

**The Women From Rhodesia: An Auto-Ethnographic Study of Immigrant
Experience and [Re]Aggregation in Western Australia.**

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BA Hons

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I declare that this dissertation is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the positioning of white, English-speaking, immigrant women from Africa to Australia. I explore the effects that minimal differences have on issues of identity. Notions of identity, memory, and belonging are contrasted with white settlement in Rhodesia in the last century. My personal history and the desire to write a thesis relevant to the Australian experience led me to ask, “How do women from a privileged background, from Rhodesia and Zimbabwe, understand their experiences as immigrants to Australia?” The relevance lies in the perception that Australia is populated by immigrants and this research interrogates at a deeper level some specific issues presented by this sample group and my interpretation of their experiences augments the literature in this area. I questioned (individually) a small group of immigrants using unstructured interviews; the use of my own experiences and ‘long/desk drawer’ makes the study significantly autobiographical. Notions of migration into Australia from Southern Africa are explored using theories and themes of *rites de passage*. I interrogate the meanings attributed to assimilation and integration in immigration and connect these to the theory. Identity, memory, and reflection are discussed in the context of separation from Africa and integration into Australia. The similarities and differences and embodied history (*habitus*) that shape us, interweave the trope of *rites de passage*, uncovering a multiplicity of identity—attributed, assumed, and self-determined. I examine the ways in which Australians of Anglo-Saxon and British origin tend to position English-speaking immigrants from non-British backgrounds as outsiders and suggest that this attribution has more to do with similarities than differences. Reflection and

discussion of other times and places reveals how memories intersect with ‘new’ lives in Australia and the complexities of time in migration as *rites de passage* make possible an exploration of present experience shadowing earlier experience. Finally, I discover that identity and belonging as continually negotiated spaces are illuminated by the contrast I drew between assimilation and integration as conceptual tools in understanding the migrant experience.