematic as some informants would repeat themselves often. It did, however, give me the opportunity to verify some of their responses and to probe further on issues that arose from the previous interviews.

2.2.3 Sampling and sample selection techniques

Sampling is one of the most important elements to consider as it directs the researcher to the relevant population to be studied. At the beginning of this study I knew only one migrant from Sierra Leone and it was important that I request her assistance in identifying potential participants. This study employed two non-probability sampling strategies, namely snowball and purposive sampling.

The initial target sample population of this study were Sierra Leonean students from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Upon learning that there are only two registered students from Sierra Leone, I redirected my focus and explored a wider group that included all Sierra Leoneans living in Durban. This population consisted of two women and twenty four men. They were aged between twenty five and fifty. Due to the limited number of Sierra Leoneans living in Durban, this study did not specify the ideal informants' gender or their occupation. Rather, it took advantage of the Association members who were willing to be interviewed (but was cognisant that most of the participants might be male).

Purposive sampling was utilised to identify the first key informant. Sarantakos (2005) refers to purposive sampling as a method whereby the researcher purposely choose who, in their opinion, is relevant for the study. Having known Mary on a friendly and academic level, I sought her advice on requesting permission to study Sierra Leoneans and if the topic could be conducted within her home group of migrants. Potential participants were identified through using the snowball sampling technique; initial participants were from Sierra Leone Association. Sarantakos (2005) argues that the snowballing method is used when a researcher chooses a few respondents using accidental sampling or any other method and asks them to recommend other people who meet the criteria of the research. Having acquainted a few Sierra Leoneans who were eager to be part of my research I asked them to introduce me to their wider circle of friends, which worked out to be members of the Sierra Leonean Association in Durban.

2.2.4 Data processing and analysis

Data was analysed using the thematic analysis approach. The thematic analysis is an approach that is useful and is usually adopted when researchers deal with coding data (see Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Because qualitative studies are interested in analysing the lived experiences of informants, the first step in analysing data was to identify patterns of experiences as they were transcribed in my fieldwork book. This included the information that was shared by informants as well as my observations. Gibson (2006) argues that coding refers to the assembling or grouping of data according to the likeness of responses. Immediately after coding, I identified the patterns that had already started to present themselves. This was not without difficulty as I realised

that some of the information that was shared and that I had recorded was not relevant for this particular study. Therefore, I had to reserve such narratives for future studies. In some cases I had to go back to ask more relevant questions pertaining to the data that had already emerged. Working with such raw coded data enabled me to further classify responses according to sub-themes. It was at this stage that I started to formulate themes that have formed part of this dissertation's chapters. It is through these sub-themes that patterns that are more concrete were realised. In many cases, each narrative could be coded as more than one theme, where this was necessary, narratives were classified in comparison to what other informants had shared on similar issues.

The thematic analysis tool allowed for this study to identify the themes and views of informants, giving precedence to data over theories. Boyatzis (1998: 160) states that;

Descriptive use of thematic analysis is desirable if the methodology chosen for the study requires it ... it does not preclude scoring or scaling of themes and then using this numeric representation to check the consistency of judgments ... neither do they preclude using the information to portray the themes and describe the units of analysis.

Thematic analysis is concerned with interpreting human experiences, from an emic perspective. Hence, responses from informants are to be interpreted as the informants share them. Gibson (2006: 1) argues that:

One of the central positions associated with qualitative research pertains to the idea of interpretivism: that we are interpretive in our actions and in our understanding of the actions of others; that we impose meaning on the world; that we inhabit cultural worlds and engage in cultural practices that are defined by shared interpretations.

Under this backdrop, analysis of data adopted an emic approach. This was done with the intention of interpreting data from the informants' perspective.

During fieldwork, not all data was jotted down in English, some were in *isiZulu*. As an *isiZulu* first language speaker I found this helpful when it came to describing the informants' gestures, body language. This was later translated into English with the help of fellow students. I was fortunate to have my key informant as my translator as she was present at all meetings. Permission to record information and to take pictures was requested prior to all

interviews. I realised that for some informants, the presence of a voice recorder during interviews became problematic as they would constantly ask if I was going to delete some of the information that they had shared. For these specific informants, I did not use a voice recorder during the second interview. Transcribing was not easy especially during focus group meetings, at times two informants would speak at the same time. While they were constantly reminded kindly to avoid this, I at times felt overpowered; this will be further discussed under limitations.

All recordings were saved on a flash disc and transcribed in a fieldwork book, which is stored in a secure place. Where permission to record was not granted, notes were taken in a private fieldwork book and later typed and stored on the same flash disc as the audio and visual material. Transcribing was time-consuming especially when I had to transcribe audio notes however, the more I listened to each interview the richer my findings became as I could listen without the pressure of having to write and to keep eye contact and to probe so as to show interest in my informant.

2.3 Validity and reliability

Like ethical considerations, validity and reliability are important for any study, particularly that, which is qualitative in nature and which is concerned with 'why' Sierra Leoneans still long for home, and share their 'home food', it was necessary to take precautions relating to validity and reliability..

Due to the large amount of data that was collected for this study, some of it was not used. It could be claimed that this reveals personal selectivity. However, as mentioned earlier, this study only deals with matters that relate to the nature of this dissertation and it is limited to the themes that emerged. Furthermore, as mentioned in limitations, not all Sierra Leonean migrants were willing to form part of this study. As a result, this is not a complete representation of all Sierra Leonean migrants in South Africa. That having been said, it is worth mentioning that the majority of the declared sample frame were interviewed.

One of the major challenges of qualitative research is supporting the study's validity. Seale (1999) argues that the reliability of qualitative research may be questioned as there are no statistical checks and figures. In response to this argument, qualitative researchers take

advantage of the triangulation strategy, which is used to help validate data. Mathison (1988: 13) states that:

Triangulation has risen as an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology.

Triangulation was used in this study to cross-validate data that was shared by informants. Cross-validating data was useful in this study; I understood the information shared by informants from an etic perspective.

2.4 Ethical issues

Research ethics are a matter of importance especially when studying groups of people considered as a minority. A protocol describing the study and methodology of this study was presented to the School of Social Sciences and was approved by the higher degrees ethics committee of UKZN.

Throughout this study, I was conscious of protecting informants against questions that could evoke unwanted feelings. This study focused on 'home food' and life in Sierra Leone, a country that experienced war until 2001, hence the war aftermath may still be fresh in the minds of my informants. Therefore, this study was guaranteed to touch their previous lives in Sierra Leone. Hence, asking participants to respond to home-related questions could have evoked unwanted or uncomfortable feelings. Orb *et al.* (2000) argues that the desire to participate in a research study depends upon a participant's willingness to share his or her experience. For that reason, certain ethical steps were taken to gain informants rapport and to request their participation in this study. These included, reading the informed consent form and explaining what this study is about, opening an opportunity for informants to ask questions when they needed clarity. All interviews were recorded with the participants' consent. In addition, permission to use tape recorders was requested at the beginning of each interview.

The informants were assured of confidentiality and were told that they had the right to choose whether to participate or not and to withdraw at any stage. It was made clear at the outset that there were no rewards or financial remuneration for participating. To safeguard their

confidentiality, participants' names and identities were replaced with pseudonyms and any distinguishing characteristics were disguised for the purposes of anonymity.

2.5 Limitations of this study

During this study I experienced a number of challenges, especially in terms of data collection and accessing theoretical material.

This study had proposed to conduct 30 in-depth interviews. However, due to only having twenty six people who are part of the association and only twenty three being available to be interviewed this study ended up representing experiences of only twenty two Sierra Leoneans. While this is more than eighty per cent of these migrants in Durban, I would have been interesting to interview all members of the Association. Despite this, the twenty one core informants were always willing to share their experiences.

The bulk of existing literature on food and the anthropology of food deals with classic themes such as food taboos, ritual food and religion, and food and gender (see; Caplan, 1994; Fieldhouse, 1995, Lupton, 1996 and Caplan, 1997). Research into the dietary patterns of transnationals, especially in the context of Sierra Leoneans is relatively under-researched and offers a new area of study as there is not much information about the social role of food in terms of network formation and re-territorialisation. It is for this reason that this study does not cite prior research into migrants using 'home food' to reinforce their identities.

Being culturally 'relative' does not come without difficulty. In the initial stage of this study I found it difficult to bracket my own knowledge and preferences especially since this study was on food. The first time I attended a Sierra Leonean meeting I was 'shocked' by the kind of food my informants considered a delicacy. However, I subsequently acquired a taste for the participant's food, and this is considered vital for the research process and the research itself. My subjectivities around food should not of course influence the research process.

Communicating with informants was also difficult at times as some were fluent in Krio with little knowledge of English. However, having an interpreter eased the challenge of having to ask the same question in many different ways so that the informants would understand. Also, most of the informants were males; some used the time scheduled for interviews to share their feelings about matters which were not linked to this study. Furthermore, due to the age difference between myself and informants it was not easy to ask them not to change the topic and especially during focus groups. There were times where I had to ask at least five times in

a space of thirty minutes. This made me feel guilty at times considering that these informants were as old as my parents if not older.

What was most interesting about the meetings is that none of the Sierra Leonean men's partners attended apart from those who were married to Sierra Leoneans, even if their partners were hosting on that specific day. I found this interesting and challenging at the same time because in the first Association meeting that I attended, I could not relate to most of the migrants. However, with the help of my key informant, Mary, I was able to build rapport with informants. It was only during the picnic that I spent time with their non-Sierra Leonean partners. I also attended communal events such as parties, picnics and Association meetings hosted by Sierra Leonean migrants. This allowed me to observe the kind of foods consumed and the types of food that hosts prepared for their guests and the manner in which it was eaten. I mingled well with the rest of the group including non-Sierra Leoneans and the fact that I helped out with serving made me feel part of the group. This gave me hands on experience of how it is like to be a 'foreigner' and still eat home food, of course in this case it was quite different as I became a foreigner in my own country and I mostly ate South African food which had been prepared by Sierra Leoneans. I was not the only one who had such an experience as some of the non-Sierra Leonean guests also indulged in South African food whilst tasting food prepared by hosts.

2.6 Conclusion

Fieldwork is the main research technique that is used by anthropologists to investigate different cultures (see Monaghan and Just, 2010). It is through fieldwork that a researcher can attempt to understand a social phenomenon from the participants' perspective. This chapter has discussed the various research methodological tools that were used to collect narratives. It has given a brief account of the research design, methods of data collection, sampling techniques, data processing and analysis, validity and reliability, ethical issues and limitations of this study. The following chapter gives a presentation of findings.

CHAPTER 3:

‘HOME FOOD’: EVOKING MEMORY AND EMOTION

3.1 Introduction

Memories are important as they allow people to remember skills that they have learned, who they are, important events and through memories people are able to connect to their past lives. This chapter investigates the different food-related memories that Sierra Leoneans have, which assists them to stay connected to their country while in South Africa. It discusses issues pertaining to sensory memories, mother-related food memories and emotions. All these are discussed using ethnographical data.

The act of eating and sharing food is memorable to most people. Banquets and feasts are not only a means of having an abundance of food, but they are also a means of creating memories (see McGinniss, 2005). Each and every human being has rich memories of food, whether on an individual or collective level. Such memories can be evoked whenever people see and taste certain foods. These experiences serve as reminders of the important events that people were part of and even of people with whom the food was shared. Aspects such as the distinctive taste, smell, and texture of food can be evocative, bringing back memories not just of eating food itself, but also of place, people and setting (see MacDonald, 2008). Scholars such as Fieldhouse (1995), Holtzman (2006) and Lupton (1996) see food as an effective means of reconnecting memories of feelings, company and emotions. Holtzman (2006) argues that memories can be the means of re-experiencing the past events that people may recall from time to time.

The Sierra Leoneans that formed part of this study were between the ages of twenty five and fifty. They had all lived in Sierra Leone for an average of 22 years; hence, they all have profound memories of their families and of the years they spent in their home country. Such memories may be unpleasant due to the war and the challenges that they may have faced during their stay in their home country. Regardless of this, the memories of their pasts are part of their identities and have contributed to their understanding of the world. It is such memories that make migrants long for their home countries, their families, friends and the warmth of home and that has led to most migrants choosing to have strong ties with their

homeland. Sutton (2000) cited in Holtzman (2006) emphasizes that “longing for home is evoked in diasporic individuals by the smells and tastes of a lost homeland” (367).

3.2 Sensory memories of ‘home food’

Certain food smells and appearances tend to transport people back to their childhood and to memories of families and of their mother and her cooking. Even when people do not remember the actual events, they tend to remember the people with whom the experience was shared. Food stirs emotions. It often has many social meanings embedded in such emotions. Having eaten it at home with family members, eating this whilst abroad can prompt emotions of joy, or of being loved and cherished. For Ben, 'home food' evokes joyful emotions associated with memories of his family, the people he has not seen in two years and whom he occasionally speaks to over the telephone. He admitted that 'home food' is one of the artefacts which connects him to his home country. Lupton (1996:49) argues that, “the smell and taste or even thoughts of certain foods, if connected to happy or idealised childhood memories may elicit nostalgia to the extent that they shape preferences for food in adult life”. Food items such as ginger beer, plantain and rice were quoted by many informants. They declared that these foods evoke childhood memories and memories of the life they lived in Sierra Leone.

Warde (1997) asserts that, there is a strong relationship between people’s memories and the social and emotional aspect of food. For Paul, the smell of ginger beer (or ginger as it is called in Sierra Leone) takes him back to when he was between the age of nine and twelve where he used to choke each time he drank it. He recalled that he was the only one among his friends who would cough and he used to sneeze even at the thought of this drink. He remembers that he used to be the centre of attention and at times his friends would bet on his sneezing and coughing.

“Drinking this [pointing to his glass of ginger on the table] reminds of the time when I was young and my friends would make fun of me because I coughed every time I drank ginger. Thing is, I could not avoid it. I had to drink it because it is what we drink at home. I sneezed until I was fifteen or something, but I just could not stop drinking it. What's worse is that even when I thought of ginger I would sneeze [he coincidentally sneezes and laughs then continues]...see I just sneezed”. (Paul)

Paul is not the only one who experienced this, Cyril shared that for many people drinking ginger was not easy, they never finished a glass without sneezing and coughing at least three times. He recalls this by saying,

“Drinking ginger was such a mission [difficult] for some people especially girls. I can't remember where we were, but it was a party for one of my childhood friends and there was a lot of ginger. [He laughs, then continues sharing the story laughing every now and again] you should have seen how some of the girls were drinking it [laughs as he picks up a glass to demonstrate how the people who were sneezing and coughing drank the ginger. He smelled the glass then pretended to be drinking, sneezed. Again, he smelt the glass sneezed, waited for a few seconds then drank again]. It was girls who took long to get used to drinking ginger. But by the time we reached the age of fifteen we all could easily drink it”. (Cyril: transcribed interview recording)

“Despite its acquired taste, I love ginger, but I prefer the one I make at home not what you [pointing to me: ‘South Africans’] buy in shops. The one I make is fresh and healthy because it doesn't have any preservatives it is just ginger and a bit of sugar. I make it the way my late mother used to make it at home. I never liked ginger when I was young, but my mother would remind me how it is good for the human body so I got used to drinking it after my meals especially after eating greasy food. It helps you digest food faster and fights against things like heart disease, flu and headache. It is really good and affordable especially if you don't exercise it is good for you. Making and drinking it reminds me of my mother who believed that ginger was a cure for all sorts of illnesses”. (Mary: Transcribed interview recording)

Mary is not the only informant who maintained that ginger evoked memories of home for her. Cyril calls ginger beer “all in one”, he said this as in his home experience, for his mother and sisters' ginger had more than one use. It was a beverage, medicinal as whenever a person was sick they would be told to drink at least a litre in a space of thirty minutes and if a person had a sore, ginger beer would be used to wash it. Lastly, at least half a cup of ginger beer would

be used in stews. For migrants like Mary and Cyril drinking ginger beer is something that they are accustomed to doing. For Cyril, ginger beer evokes more than family memories, but even instances that occurred when he was young and would hurt himself. He admits that he does not use it for all the things it was used for back at home, but he believed that it is medicinal and he told me that whenever he has an upset stomach he makes himself a strong ginger beer.

While ginger beer is considered an important part of the Sierra Leonean meals, it is not the only food item that evokes memories for these migrants. Scarce food items such as *egusi* soup also transports migrants to their home countries. Wilson and Apollo confided that their most memorable childhood memories include those that they had *egusi* soup as part of their meals. Even though they both admitted that they do not know how to prepare it, they do recognise the smell and taste of *egusi* soup whenever they are at an 'ethnic' restaurant and when they are visiting friends.

“I cannot remember the last time I had some [*egusi* soup] at home [Sierra Leone] but I remember that I was home and my younger sister made it, she always made it for us. [laughs and shakes his head]. That day she kept chasing me away as she was preparing it, but I did not want to leave the kitchen because I knew she would steal some and I would have ended up getting just one spoon of soup. So I begged her to allow me to keep her company ... she prepared it, within an hour we were sitting down and eating it”.
(Wilson)

“I use to really like *egusi* back at home, my sister knew that she had to make a lot especially if it was Friday and I was going to be home the whole weekend. You know I never ate bread like all the others; I would have *fufu* and *egusi* the whole weekend. My sisters even called me *egusi*, she would be like ‘*Egusi* we are having Edward today’ instead of saying ‘Edward we are having *egusi* today’. (Edward)

“My brother used to hate *egusi* soup, he preferred potato and cassava leaves, but because my mother forced us to finish our food, he would give me his share and I would eat for him. *Egusi* used to be my favourite at home, but only when my aunt cooked it,

not my mother. It is one of the things I remember about my late aunt, her *egusi*". (Apollo: Transcribed interview recording)

Moses is the only informant that declares that he cooks and eats *egusi* at least two times a month. He says that it evokes many 'comforting' memories of Sierra Leone and his late father who like him loved *egusi*. Toni and Cyril said that rice is one of the foods which mostly reminds them of their home country. He confessed that he likes *jollof* rice, but prefers plain rice. Toni said that food is one of the artefacts that constantly remind him of home and of the fact that he is a migrant. Hence, he has to work hard and save as much money as possible so he can send remittances home on a monthly basis.

"I don't know if you have ever seen, or even smelt our rice, it is as white as the snow and when cooked well it is soft, thin and long. At home my cousins used to say I am a girl because I like the softness of the rice, but I never changed my mind about it. I still prepare [prefer] it over *fufu* and *samp*. Its softness is enough to make you feel like you are home ... the best part is that I use my hand to eat it [closes his eyes and opens them as he feels his hands] each time we have rice during the Association I go crazy and dish up as much as I can, I love plain white rice". (Cyril: Transcribed interview recording)

"One thing that makes me love rice so much it is the softness. Its soft almost like *fufu* but it is even tastier. I always have at least three dishes spoons because it is not feeling like *fufu*. Some people say men should eat *fufu* so they can be strong. I don't believe that. I prefer rice and I will prefer it over *fufu*" (Lovemore: Transcribed interview recording)

"I know some people prefer eating *jollof* rice because they don't need stew on the side, but I prefer plain rice. It reminds me of the worst times when all we had at home was rice. My sister would make rice and we would all use our hands to eat it, sharing a bowl. We were still young and my older brother had recently died. I remember it like it happened yesterday, I still feel sad when I think about it, but it brought us together as a family. We all gathered and

shared the little that we had”. (Toni: Transcribed interview recording)

The above narratives illustrate the memories that both Toni and Cyril have of plain rice. It is so much more than just *rice*. For them the whiteness and long thin grains are enough to emotionally transport them back to Sierra Leone. Having spent an average of 22 years in Sierra Leone, both these informants acquired special tastes for their home rice, taste that cannot be replaced by the South African parboiled rice. These migrants maintain that the memories they have of eating and sharing scarce foods is what makes them long for home.

3.3 Mother-memories associated with (home) food

Mother memories are associated with love and care. Mary recalls that cooking like her mother reminds her of the wonderful moments that they spend together in Sierra Leone and in moments like that she can feel her late mother's presence in her kitchen when she cooks her ‘home food’.

“At times I forget to put in some ingredients or I forget to rinse meat with vinegar and I can literally hear my mother reminding me how it should always be done. [Pauses for a few seconds, looks up to the sky and wipes her eyes] I know she's not there, but cooking ‘home food’ somehow brings us together. It reminds me of our precious moments at home [nods her head and looks up to the sky again] mum is here with me, she helps me cook the best meals every day”. (Mary: Transcribed interview recording)

Mary had a strong relationship with her mother, even though she has ceased to be, but Mary still feels her presence when preparing meals. Mary claims that, at times she prepares food in memory of her mother. It is meals such as *egusi* soup that most reminds her of the beautiful memories she shared with her mother. Meals such as okra and *egusi* are mostly associated with motherly memories as the majority of informants claimed that their mothers cooked these meals the best.

According to Lupton (1996: 37) “one major emotion that is constantly linked with food is that of love, particularly maternal love.” People learn tastes and tend to like what they are

used to, often expressing strong preferences for their own mothers' cooking (Warde: 1997). Even though the works of Lupton (1996) and Warde (1997) are relatively old, the material and arguments they presented are still very relevant, especially as data collected in this study shows. Motherly love is often associated with the comforting feeling of home hence people tend to prefer their mothers cooking over any other meals. This is true for the majority of informants as they feel that their mothers are the people who cooked their 'home food' the best.

“I've tasted okra here, but it was not as good as my mother's. I think she had a secret ingredient. She always chased us out when she was cooking so I had never learned to cook it. Even my sister is not as good as her. Pity she is now late. When I see okra I see her. I have not yet eaten *egusi* here in fact most of us [Sierra Leoneans] have not eaten it, but when I go home I will ask my sister to cook it for me, like my mother used to” (Enock: Transcribed in interview recording)

“I am still to find a person who cooks *egusi* as good as my mother. My sisters cook it nicely, but of course it is never going to be as good as my mother's. That lady was a professional [claps hands in approval, praise] she cooked so well that even if I came home full I would still want her food. That's how good she was” (Leon: Transcribed interview recording)

“I cannot wait next year so I can go home and be with my mother. I miss her, her smile how she always knows when I am sad and her cooking. [Smiles and shakes his head] it is one of the reasons I always miss home. She is that good” (Goodman)

“My sisters at home [in Sierra Leone] always ask me if I have found a wife here [in South Africa] and when am I bringing her home. But I always tell them I haven't. See I've met so many wonderful women in this country and they have invited me for dinner and their food is nowhere close to my mother's. Now what am I to do with a woman who cannot cook well? When I have found a woman who cooks okra like my mother I will definitely

get married. I don't want to get married then go to my mother's house for food every night". (Toni: Transcribed interview recording)

These narratives express the important relationship that informants have with their mothers (who are at home, in the sending country). While some informants have lost their parents, food memories are still very much alive. In this way, their families are still very much alive in them, most especially in the reiterative act of cooking and eating their 'home food' Leon and Mary have both lost their mothers, but as Mary has said that being in the kitchen, eating *egusi* is amongst the things she misses the most about her mother.

3.4 Memories of routine (ritual) activities.

Eating food can be considered both a necessity and a routine. Routines are activities that are done in a repetitive or reiterative manner. Bells in the context of religion (1992), defines a ritual as a condition or sets of activities that are characterized by the presence of established procedure or routine. Scholars such as Minowa (2006) and Lupton (1996) associate rituals with religion and pagan worship. Spagnola and Fiese (2007) argue that rituals are distinct and unique to particular families, reflecting family identity, culture, and shared values. But much of this is true in non-religious contexts as well. This study proposes that eating 'home food' during the Association's monthly meetings is a form of 'routine' and in a sense a ritualised activity that Sierra Leoneans learn from an early age in their home country. They are accustomed to this routine, and they continue to perform this even in the receiving country as they believe "*it is the right way of doing things*" (Edward: Transcribed interview recording). While David has never asked his father why Sierra Leoneans do certain routines, especially when there are gatherings, he recalls his father and uncles sharing stories of how things were done when they (father and uncles) were young. Hence, David like Billy thinks that they were taught these routines "*to keep the spirit of their forefathers alive*". From my observations of the Association's meetings, food was served at more or less the same time. Even though the food was eaten from different plates and in different venues for each meeting (meetings were hosted by different Association members and each member had different plates and eating utensils), there was a pattern in the way that it was eaten. All migrants used their hands to eat the food. The majority preferred to drink ginger beer while eating and only Krio was spoken during this time. Also, in all meetings, food was placed in the centre on a central communal table for each migrant to serve himself.

Family rituals may include celebrations, traditions, and patterned interactions (Wolin & Bennett, 1984). While in their home country Sierra Leoneans revealed that they partook in different food-related routines and rituals. Spagnola and Fiese (2007:289) state that “repeated family gatherings offer the opportunity to create strong emotional bonds and an investment in maintaining connections into the future”. Lince and Lovemore reported that in their home country, they were taught to eat in a particular fashion. Even though the Association has members who come from different parts of Sierra Leone, Lince said that he was happy to see that they all preferred to eat in “*the traditional Sierra Leonean way*”. It can thus be said that these migrants have unconsciously ritualized their eating patterns. It is these repeated Association and network gatherings that have fostered strong emotional bonds between these migrants.

Observing the Sierra Leonean way of eating reminded me of the occasions where, at home we had rituals. Like these migrants when it came to eating meat and dumplings, we all ate in the same manner. During such rituals in the local Zulu context men group themselves together and most prefer to drink local home brewed Zulu beer instead of the commercial alcoholic drinks. Hence, like the Sierra Leoneans most Zulu men prefer their 'authentic' beverage during a religious or cultural gathering and feast that accompany such a gathering. Zulu beer like ginger beer is also considered medicinal and healthier than the beer that is mass produced. Also, Zulu beer is made especially for the occasion. Even though it takes relatively longer to make compared to the Sierra Leone ginger beer, they both can be considered ‘fresher’ than the beverages that are mass produced.

As with most rituals, food eating unites those to partake in it. When migrants participate in their ‘home food’ rituals, they expect a certain fulfilment. Such fulfilment ranges from evoking memories of home to fulfilling their longing for home as well as missing and remembering their family member and friends. The same applies when we at home have a cleansing or thanksgiving ritual. The purpose is always to connect with our family members who have passed on. This is done through sacrificing not only a goat or a cow, but time as well as we all gather together to do the ritual. Ancestor worship is common amongst the Zulu nation and African people as a whole. In his study among the Suku of south-western Congo, Kopytoff (1971) records that, ancestors are vested with mystical powers and authority. He also stated that ancestors retain a functional role in the world of the living even though they are dead. Through the routine and ritual activities mentioned in this section, both the Zulus

and the Sierra Leonean migrants used 'home food' to connect with their ancestors and to acknowledge their presence in their lives. Because ancestors are believed to be spirits; hence, not confined to a certain place, these migrants are able to connect with them even in a foreign land.

Rituals normally include food. Ritual food usually consists of food that is not always eaten in the everyday context or that is not widely available. Such food may be considered traditional, authentic and ethnic. Like ritual food, which is normally prepared in a specific manner, despite having a number of possible ways of preparing it; Sierra Leonean 'home food' is not easily accessible. Sierra Leonean 'home food' is prepared in a manner that they, as a collective appreciate. As with the Zulu ritual food such as tripe and dumplings which can be prepared in many different ways, the Zulus use a recipe that differentiates them from the other South African groups, who eat the same type of food as they do. The same applies to the Sierra Leoneans who share many food ingredients with other nationalities from Africa. Sierra Leoneans as Johan pointed out, have their own way of preparing their meals, a way that differentiates them from other West Africans.

Issues relating to home are linked with people's memories and issues of belonging. 'Home' of course is a complex term as it can no longer be associated with a certain place or country due to globalisation and its advantages. Scholars such as Gupta and Ferguson (2002) argue that that understanding and defining the term 'home' is difficult as one has to consider issues relating to place, space, feelings and practices. This study looked at what makes the Sierra Leoneans long for 'home food'. Cuba and Hummon (1993), see place as an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity. Although there are of course complexities around conceptualising and writing about the notion of 'home' and the layered meanings it has accrued, in the context of this study, *home* and '*home food*' evoked palpable memories (for the participants) of spatial location that can be traced to the geographical place of home and Sierra Leone, and the families and memories there.

While some migrants were open about their first 'home food' experiences in South Africa, Apollo was initially very reluctant to participate in the focus group and individual interviews. After much probing he confessed that I was not the first person to interview him and that the last student who interviewed him questioned if he was a legal migrant. Despite his strong feelings against students and being interviewed when he heard Moses talking about bitter leaf he could not contain himself as 'home food' is a subject that proved to be important to him

and it reminded him of his home country. With a broad smile he rose up from his distant seat and joined us. He shared his experience by saying:

“The first time I ate 'home food' here in South Africa? [Smiles gently and shakes his head as he folds his hands] I was with Solomon [a friend who has returned to Sierra Leone] he told me about the Corner [Nigerian owned restaurant] and we went there, I think I had been here [South Africa] for two or three weeks at that time. We went there at 6 p.m. When we entered I saw a couple eating, they were sharing something that looked like *jollof* rice. They ate from the same plate and I started drooling ... it reminded me of me and my friends at home, how we use to share our meals. [Pauses for a few seconds then continues with a high-pitched voice] at that moment I told Solomon I wanted whatever they were eating. I acted like a child seeing candy in a shop nagging its father and Solomon kept saying 'shush' and I wasn't embarrassed at all. I was so excited that I kept asking the waitress when our order was coming. When our food finally came Solomon and I shared it, just like I use to back home with my family and friends”. (Apollo; Transcribed interview recording)

My interview with Apollo was unusual as I did not have to probe too much; as soon as he started sharing his experience, rather, my eyes moved from his hands that he clapped, made gestures and folded, to his pop eyes as he shared his experience. He kept emphasizing that 'home food' made him feel as though he was home. He felt it is because he is the youngest child and he is used to getting food prepared for him and he was served by his sisters in Sierra Leone. He also added that, at the Corner restaurant³ he was served by a Nigerian woman who was tall like his sister'. The waitress reminded Apollo of his sisters, and of the food they served. She emotionally 'transported' him to Sierra Leone. The waitress evoked memories and feelings of his family and communal eating in his homeland, feelings that he had been longing for since he was missing his family. This could be part of the reason he could not contain himself at the restaurant, as it reminded him of home. Being around people

³Name of a restaurant in Point Road, Durban.

who sat together, shared their meal from the same plate and bowl, and seeing and smelling 'home food' reminded him of home, it for that moment fulfilled his longing for home.

As the above narratives show, 'home food' is one of the artefacts used by these migrants to satisfy their longing for home. Through their memories and imaginations they are able to minimize their distance from home. Gupta and Ferguson (2002) argue that remembered places have served as symbolic anchors of community for dispersed people. They further state that immigrants use 'memory of place' to construct their new lived world imaginatively. In this case, places and memory play a major role in the manner that people perceive themselves. Through being socialized from an early age to eat certain foods and having eaten these specific 'home foods', in their home countries, migrants are able to relive their experiences and feel the presence of their families even though they are far apart. Paul illustrates this by saying:

“You know what they say about being what you eat? [Pointing to himself] I am a Sierra Leonean, I eat my food ... each time I eat it I am reminded of my childhood. How we drank ginger [beer] and ate cassava. Eating it [‘home food’] reminds me of all the good times we had, the parties, weddings and even funerals”.

3.5 Memories of learning to prepare (home) food

Food preparation is an important part of people's cultures and identity. Proper eating includes the kind of food used, the way of preparing it, the manner of serving it, and the way of eating it (Fox, 2005). Sierra Leoneans are patriarchal in nature, most of the informants still believe that cooking is a women's job. Not only do they prefer having women preparing meals, but they also prefer having Sierra Leoneans than any other nationality. Informants said that making ginger beer is the easiest thing they can do which reminds them of their childhood memories and home. While all informants had a similar recipe of how to make this beverage, Paul's was more interesting as he had been taught by his father to make this beverage. This was interesting as all other informants had been taught by their mothers and sisters. Below is Paul's story of how he learnt how to make ginger beer.

“Learning to make ginger beer was very difficult. Not because I kept getting it wrong, but father used to be a very serious person and he would tell you things just once. I had to learn to make ginger three times for me to master it. I know with my mother I

would have been taught just once and I would know how it is done. Well I learnt to make ginger by chance as my father wanted it and my mother and sisters were not home on that day. My father brought home a lot of ginger and asked me to make ginger beer and I had never made it before all I knew was that I needed sugar, water and ginger to make it as I had seen my mother and sisters making it. My father just said 'wash the ginger and beat it' so that's what I did. My father told me to add water and a bit of water and that's what I did. I poured him some and he had to spit it because it was too sweet. He did not tell me how much sugar to add, he just said 'add sugar' (Paul: Transcribed interview recording)

Paul told us that after trying for the third time his father approved of what he made. He feels that his father was not the best teacher, but this experience brought them closer. Even though his father is no longer alive, ginger beer reminds him of the moments he spent with him. He recalled that his father was “*a very busy and hardly spent time at home*”. He treasures the days they spent together. Paul can no longer clearly remember other times that they spent together and the ginger beer story is one of the few he still remembers.

Moses said that he was not taught how to make *jollof* rice, but he always saw his mother and sisters cooking it and he would help them in the kitchen. He told me that he has always loved cooking, but in Sierra Leone cooking and the kitchen are seen as a woman's duty so it wasn't easy for him to ask to cook or to be taught. Instead, he would offer to kill chickens and help peel potatoes. Things that he considers as, 'risky for women'. Moses says this as he feels that women can easily cut themselves while peeling and he knows of instances where his sisters were unable to kill chicken because “*they felt sorry for the chicken*”. This is how Moses prepares *jollof* rice which he claims he is good at preparing:

“Making *jollof* is easy and I enjoy it. What I do is I place a big pot on a stove and pour oil when it is hot I add chicken pieces. I always wish to have real chicken not the braai pack it doesn't cook nicely. My friend who used to live at in Nanda made it with real chicken which he had killed that morning ... mmm (shakes his head and looks up) that chicken was just like what he had back at home. But I use a braai pack, it is not the closest I can get to our home chicken,

but it is something. So after adding the chicken I wait until it is all nice and brown. Then, I put it in another pot and add a bit of oil on the same pot then add onion like how you Zulus make your stew”

“So you add onion, garlic and curry powder like we do when we make stew”? I asked.

He continued “yes all your onion, pepper and garlic I put it inside for it to cook. Then, I add rice, not your big rice, basmati. Mix it with the garlic and onions and put a bit of onions inside. Add the chicken and vegetables if you like. When it all looks good remove from stove”

3.6 Conclusion

Food is one of the artefacts that migrants use to evoke memories of home (the home space) re-territorialise their space (the host space). Through preparing and eating ‘home food’ and the process of re-territorialising, migrants are able to re-experience their memories and feel the warmth of their sending country and even family members. Since food and eating are an intimate act and people usually share it with their immediate family members, food brings comfort to those who are eating and sharing it. This chapter has shown that ‘home food’ plays an important role in transporting people, especially migrants, to their childhood memories. Informants have told us that foods such as ginger beer, rice and *egusi* soup are what evokes more tangible memories of their lives in their home country. This chapter has also shown that motherly love is associated with not only emotional fulfilment, but informants have said that foods such as *okra* evoke memories of the wonderful times migrants spent with their mothers in their home country. Hence, ‘home food’ through lived memories plays a significant role in assisting migrants to connect to their country of origin. Since eating can be considered as a ritualised routine that is often done with family, friends and Association members, having access to ‘home food’ also contributes in strengthening migrant social networks as discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4:

FOOD NETWORKS FOR SIERRA LEONEANS IN DURBAN

4.1 Introduction

Over the years, migrant networks have acted as a gateway for new migrants and have assisted them through facilitating their movement from one area to another. It can be assumed that network members in many instances have a bond that is strengthened by a common past. Network members in most cases, as suggested by Poros (2001) and Vertevoc (2002), have meetings where they share their experiences and advise each other on various issues. Some networks are informal and some are formal, the latter being referred to as associations and non-governmental organisations such as the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA). Food can be seen as a form of capital as with it people are able to invest in, establish and maintain relationships. This chapter investigates some of the food networks that Sierra Leoneans in Durban are part of, and looks specifically at how 'home food' is used as an agent to meet new friends and access resources. It looks beyond the obvious nutritional value of 'home food' and focuses on the relationships that have been formed through accessing 'home food'. While the previous chapter looked at memory and the relationships between people and spaces back home, this chapter looks at networks and the relationships between people and spaces here, in the host society. This study does not differentiate formal networks such as associations, from those that are informal. Rather, it sees groups of people (comprising the same individuals) who meet regularly and frequently, in other words, recurrently for any reason, acting also as a 'network'.

4.2 How Sierra Leonean migrant networks were formed

Migrant networks are defined as recurrent sets of interpersonal ties that bind migrants and non-migrants together within a web of reciprocal obligations that can be drawn upon to facilitate entry, adjustment, and employment at points of destination (Massey, 1987; Boyd, 1989; Portes, 1995). This relationship is best seen when one investigates the role of migrant networks, which may consist of large groups across countries, and continents or alternatively may be personal and small in size.

Most Sierra Leoneans migrate alone, as data collected during this study reveal, and from the group interviewed, most were the first in their families to migrate. Since they migrated to a foreign place with no kin networks, accessing basic needs proved to be a challenge for some. To meet some of their needs they had to seek assistance not only from the South African migration offices, but also from fellow migrants. Meeting such migrants was problematic in the first instance however, meeting someone at a restaurant or any other social area made the process less problematic. Consider the following narrative of Ben who arrived in South Africa having no family or friends:

“I met my brother (Moses) in a restaurant in Point Road. I had gone to buy cassava and rice. The lady who was serving me looked at my order heard my accent and asked where I was from. She was very happy to hear that I am from Sierra Leone, West Africa. She showed me another brother from Sierra Leone who lived in South beach. Since then we have become friends and he helped me to sort my migration papers. Even though I don't live with him, he calls me whenever he cooks our food and even buys double whenever he finds ‘home food’ ingredients.” (Ben: Transcription of recorded interview.)

Moses is Ben's fictive brother. Hoff *et al.* (2010) argue that fictive kin are people that migrants consider as important in their lives. Due to their strong relationships, they develop trust and care for each other. Most migrants depend on these people for assistance. Moses is the first Sierra Leonean Ben met in the receiving country. Their meeting was by coincidence since he had gone to a restaurant⁴ to enjoy his ‘home food’ And because eating is often a group event, food becomes a focus of symbolic activity about sociality and our place in our society. From the above excerpt we can deduce that Moses and Ben have established a good relationship as Ben refers to him as his brother and not just a fellow migrant. In this case, ‘home food’ served as capital which has attracted social benefits for Ben. Ben and Moses' relationship has opened many opportunities for Ben as he claims he has since met many people from Sierra Leone and is now part of the Sierra Leonean association.

⁴ This restaurant is situated in Point Road Durban and is owned by a Nigerian migrant. It has for the past five years served West African food and its chefs are from Kenya and Nigeria. It is decorated with over 20 flags of countries within the African continent. On average they serve 40 customers per day the majority being male foreigners.

The experience of Moses and Ben is similar to that of Mary, who together with her family moved to South Africa two years ago. When they arrived in South Africa, they did not know anyone until Mary's husband Samson was offered contact details of a fellow Sierra Leonean. Mary told me that she experienced difficulty when she first tried to make friends and that for her even starting a conversation⁵ with other migrants was not easy. She also made the point that she found it more difficult relating to South Africans, as she arrived after the tragic xenophobic attacks⁶. She told us that the first time her family met a fellow Sierra Leonean they were excited as they were invited for dinner at Max's home.

“I remember us getting inside Max's house while looking at the beautiful home he had I smelt home, something I had missed since we had lived in England for a number of years. That aroma made me feel welcome and the warmth of home [Sierra Leone] and since then they (Max and his family) have been a great part of our lives. We take turns in hosting, in fact it is not even hosting anymore since it is something we do on regular bases. He is like my brother now; he is always there to help us when we need him at home.”
(Mary: Transcription of recorded interview)

Mary and her family were introduced to the Sierra Leonean Association and have ever since been part of it. She claimed that she has met a number of Sierra Leoneans through 'hosting Sunday dinner' and in turn being invited to other migrants' homes.

While the two experiences are different in terms of how these migrants met each other, one can clearly see that 'home food' played a major role. Hence, eating 'home food' can be considered as one of the ways by which one is 'identified', as the case of Ben and Moses exemplifies. This correlates positively with Counihan and Van Esteriks' (1997) argument when they assert that food communicates 'who you are'. Ben was not identified as being from West Africa through the clothes he wore, but by the food he ordered and the language, he

⁵ Mary confided that the main reason she found it difficult to communicate with other migrants was that she did not wish to be identified as a *Kwerekwere* as she feared being attached and having people taking advantage of her. She said that it was not easy to ask for directions as she did not trust anyone and that whenever she was lost she would go into a store and ask the shop assistant for directions.

⁶ Anti-immigrant violence in South Africa that killed a number of people and wounded hundreds of immigrants in the year 2008.

spoke. Pahl (2000) suggests that people seek social benefits when they open up to new friends. Even though Mary did not openly express that she was looking for certain benefits in her family's' friendship with Max, the above narrative indicates that she had been longing for home, that she needed to be with people of her kind, to eat 'home food' and to feel the 'warmth of home'.

While the nodal actors in networks may have direct interaction with each other, at times due to the size of networks, this familiarity and relationship may not always be there and they would be connected to each other through bridges which may act as links between actors. Depending on what the nodal actors or the people in the networks need, their relationships with other nodal actors may not always be strong, as each relationship is created through certain needs, which have to be met. Hence, the ties may not all be strong, rather some may be weak as the migrants will hardly communicate except when a particular need arises. However, as Bagchi (2001) has suggested, at times weak ties play a more important role than strong ties. Arguably, if a hub is heavily connected to a group of other nodes and actors, and these nodes and actors could supply or cater for their needs, they would not need to look at the wider circle of people or other migrants for assistance, rather they would take care of each other's needs. In this case, Mary can be considered as a hub as she is densely connected to other nodes (from the Association and other migrants outside the Association).

These narratives are true for most if not all migrants, as food has a nourishing role. In most cases it nourishes more than the human body alone, sustaining all aspects of human life as these migrants' experiences have proven. Friendships and Association meetings are the main route to having access to basic needs and having access to 'home food'.

4.3 The Sierra Leone Migrant Association as a network

Migrants from the same countries or ethnic groups may form voluntary associations, which become their core fictive families. Such associations are "organisations that allow migrants from the same village, city or region to maintain ties with each other and materially or emotionally support each other in the host country or those left in their countries of origin" (Massey *et al.*, 1993:445). Lopez *et al.* (2001) cited in Bosiakoh (n.d.) assert that members join associations to ensure adjustment, integration and development. Migrant associations are, therefore, the 'formal' manifestations of migrant social networks. Hence, the role of a network and an association is not so different. The association is said to be 'formal' as there are formal proceedings that migrants have to follow and adhere to. For migrants, being a

member of an association and financially contributing towards the needs of the association serves as an investment as migrants stand to gain friendships, kin relations and access to 'home food'.

As with many other migrant nationalities, Sierra Leoneans have an association called the Sierra Leone Association. Its members meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues and challenges that migrants have. Mr Johan, who is well known as Mr Chairman, directs all the meetings and has a secretary and treasury, and heads this Association. During the meetings, in which I participated and observed, I found that most members were present except when there were outings and some of the members were unable to attend. During their meetings Krio and English are spoken. According to Mary, "*this is done so to accommodate all our members as some of our members are not good with English*".

Johan said that the Sierra Leone Association was formed from the core group of Sierra Leoneans living in Durban⁷. He claims that there are not many Sierra Leoneans in Durban and that they are always willing to accept more people. He asserts that most members joined the Association through referrals, as the Association members are continuously reminded to "*look out for new migrants and encourage them to attend the Association meeting*". Johan pointed out that being a member of the Association does not limit people from joining other groups as the Association is not able to attend to all the needs of migrants. He added that where necessary they seek assistance from migrants of other nationalities.

As the stories shared in the previous paragraphs have revealed, 'home food' is an important part of Sierra Leoneans and many other informants attending the meetings also claimed the same. Being a member of the Association has a number of benefits; informants expressed the most prominent advantage as being that of having access to 'home food' and to 'a family' which was the comment contributed by Billy. The story of Paul who lives with his brother and his brothers' family illustrates this. Paul said that he enjoys being part of the Association and always looks forward to the Associations' monthly meetings. He was open about stating that his favourite part of the meetings is when they have lunch. This lunch, he said, always consists of food from Sierra Leone. He also reminded us that it is the 'sisters' (females who

⁷ The Durban Sierra Leone Association has 25 members; Johan believes that there may be two or three other Sierra Leoneans living in South Africa who are not part of the Association. He told us that the exact number of Sierra Leoneans cannot be known as some of the migrants 'have no papers and they are not open about where they are from'.

are part of the Association) who prepare the food so well that he always goes for more food or 'seconds'. Edward also expressed the same sentiments:

“The meetings are important but at times they get boring as we sit and listen to Mr Chairman as he tells us everything that was discussed in the previous meeting. I sometimes wish I can go late, if it starts at 1 pm get there at half past two just so I can miss the boring information about the Association. All the things that are discussed are important, but I mostly go there for food. Any other time I buy the food at a restaurant owned by a friend of a friend. They cook bitter leave [leaf] and *fufu* but it is not like sister's and during the meeting I get to eat a lot because there is no limit so long as there is still food I can have more and more.”

“When we are here it is like we are home, we eat our 'home food' and speak our language at times we even sing and dance just like we do at home no one calls us *makwerekwere*⁸. I do not enjoy these meetings, but I love my brothers and sisters so I have to be here and of course (I love the 'home food'. It is the only time I get to eat my food.” (Toni: Transcription of recorded interview)

For some of these migrants, the association is their main access to 'home food'; as a result they always try to attend all meetings for the sake of having access to unlimited 'home food'. During these meetings they appear to be a family and they have a collective identity, that of being migrants, and since they have a similar history of having lived through a war and experience its aftermath they are able to enjoy being Sierra Leoneans. It is this history that continues to draw them together even in the receiving country. As a network, they share a bond that has led them to refer to each other as brothers and sisters. These migrants' cases and experiences of being in South Africa made me view the Association as the migrants' haven as they could freely be who they are during the meetings.

“The meetings are the only way for me to eat 'home food'. I work until late and I am not a good cook. I have a South African woman, she cannot cook our food [Sierra Leone], and she does

⁸Makwerekwere is a derogatory term used by South Africans to describe African immigrants.

not really like it. So I always look forward to our meetings if I had it my way we would have meetings every week just so I can have some cassava and *jollof* rice.” (Wilson: Transcription of recorded interview).

Wilson is not the only Association member who wishes meetings could be weekly for the sake of having ‘home food’, Max also shared the same sentiments before he met Mary and her family. He claims that he now has ‘home food’ on a weekly basis since he lives close to Mary and her family. Unlike Wilson and Johan who are only part of the Association network Max is also part of a smaller network, one that consists of Mary’s family and a ‘few other friends’. Max, like Mary is closely connected to other nodes that have access to ‘home food’. For Mary’s family and Max being part of the Association is important, as they get to share information with the members, who in some cases only attend to access ‘home food’. From this we can deduce that ‘home food’ nourishes these migrants’ lives in many different ways.

“I always look forward to our meetings I think they are very important especially because we talk about important things and we help⁹ each other. However, for me the food is the most important part. I remember one meeting we had and another (Lince) said we shouldn’t waste money on so much home food since it is expensive and we should rather save the money in case someone gets sick. I actually laughed because he did not know what he was talking about! How dare he say we should not have a lot of home food? He clearly did not know it is the only way I get to eat this food.” (Leon: Transcription of recorded interview)

I was fortunate to have witnessed first-hand the argument Leon recalled during the interview, as I was present at that particular meeting. The arguments started in the last hour of the meeting when all members were offered an opportunity to share their thoughts and suggestions on how meetings should be conducted. Even though Mary and her husband thought he had a valid point, they confided (during the interview) that they did not comment during the meeting because they knew how important ‘home food’ was to the rest of the Association members and how the few members who only accessed ‘home food’ through the

⁹ From the interviews I found that most of the Association members lived in the same block of flats and they worked for the same company. Moses assisted Ben into being employed as a security guard while Leon was assisted by Johan when he looked for accommodation.

Association felt regarding this particular subject. Even Leon admitted that Lince had made a valid suggestion; however, he (Leon) felt that Lince was being ‘selfish’ since he had access to ‘home food’ at least three times a month aside from the Association’s meetings¹⁰. Even though most Association members thought the argument was “*uncalled for and unnecessary*” as reported by Edward, to me it highlighted essential issues regarding the importance of having access to ‘home food’. It was through this conversation that I began to understand how difficult it was for some of the Sierra Leoneans to have access to ‘home food’, how desperate they were to fulfil their longing for home and to be mentally transported back to Sierra Leone.

The above is an important narrative as it revealed that these migrants long for ‘home food’ and that the Association has become an important part of their lives. It proved that even though these migrants are far from home, they carry it in their hearts and everyday lives and that memories of home are relived through sharing ‘home food’. For these migrants ‘home food’ is important for the preservation their home identity and their heritage. As suggested by Caplan (1996), food symbolises ethnicity. He argues that national, regional, linguistic and religious distinctions are often marked in culinary fashion. ‘Home food’ serves as an important ‘agent’ for preserving the ‘Sierra Leonean-ness’ as through it outsiders can identify these migrants as being different from other nationalities. This also serves as an important example of networks having benefits. Needless to say the Association is not the only network by which some of the Association members access ‘home food’. Some of the Association members are connected to other friends (nodal actors) who assist them with ‘home food’ ingredients.

4.4 Networking: friends with (food) benefits

Friendships are about sharing and exchanging memories and ideas, and in many instances articulating a common identity. For some migrants, friends are the closest people that they have, and as a result most migrants refer to their friends as family. Fictive families are created as more and more migrants meet to share their resources, which in some cases may be scarce. Pahl (2000) states that friends, usually consist of people with similar interests and this may include social activities and social groups. This suggests that, there is a form of identity that binds people and encourages them to be friends. In the case of the Sierra Leoneans it is their

constructed ethnicity, and a sense of culture and their common past. As a form of capital, food links people who have a shared identity.

In the case of migrants, friendships are as important as are family, as seen with the relationship between Mary's family and Max also with Ben and Moses. While they are in host countries friends are the closest they can get to having (a biological) family. Bellah *et al.* (1996: 115) suggest that the traditional idea of friendship has three components; these components are "friends must enjoy each other's company, they must be useful to one another, and they must share a common commitment to the good". Hence friendships are about sharing, whether it is company or resources. The following excerpt exemplifies this suggestion by Bellah *et al.* (1996: 115):

"My friends from Uni (University) have been great. They share their food with me. It is so nice to have people like them. I always think of them when I am preparing my meals during the week. Sometimes I bring *jollof rice* and bitter leaf for us to share. You should see the way we all share one small dish. They are like my extended family. Sarah one of my friends is very connected and at times, she brings me raw bitter leaf and cassava leaves. I remember the first time she gave me plantain, which she had gotten from a friend of hers. Other students did not understand what was so special about the 'giant banana' as they called it but I just could not wait to share it with my family. I remember I called my husband and he was so excited. When I went home we all shared that plantain ... it was like we were in Sierra Leone I could feel home." (Mary: Transcribed interview recording.)

Mary is part of three distinct networks, the first being with Max (I will refer to this network as 'network M') and his friends. The second, being the Association (I will refer to this network as 'network A') which she was introduced by Max to and lastly that from the university (I will refer to this network as 'network U'). Only the Association is formal as explained earlier. She claimed that her networks are equally important to her, and that she benefits from all of them. She claims she shares food from network U with her family and with network M. The above excerpt contains an example of how she used 'resources' from

her network with her family. She shared that depending on how much bitter leaf and potato leaves she managed to buy at the market, she at times shares it with network N and U.

“I do have friends who do not help me with anything. Well I consider them as just friends and not sisters and brothers. This culture of not helping each other is foreign to me and it is my first time ever experiencing it, it must be a South African thing. My true friends share food with me, in fact, I have never shared food with you then I don't consider you as a sister or brother. In friendships we must share what we have.” (Mary: Transcription of recorded interview)

As with any other relationships, friendships involve a certain level of ‘give and take’. For this reason, Pahl (2000) argues that friends can sometimes be regarded as an oppressive burden when they appear to be greedily demanding too much of us. As the English saying goes, ‘sharing is caring’. Because of the needs that migrants have, they tend to depend on fictive kin for assistance. They tend to benefit from their friends for ‘home food’. There is no guarantee that a particular network will always have access to ‘home food’, but being part of a network that has members, living in different cities becomes advantageous as one is able to access certain foods that may not be available in their own cities or in their circle of friends. Lince like Mary and Max was open to share with me about his affiliations with other networks and having his needs satisfied through one or more of his networks:

“It is important to talk to people and be friend as many people as possible, that way you get connected to many people and resources. You always find what you are looking for if you are part of different friend groups (networks) it makes your life easier. I even have friends from Pietermaritzburg and they are also from home (Sierra Leone) whenever they come to Durban they know they have to bring me some home food and when they leave I give them something too...I eat my food at least once a week.” (Lince: Transcription of recorded interview)

The above case is similar to that of Mary, who enjoys her ‘home food’ almost daily due to being closely connected with other people and other networks. Lince's connection with other migrants allows him the benefit of having more opportunity to eat ‘home food’ than other

association members. This may be his main motivation for suggesting that there should be less 'home food' prepared for Association meeting. When he was questioned about this, he clearly said,

“As an Association we need to have a lot of money just in case someone dies and we have to transport that persons' body home, we know that some of us don't have benefits where we work so as a family we should reserve money for such emergencies¹¹.”

Sierra Leoneans value friendships, as the majority of the people interviewed indicated that while they have close relationships with the Association members, they do have other friends. While such friends are from all over the world, the majority are from West Africa. However, while they befriended South Africans, they said that they feel more comfortable with people outside South Africa and preferable from Sierra Leone and West Africa. This is due to having commonalities with migrants from other countries, that of being in a foreign country and eating the same or similar food even though other nationalities may prefer cooking it differently. Eric communicated this when he said:

“I have many friends; they are from all over the world. I like spending time with them. When I visit them we eat and have fun. When I first came here (South Africa) I had no friends. It wasn't easy to make friends especially to South Africans. But now we get along well. But I still prefer my people (Sierra Leoneans) over all other nations. I have friends from other countries they are also nice we talk and have fun but when I am with my brothers [smiles and nods his head] it is like I'm home, where I belong. We eat our food like potato leaves, drink pepper soup and we speak Krio. You know, we have fun like we use to at home. I have many friends from West Africa, some came here during the world cup, and it was nice to be with my other brothers. I still have friends in Kenya, Cameroon and Nigeria, it wasn't easy to get used to them but at least we eat the same food so they tell me whenever one of their

¹¹He expressed that he was not comfortable with sharing more on this particular issue as he felt that his brothers and sisters did not understand the point he was making.

friends i s s elling fo od fro m h ome.” (E ric: Transcription of recorded interview)

Eric, l ike m any ot her i nformants m entioned t wo i mportant e lements, w hich t hey found important for their home identity. These were ‘home food’ and Krio, the language spoken by the majority of Sierra Leoneans. To Eric having ‘home food’ is always a highlight of any meeting or friendly visit he may partake in. Eric claims that he can cook most of his home dishes a nd hi s favourite i s pe pper s oup. H e c laims t o be o n e o f t he best c ooks i n t he Association. Even at his workplace, his colleagues, who happen to be migrants, always ask him if he has any ‘home food’. His cooking skills have made him popular in their workplace as they (male colleagues) cannot cook ‘home food’ well. He is convinced that if he did not know how to make *fugue* and bitter leaf, he would not be as close to some of the people as he currently is as he, as he was never close to any of his colleagues before they found out about his c ooking s kills. T his i llustration of bonds formed t hrough ‘ home food’ c orrelates w ith Lupton’s (1996, 37) a rgument w hen he s tates t hat, “the s haring of food i s a v i tal part of kinship and friendship networks in all societies”.

Needs vary from day to day, and one can argue that assistance from people in other nodes and hubs are important. Jackson and Rogers (2007:892) assert that “some nodes meet each other explicitly through common neighbours”. Hence, nodes may not be of people from the same countries all the time. Who one knows and is connected with depends on the arising needs that have to be satisfied. An example of this would when Mary was given a plantain by her friend from the university, which she shared with her whole family.

4.5 Conclusion

Migrant ne tworks pl ay a cr ucial role n ot o nly i n f acilitating mig ration, b ut i n a ssisting migrants t o c ope w ith the pr essures o f b e i ng i n hos t c ountries. T hey a re v i tal f or t he establishment a nd m aintenance of m igrant a ssociations. A s e vidence from pa rticipants ha s shown, it is through networks that new migrants get to know about associations. Whilst the core agenda of associations is to assist migrants to settle and to adapt in host countries, this study ha s shown that t he Association w ould not ha ve such a m ajor impact i n the lives of Sierra Leoneans i f ‘home food’ w as not part of the agenda. A s t o some participants, these associations a re t heir m ain s ource of ‘home food’ a s t hey ha ve i t i n abundance, w hich i s different from when the food is eaten in the Nigerian restaurants. This chapter has also shown

that relationships are cemented and forged through 'home food', as the example of the relationship between Mary and Max as well as Ben and Moses have illustrated. Hence, 'home food' is an agent for maintaining migrant networks and for establishing and maintaining friendships. 'Home food' can also be said to play a role in maintaining identity for migrants as discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FOOD AND MAINTAINING IDENTITY FOR SIERRA LEONEANS

5.1 Introduction

Identity can be defined as “people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 2). According to Jenkins (1996:4), identity refers to “the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities”. It is through this collective identity that people can be categorized and labeled as belonging to a group and having social identity. Beaux (2001) argues that social identities assume some commonality with others; as a result, our social identities are grounded in our perceptions of social group membership. Wendt (1994) argues that social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to it while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object.

Food can be considered a vital and dynamic part of people's culture and identity, as people often identify and associate themselves with the food they eat. Food and eating are part of people's socialization; food plays an important role in people's lives, one that is more than being a source of nutrients, but it is part of people's cultures and identities. This chapter explores the importance of food in maintaining identity for Sierra Leoneans. It investigates the importance of 'home food' as an identity marker. It also explores culture shock in relation to food and food habits.

5.2 ‘Home Food’ as an identity marker (and possible) boundary marker

Food can be seen as a powerful identity maker. During interviews informants said that 'home food' is part of who they are and this suggests that it also marks who they are not, that is, the local South Africans.). The social identification theory eliminates individualism as identity is derived through group membership. This is due to the fact that social identity is shared with others and it provides a basis for shared social action. Social identification also provides a channel through which people are seen as a group that shares the same characteristics. Social identification theory encompasses all necessary groups that a person may be part of. This may involve ethnicity, religion, political affiliations and relationships. In the case of these

migrants, it illustrates the relationship between the different food networks and the Sierra Leonean Association. Fox (2005:2) argues that,

There are a sm any kinds of food identification as there are the same in fashion, speech, music, manners and the like. The obvious ones are ethnic, religious and class identifications. Ethnic food preferences only become identity markers in the presence of gustatory foreigners, such as when one goes abroad, or when the foreigners visit the home shores.

Hall and du Gay (1996:2) argue that (language) identity is "constructed on the 'back' of the recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group". Schopflin (2001:1), states that, "identities are anchored around a set of moral propositions that regulate values and behaviour". This suggests that, people's identities are 'guarded' by certain values, which need to be upheld at all times (see Qingxue, 2003). Such values are considered important for social cohesion as it forms part of what outsiders use to categorize people who are different from themselves. Mintz and Du Bois (2002, 109), argue that, "food serves both to solidify group membership and sets groups apart". This argument shows food can also be used to separate people, as much as it can be used to unite and solidify group membership.

Societies strive for social cohesion through their set norms. To maintain this, there are boundaries which are used to keep a certain identity distinct. Food habits differ from society to society, certain foods act as walls that segregate people. Schopflin (2001) argues that identity includes and excludes. This process of including certain people and having expectations suggests that each collective or society attempts to have 'exclusive' members. Such members are recognized by the manner in which they conduct themselves, which is acceptable to their societies. Consider the following narratives which reveal deep issues of experience solidarity and social cohesion.

"When we are here [Association meetings] it is like we are at home, we eat our 'home food' and speak our language at times we even sing and dance just like we do at home no one calls us *makwerekwere*. This is our home for the four, five hours we spend together". (Toni; Transcribed interview tape)

“When we are together we forget that we are in a foreign country because it is always just us [Sierra Leoneans] as you can see. Oh and there's you. But before you came we only spoke Krio and we ate our food. Not that your presence has changed anything, but we are more considerate now and we try to speak English so you can hear us”. (David: Transcribed interview recording)

“I never used to be able to ask my Zulu friends to leave because I'm a kind person, but one day I offered my friends [two South Africans and one Sierra Leonean *jollof* rice and bitter leaf ... Haaa!!... Both my Zulu friends left before the soccer match that we were watching was over. I was offended at first, but not [if] it helps chase people away because I know they don't like it”. (Jack: Transcribed interview recording)

“South Africans don't like our food, I don't know why, but even if they try to eat it they never eat more than two spoons. But I understand they are not from home. They have their own food that they like. But it is nice to know that there's something that we can do alone [as Sierra Leoneans]. Most of our South African friends don't like our food we always try to find a person from home to eat it. In fact, whenever we [Sierra Leoneans] want to be alone at work, we eat ‘home food’ [smiles] we bring ‘home food’ for lunch and we [Sierra Leoneans] sit together and eat”. (Ben: Transcribed interview recording,)

Scholars such as Fieldhouse (1995), Lupton (1996) and Warde (1997) writing over a decade ago, have argued that food consumption habits are not simply tied to biological needs, but serve to mark boundaries between social classes, geographical regions, nations and cultures. This is relevant in the case of Sierra Leoneans, when they learned that some of their South African friends were not fond of their ‘home food’, they used it to distance themselves from their friends. For Ben and Jack, eating such food has created a wall between them and some of their non-Sierra Leonean friends, especially when it comes to food eating and sharing. This is applicable to the Sierra Leonean community, who, upon arriving in South Africa realized that their food habits were very different from those of South Africans and even though they did attempt to consume host country food they were shocked by the type of foods that South

Africans consider a delicacy. From the above narratives one can deduce that food can be used as a boundary that separates groups of people and in this case it appears on some levels, separates South Africans from Sierra Leoneans. These narratives also speak to these migrants' unwillingness to compromise their identity; rather, they chose to maintain their identity by continuing to prepare and eat their 'home food' despite the negative reactions they received from their local friends.

While there is evidence of using 'home food' as a boundary that separates these migrants from the rest of the people living in Durban, my observations revealed that the boundary was not impermeable, rather it was porous. During fieldwork I gathered that participants of this study do have friends outside the Association, who are not from Sierra Leone. Even though some of these migrants were open about having South African friends, they also confessed that they felt closer to people from other African countries, especially those from West Africa. This was also shared when informants were asked who they preferred eating and sharing their 'home food' with. Responses to this question ranged from "*no I only prefer eating with people from Sierra Leone*" (Goodman), "*I don't mind eating with other migrants, but I just can't eat with South Africans especially those who do not like our food*" (Lovemore). Billy said that he has tried to eat with his South African friends, but because the food is different from what his friends are used to eating, they had negative comments about the food. He also stated that he prefers eating with fellow West African friends, since they are familiar with some of the food. Narratives from my interview with Benson also illustrate this:

"I have many friends ... since I came here [South Africa] I have met so many different people. Some I have known for more than three years. I also have a lot of brothers that I met here. They are very supportive and I always try to spend time with them because I gain a lot from spending time with them, they are all from West Africa. The other day we spent hours just talking about how we, West African men are so different from South African men ... of course[course] you know about these things you are still young and you are a woman"

"How do you differentiate your 'friends' from your 'brothers'?" I asked.

He replied, 'it is very easy, people from home are like family, so they are my brothers and sisters and whoever is not from home is just a friend'

"Does that mean all your brothers are from Sierra Leone?" I asked.

He replied, "all *makwerekweres* are my brothers, especially those from West Africa. I prefer being close to them than to South Africans, with them we are just the same, all *makwerekweres*."

Contrary to these 'negative' food related relationships, some Sierra Leonean men are married to South African women. However, Moses told us that his wife does not enjoy eating his 'home food'. He also claimed that for him this is not a problem as he is able to prepare his 'home food' and enjoy it on his own. His responses suggested that, while he (Moses) preferred to eat with other migrants rather than with South Africans, he was able to maintain a good relationship with his South African wife even though she did not eat the food with him. Moses' wife's preference for South African food could be one of the reasons she was never present in any of the Association meetings that I observed in; all the meetings had 'home food' as lunch. She did, however, attend the picnic where lunch was a mixture of South African food and Sierra Leonean food. In fact, most of the South African and none of the Sierra Leonean partners attended this event.

5.3 Collective identity

Belonging to a particular society shapes people's understanding of the world around them, and in a sense shapes their understanding of circumstances. This is the case for Sierra Leoneans who because of their distance and longing for home, collectively meet monthly to share their experiences and to share their 'home food'. Their position as migrants gives them a collective identity which has shaped their worldview and encouraged them to use the limited resources they have in South Africa to re-enact their home lifestyle and maintain their home identity. Through collective awareness and understanding of the host country, and some of its cultural expectations these migrants are able to negotiate their identity and bring the 'spirit of home' to their current spaces. Despite being a minority in South Africa and more especially in Durban, the Sierra Leone community, through eating and sharing their 'home food', speaking their native language during the Association meeting, engaging in home related routines, they are able to relive their memories of home and to maintain their home identity. The above are but a few of the elements that characterise the Sierra Leonean nation, their

national pride and identity. Bloom (1990) asserts that national or collective identity describes that condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with national symbols and have internalized the symbols of the nation. This process of internalizing is a result of socialization. Jenkins (1996: 21) states that “individual identity formation has its roots in our earliest processes of socialization.” Jenkins (1996: 89) further states that, “collective identities must always be understood as generated simultaneously by group identification and social categorization”.

Schopflin (2001) states that, collective identity provides a sense of security for its members. This is done by making the world meaningful and a socially rewarding place. Jenkins (1996:80) argues that “collective identities emphasize how people are similar to each other, what they are believed to have in common”. For Sierra Leoneans, this is made possible through their participation in the voluntary Association which serves as a kind of home (offering ‘home food’) and haven while in foreign land. This study argues that the Association acts as a shield which ‘protects’ these migrants from completely adapting to the South African way of doing things. It is during these meetings that these migrants are encouraged and given the platform to ‘be who they are’; connect with the home identity, which in turn assists them to maintain their national and collective identity. This, I argue as Sierra Leoneans were so successful in re-territorialising their space that I felt like the migrant during meetings. During the meetings I was observer in, I felt like I was a foreigner. I felt as though I was not in Durban, my home city where I have lived all my life. Suddenly my identity ‘changed’, I was no longer a local, rather, I was an outsider who had visited a Sierra Leonean family, which consisted of people who spoke Krio fluently and made jokes that I could not identify with. They ate food that I had never seen or heard of before. The whole environment changed as I entered Moses’ flat where the meeting was held. This could explain perhaps why some informants regarded the Association as 'home'.

5.4 Using (home) food to maintain home identity

From an early age, people are taught to conduct themselves in a particular manner, which is deemed acceptable by the particular societies that they live in. Like culture, which is learned and passed from generation to generation, food habits are acquired from childhood. Authors such as Fieldhouse (1995) and Warde (1997) have stated that once food habits are acquired and established, they are likely to be long-lasting and resistant to change. This process of learning to eat certain food forms part of people's socialization. Fieldhouse (1995) describes

socialization as the process by which culturally valued norms of behaviour are passed from generation to generation. Fieldhouse (1995) further argues that because socialization is a lifelong process, natural functions such as eating become socialized as the growing child is conditioned by customs and traditions.

Food plays a key role in human socialization, in developing an awareness of body and self, language acquisition, and personality development (Koc and Welsh: 2002). During socialization individuals, more especially children internalize their culture's social controls, along with values and norms about right and wrong. This continues through adulthood and their articulation of who they are as adults; in other words, their articulation of aspects of their identity. It is through the process of socialization that people's identities are shaped and they begin to identify themselves through lenses of their societies.

Deaux (2006) defines culture as the shared patterns of behaviours and interactions, cognitive constructs, and effective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. It is such behaviour that people adopt as they lead lives that are recognizable and acceptable by their cultures, their behaviours are guided by their community's norms and expectations. In some cases, as with Sierra Leoneans, when people migrate they wish to continue to live a lifestyle similar to that, which they lived in their home countries. Having grown up in Sierra Leone and lived there for many years, participants of this study were confronted by an unfavourable situation, one that forced them to leave their familiar environments, and move to the unfamiliar. This resulted in these migrants re-establishing themselves in the receiving country and adapting to their new environment. Even though this was to a large extent possible (migrants had found employment and had stable living arrangements and some had even found partners) maintain their home identity was challenged. For the majority of the migrants, 'home food' was and still is the main tool with which they have been able to maintain their identity (as shown in chapter four).

The first few days in foreign land are the "loneliest, darkest, worst" (comment offered by Edward and Jack) days for many migrants as some informants have stated. During these days, migrants may not have made friends or found fellow migrants from their home countries. In cases such as this, migrants look for artefacts that can help them connect and remind them of home. These artefacts play an important role in helping migrants to maintain their identity as they form part of 'who they are'. Ben is one of the informants who echoed this; he found Moses a week after arriving in Durban. Ben told us that on the second day of his arrival he

visited a Nigerian restaurant, which he recognized as being owned by a West African by the table clothes that were used on tables.

“...at that restaurant they used real fabric as their tablecloths, not the cheap kind that you have here, pity it is closed I can't take you there so you can see it. I trusted their food because of the tablecloth ... it sounds silly I know, but I had been missing home so much that I needed something that was going to help me remember what home looked and felt like. A day in South Africa felt like a month since I did not know anyone. When I saw that place [restaurant] and I touched the tablecloth, it was like I was at home, like I was in the sitting room at home or something. When they served me cassava it was like I was in heaven. I still don't know why it felt like that because I had eaten cassava all my life, but I had never felt like that ... I just felt at peace like I was myself, again”. (Ben: Transcribed from recorded interview)

“I left everyone at home and I came here alone. It was hard at first. Being alone, not knowing anyone. I needed something that would connect me with home. I remember seeing a young boy selling home-made ginger beer. I wasn't thirsty, but bought it because it reminded me of home; it reminded me of my last meal at home where brother and I drank two litres of ginger beer in 30 minutes”. (Johan: Transcribed interview recording)

Ben told me that on that day he ordered *cassava* and rice even though it did not taste like what he would usually have at home, he was happy to see something that he was familiar with, the food he ate and the material that was used as tablecloth. Ben and Johan are not the only migrants who found 'comfort' in 'home food', there were Moses and Apollo as well. Moses said that a couple of days after he arrived in South Africa he came across a woman who was selling bitter leaf on the streets. He bought a packet and made it the same day in his flat that he was sharing.

“I remember a few days after arriving here, [South Africa] I decided to walk around and see some of the places around here and I walked past Grey Street. I didn't see anything familiar;

everything about South Africa was different from home. I started seeing people selling all sorts of things that ranged from leafy vegetables to bags and sweets. I heard one woman who kept shouting, 'cassava, bitter, cassava, bitter, cassava, bitter' I went to her asked if it was cassava leaves and she nodded her head. And, without hesitation I bought bitter leaf because it was cheaper, I can't remember how much it was, but I could only afford one pack. I could not wait to prepare it". (Moses; Transcribed interview recording)

Visiting restaurants and seeing 'home food' ingredients being sold on the streets was in a sense comforting for these migrants. For the first time in South Africa they had something that they could identify with that evoked wonderful memories and which served as an important tool in maintaining who they are, being Sierra Leoneans.

Maintaining a particular identity in a foreign land is not without difficulty as often there may not be many people from the same country living in the host country. Identity is linked to socialization; it is also linked to family relationships and to areas of residence. This often influences how people identify themselves and how they interpret situations. To maintain their identity, people often need to use elements that are associated with a certain group of people. Food, clothing, language and music are often seen as the main transmitters of cultures (Ratanakul, 1999) and are the main elements that one is exposed to from an early age; hence, they are important for individuals and collectives to maintain their identities. They attempt to maintain these cultural transmitters as they are a vital part of who they are, hence, their identity. This is seen when some Sierra Leoneans prefer to wear their cultural clothes, speak their home language and eat their 'home food' while in South Africa. Billy said that he does this so as to maintain his Sierra Leonean identity and Max said "even though I'm in South Africa I still do things like I was, home because it is how I was raised". From Billy and Max's interviews, one can deduce that there is a strong need to maintain identity (for the Sierra Leoneans) through what one possesses and does.

5.5 Identity (food) shock

As mentioned, most food habits are acquired from an early age. Prior to arriving in South Africa, Sierra Leoneans identified with most of the foods that they ate in their homeland.

While some of the Sierra Leonean food is accessible in South Africa¹², South Africans prefer to eat their own food, food that they are accustomed to, as Moses pointed out:

“My wife eats our food [Sierra Leonean ‘home food’] but she prefers her own [South African food]. I don't mind that because it is part of who she is, she's a South African that's why she prefers her own food. I love my ‘home food’ I prefer it over hers and she knows that and she is fine with it”.

‘Culture shock’ is one of the challenges that migrants face upon arriving at host countries (see AL-Ali and Koser, 2000). Seeing people behaving and leading a different lifestyle from their own poses many questions and may lead to anxiety for some migrants. Seeing people eating and enjoying food that is different from that, which migrants are used to brings about shock, especially if it is the kind of food that migrants cannot bear eating. Leveland *et al* (1960) cited in Juffer (1985) argues that culture shock is often loosely applied to cover all forms of adjustment overseas. However, such a shock is experienced as a challenge and is mostly felt when migrants attempt to adapt to a new environment. According to Bates and Plog (1977) cited in Qingxue (2003) the term culture refers to the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviours, and artefacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, and that are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. ‘Culture’, (the notoriously elusive and difficult to define notion in anthropological discourse), is what people use to identify themselves in popular and personal terms. Like ‘culture’, ‘identity’ is not fixed. Koc and Welsh (2002) and Fieldhouse (1995) argue that culture is not static; it preserves traditions, but also builds in mechanisms for change. Food habits are part of this dynamic process, in as much as they are strongly re-articulated; they may also change from time and time. For migrants this change may not be voluntarily, rather, it could be due to lack of access to certain ‘home food’ ingredients. Some of its elements change as people from different cultures interact on a daily basis. Having being taught certain beliefs and norms people end up becoming that which society expects them to be. This becomes problematic when migrants move from one country to the next as some of the practices they witness in host countries may be foreign to them.

¹²Vegetables such as cassava, bitter and potato leaves are amongst some of the vegetables that are available South Africa

From the interviews I gathered that in some cases, culture shock did not only emanate from the migrants experiences with South Africans, rather, even the Sierra Leonean community had different views when it came to the act of eating. Mary's account of her 'home food' eating in South Africa shows her eating preferences which are different from that of her family. Mary, like Lovemore and Billy feels the need to adopt some of the host country's eating habits. Their narratives on chewing and swallowing meat bones reveal this.

“You know I don't know why, but West Africans have this tendency of chewing and swallowing bones, especially chicken bones. [Shakes her head in disapproval] I used to think it is a Sierra Leonean thing, but even people from Cameroon and Kenya do it. I think it is crazy, but hey its part of who they are. I know some say they rather not have any meat just as long as they eat bones. [Laughs and continues] you know the other day I was told I'm not an African just because I don't chew bones. There is a lot that people associate with being an African and a Sierra Leonean for that matter. I still think it is gross to do that especially when South Africans are around. But I do it when I am home just because I'm around my people are they also do it and besides even back at home [Sierra Leone] my family does it”. (Mary: Transcribed interview recording)

Mary was not the only informant to talk about chewing and swallowing bones. Lovemore told me that South Africans are the only people, that he knows of that do not swallow bones. His South African friends think he is very strange as he swallows bones. He prefers eating alone and away from South Africans as this is the only way he is able to fully enjoy his food and not be judged for his eating habits.

“You should have seen the look on my friends' faces, when they first saw me chewing and swallowing bones. It was as if I had killed a cat with my bare hands. They looked at me like I was strange or I was mad or something. I really did not understand. So I decided to ask them and one of them asked if we had cattle at home. I seriously did not see the link. What does me eating and leaving my plate clean [with no food or bones] have to do with

cattle? Why did whatever that was troubling them make me seem crazy to them? My friend later explained that he has never seen anyone chewing and swallowing bones. I still did not understand why they looked at me in that way and why they asked if we owned cattle. When I asked him he said he thought that maybe we never had any meat at home. He thought I only started eating meat here ... How stupid. But I understand, South Africans don't know how nutritious bones are ... to avoid being judged I eat alone now or 'I just don't chew bones'. (Lovemore: Transcribed interview recording)

Food shock can be seen as a result of not being able to identify with some of the food that people eat in host countries. This reaction against certain food habits, practices and traditions does not only come in terms of what people wear or the structures which have been built in certain communities as was the case in Fomunyan's (2011) study of the Cameroonians in Durban, but it can also emerge in the domain of food. This study argues that its participants were in most cases ethnocentric in their understanding of the host countries food preferences. Ethnocentrism describes the belief that one's own patterns of behaviour are preferable to those of all other cultures. Different cultures have developed preferences for certain kinds of food and negative attitudes toward others. Sierra Leoneans appeared ethnocentric when it came to food habits, when they could not relate or identify with the rice that is considered to be of great quality by South Africans they referred to it as the 'thing'. Even their facial expressions disapproved of the South African rice; to them it did not deserve to be considered as food. Fieldhouse (1995) argues that foreign cultures are viewed as being wrong or irrational or misguided due to people's socialization and what they believe to be acceptable or not.

All research informants recorded that they experienced some level of culture shock when they first arrived in South Africa. The shock manifested in different ways and different stages of their adaptation to the South African lifestyle. The majority of participants indicated that it was through South African food that they mostly felt at distance from their homes as South African food is said to be 'very different'. The South African parboiled rice was and still is the main food that Sierra Leoneans could not relate to when they arrived in South Africa and for

majority of these migrants it is still not part of their grocery shopping list. The following was recorded during interviews:

“I was lucky to find that restaurant just after I arrived in Durban. I had seen some of the food that was sold in some shops. It did not look inviting. In fact, I did not understand how some people could be eating that big rice and tinned fish curry”. (Ben: Transcribed interview recording)

“I love rice and I prefer it over everything else, but not your (South African) rice. How do you South Africans eat Aunt Caroline? I tried eating that thing it was so big I choked while eating it. I even tried over chewing it, but I still could not swallow it. And, that thing takes long to cook”. (Johan: Transcribed interview recording)

“I rather not eat if I'm served South African rice. It is not filling and it is big and tasteless. I prefer our Sierra Leonean rice; it is more nutritious than Aunt Caroline. There's no way I can eat that thing, I'm a Sierra Leonean man, and at home men eat real food”. (Goodman: Transcribed interview recording)

As mentioned in chapter 3, rice is one of the staple foods for Sierra Leoneans. Most informants stated that in Sierra Leone 'you haven't eaten if you haven't had rice'. From this one can deduce that migrants do long for rice and that eating and thinking about it evokes memories of home. However, the above narratives indicate that this fondness for rice does not apply to any kind of rice, but the kind that is considered Sierra Leonean. The difference between the rice that is widely available in South Africa and that which Sierra Leoneans grew up eating challenges these migrants' food preferences as Goodman's narrative expresses how he would rather not eat that, and make it his 'home meal' here in South Africa. Hence, for these foreigners rice is not just part of their main food, but it is part of their culture and identity. Because it is their staple food, they cannot easily replace it as they would be doing away with their home identity. Responses from interviews show that, Goodman, together with the majority of other Sierra Leoneans do not identify with the 'big', 'tasteless', 'not filling thing' [parboiled rice] that South Africans enjoy.

5.6 Conclusion

Due to the fact that identity is greatly influenced by the manner in which people are socialised, it becomes an important aspect of people's lives. Even when they relocate, many migrants prefer to maintain their home identities, as it is part of 'who they are'. It carries memories of their experiences in their home countries. Socialization influences people's food habits. Since socialization is an on-going process, which forms part of people's cultures and identities, it also influences their articulation of the world at large. As a result, when people migrate to different countries, they are confronted with the challenge of maintaining who they are, their identities. Eating 'home food' is one of the means by which migrants maintain their identities. Even though accessing 'home food' it is not without difficulty, narratives used in this chapter have shown that migrants do long for 'home food'. While some informants have lived in South Africa for a number of years, they still prefer their 'home food' over South African food. This chapter has shown that by using 'home food', migrants were able to create a porous boundary between South Africans, migrants from other African countries and themselves. Even though this is the case, this chapter has also shown that 'home food' plays a role in connecting migrants with their home countries and in mentally narrowing the distance between home and host countries. This enables migrants to maintain their identity in receiving countries

CHAPTER 6:

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Migrating to a new country has a number of implications for migrants, the most prominent being that of adjusting to a different environment. Regardless of the push and pull factors which may influence the decision to migrate, migrants face stressful times and circumstances when they arrive in the receiving countries. While migrating to a country where people already have well-established kin may lessen the estranged feeling and in a sense lessen feelings of missing home, not all migrants relocate to countries where they have well-established network ties. It is for these reasons (amongst others) that some foreigners join migrant associations (see Nagasaka, 1988 and Mahmud *et al*, 2009). Such networks have proved to be supportive to migrants, and due to the national and cultural identity, these associations serve as a haven where migrants are able to 'be themselves' and relive their memories of home and assert 'who they are'. This study explored the role played by 'home food' in maintaining identity through social network ties. It investigated the importance of 'home food' in forging relationships and probed whether or not 'home food' is being used to satisfy migrants longing for home. This concluding chapter provides a critical appraisal of the three overarching themes that were revealed through ethnographical narratives. It also provides a brief summary of the broad issues that this study aimed to investigate.

6.2 Study challenges

Firstly, however, as this was a qualitative ethnographic study it is important to mention some of the methodological challenges encountered during this study. The main challenge was establishing rapport which took longer than I had expected. Before entering the field, I had known Mary for five months; she had shared a lot of interesting information about Sierra Leone, the Association, the different meetings hosted by the Association and had shared the notion of what she understood as 'home food'. Prior to meeting the informants, I had developed mental pictures, of how each individual looked and how they had adapted to South Africa. While I had thought this would serve to my advantage, it did not. My pre-conceived ideas of my informants limited me from initially gaining perhaps in-depth information, as during interviews I was expecting specific responses, responses that I had heard from Mary's point of view. After attempting to 'bracket' the knowledge I had acquired from my

conversations with Mary, I reviewed my interview guide and ‘shifted’ and changed the questions so as to accommodate the information from the participants’ perspectives.

During this study I also encountered challenges relating to literature. The biased accounts of Sierra Leone and individuals from that country in academic literature limited this study as there was not much scholarly literature to compare findings with. Instead, this study relied on ethnographical data. This lack of literature led to employing some of the theoretical ‘tools’ which were put forward by Glaser and Strauss (1967) when they proposed the usage of grounded theory in qualitative research. Grounded theory is useful to create knowledge about the behavioural patterns of a group (see McCallin, 2003). Since grounded theory is both a theoretical and methodological approach, it allowed me to thematically conceptualise the primary data that I had collected. All data collected through fieldwork were thematically coded to produce sub-themes which could be used as chapters. Again, the lack of literature relating to the ‘culture’ and lifestyle of Sierra Leoneans limited this study as I could not compare fieldwork findings with published findings. This led to employing triangulation as part of the fieldwork approach. Triangulation offered me the opportunity to compare data collected and to review some of the responses. While this was time-consuming it was beneficial to this study as it allowed me to contextualize and put into perspective rehearsed narratives.

6.3 Review of Literature

The majority of social science literature, especially in the discipline of Anthropology, discusses classic issues pertaining to food taboos and rituals. Whilst such studies are still of relevance as people still practice rituals, in both secular and sacred contexts, and anthropologists are still interested in studying the ‘other’ within ritual performances, these issues (food taboos etc.) were outside the immediate purview of this study. Rather, this study attempted to probe issues of maintaining identity in and through social networks in relation to food. Identity is a difficult term critically to engage with, especially from an etic perspective. Many elements that make up a person’s identity are perhaps somewhat too personal to be understood and researchers have to establish solid rapport for informants to openly share what they feel (about who they feel and believe they are). Using food as the main artefact by which identity is explained and understood by migrants, made data collection less challenging as the majority of informants who participated were willing to share their experiences as to them, food is a vehicle for solidarity (amongst themselves). And they were happy to share this with me. ‘Home food’ also served, as the study reveals, as a way of re-

territorializing their space, allowing them to 'bring' a sense of 'home' to their current living spaces.

Theories give researchers different 'lenses' through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis (see Bourgeault *et al.*, 2010). To make sense of all the data collected, this study employed two social science theories; social capital theory and social identity theory. The theory of social capital is mainly concerned with the relationship between network members who stand to benefit from each other. Employing this theory offered the theoretical framework to understand the benefits or capital that was gained by migrants as they shared their experiences of communal eating. This theory also allowed this study to investigate issues concerning the importance of migrant networks. This study interrogated the relationship between migrants and how their identity was maintained and strengthened through accessing 'home food'. Social identification revealed how individuals saw themselves as being part of a group, and how they used their common interests in defining themselves. This theory opened an opportunity for this study to engage with issues of collective identity.

Feminist studies have shifted critical gaze beyond just the male in migratory circuits of migration (see Nawyn, 2010 and Robert *et al.*, 2004). They assert that there has been an increase in the number of women being empowered to relocate individually or with their families. Naidu (2012) argues that notwithstanding this shift, some categories, or some nationalities still show male migration patterns in stead of the recent women-dominated patterns or migratory circuits where women are highly or equally visible. This comment is true for the Sierra Leonean community in Durban (as far as this study reveals). Masculinized migratory patterns are not new in African migration. The case of Sierra Leoneans is similar to that of Senegalese migrants, which Barbali (2009) claims to be masculinized in nature. Mary commented that the great disparity between men and women who migrate is mainly due to the patriarchal ideologies and the inequality between men and women. She also felt that that in Sierra Leone men have more privileges than women, and for men, relocating is one of those privileges. During my first Sierra Leonean Association meeting, there were only two women who attended. On the same day I learned from my informants that one woman was absent due to having other commitments. This led me to query the gender dynamics that characterize this nation's migration pattern. I learned from my informants that there were

only three Sierra Leonean women living in Durban, two had relocated because their husbands had accepted offers to work in this country and the other woman had been offered the opportunity to relocate by her employer. Unfortunately I never had the opportunity to interview her as she returned to Sierra Leone shortly after my first Association meeting. Due to the scope of this study, I did not engage in issues concerning the Sierra Leonean migration gender dynamics, however, such an issue is vital for future and further research.

6.4 Critical Appraisal of Chapters

From the narratives collected from the Sierra Leonean migrants, three ‘home food’-related themes emerged while collecting the ethnography. These were;

- 1) ‘Home food’ in the context of evoking memory and emotion,
- 2) ‘Home food’ in the context of networks for Sierra Leoneans in Durban
- 3) ‘Home food’ in the context of and the means of maintaining identity for Sierra Leoneans.

Memories can be seen as tools that people use to connect to home wherever migrants may be. Memories also allow people to be able to identify with places and people. Through memories people are also able to relive their past lives. Chapter three uses rich narratives to reveal that for Sierra Leoneans, ‘home food’ is one of the tools or artefacts that enables them mentally to connect to their homeland. This chapter explored the usage of ‘home food’ as a means of evoking memories of home for migrants. It also explored sensory memories which served to comfort migrants while in host countries. Ethnography revealed that the smell, sight and feel of certain foods mentally and emotionally transported migrants to their homeland. Since sensory memories are mostly associated with childhood memories, (as revealed by narratives in chapter three), this study concluded that these are the most important memories (of the past) for migrants, and that migrants wished to treasure these memories, more especially in a foreign land. Narratives also revealed that ‘mother’ memories served to comfort migrants during their stay in the receiving country. Love and care strengthens the bond that people have with their mothers. Since most people grow under the comfort and care of their mothers, their food preferences are often ‘mother-centered’. For this reason, even though some of their mothers have ceased to be, migrants still prefer their ‘mothers’ cooking’. This chapter showed that food-related memories are important for migrants during their stay in foreign land.

Migrant networks are crucial in migration studies as they serve as the main source of assistance for migrants. A social network is made up of individuals and organizations, often called 'nodes,' or 'nodal actors', who are tied together by different sorts of nodal relationships, such as friendship, economic exchange, influence, and common interests (see Poros, 2011 and Williams and Durrance, 2008) all of which form social capital. As discussed in chapter four, migrant networks have played an important role in assisting migrants to relocate, adapt to the receiving country and as this study has gathered, in providing access to 'home food'. Having access to such food has enabled migrants to forge and sustain relationships and friendships. The Sierra Leonean Association is the most important channel through which informants of this study have formed friendships and relationships. Through the Association, all Sierra Leoneans have found a 'family', people with whom they can share their concerns and joyous experiences. As a network, the Association has assisted migrants to maintain their identity through speaking Krio and through eating 'home food', which served as important tools for re-carving their space. Narratives of Mary and Lince served as examples of how nodal actors can belong to more than one network and because they are closely connected, they also act as bridges between networks, allowing for 'home food' to circulate and to be enjoyed by many other migrants. This chapter has also shown that the strength of migrant networks is based on their ability to connect migrants to their home country (if only in an emotional sense) and in the association's ability to assist migrant in satisfying their longing for home, which in many cases (as indicated by this study), can best be done through the availability of 'home food'.

'Identity' concerns how individuals or groups see and define themselves, and how other individuals or groups see and define them. Food, like language serves as a powerful identity marker as it forms part of people's early and formative socialization. People are also often identified by the food they eat. For these migrants, 'home food', served as an identity marker, which in some cases differentiated them from the rest of the South African community. While this was observed and confirmed by this study's participants, this study also gathered that some of the Sierra Leonean migrants are in relationships with local Africans and others are even married to non-Sierra Leoneans. Despite this, migrants such as Moses continue to cook and eat their 'home food' while their partners eat what they prefer. It emerges that 'home food' is the main artefact by which these migrants are able to 'preserve' their 'culture' and it evokes important memories for them.

Collective identity is important for maintaining national identity. For Sierra Leoneans, 'home food' served as an important channel through which home identity could be maintained in the receiving country. Through narratives, this study investigated two broader issues namely, re-territorializing through food and food sharing as well as boundary formation through 'home food'. This study gathered that, while Sierra Leoneans do not have many items or objects¹³ they use to 'bring' a sense of 'home' to their current homes especially to their kitchens (in host country); there are a lot of activities (in a form of routines) that they use to mentally recall home. Having 'home food' in their kitchens, choosing to buy basmati instead of the 'normal' parboiled rice that is used by South Africans and palm oil instead of the widely used South African sunflower oil shows that they still value their 'home food' ingredients and prefer them to South African equivalents. They wake up early on Saturdays so they can go to The Workshop (a local Mall) and buy their home vegetables. Also, during their meetings and social gatherings, despite the presence of non-Sierra Leoneans, they serve their 'home food' and eat it the way they ate it (communally) in their home country. While at first I did not realize that eating from the same plate, and taking turns to hand scoop their food and drinking ginger beer was part of their home 'culture' and routine, enquiring about this led me to realize that this eating 'routine' was important for these migrants as it formed part of their assertion of identity and was a way of re-territorializing eating space and eating performances within this country.

Migration brings different people into contact with each other. Such people may be of different races, cultures and even nationalities. 'Cultural' identity (although not fixed and static) plays an important part in how people understand the world around them and how they collectively respond to different situations and how they behave. Once migrants cross borders and enter foreign lands, they are confronted with many different challenges, and often their 'identities' are in danger of being completely assimilated (McDonald and Balgopal, 1998). Due to the fact that migrants become minorities in receiving countries, their identities and 'cultures' risk being influenced by the host country's beliefs and way of life. It is for these reasons that migrants use artefacts to create boundaries between themselves and the so-called 'local' people (see Lamont and Molnar, 2002 and Bail, 2008). Not all boundaries are the same; some are impermeable, restricting constant contact with the 'local' cultures while others, (like those of the Sierra Leoneans who formed part of this study), may be permeable

¹³such as cooking utensils, and spices which they brought from their home country

(Ellemers *et al.*, 1998). Narratives and observations revealed that while Sierra Leoneans prefer to eat with people of their ‘own kind’, they have friends and even partners who are not of the same nationality as them. Due to their longing for home, migrants end up re-territorializing their space with the aim of ‘bringing’ a sense of home to their new places. In the case of Sierra Leoneans, this was done by purchasing preparing food and by means of communally eating ‘home food’. The environment in which ‘home food’ was eaten was ‘conducive’ for these migrants as they ate as a group, sharing from the same plate. Their eating patterns were ritualized, done in the same manner as it was done in their home country. Sierra Leoneans can thus be said to be, in a sense, successful in re-territorializing their space. During my first Association observation, I felt alienated, excluded and ‘left out’ as these migrants spoke Krio and ate food that I had never seen before. I did not realize that because the Association served as a haven for these migrants, the Sierra Leone Association attempted to evoke a sense of home in every way possible as their main objective was to be in an environment where they could emotionally connect to their homeland.

Through investigating the broader issues concerning the use of ‘home food’ in re-territorializing space for this collective, I gathered that through meeting and sharing ‘home food’, migrants were ‘bringing’ a sense of home to their current spaces. This offered them a chance to be ‘themselves’ and collectively maintain their identity. Employing the social capital theory and the social network theory also proved to be beneficial as I gathered that because these migrants enjoyed each other’s company and preferred eating their ‘home food’ alone (with no outsiders), they were ethnocentric in most of their food-related preferences. In addition, even though they share food ingredients with other migrants, especially those located in the western part of Africa, I learned that these migrants believe that their way of cooking is more ‘authentic’. Due to being desperate for ‘home food’, at times Sierra Leoneans visit Nigerian restaurants for ‘home food’. For me this served as an example of how a food, and particularly the ways of preparing and sharing ‘home food’ can serve as an identity marker. Through their food preferences, I deduced that foods such as *okra*, *egusi* and *cassava* are what these migrants identify with and that it is through such foods that Sierra Leoneans are able to connect to who they are.

6.4 Conclusion

Migration is a multifaceted subject, embedded in it are different themes that are of interest to many different disciplines. While there have been a number of migration studies conducted by different disciplines and different scholars, especially at the University of KwaZulu Natal, none of them have tackled issues concerning 'home food' as a tool for maintaining identity for foreigners. Neither has there been, as far as I know, a study on the Sierra Leonean migrants in Durban nor studies that include the social role of 'home food' as well as the role played by 'home food' in maintaining identity and satisfying the migrants longing for home. Thus, this study has opened an avenue for future studies not limited to 'home food' and 'home food' networks, but studies that investigate issues concerning the use of 'home food' in forming boundaries between migrants and local people. The bulk of existing literature on migrant networks deals mainly with economic issues which include finding employment, establishing businesses and sending remittances. While these themes are important as they characterize the migrants' lives in host countries, topics relating to migrant networks in association with food are also vital as this study has revealed that 'home food' is a powerful tool for maintaining home identity.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES: PRIMARY SOURCES:

The primary source of reference for this research is the ethnographic data that was collected during fieldwork.

REFERENCES: PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Abawi, K .(2008). *Qualitative and quantitative research*. [Online]. Available at http://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/Afghanistan_2008/pdf/Qualitative_quantitative_research_Abawi_Afghanistan_2008.pdf Accessed on 30/09/12.

Adepoju, A. (2003). "Migration in West Africa" *Development*. 46 (3), 37-41.

Al-Ali, J and Koser, T. (2000). *Culture Shock: A reader in modern cultural anthropology*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Ashforth, Blake E ., and Fred Mael. (1989). " Social identity theory and the organization." *Academy of Management Review* 14 (1), 20-39.

Barbali, S. (2009) *Coping with xenophobia: Senegalese migrants in Port Elizabeth*. Masters thesis, Rhodes University.

Babbie, E., Mouton, J., Voster, P. and Prozesky, B. (2006). *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town: Oxford Press Southern Africa.

Bagchi, A. (2001) "Migrant networks and the immigrant professional: An analysis of the role of weak ties" in *Population Research and Policy Review* 20(1-2), 9-31.

Bail, A. (2008). "The Configuration of Symbolic Boundaries" *American Sociological Review*, 73, 37-59.

Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N. and Szanton Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach

Bellah, R., Madsen, R., Sullivan, W., Swidler, A., and Tipton, S. (1996). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Berry, R. (1999). *Collecting data by in-depth interviewing*. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Sussex at Brighton, September 2 – 5. UK.

Bhugra, D. (2004). “Migration, distress and cultural identity”, *British Medical Bulletin*, 69: 129–141.

Bhugra, D. and Becker, M. (2005). “Migration, cultural bereavement and cultural identity”, *World Psychiatry*. 4(1): 18-24.

Binford L. (2003). “Migrant remittances and (under)development in Mexico”, *Critical Anthropology*. 23:305–36.

Blommaert, J. (2006). “Ethnography as counter-hegemony: Remarks on epistemology and method”. *Working papers in urban language and literacies* (Paper 34). London: Institute of Education.

Bloom, W. (1990). *Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J., Thomas, M and Robson, K. (2001). *Focus Groups in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Blunt, A. (2007). “Cultural geographies of migration: mobility, transnationality and diaspora”, *Progress in Human Geography*. 31(5).684–694.

Bosiakoh (n.d.). The role of migrant associations in adjustment, integration and development: the case of Nigerian migrant associations in Accra, Ghana. [Online]. Available at <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/bosiakoh-briefing> Accessed on 15/08/12.

Bourgeault, I., Dingwall, R. and de Vries, R. (2010). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Health Research*. London: Sage Publications.

Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Boyce, C. and Neale, P. (2006). *Conducting In-Depth Interview: a guide for designing and conducting In-Depth Interviews for evaluation input*. Pathfinder International Tool Series, monitoring and evaluation – 2. USA.[Online]. Available at http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/m_e_tool_series_indepth_interviews.pdf?docID=630
1. Accessed : DATE MISSING.

Boyd, M. (1989). “Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas”, *International Migration Review*, 23(3): 638-670.

Bretell, B. C. (2000) *Theorizing Migration in Anthropology: The Social Construction of Networks, Identities, Communities and Globalscapes*. In C. B. Bretell, B. C. and J. F. Hollifield. *Migration Theory*, New York: Routledge.

Brink, R. (1996). *Fundamentals of research methodology*. Credo communications, Cape Town: Juta

Caplan, P. (1997). “Approaches to the study of food, health and identity”. In *Food, Health and Identity*, P Caplan, ed. London/ New York: Routledge, 1-31.

Clark, L. (2009). “Focus Group Research with Children and Youth”, *Journal for Specialists in Pediatric Nursing*, 14(2), 152–154.

Conger, J. (1998). “Qualitative Research as the cornerstone methodology for understanding leadership”. *Leadership Quarterly*, 9 (1): 107-121.

Coulter, C., (2008). “Female Fighters in the Sierra Leone War: Challenging the Assumptions?” *Feminist Review* 88(1): 54-73.

Counihan, C. and Van Esterik, P. (1997). *A taste for Mexico: Food in Transnational Culture*. [Online]. Available at http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/9/3/3/pages109332/p109332-1.php. Accessed: 28/03/11.

Cuba, L. and Hummon, D. (1993). "A Place to Call Home: Identification with Dwelling, Community, and Region", *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(1), 111-131.

Dannecker, P. (2005). "Transnational Migration and the Transformation of Gender Relations: The Case of Bangladeshi Labor Migrants." *Current Sociology* 53: 655- 674.

de Haas, H. (2010). "Migration and Development: A theoretical perspective", *International Migration Review*, 44:227-64.

Deaux, K. (2001). *Social Identity*. [Online]. Available at http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b_files/ARTICLES/identity.pdf Accessed on 10/11/12.

Dzvimbo K, (2003). "The International Migration of Skilled Human Capital from Developing Countries," a case study prepared for the *Regional Training Conference on Improving Tertiary Education in Sub-Saharan Africa: Things That Work!* Accra, Ghana, 23–5 September, 1–6.

Ellemers, N., van Knippenberg, A., De Vries, N and Wilke, H, (1998). "Social identification and permeability of group boundaries". *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 18(6), 497-513.

Eriksen, T.H. (2010). "The challenges of anthropology", *International Journal of Pluralism and Economics Education*. 1(3) 194.–202.

Ferraro, G and Andreatta, S. (2010). *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective*. 5th ed. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Fieldhouse, P. (1995). *Food and nutrition: Customs and culture*, London: Chapman and Hall.

Fomunyan, B.N. (2011). "Migrant Adjustment and Regrouping: Discourses on Cameroonian transnational adjustment patterns in Durban". VDM Verlag Dr. Mueller e.K.

Foster, G. & Anderson, B. (1978). *Medical Anthropology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Fox, R. (2005). "Food and Eating: An Anthropological Perspective". [Online]. Available at <http://www.sirc.org/publik/foxfood.pdf>. Accessed, 24/09/12.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). "Social Capital and the Global Economy", *Foreign Affairs*, 74(5):89-103.

Gberie, L. (2005). *A Dirty War in West Africa: The RUF and the Destruction of Sierra Leone*, India: Indian Press.

Gisbon, W. (2006). "Thematic analysis". [Online]. Available at <http://avetra.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/Thematic-analysis.pdf> Accessed on 10/10/2012.

Goody, J. (1982). *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine.

Gupta, A. & Ferguson, J. (2002) "Beyond culture". In *The Anthropology of Globalization* (eds J. X. Inda & R. Rosaldo), 65–80. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Hall, S. and du Gay, P. (1996). *Cultural Identity*. London: Sage Publications.

Hancock, B. (1998). *Trent Focus for Research and Development in Primary Health Care: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. CITY OF PUBLICATION MISSING: Trent Focus.

Hoff, A., Feldman, S. Vidovicova, L. (2010). "Migrant home care workers caring for older people: fictive kin, substitute, and complementary family caregivers in an ethnically diverse environment". *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 2010 5(2): 7–16.

Hoffman, D and Lubkemann, S, E, 2005. "Warscape Ethnography in West Africa and the Anthropology", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 78(2), 315-327.

Hogg, M and Abrams, D. (1988). *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*. London: Routledge.

Holtzman, J. (2006). "Food and Memory." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35:361-378.

Hossain, M. (2001) "Rural urban Migration in Bangladesh: A micro Level Study" paper presented at *the Brazil IUSSS Conference*, 20-25 August, 2001.

Hu, X and Salazar, M A. (2005). "Dynamic change of migrant networks: How migrant networks change under changing environments". [Online]. Available at www.cri.uci.edu/pdf
Accessed : 30/03/2011.

Ibrahim, A. F. & Shepler, S.(2011). "Introduction: Everyday Life in Postwar Sierra Leone", *Africa Today* 58(2), 1141-1173.

Ing, L, 2010. "A Brief Introduction to Anthropological Perspectives on Diet: Insights into the Study of Overseas Chinese". *Asian Culture and History*, 3(1), 86-91

Jackson, M. & Rogers, B. (2007). "Meeting Strangers and Friends of Friends: How Random Are Social Networks?," *American Economic Review, American Economic Association*, 97(3), 890-915.

Jenkins, R. (1996). *Social Identity*. London: Routledge.

Johnson, B and Christensen, L. (2011). *Educational Research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*. 1st ed. India: Sage Publications.

Jorgensen, D. (1989). *Participant observation: Methodology for human studies*. Newbury, CA: Sage.

Juffer, K. (1985). *Researching culture shock: the culture shock adaptation inventory (csai)*

Kainth, G. (2010). "Push and Pull Factors of Migration: A Case Study of Brick Kiln Migrant", Workers in Punjab, MPRA Paper No. 30036.

Koc, M a nd W elsh, J . (2002) .”Food, F oodways a nd Immigrant Experience’.[Online].Available a t http://canada.metropolis.net/events/ethnocultural/publications/aliments_e.pdfAccessed o n 18/08/12.

Kopytoff, I. (1971). “Ancestors as Elders in Africa”.*Africa*, 41, 129-142.

Kumar and Sidhu. (2005). “Pull and Push factors in labour migration: a study of Brick-Kiln workers in Punjab”, *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 41(2), 221-232.

Lamont, M and Moln’ar, V. (2002).“The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences”.*Annual Review of Sociology*, 28, 167–95.

Levitt, P . (2001). “ Transnational m igration: t aking s tock a nd f uture direction”. *Global Networks*.1(3).195-216.

Leininger, M. (1985).*Qualitative Research Methods in Nursing*.CITY OF PUBLICATION MISSING: Grune and Stratton.

Lin, N., Cook, K. and Burt, R S. (2008).*Social Capital*. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers.

Lupton, D. (1996). *Food, the body and the self*, London: Sage Publications.

MacGregor, K . (2005). F oreign s tudents f lock t o s tudy i n S A.[Online].Available at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/index.asp?navcode=92>.Accessed : 19/05/2011.

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G. and Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector’s field guide*. USAID, Family Health International, North Carolina, USA.

Mahmud, H., Sabur, A. and Tamanna, S, (2009). “International Migration, Remittances and Development”.*Journal for Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 147-155.

Martin, S. (2004) “Migration and women”, UN-DAW, CM/MMW/2003/WP.1.

Massey, D S . (1987).“Understanding M exican M igration t o t he U nited S tates.”*American Journal of Sociology*, 92: May’87. 1372-403.

Massey, D. S., J. Arango, G. Hugo, A. Kouaouci, A. Pellegrino, and J. E. Taylor. (1993). "Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal." *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431-66.

Mathison, S. (1988). "Why triangulate?" *Educational Researcher*, 17(2), 13-17.

Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCallin, A. (2003). "Designing a grounded theory study: some practicalities" *Nursing in critical care*, 8(5), 203-208.

McDonald, H. and Balgopal, P. (1998). "Conflicts of American immigrants: assimilate or retain ethnic identity". *Migration World Magazine*, 26(4), 14-18.

McGarvey, S. (2009). "Research in Anthropology, Nutrition, and Public Health", *Annual Review Anthropology*. 38:233-49.

McGinniss, L. (2005). *Feasts and Friends: Women and Food From Across the World*. Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press.

Minowa, Y. (2006). "Elixir of Eternal Life or Libation to Ethnic Spirits: The Meanings of Tea in Japan", *European Advances in Consumer Research*, 7: 262-267.

Mintz, S. W. and Du Bois, C. M. (2002). "The anthropology of food and eating" *Annual review of anthropology*, 31: 99-119.

Monaghan, J. and Just, P. (2000). *Social and Cultural Anthropology. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Monaghan, J. and Just, P. (2010). *Social and Cultural Anthropology: A very short introduction*. 5th ed. Britain : Oxford University Press.

Morokvasic, Mirjana (2007): "Migration, Gender, Empowerment". In: Lenz, Ilse, Ullrich, Charlotte & Barbara Fersch (eds.): *Gender Orders Unbound? Globalisation, Restructuring and Reciprocity*. Opladen: Barbara Budrich,

Muthuki, J. (2010). *Renegotiation of gender identities in transnational spaces: the experiences of foreign students of African origin at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban South Africa*, Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Nawyn, S. (2010). "Gender and Migration: Integrating Feminist Theory into Migration Studies". *Sociology Compass*, 4/9, 749-765.

Nagasaka, I. (1988). "Kinship networks and child fostering in labor migration from Ilocos, Philippines to Italy". *Asian and Pacific migration journal*, 7(1), 67-92.

Nguyen, T. and Polonsky, M. (2003). *Migrant acculturation and consumption motivations: an empirical study of the Vietnamese*. [Online]. Available at http://smib.vuw.ac.nz:8081/WWW/ANZMAC2003/papers/INT20_nguyent.pdf Accessed on 28/03/11

Ojong, V. (2007). "Entrepreneurship among Ghanaians in South Africa". In L. Dana (eds), *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship: A Co-Evolutionary View on Resource Management*. 1st ed. United Kingdom: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited (707-719)

Ojong, V. and Muthuki, J. (2010). "Empowerment or Reconstituted Subordination? Dynamics of Gender Identities in the Lives of Professional African Migrant Women in South Africa", *Journal of Social Science*, 25 (1-2-3), 169-176.

Orb, A., Eisenhauer, L. and Wynaden. (2000). "Ethics in Qualitative Research". *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*. 33:1, 93-96.

Pahl, R. E. (2000). *On Friendship*, Cambridge: Polity.

Palojoki, P. & Tuomi-Gröhn, T. (2003) "Consuming as a part of everyday life: boundary crossing between school and everyday life – some theoretical remarks" [Online]. Available at http://www.v4.edu.helsinki.fi/okl/tutkimus/ad2002/artikkelit/KK_Palojoki.pdf Accessed: 15/09/12.

- Panagakos, A. (2003). "In search of Adonis: marriage strategies and gender identity in Greek transnational migration", *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 110, 77-106.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd ed)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Philipp A and Ho, E. (2010). "Migration, Home and Belonging: South African Migrant Women in Hamilton", New Zealand. *New Zealand Population Review*, 36, 36:81-101.
- Poros, M. (2001). "The role of migrant networks in linking local labour markets: the case of Asian Indian migration in New York and London", *Global Networks*, 1 (3): 243- 259.
- Poros, Maritsa V. (2011). *Modern Migrations: Gujarati Indian Networks in New York and London*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Portes, A. (1995). "Economic Sociology and the Sociology of Immigration: A Conceptual Overview". In Alejandro Portes, ed., *The Economic Sociology of Immigration: Essays on Networks, Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Qingxue, L. (2003). "Understanding Different Cultural Patterns or Orientations Between East and West". [Online]. Available at http://www.staff.amu.edu.pl/~inveling/pdf/liu_quingxue_inve9.pdf Accessed : 12/11/12.
- Quandt, S. (1996). "Nutrition in medical anthropology". In C.F. Sargent and T. M. Johnson (Eds.), *Handbook of medical anthropology* (272-289). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Ratanakul, P. (1999) "Some Notes On The Humanities And National Identity". [Online]. Available at <http://www2.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/cimac/ratanakul.html> Accessed: 13/10/12.
- Reeves, D. (2006). "Educational Leadership of hubs, bridges and networks", *Challenging the Status Quo*. 63(8), 32-37.
- Roberts, K., Connelly, R., Xie, Z and Zeng, Z. (2007). "Patterns of Temporary Labor Migration of Rural Women from Anhui and Sichuan". *The China Journal*, 52, 49-70.

- Roccas, S and Brewer, M. (2002). "Social Identity Complexity". *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 6 (2), 88–106.
- Rozin, P. (1991). "Family resemblance in food and other domains: The family paradox and the role of parental congruence", *Appetite*, 16, 93-102.
- Ryan, W., and Bernard, H. (2003). "Techniques to identify themes in qualitative data". *Field Methods* 15 (1):85-109.
- Sandelowski, M. (2000). "Focus on Research Methods Whatever Happened to Qualitative Description?". *Research in Nursing & Health*, 23, 334-340.
- Sarantakos, S. (2005). *Social Research*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scott, S and Cartledge, K. (2009). "Migrant Assimilation in Europe: A Transnational Family Affair". *International Migration Review*, 43(1), 60-89.
- Seale, C. (1999). "Quality in qualitative research". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5(4), 465-478.
- Shaw, R. (2007). "Displacing violence: Making Pentecostal Memory in Postwar Sierra Leone", *Cultural Anthropology*. 22 (1), 66-93.
- Shakya, M. (2009). "Competitiveness Assessment of Tourism in Sierra Leone A Cluster-Based Approach". The World Bank. Discussion paper. 10/2009.
- Shehu, A. (2004). "The Asian alternative remittance systems and money laundering". *Journal of Money Laundry. Control* 7:175–85.
- Sliwka, D. (2003). *On the hidden costs of incentive schemes*. Bonn: University of Bonn, Department of Economics. Bonn Econ Discussion Paper 12/2003.
- Spagnola, M and Fiese, B. (2007). "Family Routines and Rituals A Context for Development". *In the Infants & Young Children*, 20/4, 284–299.
- Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant Observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Straus, A. and Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*. London: Sage Publishers.

Sydney, Y and Fjellstrom, C. (2005). "Food provision and the meal situation in elderly care - outcomes in different social contexts", *Journal of Human Nutritional Diet*, 18, 45-52.

Vertovec, S. (2002). *Transnational networks and skilled labour migration*, Research report WPTC. [Online]. Available at www.transcomm.ox.ac.uk. Accessed: 30/03/2011.

Warde, A. (1997). *Consumption, Food and Taste*. 1st ed. London: Sage Publications.

Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1999). *Social network analysis: Methods and applications*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. (Work originally published 1994).

Weinreich, P. (2000). "Ethnic Identity and "Acculturation": Ethnic Stereotyping and Identification, Self-Esteem and Identity Diffusion in a Multicultural Context". In: Olshtain, E and Horenczyk, G. ed. *Language, Identity and Immigration*. Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press, 31-65.

Weinreich, P., Luk, C and Bond, M (1996). "Ethnic Stereotyping and Identification in a Multicultural Context: 'Acculturation', Self-esteem and Identity Diffusion in Hong Kong Chinese University Students", *Psychology Developing Societies*, 8(1), 107-169.

Wendt, A. (1994). "Collective Identity Formation and the International State." *American Political Science Review* 88:384-96.

Whitehouse, Bruce. 2009. "Transnational Childrearing and the Preservation of Transnational Identity in Brazzaville, Congo." *Global Networks*, 9(1): 82-99.

Williams K and Durrance, J. (2008). "Social Networks and Social Capital: Rethinking Theory in Community Informatics", *The Journal Community*, 4(3).

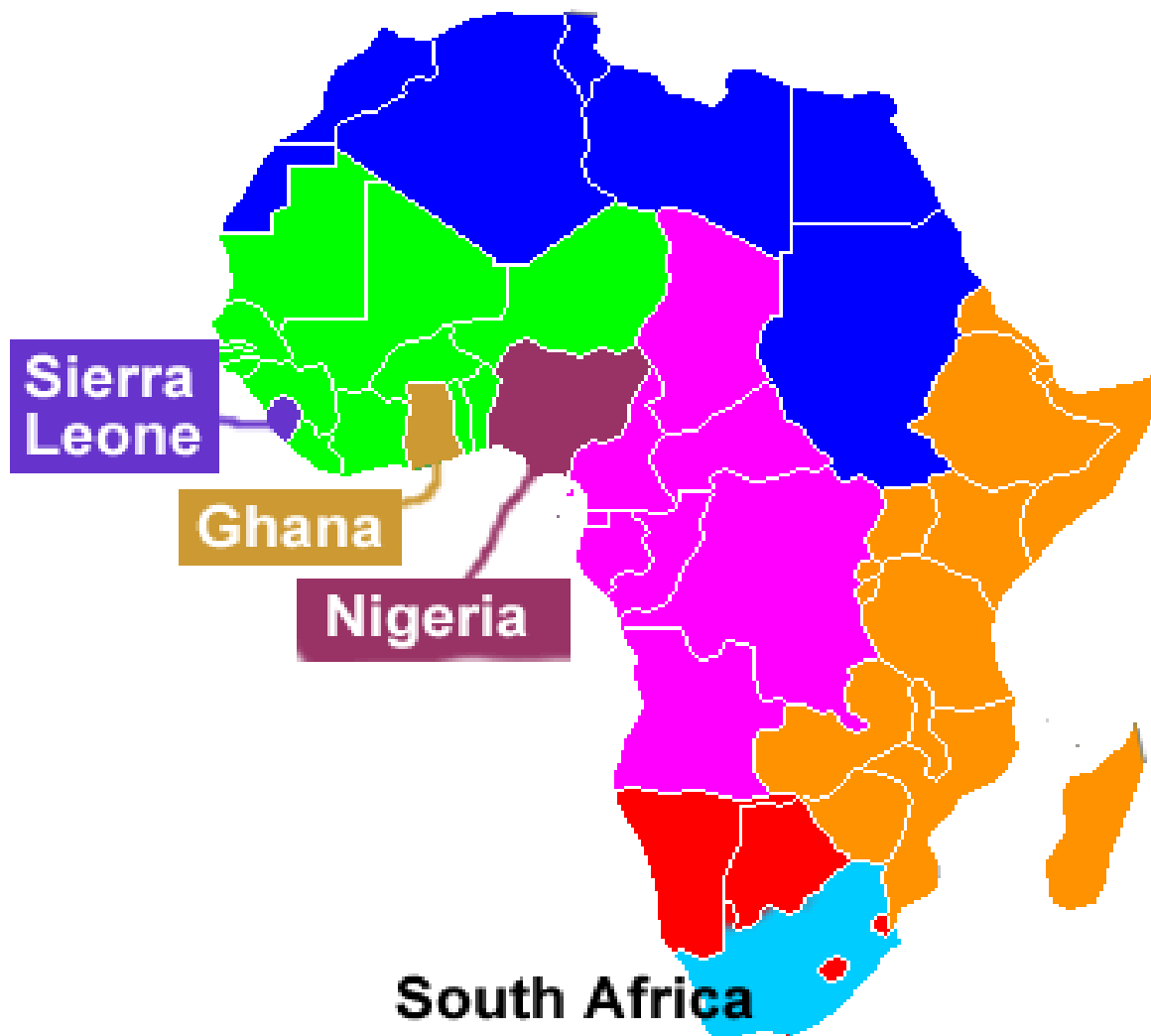
Wolin, S. J., & Bennett, L. A. (1984). Family rituals. *Family Process*, 23(3), 401-420.

"Anthropology and Food." *Encyclopedia of Food & Culture*. Ed. Solomon H. Katz. Vol. 1. Gale Company, 2003. [eNotes.com](http://www.enotes.com). [Online]. Available at <http://www.enotes.com/anthropology-food-reference/> Accessed: 16/10/2012.

Map of Africa

Map showing some of the countries that are between South Africa and Sierra Leone.

Adapted from <http://findacenter.com/mapAfrica.htm> on the 15th of November 2012.



APPENDICES

Appendix one: consent to participate in a research study

My name is Nkwanda Nzuza and I am currently enrolled for a Masters degree in Anthropology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My Student registration number is : 207524241.

I am conducting a study of the role that 'home food' plays in maintaining an identity through social network ties in the lives of Sierra Leoneans in Durban. This study attempts to see whether or not particular kinds of food, and particular kinds of food preparations shared in communal eating groups, is being used to strengthen the ties between people in social groups.

You have been chosen as a possible participant in the study. Participation in this study is voluntary, you may, at any stage, withdraw from this interview or choose not to answer any of the questions that you may not be comfortable with. For the purpose of this research study your comments will be anonymous unless you request that your personal information be revealed and used. I will make all possible efforts to preserve confidentiality including using pseudonyms and arranging a secure place for data storage. Information gathered through this study may be published in academic journals and presented orally. But here too your confidentiality will be maintained.

Please note that there will be no form of compensation.

Should you agree to take part in this study you will be required to take part in an in depth open-ended interview which will allow you to express your feelings regarding the topic at hand. Interviews will be between 30 and 45 minutes. Should there be a need to revise the timeschedule your permission will be requested. With your permission all interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed.

Would you like to continue with the interview? YES _____ NO _____

If you have answered ' YES' above please fill in the agreement and consent section below which we will both sign and keep a copy of.

My Name/Signature : Nokwanda Nzuza _____

Participant Name/Signature: _____

Date_____

Appendix two: interview guide

Note: These are open-ended questions. They will not necessarily follow a strict order and will be posed within conversational interactions or informal interviews.

This study is about trying to discover the role played by ‘home food’ in the lives of transnational students.

(Home food refers to food that transnationals would usually eat in their home countries)

Name: _____ Age: _____ Gender: _____

Home country: _____ No. of years in South Africa: _____

-
1. What is your favourite ‘home food’? _____

 2. How does it taste? _____

 3. How do you feel when eating or thinking about it? _____

 4. How often do you prepare it? _____

 5. How is it prepared? _____

 6. Who prepares it back at home? _____

 7. Do you prefer preparing it yourself or having a friend preparing it? Does the friend have to be from Sierra Leone? _____

 8. Who do you prefer to cook and eat with? Why? _____

9. If you cannot access your favourite 'home food' which South African dish do you supplement your cravings with? _____

10. Do you think the type of company matters when preparing and eating 'home food'?

11. Where do you normally buy 'home food' ingredients? Are they priced reasonably?

12. Do you or any of your friends know of people who regularly go 'home' and come back with 'home food' to sell here, what types of foods do they sell? _____

13. Have you made friends with or have you become acquainted with people through food? If yes, are they all from your home country? _____

14. Do you visit restaurants which serve 'home food'? if yes, whom do you prefer going with? _____

15. Have you ever invited a South African to eat with you? If yes, were you comfortable to eat in their presence? _____

16. How do you feel about South African food? _____

17. Do you think people can identify you as a transnational by the food you eat? _____

18. What does the saying 'you are what you eat' mean to you? _____

19. Do you think it is possible to identify a person's home country by the food that they eat, or how they prepare it? _____

20. When hosting parties and other occasions, which foods do you and your friends serve? _____

Thank you for your time.