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## Who Am I? A Qualitative Study Exploring Identities and Sense of Belonging of Black Migrant Women in South Africa

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**Who am I? a qualitative study exploring identities and sense of belonging of black migrant women in South Africa**

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**ABSTRACT**

Post-apartheid South Africa experienced a massive migration flow of African migrant women due to the accommodative Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that was promulgated in 1996. Diversity, multiculturalism, and ethnic and social heterogeneity have been some of the features and challenges of modern South Africa blending national and non-national elements. Nevertheless, black migrant women experience significant levels of xenophobia and multiple layers of discrimination because of “being a woman”, “being Black” and “being a migrant”. The perennial problem of xenophobia in South Africa towards Black Africans is complex and multifaceted; the institutional side of xenophobia circumvents other explanations including socio-cultural and structural monopolizing of the negative attitude of the South African state, politicians, and civil servants towards Black foreigners and their unfavorable treatment. This paper critically examines how black migrant women negotiate their gendered, racialized, and ethnic identities within the identity-belonging realm and highlights the significance of belonging for foreign nationals on African terrain. By analysing the lived experiences of black, migrant women and their identity-related challenges, the paper addresses the implications of these challenges as they arise in a post-colonial, decolonized South Africa. The study contributes to theory in the field of black social psychology and invisible intersectional identity within a black majority context, with practical application for finding ways for supporting their inclusion in commerce. The author employed a qualitative methodology based on narrative interviews with black migrant women of African descent using a combination of purposeful and snowballing sampling techniques. The migrant respondents’ perceptions and lived experiences of exclusion and discrimination lend support to the argument that the intersection of gender, race, and migration status affects their inclusion, and that the invisible identity of migration contributes to a sense of belonging/ non-belonging in the host country. It further highlights how black migrant women utilize multiple mechanisms to negotiate their identity and how being black, migrant females predisposes them to racial discrimination, xenophobia, and workplace exclusion, which has implications for Black identity politics, and belonging discourses.

Keywords: intersectionality, African women, migration, identity, belonging, decolonization