

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF INFORMAL DIAMOND MINING IN CHIADZWA, ZIMBABWE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The diamond fields in Chiadzwa have become a site for mutations of socio-cultural representations. The fields are an arena of socio-cultural struggles and representations, which are reflective of the macro political and economic quagmires faced by Zimbabwe. The emergence of the informal diamond enterprise came with new cultural modes imbued in the mutation of social identities and consumption cultures of diamond miners. This study ethnographically explores and analyzes the cultural, social, and micro political dynamics of “informal” diamond mining in Chiadzwa, relying heavily on Bourdieuan among other concepts. The focus is on analyzing the lifestyles and emerging identities of diamond miners as represented in their social practices.

**Keywords:** informal diamond mining, social practice, social identity

### **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The publicization of the presence of diamond deposits in Chiadzwa village of Marange district in Manicaland Province resulted in an influx of informal diamond miners and dealers from all over Zimbabwe and beyond. Chiadzwa is a rural area in Marange, about 100 kilometers southwest of the city of Mutare in Manicaland Province in the Eastern part of Zimbabwe. The 66,000 hectares of diamond fields are in an area that falls under the jurisdiction of headman, Chiadzwa, and the Marange Chieftainship. Informal diamond mining in Chiadzwa came under the spotlight in June 2006 and intensified in 2007 and 2008. The year 2007 saw an influx of thousands of diamond miners and buyers into Chiadzwa in search of the gemstone. Human Rights Watch Report (2009) indicates that there were an estimated 35,000 people, who were either miners or buyers, in and around the diamond fields at the peak of the diamond rush by October 2006. The number of people who thronged the diamond fields is difficult to determine and all the figures are based on rough estimates, most of which are either exaggerated or under-represented. The fact that remains, however, is that there was a huge population trying their luck in the diamond fields as artisanal miners, buyers, and vendors as well as thugs. The population was composed of locals as well as foreigners from different parts of the world. It is in this vein that Sachikonye’s (2007) claim that the Marange diamond rush has the ingredients of a “global scramble” is founded. Chiadzwa is, therefore, a *mélange* of people of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and this creates a terrain of conflicts, struggles, and contestations. Chiadzwa is also a site of cultural production in which new sub-cultural cartographies are created. I, therefore, interrogate the micro-politics of socio-economic interaction and the cultural politics of violence and belonging in Chiadzwa diamond fields. This ethnographic study seeks to

fill a sociological and anthropological hiatus existent in the analysis of the phenomenon of informal diamond mining in Chiadzwa as most accounts came from journalists.

### **ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study relies on Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and social practice. The concept of social practice, which is the linchpin of this treatise, is defined as constituted by habituated behavioral patterns of human beings, which come into being through repeated practice. It is in light of this that the routinized practices of diamond miners are examined. Bourdieu (1977; 1990) defines the habitus as an acquired body of dispositions, classificatory categories, and generative schemes which produce and are produced by social practices. I use the concept of habitus to capture the diamond miners' and other stakeholders' socio-economic and cultural dispositions, locating them within the context of spheres of socio-economic and cultural exchanges. The concept of field is used to analyze the miners' struggles and competition over the accumulation of social, economic, symbolic, and cultural capitals (Wacquant, 1989). A field, in Bourdieu's sense, is a social arena within which struggles or maneuvers take place over specific resources or stakes and access to them (Jenkins, 1992). I blend these Bourdieuan concepts, with a host of other concepts in the analysis of the socio-cultural realities of diamond miners.

### **METHODOLOGICAL NOTE**

This study relies on ethnographic methods. I used unstructured interviews, direct observation, and documentary reviews in eliciting information. In carrying out the study, I strived to do overt observation, although the precarious nature of the socio-political environment in Chiadzwa demanded that I, sometimes, mutate to a covert mood for the sake of my personal security.

### **PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### *The cultural politics of belonging, entitlement and ritualism*

The influx of artisanal diamond miners from all over the country and outside evokes a repackaging of notions of foreignness and indigeneity and the attendant notion of entitlement to the diamonds. Residents of Chiadzwa and those in its vicinity consider themselves to be autochthonous inhabitants of the land and to be rightful beneficiaries of diamond resources therein. Some of the locals have internalized schemas of "we" and "other". The schemas of "we" are based on cartographies of belonging to an autochthonous in-group composed of people originating from Chiadzwa or its vicinity, while the schemas of "other" are based on cartographies of out-group based on the notion of invasion, which is enacted on those originating from places outside Chiadzwa and its vicinity. Following Schutz's existential analysis, it can be observed that the "we" and "other" schemas are the basis of interaction and social life in Chiadzwa diamond fields (see Jenkins, 1996). In this case, people from Chiadzwa area and Marange District, in general, and those coming from such places as Mutare Central, Mutare South, Mutare North, Chimanimani, Chipinge, Mutasa, and Nyanga, are regarded as the rightful beneficiaries of diamond resources in Chiadzwa. Those who come from Chiadzwa, Gamunorwa, Mukwada, Chipindirwi, Betera, Muedzengwa, and Nyazika kraals in Marange area are the ones who have a direct connection to the diamond fields and make staunch claims of ownership and entitlement to the diamond fields. The tales of indigeneity and foreignness mutate within a continuum of nearness and farness of the miners' place of origin to Chiadzwa, in which the extent of rightfulness corresponds to the proximity to Chiadzwa.

The language that one speaks is often used as a mark of indigeneity or foreignness. The dialects that would win someone a tag of autochthony are *Chibocha*, *Chijindwi*, and *Chigarwe* and then relatively closer to these are *Chindau* (Spoken in parts of Chimanimani and Chipinge) and *ChiManyika* (Spoken in Nyanga). All other people speaking languages other than these are squarely labeled as foreigners and therefore as having less or no entitlement to the diamond resources. Those who speak *Chizezuru* and *Ndebele* are even viewed as invaders. One interviewed elderly Chiadzwa man had this to say:

“These resources were given to us by our ancestors to assist our children who are suffering because of poverty. But people are now coming from faraway places to take the resources”.

Those regarded as foreigners on grounds that they do not originate in or closer to Chiadzwa also make claims of entitlement based on their nationality as Zimbabweans. The bases of making claims to entitlement are, therefore, quite fluid and open-ended.

Indigeneity is a resource that is used by unlicensed diamond miners for self-protection against the police and army officers manning the diamond fields. The local Chiadzwa people and those who hail from the vicinity of Chiadzwa would produce their national identity cards when under siege from security officers and would pretend as though they would be doing other business and are not unlicensed miners. All national identity documents, whose numbers start and end with a 75, warrant labels of indigeneity and are a source of security and protection against police and army clampdown. Security officers are generally likely to be sympathetic to locals found in the vicinity of the diamond fields and would harass or arrest those whose identity cards indicate that they are foreigners in Chiadzwa. Foreignness is a liability because it makes some miners more vulnerable to the brutality of security forces. The locals would sometimes sell out foreign miners to security forces, resulting in them being arrested or attacked and assaulted. *Mazezuru*, who are an ethnic group from Mashonaland, are the most vulnerable in this respect. This is indicative of the politics of belonging and entitlement whose effects are both salient and open.

Diamonds in Chiadzwa are associated with myths and beliefs which confirm the logic of schematic notions of belonging and entitlement. As indicated, the diamonds are believed to have been bestowed on the local people by their ancestors and this forms the basis of the idea that the rightful beneficiaries are those who have a direct connection to the ancestors of the land in Chiadzwa. The diamond fields are shrouded in mysteries reinforced by tales of sacredness in which they are associated with the land spirits, which are believed to determine the allocation of portions of diamonds to individual miners, depending on their spirituality. Finding diamonds is considered to be a product of synergies between the spirits guiding the individual miner(s) and the spirits of the land (the land spirits are called *midzimu* in Shona language). The spirits, which are believed to guide individual miners, are called *mashavi* in Shona. One miner said: “If the spirits that possess you allow you to make money, it is easy”. There are beliefs in the sacredness of the diamond fields which are propped by superstitious claims. One such claim is that if the land in the diamond fields is earth-moved, lions and elephants will be seen roaming around the fields. Earth-moving and fights within the diamond fields are believed to anger the spirits, resulting in the disappearance of diamond. These myths emanated from traditional leaders, such as *masadunhu* (kraal heads) and *masvikiro* (spirit mediums). Myths forbidding the use of earth-movers were concretized by stories from workers of Zimbabwe Mining Development

Corporation (ZMDC), who reported that they were failing to get diamonds during their mining operations by using earth-moving machines. The sacredness of diamond fields was sustained by rituals conducted by spirit mediums following awareness of the presence of diamond deposits in Chiadzwa by local people. Elderly members of communities in Marange recalled that after the discovery of diamonds there was a series of rituals, including beer brewing and ancestral worship, that took place under the guidance of local spirit mediums.

The myths, beliefs, and rituals surrounding Chiadzwa diamond fields are used to disdain government appropriation of the fields, including its fencing of these fields by razor wire and the deployment of violent security forces. Such fencing, which took place starting in October 2006, was viewed by spirit mediums, traditional leaders, and ordinary people as offending the land spirits, who are believed to be responsible for providing the diamonds. The fencing of diamond fields is an exclusionary act meant to deny access to the fields by unlicensed diggers. A fence is a simple technology of access control both because it physically restricts access and it symbolizes or communicates intent to restrict access to the diamond fields by potential unlicensed miners (Ribot & Peluso, 2003). The exclusionary orientation by government became the basis of mute and salient political struggles between the government and the traditional leaders, spirit mediums, and (potential) informal miners on the one hand. The diamond fields have, therefore, become a social space muddled by tensions and struggles. The influence of spirit mediums and traditional leaders over the diamond fields is indicative of their possession of cultural and symbolic capitals, which are some of the defining capitals of the religious and political fields. These forms of capital are embodied in the authority, honor, and prestige that the traditional leaders and spirit mediums derive from the sacrosanctization and mystification of diamond fields. Government fencing and the army take over directly undermined the power bases of the traditional leaders and spirit mediums, hence the mute and salient tension.

Some of the diamond diggers professed that they would go through some cleansing rituals prior to coming to the fields, under the guidance of their elders or traditional healers or faith healers to enhance their chances of getting diamonds and making a fortune. The faith healing industry became so lucrative that some faith healers or prophets (*maporofita*) came to the field to make a fortune out of their services since they would charge money or get tokens for consultations. Some of these faith healers would stay in the “base camps” of diamond miners or in free or rented accommodations in communities in the vicinity of diamond fields. The rampancy of beliefs in cleansing rituals prior to the visiting of diamond fields indicate and reinforce the view that getting diamonds is considered a matter of luck and that such luck could be attained by appeasing some spirits. Continuous unsuccessful trips to the diamond fields would evoke the view that one has *munyama* (bad luck). The cleansing rituals are seen necessary in the face of police and army brutality against informal diamond miners and the continued exposure of diamond miners to bloody conflicts with the police and army. The cleansing rituals are believed to appease the spirits of the ancestors or the gods or God so that these would protect the diamond miners. Getting involved in fracas with the security forces and getting injured or being killed in the process is considered a product of *munyama* caused by evil spirits (*mweya yetsvina*).

Partaking in diamond digging as a means of accessing financial resources to enable survival has become a rite of passage in communities in and around Chiadzwa. The manhood of young men is demonstrated by the ability to get into the diamond

fields in the face of restraint from the security forces and the associated risks. Young men who have failed to make it in the conventional economy consider Chiadzwa diamond fields as an avenue for obtaining resources and being able to perform duties associated with manhood. Some young men claimed to have managed to pay bride wealth (called *roora* in vernacular) using money obtained from diamond proceeds. The desire to be able to pay *roora* and to build modern brick houses is one of the reasons behind the continued presence of diamond miners in Chiadzwa. Going to Chiadzwa diamond fields to try one's luck is in fact a rite of passage, which signifies one's transition from boyhood to manhood. Van Gennep (1960) defines 'rites of passage' as practices or ceremonies accompanying an individual's life crises – understood as stages of life; in light of which demonstration of the ability to fend for oneself and to exercise responsibility can be conceptualized. The desire for fatherhood, which is deemed to be a sign of manhood, is key in motivating *Magweja* to engage in diamond mining activities.

The government has indicated the need to relocate families who are in Chiadzwa diamond mines to allow the exploitation of the mineral by franchised companies. There are indications that the people will be relocated to Kondozi, a farm owned by the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority. The farm is located about 70 kilometers away from Chiadzwa. Relocation would involve uprooting at least about 7,000 families and 20,000 individuals. The feasibility of Kondozi as a possible relocation is questionable given the lack of social amenities and the absence of social service centers, such as clinics and schools. The government has not indicated that it will compensate the villagers in any way after coercing them to relocate to Kondozi. Relocation is pathetic because it will involve loss of property by the villagers (Human Rights Watch Report, 2009). Relocation entails not only a loss of property, but also a loss of identity and a loss of cultural capital accrued over generations of villagers' who stay in Chiadzwa. This is generating problems among concerned families and communities given their spiritual and existential connection to the land in Chiadzwa. These families and communities are spiritually and sentimentally tied to the land, having stayed in Chiadzwa for a long time. The spiritual connection to the land is mirrored in the connection of Chiadzwa residents to their departed relatives and ancestors, some of whose graves are in the diamond fields. The full scale commercial mining of diamonds with the use of state of the art equipment will mean tampering with graves and this creates problems in an environment where the dead are revered and worshipped by some people. The destruction of the graves would also mean the destruction of symbols that enable the living to remember the dead. Relocation of families, therefore, generates contestations pitting government and the locals in Chiadzwa. The politics of relocation is, therefore, inextricably linked to the politics of belonging and existence.

#### *Idioms of extraction and exchange*

Informal diamond miners in Chiadzwa have specific language that they use when going about the business of diamond extraction. They have a specific linguistic habitus, which manifests in idioms reflective of schemas of thought and mental dispositions that are peculiar to those in the practice of informal diamond mining. According to Bourdieu, the linguistic habitus encompasses the cultural propensity to say particular things, a specific linguistic competence, and the social capacity to use that competence appropriately ( See Jenkins, 1992). The linguistic habitus of the diamond miners is mediated by the linguistic market, which defines what can and cannot be said, determining expressions of thought and the idioms of extraction, and exchange of rough diamond (Jenkins, 1992).

Some of the prominent words and phrases on the linguistic market of the informal diamond mining economy and community include the term *Gweja*, which refers to the male diamond miner, and *Gwejeleen*, which refers to the female diamond miner. Plural for *Gweja* is *Magweja* and for *Gwejeleen* is *Magwejeleen*. The term *Gweja* is derived from a Shona word *kugwejura*, which means breaking or dismantling something. In this case, *Gweja* and *Gwejeleen* metaphorically refer to men and women who engage in acts of dismantling and breaking the earth to extract diamonds. A child diamond miner is called *Gwejana* (which is a combination of the concepts *Gweja* and *Mwana* [child]) and the senile miner is called *Gwejembere* (which is a combination of the concepts *Gweja* and *Chembere* [elderly person]). These terms indicate the brutish nature of the process of diamond mining, which entails indiscriminately breaking the landscape with the use of sharp iron bars called *migwara* (*mugwara* being the singular version).

*Munda*, which means field, is the vernacular word that is used to refer to the diamond fields in Chiadzwa. The word *munda* has come to be associated with Chiadzwa to the extent that when the diamond miners and those who stay in the vicinity of Chiadzwa hear the word, they would usually interpret it as referring to Chiadzwa diamond fields, even though it has another meaning in daily usage. In daily usage, *munda* refers to a crop field, where people plant, grow, and harvest food crops, and, therefore, the metaphorically meaning is that Chiadzwa is a field where people would go and harvest diamonds and be able to earn a living. *Ngoda* is the term used to refer to black industrial diamonds, while *girazi*, which is derived from the word glass, refers to clear diamonds. There is also another category of diamonds which is referred to as *ngodaglass*. This kind of diamond resembles *ngoda* while, at the same time, has the characteristics of *girazi*. These types of diamonds are classified according to their value, *girazi* being the most valuable, followed by *ngodaglass*, and then *ngoda*. *Mutaka*, which refers to mud in everyday usage, is the concept used to refer to diamond ore. *Mutaka* is classified according to its perceived quality. High quality *mutaka* is called *chusta* and low quality *mutaka* is called *maravhiza*. When a miner fails to access diamonds, this is referred to as *kukabwa ngesample* (literary meaning being kicked by the sample). Every *Gweja* or *Gwejeleen* yearns to get hold of *girazi*, given its high weight to value ratio.

The diamond miners are a networked lot and have codes which they use amongst themselves to warn or encourage each other during their visits to the fields for extraction and in their day to day interaction, in and outside the fields. For instance, they use the popular shout: “*herere herere*” (A shout which warns fellow diggers to be on their guard and to prepare to flee) when they foresee or perceive looming danger. To keep each other alert, they encourage one another to consider their instincts when they are in the fields, hence the popular statement: “*Gweja nyumwawo*” (meaning that the diamond miner should use his intuitive abilities). Following Giddens, this language is categorized as having communicative intent given its thrust to inform fellow diamond miners to take action in the face of aggression from the security forces that are manning the diamond fields (Tucker, 1998).

When a miner successfully extracts diamonds, they would make the famous shout: “*yafa mari*” or “*yafa jangola*” (literally meaning that money has died and metaphorically meaning that one has managed to get diamonds and, therefore, money as well). *Jangola* is a nickname for a famous buyer who is known for paying well and in this case it is used as a metaphor for money. To these shouts the miners would add: *yafira rombe* (metaphorically meaning that the destitute has found money).

These shouts are demonstrations of excitement, but are also dangerous in that they attract the attention and envy of fellow miners and also of thugs.

Those who seek to restrict the activities of the diamond miners and to spy on them are sometimes circumvented via these idioms. It can, therefore, become easy for the diamond miners and dealers to communicate amongst themselves during transactions without easily attracting attention from members of the public or the police. This is because the kind of language, symbols, and signs are not common to the ordinary people who have not been to the diamond field or have not associated with the miners and dealers. The language which constitutes the linguistic market of the diamond fields and generally of the informal mining economy and community is considered as the key to addressing the collective social problems and challenges of diamond mining. In this way, it facilitates the reproduction of the informal diamond mining economy and community.

#### *The practice of diamond extraction*

The diamonds being mined in Chiadzwa falls under the rubric of alluvial diamonds. The unlicensed miners use rudimentary technology, such as digging iron rods (*migwara*). The type of mining categorically falls under artisan mining. The miners use iron rods to dig for ore (*mutaka*) and then load it into sacs. The sacs are designed in such a way that they are converted into satchels with arm bands in order to make them easily portable and to allow the miner to run. Running is an essential component of diamond mining given the presence of marauding police and army officers. The diamonds are in alluvial deposits, making them easily accessible to any individual with a sharp iron bar or a spade. All the miner needs is to be brave enough to circumvent, clash, or negotiate with the police and army officers who are protecting the fields. The accessibility and the modes of alluvial diamond mining make the total control and flushing out of informal miners by the police and army officers problematic.

The mining sprees are ephemeral and normally done at night. One mining spree does not normally exceed thirty minutes, given the danger of being gunned down, bitten by dogs, beaten, or arrested. Some of the miners would sometimes get into the fields early in the morning around 3 am or 4 am to avoid risky clashes with the police officers, who, by then together with their dogs, would be tired and sleepy. There are, however, miners who are brave enough to get into the fields during the day and this is called a *live show*. *Live show* is more dangerous than nocturnal mining because it is more visible to security personnel. To handle the looming dangers, *live show* miners would hide in bushes, pits, and tunnels to avoid being noticed by security officers. The fearful, elderly, and some child miners, who could not get into the diamond fields to mine, would sieve residues of alluvial soil and pebbles left by diggers in search of diamonds. Some would indeed get it. This exercise is called *mutsvare* in Shona.

Some of the respondents reported that the diamond fields and portions of land therein could be categorized differently depending on the quality and amount of diamond presumed to be present and also on other factors. In this case, the more diamonds that are presumed to be in some portions of the diamond fields, the tighter the army and police security and the riskier it is for miners. These portions were given names, some of which depict the miners' perceptions of the presence of

diamond therein. One of the spots that are presumed to be diamond rich is named after a prominent ruling party politician, *Mai Mujuru* (Human Rights Watch Report, 2009); and this symbolizes the general belief that rural party politicians are benefiting greatly from Chiadzwa diamonds. Such portions were under heavy army and police surveillance, but despite this, the miners found it economically rational to take the risk and try their luck there. One interviewee indicated: “My friend, where there is a policeman’s boot, there is money”. One portion in the field is called *Pamadhaka* (meaning muddy portion) and this is one of the portions where clear diamonds were initially extracted. Another portion is called *pamaBuhera* because it is dominated by people who come from Buhera district. Any person who is not from Buhera would invite the wrath of miners from Buhera if he/she is found mining there. This shows the role of ethnic identity in determining inclusion or exclusion from access to portions in the diamond fields. Another portion is named *Mufakose*, after one of the densely populated, high density suburbs in Harare. *Mufakose* is a portion which is perceived to have less diamonds compared to other portions and that is where most people who are scared of the police would dig because the levels of protection there are lower than in other portions of the field. There is one other portion called *paMbada* (Literally meaning where leopards stay). This name was derived from the fact that it was at this hilly place inside the fields where there used to be a market for goat meat where the diggers would buy and roast the meat. At *paMbada*, precedence has it that black industrial diamonds are dominant.

Although diamond mining is generally done haphazardly, it requires some knowledge of the mining history, topography, and soil textures and types for one to be able to predict the possibility of getting diamonds. Knowledge of the various portions in the fields is, therefore, essential. Mastery of such knowledge by diamond miners is indicative of the levels of education, experience, skill, or intellectual capacity of the miner(s); what Bourdieu calls cultural capital. The more someone had been getting into the fields, the more experienced they become in purposively sampling the best portions to dig and collect diamond ore. The other problem is that excavation is normally done at night, in the dark, making the process of purposive sampling difficult. The miners, therefore, sometimes depend on luck or mere chance in excavating diamond-rich spots. This was one of the sources of the reinforcement of the belief in guidance by spirits in the process of navigating for diamond in the fields.

The miners use their resources as tools deployable in facilitating their integration into the informal diamond economy. According to Giddens, resources are the material equipment and organizational capacities that people possess, which allows them to get things done (Tucker, 1998). In this case, economic capital, which takes the form of cash and pieces of rough diamond that the miners possess, constitutes the material resources, which could be used to bribe police and army officers to negotiate access into perceived diamond-rich spots in the fields. Social capital, which the diggers possess in the form of connections to some army and police officers, enhances their negotiation of access to perceived diamond-rich spots in the fields. Cultural capital of the miners is a resource deployed in the process of negotiating access. The diamond miners’ cultural capital takes the form of skills and knowledge, which bestows on them the verbal propensity and capacity to dialogically engage the security forces. Such skills facilitate the payment of bribes to some army and police officers to buy access. Bribing is, however, considered risky in that if other police officer(s) who are not part of the deal find the miner in the field, they would attack. These police officers were popularly called *mapurisa ereaction* (meaning police officers for reaction). They would arrest other police officers found accepting bribes or syndicating with the miners. Following Long’s

concept of interface, it is noteworthy that although the diamond miners are almost always in physical conflict with security forces, there is high possibility for striking common ground and negotiating or syndicating, which provides avenues for access to diamond, for both miners and security officers (Long, 2001).

The extraction of diamonds within the syndicates is characterized by the economics of equity. The benchmark of a syndicate is the principle of equity and joint responsibility for profit and loss. Each member of the syndicate is entitled to bring his/her sac of diamond ore to the common pool where the process of sieving and selection would take place in the presence of all members of the syndicate. The miners, through their repeated practices and the reproduction of their daily experiences in syndicates, created trust amongst themselves and this eased their cooperation and enhanced the stability and continuity of the diamond mining community. This kind of trust is conceptualized using Giddens' notion of ontological security. Ontological security refers to a belief in the continuity of self-identity over space and time and the reliability of social life (Tucker, 1998). Trust among syndicating miners is conceptualized is hinged on continued cooperation over time. The miners' quest for trust-based security explains the structure of the mining syndicates, which were composed of people who were friends or relatives or who came from the same villages or locations.

#### *Symbolic communities, communities-of-place and unlicensed mining*

Diamond miners are organized into syndicates. These syndicates are called *masindalo* in the colloquia of the miners (*masindalo* is plural and *sindalo* is singular). Syndicating is done mainly to meet the requirements for security and mutual support and for economic benefit. Syndicates would provide security through collective defense and vengeance against external foes such as security personnel and robbers. Economic benefits in syndicates would accrue in the form collective responsibility for profit and the collective cushioning against loss or failure to access diamonds. The arrangement is that a syndicate will do the alluvial extraction together and the proceeds will be shared equally. The marketing of the diamond is a joint venture and any refraction of the principle of collective responsibility and benefits over the exploits would fuel some conflict, which would sometimes turn bloody. However, records of such conflicts are rare given the mutual trust and shared values that normally characterize mining syndicates. It is in light of the high levels of cooperation that mining syndicates are classified as constituting "corporate groups". Corporate groups" are those that collectively produce, reproduce and defend themselves (See Kottak, 2002).

Syndicating is a product of the geopolitics of origin. In this case, people who come or originate from the same villages tend to belong to the same syndicates. For instance, miners who come from places such as Nhedziwa, Gonzoni, Chiramba, Nechitima, and Chakohwa, among others, tend to syndicate among themselves for purposes of collective defense and protection. Within these mega syndicates are sub-syndicates, which are constituted of smaller cliques of individuals who collectively engage in mining. These sub-syndicates are the ones which provide economic security and cater for the immediate needs of individual miners. Members of sub-syndicates would eat from the same pot and sleep on the same spot in the "base camps". In this case, syndicates fall under the tag of communities of place. Related to the geopolitics of origin are kinship and friendship, which constitute the bases for sub-syndicating. Original inhabitants of Chiadzwa do not join mega syndicates since security is not much of a problem for them because they are in their home ground and can easily handle

security problems by retreating to their homes or recalling members of their local communities for cooperation in the face of aggression or attacks. They are members of small syndicates that are simply based on kinship and friendship ties.

Diamond miners stay in hills in the vicinity of the diamond fields. These places are their “base camps”, and in the language of diamond miners, these places are called *kumaBase*. There are many “base camps” in Chiadzwa, although there are five main “base camps” that are notable. The biggest “base camp” is called “*Padhibhi*” (meaning; at the dip-tank, because there is a dilapidated dip-tank closer to the base camp). This “base camp” is located on the Eastern side of the diamond fields in *Makate hill*, closer to *Chishingwi Primary School*. The “base camp” is home to people coming from Mutare South, Mutare Central, Chimanimani, and Chipinge, among other places. It is strategically located near boreholes and this helps to ease the water woes that normally face diamond miners. The second “base camp”, which is on the Eastern side of the diamond fields closer to *Makate hill*, is called *pa24 hours* (this name is derived from the fact that people would be awake and in operation for 24 hours). It is a hive of business activity where people buy goods and services at any time of the day. Another major “base camp” is located on the Western side of the diamond fields in Gamunorwa village in the area around *Singwizi River*. In this “base camp”, there is a serious lack of water and inhabitants rely on *mafuku*, which is water that they burrow from the sandy riverbed of *Singwizi River*. The miners would sometimes buy water, which is sold at a price that ranged from 5 rand (South Africa currency) to one US dollar per 20 liters. This “base camp” is home to people from areas such as Buhera, Odzi, and Marange Clinic. Another “base camp”, which is located on the Western side of the fields, is called *gomo remapotoatoes* (meaning hill of potatoes). This is because the hill is full of small stones which look like potatoes. This is a transitional “base camp” for miners where they camp ephemerally before they get into the diamond fields to mine. It is one of the highest points located closer to the diamond fields. This highest point is called *paTV* (meaning at the television). One other “base camp” is called *Mbare*. It is occupied by people from Buhera, Odzi, and some from the Marange Clinic area. The taxonomy of these “base camps”, indicates that the miners constitute communities of place (Vergunst, 2006). Communities of place are those based on the territoriality of membership. Therefore, the geopolitics of origin plays an important role as the basis for cooperation and interaction within the “base camps” and in the diamond fields.

There is a sense of community among the miners, in general, and it is manifestant especially during conflicts with external foes, such as security officers and thugs called *Magombiro*. The miners become a united lot when they engage in violent clashes with security officers during their alluvial extraction sprees. In this case, one of the litmus tests for the collectivity of the *Gweja* communities is the adoption of codes, such as *herere herere*, for giving each other warnings and coordinating the alluvial extraction sprees.

The Bourdieuan concept of hexis is useful in understanding the symbolic communities of diamond miners. Diamond miners’ deportments, manners, stances, gaits, and gestures constitute their hexis and are an expression of their habitus. In the diamond fields, miners have a dress code. They normally wear vests, shorts, and trouser, some of which are tattered and are used during diamond extraction activities. The miners are normally dusty and scruffy and this deportment is inevitably necessitated by the nature of their job that involves working in dusty and rough terrains. Striking characteristics of a *Gweja* is the hairstyle, which is normally either afro hair or dread locks, and the dusty, ragged clothes. These characteristics have come

to be viewed as the trademarks of the informal diamond miner(s). However, *Magweja* would mutate to a different mood when they are out of the field. Some of them smartly dress in jeans and t-shirts. Such dressing would earn them honor, respect, and envy among their peers as it would be indicative of their possession of money. It becomes a form of symbolic capital, a symbol of success in diamond mining activities.

The diamond miners' dress code and style invites the attention of police and army officers on roadblocks and checkpoints that were mounted intensively by the military and police from October 2008 to around February 2009. The police and army officers would use their discretion in their searches, targeting those people whom they suspected to be diamond miners and such suspicions were based on stereotypes of hair style, dress code, gait, and gesture, among other styles. These roadblocks resulted in most of the miners walking long distances to the diamond fields using shortcuts and routes that enabled them to evade police and army censorship. The searches were not just confined to roadblocks, but also targeted the passenger train that plies the Harare – Mutare route, under the banner of an operation code named *operation urikuendepi?* (Meaning: operation where are you going?). One indicator of a *Gweja* is the possession of a sharp iron bar and, if one was to be found in possession of this, they would be regarded as a (potential) diamond miner and would be taken in for interrogation. Dress code and style became a mark of identity for informal diamond miners. Following Schutz, it can be maintained that there is a stock of knowledge which typifies and categorizes some dress codes, deportments, gaits, manners, and styles as a characteristic of an informal diamond miner (Wallace & Wolf, 1991) These typifications were based on stereotypical presumptions, which would result in the harassment of motorists and passengers, some of whom were innocent members of the public traveling along roads in and around Mutare and Chiadzwa.

The sense of togetherness and belonging to the diamond mining communities are reinforced in the insignia of song. The miners would resort to song during clashes with security forces. Such songs reinforce the solidarity of miners in the face of attacks by police and army officers. The songs that are usually sung are those indicating the bravery of miners. One such song is a reconfigured version of a song that was sung by the members of the guerilla army, which fought in Zimbabwe's liberation war. The following are the selected words of one of the songs:

“Mother and father do not mourn when I die because of the war. I chose to come to the field [referring to the diamond field]...”

Such songs have the effect of strengthening the miners and uniting them for their common cause. The collective singing of a song is an indication that the miners' community and is a symbolically constructed one. Songs are one of the emblems that glued miners together in the face of possible death in the process of attempting to extract diamonds. The collective singing of songs is a social practice which fosters and displays a sense of togetherness or community belonging among miners. It is part of the host of other social practices, which are repeated by miners with the result that they are habituated and routinized. Routinization and habituation of social practices enhance the collective integration of miners into the informal diamond community (Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984).

The miners' styles and social practices within and outside the diamond fields correspond to their belonging to a symbolically constructed community, to which membership is based on the acquirement of cultural tastes and styles that coincide with

being an informal diamond miner. In light of this, Vergunst (2006) notes that the strength of cultural symbols is derived from the fact that they are defined in ways that enable those people who are identified with them to distinguish themselves from others. Apart from constituting symbolically constructed communities, informal diamond miners are regarded as collectively constituting of a community-of-place given their geographical attachment to Chiadzwa. Thus, the diamond miners are both symbolically constructed communities and communities-of-place.

The concept of symbolic violence explains the modes of involuntary integration of diamond miners into becoming members of the mining communities; adopting styles and norms that have become the defining characteristics of a diamond miner. In this case, the lifestyle in the diamond fields can be considered as reflective of an “informal diamond mining culture” which is embodied in tastes and styles of the miners. For one to survive as a *Gweja* or *Gwejeleen*, they have to endure secondary socialization; socialization into the cultural mores of diamond mining. Secondary socialization is the re-socialization of a human being that takes place after childhood. It takes place in the diamond fields to orient the new digger. Howard (1989) defines socialization as the general process by which people acquire their views and values from others. Secondary socialization is that which takes place after childhood and is a continuous and lifelong process (Kottak, 2002), as is the case with socialization into a culture of informal diamond mining. Such kind of secondary socialization involves the exercise of symbolic violence. Symbolic violence, according to Bourdieu, is the imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). The exercise of symbolic violence in the diamond mines took the form of the imprinting of *Gweja* style or *Gwejeleen* style cultural mores into new recruits in the diamond fields and reinforcing such mores among the already in-field miners. These styles would enable the diamond miners to endure the roughness of the diamond fields. One strategy to handle the roughness of the diamond fields is to resort to the use of drugs, such as cannabis (called *mbanje* in Shona language), to divest oneself of soberness and gather the guts to get into dreaded spots in the diamond fields. The senior diamond miners are the ones who take charge of effecting the integration of new recruits into the field of informal diamond mining. Most such senior diggers recruit their friends, neighbors, and relatives, who would be attracted by the prospects of gaining access to the United States dollar. Social networks are, therefore, an integral aspect of the informal diamond mining economy (Degenne & Forsae, 1999; Mitchell, 1969).

It is, however, important to note that not everyone who throngs the diamond fields becomes fully integrated into the communities of diamond miners. There are people who make some brief visits to the diamond fields to try their luck and then would leave as soon as they get rough diamonds or fail to get it. Most of them would be mesmerized and scared by the frequency of gun fire, attacks by police dogs, and the continued clashes with army and police officers. Some would continuously stay in the “base camps” because of fear and would leave the fields without doing the mining.

The army and police could be regarded as constituting a community or communities in themselves. One of the emblems of their identities is their regalia. These communities are pitted against the diamond mining communities. However, the community of security forces is not homogeneous; it is muddled by some tensions and contestations. There is silent and salient tension between police and army personnel, which is characterized by the hierachization of authority in which the

latter regard themselves as superior to the former. Conflicts also ensue within each of the categories of the security forces. Within the police, there are tensions purportedly arising between regular police officers syndicating with diggers or accepting bribes and the “reaction police”. Regular police officers are those who are almost always around the diamond fields, while reaction police are those who would come briefly for assignments to chase away informal miners; employing more lethal force than the regular police. Likewise, the army is not, in itself, a homogeneous entity as reflected in tales detailing conflicting interests between senior officers and junior officers over access to the gemstone and the execution of security provisioning duties.

### *Violence, Thuggery, and Exchange*

Chiadzwa diamond fields are an arena of conflict, some of which turns bloody. The most pronounced form of hostility and violence is that between and among diamond miners, thugs (*magombiro*), hawkers, diamond buyers, and police and army officers.

One form of violence, which sometimes turns deadly, is that between informal diamond miners and *magombiro* (*Gombiro* is the singular version). *Magombiro* are predatory gangs who prey on the diamond miners and buyers for money and rough diamonds. These gangs are usually composed of people who are very muscular and heavily armed with weapons, such as iron bars, guns, and knives. The *Magombiro* phenomenon is rampant and the miners are always on guard and on the lookout. As a security, protective, or retributive measure, the diggers would team up against *Magombiro* and engage in some bloody fights that result in some deaths being recorded. There is a tale of a *Gombiro* who was killed and dissected by members of a mining syndicate after he robbed them of their big clear diamonds and swallowed it. The miners teamed up against him and mutilated him. After dissecting the *Gombiro*, they squeezed their diamond from his gastro-intestinal track. *Magombiro* were also involved in some skirmishes with the police. Some of the interviewees and discussants reported cases of gun shoot outs between *Magombiro* and security forces.

The *Magombiro* phenomenon is a complex one. The definition and identification of a *Gombiro* (the singular version of *Magombiro*) is intricate given the fluid and oscillatory identities of *magombiro*. Inevitably, the types of *Magombiro* are variable and mutate within the following classificatory categories: miners as thugs, thugs as miners, buyers as thugs, and thugs as buyers. In line with this taxonomy, there are part-time *Magombiro* and full-time *Magombiro*, although this distinction is blurred. Miners as thugs are those whose primary objective is to dig for diamonds, but are forced into thugging by desperation emanating from failure to get the diamonds. Thugs as miners are those that pretend to be engaging or do engage in diamond mining, although their primary objective is to rob for money, diamonds, or unsieved alluvial soil and pebbles from miners. Buyers as thugs are those whose primary objective is to buy rough diamonds, but would take advantage of any opportunity to rob diamond miners of their rough diamonds and money. Thugs as buyers are those whose primary objective is to rob and steal from the miners under the pretext of being buyers. One striking feature of the *Magombiro* phenomenon is that there were indications by some discussants and interviewees that some members of the army and police would turn into *Magombiro* using official guns while wearing civilian clothes. Some security forces would search diamond miners and their homes and confiscate possessions including money, rough diamonds, mobile phones, furniture, and clothes,

most of the times without search warrants. Anecdotal evidence indicates that these loot this confiscated property for personal benefit instead of surrendering to the state. The confiscation of property from suspected diamond miners was undertaken under an operation tag-named *operation wakazviwona kupi?* (Meaning: operation where did you get these?). These dynamics compound the definition of who exactly *Magombiro* are and this further makes it difficult for miners to identify *magombiro*. There are, however, a few who have been identified by miners and are known to be full-time *magombiro*.

The perceptions of *Magombiro* by informal diamond miners are based on ethno cartographies. *Magombiro* are mostly and normally perceived to be those people who come from nearby areas, such as Buhera, Chipinge, Chimanimani, Sakubva Township in Mutare, and Marange. These people target people from far off places who are not very familiar with the local environment and local languages. *Mazezuru* are the most vulnerable because of their lack of conversance in the local languages and their unique tone. *Magombiro* could easily identify and attack them and get away with it without being identified and so there would be less risks of vengeance. However, some *Magombiro* come from far off places in parts of Matabeleland and Mashonaland. There are stereotypes of the levels of cruelty and ruthlessness of *Magombiro*, based on constructions of ethno cartographies. In these cartographies, *Magombiro* of *Ndebele* origins are perceived as the cruelest. *Ndebele* people are those that come mainly from Matabeleland Province in Zimbabwe.

*Magombiro* do not just employ violence as the only means of accessing diamonds and money, but they also deploy deception and fraud. *Magombiro* would also manufacture fake diamonds (which are called *zvidhura* in the local language). They would use pieces of clear bottles of coca cola to manufacture fake clear diamonds, which they would then sell to gullible buyers. The *magombiro* use other forms of trickery, such as pretence to prey on unsuspecting miners or hawkers. One method that is well confirmed is the pretension by *Magombiro* to be police officers during the night where they would stop miners who would be exiting the diamond fields with diamond ore sacs in their backs. The unsuspecting diamond miners would panic and stampede and in the process, some would lose their sacs of diamond ore and the *Magombiro* would then collect the ore to sieve for diamonds. A related strategy was used against hawkers. The *Magombiro* would pretend to be running away from pursuing police officers and would run in the direction of the selling places of hawkers. The hawkers would then panic and stampede leaving some of their valuable goods and then *Magombiro* would collect it for personal use.

Gambling is one of the systems of exchange that have become popular among diamond miners. Diamond miners play gambling games including *makasi* (the use of play card games to do gambling). Gambling of this nature takes place in business centers around Chiadzwa. Some of the shopping centers where gambling among diamond miners was observed are Chipindirwi, Muchena, Marange Clinic, and Chakohwa. The gambling activities are a means of exchange and redistribution of cash resources emanating from diamond mining. It is associated with a lot of rituals involving the cleansing of the players before they engage in the gambling activities.

#### *Death and risk-taking*

The diamond miners have a casual perception of death given that they view themselves as always exposed to it. *Magweja* indicated that they would witness death frequently during times when the security officers engaged in some shoot outs

against them. There was this popular saying among the diamond miners: “*Isu takafa kare*” (We are already dead beings). This casual perception of death explains the level of recklessness and bravery amongst the *Magweja* who would dare get into the diamond fields despite the heavy presence of armed police and army officers. The reason for some *Magweja* to view themselves as dead beings is because they regard themselves as having no choice, since poverty for them is like death. One of the *Magweja* had this to say during a conversation: “There is no choice here. If you do not get into the field, what do you do?” Another discussant noted: “Here people just die. A human being is just like chicken”.

These narratives indicate that death is part of everyday life and is not feared amongst the miners. Some of the miners who died of illness or from gun shootings were left lying and decomposing on the ground for many days and some would be taken to mortuaries. Those taken to mortuaries would have their bodies claimed by their relatives or would simply be buried by the state if no relative turns up to claim the body. There was also the practice of mass burial, which is reported in findings by the Human Rights Watch Report (2009). The miners are used to seeing and passing by corpses lying on the ground in and around the diamond fields and, for them, it is something ordinary.

The attitudes and perceptions of the diamond miners challenge the sacrosanct way in which death is handled in most Zimbabwean communities. These demystify the myths surrounding death, as it is viewed as a common aspect of everyday life in the diamond fields. I argue that in the diamond fields there is a deritualization of death. According to Cohen (2002), deritualization entails a decline in sacred ceremonialism. What this means is that funerary and mortuary rites characteristic of mainstream rural society in Zimbabwe are not being fully observed in the diamond fields. Exemplifying the lack of observance of funerary rites is the burial of some corpses in mass graves, instead of the normal case where an individual corpse would be buried in its own grave. There are significant oversights over the proper conduct of funerary and mortuary rites in Chiadzwa. This is partly because the diamond fields are a melting pot of different personalities and cultures. The violence and volatility of the environment also makes it impossible for miners to properly engage in the customary mortuary rites that are conducted soon after the death of an individual. In most cases, the death of one member of a syndicate will be reported to the responsible relatives, who could then claim the body from the mortuary or, if they stay in Chiadzwa, they would collect it from the scene of death. There are reports of the presence of skeletons of unburied individuals in Chiadzwa and it is this category of the deceased who just die without normal mortuary rites following their death. Such deaths are not accompanied by the normal rituals, which involve the preparation of the corpse and its subsequent burial.

Working conditions in the diamond fields are dangerous and unhealthy (Sachikonye, 2009; 2007). Unfortunately, miners would sustain injuries from dog-bites and from the firing from mossberg shotguns (*zvifefe*) by police officers. There is also the danger of being beaten up by baton sticks by police officers. Some miners would get into mining tunnels (popularly known as *matonera*), and this is a dangerous venture because some of the tunnels would collapse, causing death and injury. All these health challenges are worsened by the long distances to clinics and hospitals. The clinics, which serve the Chiadzwa area, including the *Chishingwi Clinic*, which is about 3 kilometers away from the diamond fields, and the *Mukwada clinic*, which is about 4 kilometers away from the diamond fields, have challenges of inadequate drugs and personnel. The nearest hospitals are Marange hospital, which is about 40 kilometers away from Chiadzwa, and Mutare General Hospital, which is in

the city of Mutare and is 100 kilometers away. Access to health service by miners is therefore a challenge. However, the miners devise mechanisms of enhancing access to health services despite the difficult circumstances. For example, when a member of a syndicate is seriously injured, all syndicate members would pool financial resources to ferry him/her to hospital. Syndicate members would also provide therapies to some mild injuries and ailments. For instance, they would squeeze pellets out of the bodies of those who would have been victims of police from mossberg shotgun shootings.

The diamond miners live in conditions that can be described as appalling. They have no shelter. They sleep in the open in their “base camps” and lack access to the most basic of social amenities, such as water and toilet. This poses a serious health hazard. The miners use the bush for a toilet and would get their water from the burrowing of sandy riverbeds of Singwizi River. This water is not safe for drinking. The lack of amenities and the appalling hygienic standards at the “base camps” proved to be a time bomb between November 2008 and March 2009, when there was a cholera outbreak that left many dead, including some police and army officers. The long distance to the nearest hospital and clinics made it difficult to handle the outbreak. The cholera outbreak, coupled with the army crackdown, resulted in the diamond miners dying in big numbers. Those who live in *Makate/Padhibhi* “base camp” are the only ones who have access to borehole water that is considered clean. Most of the diamond miners considered staying in Chiadzwa as like staying in the bush. One of the participants indicated: “When we are here, we are animals”.

#### *Miners' consumption patterns*

The diamond miners have a general culture of “over consumption” and this has trapped most of them into a cycle of diamond mining, in which they oscillate between the diamond fields and nearby towns and cities. When the diamond miners have money, some of them engage in alcohol drinking sprees in the surrounding business centers, such as Marange Clinic, Muchena, Chakohwa, Nhedziwa, Hot Springs, Mupedzanyota, Nyanyadzi, and Birchenough Bridge, among others. The miners also buy some modern paraphernalia, like jeans and T-Shirts, and some electric gadgets, like radios and television sets. The possession of such paraphernalia is the yardstick of the success of the diamond miner(s). Very few have an inclination toward saving or investing in profitable enterprises. There are also a lot of casual sexual activities that go on in the diamond fields as commercial sex workers have thronged the diamond fields to provide transactional sexual services to the diamond miners. Obtaining the sexual services of commercial sex workers is an arena of struggles and conflicts among the *Magweja*, who compete to obtain the sexual services of the sex workers who are deemed as fashionable. At the same time, commercial sex workers compete to provide sexual services to *Magweja*, who are considered to possess more cash than others. This pose challenges, given the rampancy of HIV/AIDS and STDs in the face of the general sexual slackness of the *Magweja* and their high propensity towards risk taking. During their drinking sprees outside the diamond fields, some of the miners normally splash their money by buying beer in bulk. In fact, it suffices to indicate that they engage in feasts of roasted meat (called *gochi gochi* in local colloquia) and intoxicating themselves with alcohol. It is in such drinking sprees that the miners enjoy the company of sex workers.

The informal diamond economy is a field and is defined by stakes which include cultural goods (lifestyle), cash, rough diamonds, prestige, and power (Wacquant, 1989). The lifestyles of stakeholders within the field of the informal diamond

economy constitute the economy of cultural goods. This economy is characterized by different aesthetic choices miners make. The *Magweja* juxtapose themselves against some social categories composed of those in other professions, such as teachers, who used to be the benchmarks of success in rural communities before their livelihoods were eroded by the national economic hardships facing Zimbabwe. One statement which appeared to be popular among *Magweja* when they engage in drinking sprees in beer halls was: “We are galloping alcohol as you teachers long to have it as well”. The diamond miners would drink clear beer in the form of brands, such as castle lager, lion lager, and golden pilsner, and shunned those who consumed opaque beer (called *masese* in Shona). The consumption of cultural goods (alcohol included) signify status and is a particular case of competition in which minute distinctions of taste become the basis for social judgment (Bourdieu, 1984). The defining capitals of the informal diamond economy are economic, symbolic, and cultural. Being in possession of economic capital, which is evaluated in terms of the possession of rough diamonds, cash, and assets including cars, houses, and fashionable clothes, among others, is one of the defining characteristics of the informal diamond economy and a measure of success. The possession of symbolic capital, which is the prestige and honor acquired by those in the fraternity of the informal diamond economy, is evaluated on the basis of the possession of economic capital.

The cultural transformation and social mobility emanating from the use of proceeds from diamond mining and the attendant tastes and styles, which sometimes find expression in *hexis* (body disposition), is what constitutes cultural capital. The desire to better ones’ lifestyle is one of the driving factors behind diamond mining. The importance of attainment of economic capital as a conduit of access to cultural capital is epitomized in the hope of most diamond miners to progress from being miners to being buyers and to partake of the consumption styles characteristic of being a diamond buyer. Buyers are known for possession of cars, including luxury ones. Some diggers end up having a dual identity as *Magweja* and buyers and these are called *Magweja-buyer*. The acquiring of economic, cultural, symbolic, and social capitals is an arena of contestations and struggles, where each of the stakeholders seeks to profit maximally and outmaneuver competitors. The defining capitals of the informal diamond economy are both a product and producer of the habitus and social practices, which are specific and appropriate to the informal diamond economy and its mining community.

#### *Gender dynamics in the diamond fields*

The diamond fields are a highly masculine arena. This is because they are associated with a lot of risk and such risk is regarded as unsuitable for women since they are viewed as fragile beings by *Magweja* and other men and women in mainstream society. Despite this, it is worth-noting that there is a heavy presence of women and girls as miners and commercial sex workers in and around the diamond fields.

Female diamond miners (*Magwejeleen*) are depicted as inferior to their male counterparts. *Magwejeleen* are considered as dependent on the *Gweja* for success in diamond mining or in accessing cash. A *Gwejeleen* is normally expected to join a syndicate, which would be composed of *Magweja*, as a measure for economic and social security. In this case, a *Gwejeleen* would provide some services, such as cooking for the male miners and sometimes providing sexual services for them in exchange for access to diamonds or cash. Getting into the diamond fields to dig is considered risky for the females, hence the easiest way to gain access to diamonds and to the benefits accruing thereof is to join a male dominated syndicate. The girls

and women who thronged the diamond fields are generally viewed by the *Magweja* as of loose morals. They are also vulnerable to sexual harassment, which is normally perpetrated by male miners and male security officers. In fact, the females in the diamond fields are viewed as sexual objects and are exposed to a lot of sexual vulgar. *Magwejeleen* are given derogatory names such as *Magongi* (sluts) and *Mahure* (whores/ prostitutes). Sexual vulgar is, in itself, a form of symbolic violence which forcibly inculcates the production of a negative sexual self-perception and enacts and reinforces identities of whores or sluts among females patronizing the diamond fields. By simply being in the diamond fields and falling short of the expectation of domesticity, which is associated with female sexual purity, *Magwejeleen* are typified as morally loose and sexually slackened.

The gender dynamics in the diamond fields are generally characterized by hegemonic masculinities and muted femininities. The sexuality of a *Gwejeleen* is a resource usable in gaining access to the diamond fields and to cash and rough diamonds. There are indications that some female miners transact sex for the granting by security officers, of access to rich diamond spots in the fields. The sexuality of a female member of a mining syndicate is also a resource that could be appropriated and deployed by male members of a syndicate who would trade off the sexual services of a female syndicate member to security officers for the granting of access to presumed diamond-rich spots in the fields to all or some syndicate members.

Despite these hegemonic masculinities, there are girls and women who could get into the fields and do their mining without necessarily trading off their sexuality for access to the fields or the gemstone. Such female are, however, regarded as masculine by their male counterparts and also regarded themselves as such. This is another version of the appropriation of femininity or femalehood through defining females in male terms and is, therefore, reflective of the hegemony of masculinities. The female diggers disdained some men who are afraid to get into the diamond fields to mine. One female miner, during a conversation, said: “Some men are like women. They cannot even get into the field where we women are getting into”. While female miners are regarded as masculine, men who are scared to get into get into the diamond fields are labeled as feminine. The diamond fields are arenas where conventional notions of masculinity and femininity, in which women are viewed as weak, spineless and fragile and men as brave and proactive are problematized. In light of this, Lovell (2000) indicates that there is the existence of a masculine and a feminine habitus, the former falling under the conventional expectations of male behaviors and dispositions and the latter of female behaviors and dispositions concretized notions of the existence of a feminine and masculine habitus are questioned, given the fluidity of masculine and feminine dispositions characteristic of *Magweja* and *Magwejeleen*. The fluidity of the masculine and feminine habitus among the diamond miners reinforce Lovell’s (2000) argument that there is the possibility of having the existence of a cross-gender habitus.

#### *The phenomenon of child miners*

Children, including some as young as nine years, also swarmed the diamond fields to try their luck. Most of the child diamond miners (*Magwejana*) are male and this mirrors societal beliefs of ideals femininity and masculinity and its quest to tame female children into the domestic sphere. Some of these children play truancy to school in order to be in the diamond fields. One child indicated, “Education is now useless. We have many teachers here, but they have no money. They are suffering. Some of them have turned into diamond miners”. Some of the children in the diamond mines are engaging in drug

smoking and alcohol taking. One of the children indicated: “I take cannabis because it helps me to be brave when I get into the field”.

These children syndicate with their brothers, sisters, and parents. The elder members of syndicates take advantage of the children who are normally not arrested or beaten up by the security officers because they easily attract sympathy. One discussant indicated: “Children are good to work with because they are daring. They do not panic”. The daringness of the children is probably a product of their lack of understanding of the implications of gun fire and death. Some elderly syndicate members indicated that one advantage in favor of working with children is that they have nimble fingers and sharp eyesight, which is important in the sieving of alluvial soil and pebbles in search of diamonds. Some children in the vicinity of Chiadzwa would double their roles as diamond miners and as school-going pupils. They will be in the fields at night and at school during the day. This is certainly a burden on the part of these children. In sharing of the proceeds from the diamonds, the elder members of the syndicates who are normally parents, brothers, and sisters would take more than the children under the pretext of being custodians of household resources. Child miners (*Magwejana*), therefore, play an important role in contributing toward household fiscus.

The active presence of children in the diamond fields substantiates the claim that childhood is a social construction (James & Prout, 1990). In this case, socially constructed notions of children as immature and fragile beings are warranted by their economic dependence and school-going status and are questioned (James & Prout, 1990). The involvement of children in the diamond fields raises questions regarding the abuse of children and their involvement in child labor. However, notions of children’s rights and child labor are problematic in applying them in a context where the local people’s perceptions of childhood are at variance with the conception of a child that forms the basis of the very notions of child labor and children’s rights. The scenario of child miners (*Magwejana*) indicates that children are not necessarily fragile beings, but are capable and active economic beings that can be treated as such.

## **CONCLUSION**

The dynamics of informal diamond mining activities in Chiadzwa constitute a culture; a lifestyle for the miners. It is a lifestyle of bravery, fear, contestations, mute and salient conflicts and deceit. While this kind of lifestyle could be viewed as a deviation from conventional cultures or from mainstream society and economy, it could be rightly viewed as a replica of the cultural and political contradictions bedeviling Zimbabwean societies and communities. Given the diverse and mutating cultural representations and practices in and of the diamond fields of Chiadzwa, it can be concluded that the diamond fields are an arena where culture is produced, reproduced, and redefined in various ways. The new cultural forms and identities emerging as a result of the “informal diamond economy” in Zimbabwe have had a lot of knock on effects on the overall perceptions of social and economic success. The attendant lifestyles are based on dichotomous notions of luck, thrill on the one hand and violence, threats as well as fear on the other hand. These dichotomous lifestyles are a reality pervading the social structures of communities in Zimbabwe, particularly those which have been directly affected by the flight or flux of people into the diamond fields of Chiadzwa. This culture of informal diamond mining reflects the overall socio-economic and

political stresses faced by Zimbabwe, as people are cornered into risky behavior in their quest to survive the economic meltdown and socio-political fragility characteristics of Zimbabwe.

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