

## The uses of social capital among Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg

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This paper analyses the role of family and church networks as sources of social capital in aiding migration, settlement and social integration of Zimbabwean migrants. It also shows how these networks sometimes inhibit migrant integration into the host community. The study was carried out among Zimbabwean migrants in Tembisa and Kempton Park in Johannesburg. This study adds to the growing literature on bonding and bridging social capital while at the same time revealing how social capital is both a blessing and blight to Zimbabwean migrants. This paper makes an important contribution to the literature by arguing that while sometimes migrant social integration is hindered by the activities of the host population (e.g. xenophobic attitudes among South African locals), in some cases, the migrants themselves could hinder their own social integration through their migrant social networks. I argue that this is an unintended consequence of migrant family and religious networks.

**Keywords:** church; family; social capital; social networks; migrants; Zimbabweans

### 1. Introduction

This paper traces the origins of the concept of social capital and shows how it has been used to understand the lives of migrants in host communities. It then discusses how Zimbabwean migrants use social capital in the form of family and church networks. It argues that these networks help migrants access jobs, houses, marriage partners, legal and illegal documents, etc. However, this paper reveals the problems of the same social networks in constraining and disadvantaging the lives of migrant Zimbabweans.

This paper is based on findings of a qualitative research that was conducted in 2012 among 58 (33 male and 25 female) Zimbabweans living in Tembisa (low-income area) and Kempton Park (high-income area) in Johannesburg. These were selected using snowballing while the life history type of interview was used. All the interviews were recorded on audio and later on transcribed by the researcher. The research participants had been in South Africa for at least six months. Most migrants (81%) had been in Johannesburg for more than 5 years. These Zimbabweans speak two main Zimbabwean languages: Shona and Ndebele.

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## 2. Background

### 2.1. Defining social capital

Bourdieu (cited in Daly and Silver 2008, 543) defines social capital as:

... the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – in other words, membership in a group that provides each of its members with a backing of the collectively owned capital ... a credential which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word.

Another definition of social capital is given by Woolcock and Narayan (2000, 225) as simply referring to norms and networks that enable people to act collectively. Portes (1998, 6) highlights that social capital refers to the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social ties. Portes and Landolt (2000, 531) outline three ways that social capital has been defined: as a source of social control, a source of family mediated benefits and a source of resources mediated by non-family networks. Portes and Sensenbrenner define social capital as ‘those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the economic goals and goal seeking behaviour of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward the economic sphere’ (1993, 1323). Wilson (2006) traces social capital to arguments by Durkheim on mechanical and organic solidarity. He reveals how mechanical solidarity leads to the formation of a community, while organic solidarity leads to the formation of a society. These also lead to different outcome in terms of social capital where mechanical solidarity leads to bonding social capital while bridging social capital is an outcome of organic solidarity which does not depend on individual likeness/sameness. Putnam (cited in Wilson 2006, 349) distinguishes between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ forms of social capital where bonding refers to the connections between like-minded people and therefore reinforces homogeneity, while bridging capital refers to connections between heterogeneous groups.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) argue that there are four main views to understanding social capital. These are the communitarian view, the networks view, the institutional and the synergy view. The communitarian view equates social capital with local organizations such as clubs, associations and civic groups. It states that social capital is inherently good and that more is better (Woolcock and Narayan 2000, 229). The networks view emphasizes the importance of intra-groups (horizontal) as well as intergroup (vertical) relations among groups and firms. Studies of such networks have dwelt on strong and weak ties or bonding and bridging ties. Granovetter (1973), Burt (1994), Portes (1998) and Massey (1990) are classified as authors falling within this category. The institutional view of social capital contends that the vitality of community networks and civil society is largely the product of the political legal and institutional environment. This means that social capital is constrained largely as a result of the formal institutions that undergird it. This is the line of argument pursued by Fukuyama (1995) and Ostrom (2000). The synergy view combines arguments from the networks and institutional perspectives. Its popular notions are those of complementarity and embeddedness (e.g. Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Kloosterman and Rath 2001; Korinek, Entwisle, and Jampaklay 2005).

### 2.2. Benefits of social capital

There are clear benefits of social capital in the form of social networks which help the settlement of a new migrant in the receiving country. They lower the costs of migration and offer psycho-social support to the new migrant. Migrant networks help with the acquisition of information on the migration process itself, in the host country networks aid in providing employment, accommodation, food, security and even capital for businesses (Menjivar 1995, 1997;

Dolfin and Genicot 2010; McGregor 2010). They may also serve as conduits for information which can ultimately lead to further migration (Collyer 2005; Korinek, Entwisle, and Jampaklay 2005).

Religious networks whether within the community or between communities have been viewed as lessening social exclusion and emphasizing Christian universalism thus creating alternative forms of belonging other than ethnic or kin groups (Levitt 2003; Glick Schiller, Calgar, and Goldbrandsen 2006). Aydin, Fischer, and Frey (2010, 742) discovered that socially excluded persons reported significantly higher levels of religious behaviours than comparable non-excluded individuals. This was said to be a result of the desire by all human beings to be accepted and create stable and lasting connections with the social world. However, Akcapar (2006) showed how religious networks were manipulated as a migration strategy such that rather than facilitating inclusion in the receiving country, religious conversion increased the chances of migration from transit countries.

### 2.3. *The downside of social capital*

A growing body of knowledge has made the realization that social capital must not be romanticized as being always advantageous and positive, but it needs to be viewed as a double-edged sword cutting both ways or having both the 'sunny and dark side'. Social capital in the form of social networks presents both benefits and blights (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993; Menjivar 1995, 1997; Hagan 1998; Portes 1998; Adler and Kwon 2000; Lin 2000; Ostrom 2000; Portes and Landolt 2000; Woolcock and Narayan 2000; Burt 2004; Akcapar 2006; Wilson 2006; Daly and Silver 2008; de Haas 2010).

Sometimes bonds to migrant networks and families may lead to co-ethnic exploitation, especially for the extremely marginalized members of the group thus entrenching them in never-ending financial and emotional indebtedness (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994 cited in Hagan 1998; Portes and Landolt 2000). Social networks may present both benefits and costs. Woolcock and Narayan (2000) highlight that while social networks may provide valuable services such as childminding and emergency cash, they may also place considerable noneconomic claims on members' sense of obligation and commitment. They further argue that:

group loyalties may be so strong that they isolate members from information about employment opportunities, foster a climate of ridicule toward efforts to study and work hard or siphon off hard-won assets (say to support recent immigrants from the home country).

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) cite a study by Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) which revealed cases of prosperous Asian immigrants who anglicized their names in order to divest themselves of communal obligations to subsequent cohorts. Another example is the successful Balinese businessmen studied by Geertz (cited in Portes and Landolt 2000, 533) who:

were constantly assaulted by job and loan seeking kinsmen on the strength of community norms enjoining mutual assistance. The result was to stunt the growth of business initiatives and eventually bankrupt them.

Portes and Landolt (2000) highlight four negative consequences of social capital: exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms and downward levelling norms. Terms such as negative social capital (Portes and Landolt 2000) and perverse social capital (Woolcock and Narayan 2000) reveal the costs and dangers of social capital as it creates bondage rather than bridges for individuals to use to get ahead. Powell and Smith-

Doerr (cited in Adler and Kwon 2000, 106) succinctly state that 'the ties that bind may also turn into ties that blind'.

Granovetter (1973, 376) refers to this as encapsulation where the individual's network is composed of only those individuals directly known to the person. While this is a strong tie, it breeds local cohesion and leads to overall societal fragmentation. He therefore views weak intergroup ties as more progressive as they lead to the manipulation of networks from different groups because some of these weak ties act as bridges between different networks. He argues that no strong tie can be a bridge. The strength of an interpersonal tie 'is determined by the combination of the amount of time, emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and the reciprocal services which characterise the tie' (Granovetter 1973, 361). Therefore, strong ties are characterized by high levels of emotional intensity, investment in time, intimacy and reciprocal services, while weak ties are defined by the relatively low levels of emotional involvement, time invested in the relationship and low reciprocity. A study by Spoonley et al. (2005) in New Zealand revealed that the strong or dense social relations existing within the migrant community built relational embeddedness and local social capital for the migrant group and did not contribute to social cohesion in the wider context.

Arguing from the same perspective, Burt (2004, 353) also contends that being confined to a single network creates homogenous information which results in 'holes in the information flow within different groups'. He further argues that holes are 'buffers which act like insulators in an electric circuit'. Relations that span these structural holes create bridges that get rid of redundant information which results from cohesive and structurally equivalent contacts. However, such networks are attractive avenues for individuals who want to act as brokers between different groups and networks. These individuals exercise their agency and benefit from both worlds as their networks 'bridge the structural holes and information gaps existing in different groups' and networks (Burt 2004, 353).

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that social networks do not represent an endless seam of generosity as they can lead to co-ethnic exploitation. Moreover, their capacity to aid members is also constrained by the structure of opportunity and challenges within the destination country. New comers may fail to get help if network members exist in an extreme state of marginalization resulting in the severing of ties and tense relations among co-ethnic members (Menjivar 1995, 1997; Collyer 2005; Worby 2010).

### 3. Discussion of findings

#### 3.1. *Social capital from church networks*

Zimbabwean migrants are very religious people. The church was believed to be the moral compass guiding migrants and going to church was also perceived as one of the ways of surviving loneliness and getting access to information, jobs and comfort from others. Ninety per cent of migrants regularly go to church, while only 10% do not go to church. Migrants mostly attend Pentecostal churches which originate from Zimbabwe. They have not been integrated into South African churches. In these Zimbabwean originated churches, they preach in Ndebele and Shona and sometimes reminisce on the days in Zimbabwe. There are fewer attempts made to convert their South African neighbours to join them.

Research revealed that 31% of the migrants are members of the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church, 7% belong to Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), 9% go to Jesus Promotion Ministries (JPM) and 5% are members of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM). There were migrants who belonged to various inter-ethnic Pentecostal churches that largely included other migrants such as Ghanaians, Nigerians and Congolese. These constituted 24% of the sample.

There was 1 migrant (2%) who claimed to be Catholic, while 12% belonged to the Apostolic church sects such as *Johane Masowe* or *Johane Wechishanu* or *Mugodhi*. These are strictly Zimbabwean indigenous protestant sects. Members of these churches wear white or other colourful garments on Saturdays when they go to church. They are also visible because males attend church services carrying staffs/rods and services take place in open areas and not in buildings.

Going to church is viewed as important for the following reasons: spiritual guidance and protection from God, access to information on accommodation and jobs and also acquisition of friends. Church members tend to be from the same network that provides work and accommodation. It is in these churches that migrants form revolving social and grocery clubs. They also marry within the same cliques.

Some migrants go to the Apostolic/*vapostori* churches where they are prophesied to that is, where their future is foretold and strategies to deal with future problems are mapped out. Daniel stated clearly that:

I used to go to Baptist church but then decided to go to the apostolic sect. I had family problems. A friend of mine invited me to apostolic sect. They prophesy here. I was told things by prophets, for example how I lost my job. I was told people hate me.

Sheunesu is another migrant who goes to *Johane Masowe* church. He says ‘problems don’t choose individuals. We go to church because of problems, difficult situations and circumstances’. Maphosa (2011) concurs that the challenges of migrant life are usually dealt with via churches that prophesy and foretell the future. Some prophecies are about impending return journeys and the dangers associated with them. Prayers accompanied by fasting are usually recommended to deal with the challenges of migrant life.

The church is critical in that God is viewed as the protector against the police especially for those without proper documentation. They pray so that the police will not catch an undocumented migrant. One 46-year-old male migrant (Tapera) argued that local South Africans do not need to pray. He went on to say ‘If I get deported it doesn’t matter. God knows my situation. I know I am being unfair to God because I am breaking the law by being illegal’. Another male migrant (Farai) argued that:

As a foreigner you know your problems, when the going gets tough you have to focus on God. You are desperate ... Locals are at home and relaxed, they have no need to go to church. They have relatives all over.

Farai’s argument points to the belief that God is very important to people without relatives and friends. He also gives a better identity (being called a child of God) to those whose identity is devalued. He is the relative and friend to the lonely, desperate and needy. This is very true given that in one of Pastor Lloyd’s sermons he admonished people to continue seeking God even after getting jobs. He said there was a tendency of people to relax after getting jobs only to seek God again when they are desperate and unemployed.

Studies on religion and migrants reveal how churches function both as a means of integration in the receiving country and also as a migration strategy in transit countries (Akcapar 2006; Levitt 2006). Migrant churches in Tembisa and Kempton Park mainly help migrants deal with their destination country. They help them in various ways. However, their functionality is constrained as they do not have institutionalized methods of dealing with migrants’ issues. Pastors deal with each individual case differently. The churches tend to be small, with an average number of 40 congregants. Church branches are relatively new, having been established in the last 2–10 years. However, the networks that are created at church tend to be just as strong, or even in some

cases stronger than family ties as the individuals pay homage first to the church and then to the family. Sometimes, individuals prefer church ties to family ties.

Akcapar (2006) and Aydin, Fischer, and Frey (2010) argue that church membership provides spiritual healing, helps and empowers individuals to deal with loneliness and other challenges faced by migrants. Christian churches also encourage individuals to see themselves as belonging to a bigger nation/kingdom which has no boundaries (however, this could still be exclusionary where members of other religions such as Islam, are not perceived as belonging to this kingdom [Levitt 2003, 2006]). They exhort individuals to work hard, endure and change their lives in the same way that the Israelites conquered throughout their history in the Bible.

The churches themselves have become transnational and have membership across the borders. Pastors officiate at weddings and funerals in Johannesburg and Zimbabwe. They also pray for jobs and accommodation for their members. Sometimes, they help by providing advice, counselling and decision-making on issues that appear complex to migrants. Migrants tended to attend protestant or evangelical churches where the majority of members were Shona and Ndebele Zimbabweans. These churches compare very well with those described by Menjivar (2010), where evangelical churches put more emphasis on conversion and religious rituals. But the churches also responded to the practical concerns of their members. The pastor took the role of the father in admonishing his flock while offering counselling, advice and sourcing money to pay rent for some church members. All the three main churches studied (JPM, SDA and ZAOGA) relied on Zimbabwean pastors. The founding leaders and headquarters of JPM and ZAOGA are in Zimbabwe.

There are five functions of religiosity identified by Leman (cited in Akcapar 2006, 838). The church functions (a) as an institutional conveyor of ethno-cultural bridging; (b) as a medium of socio-cultural integration; (c) a medium of affirming original culture; (d) a celebration of cultural and religious syncretism and (e) as an engine of non-adaptation. Using these categories, religion among Zimbabwean migrants can be evaluated as fulfilling function (c) – that is, affirming original culture.

### 3.2. *The downside of church networks*

Although church ties help in creating a comfortable environment for an individual, they do not necessarily expose him/her to a different reality as migrants attend their Zimbabwean based churches. This means that the migrant moves in the same circles and is rarely exposed to any newer information since it is the same people they stay with whom they meet at church. The church membership tends to be small (around 40) especially for migrants in Tembisa, thus not exposing the migrants to the wider society. There are many church activities that take place throughout the week thus creating strong relations among church members. While these smaller groups ensure bonding social capital, they may insulate the individual from accessing newer information and opportunities outside their social network. The situation is different for those that attend multicultural churches in Kempton Park. These churches have the potential to expose migrants to the wider society. However, their weakness is that migrants may have superficial relations with other church members and thus eventually feel lonely and detached.

There have been arguments about the church as both a facilitator and inhibitor of migrant integration and assimilation (Menjivar 2010). The evangelical churches studied in Tembisa and Kempton Park could be said to inhibit assimilation in the following ways:

- (1) Preaching – while there was an attempt to preach in Zulu and Ndebele with an English interpreter, examples given by preachers were from Zimbabwean places and the Zimbabwean history. For example, in a sermon given on 16 June 2012 by an SDA preacher,

reference was made to the Zimbabwean liberation struggle and how the two main political leaders, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, fought fiercely to win back their countries from British colonialists. The preacher drew parallels with the Christian faith where he encouraged Christians to jealously guard their Christianity. In another sermon at the same church on 23 June 2012, a preacher gave examples of Zimbabwean dairy farms explaining how people work on these farms. My argument is that if such preaching becomes the norm, it has the potential to de-motivate those that have no knowledge of Zimbabwe and do not share this common memory.

- (2) Another source of exclusion concerns some songs that were sung in Shona (this was true for ZAOGA and AFM churches), making it difficult for those that cannot understand Shona to participate. Church members also made constant reference to how things were done in their parent churches in Zimbabwe.
- (3) Perhaps the biggest potential source of social exclusion is the insistence by church members that they are different from those who do not go to their church. This is especially true for SDA members who pride themselves in being morally upright and wanting nothing to do with the rest of the community members who are viewed as 'sinners'. Such views can hinder attempts to integrate for fear of bad influence. There is a tendency to judge local South Africans as the bad influence who would lead migrants to partying and forgetting about their homelands.
- (4) Exhortations of belonging to a new family – all the churches emphasized that migrants now belong to the new family of Christ or family of God and had responsibilities to look after their brothers and sisters in Christ. Although such values encourage unity within the church, they do not necessarily encourage the same attitude towards other individuals who do not belong to the 'family of God'. The church, therefore, functions to strengthen bonding rather than bridging social capital. Church members may also end up being drawn closer to fellow members even at the expense of their own family relations, especially with those that do not share the same faith.
- (5) The church does not seem to question illegality or lack of documentation – rather than encouraging members to legalize their stay and conveying the same message to potential migrants in Zimbabwe, the church concentrates on praying, healing and attending to other practical needs of the migrants, without necessarily questioning why migrants are illegal. Therefore, instead of encouraging some undocumented members to go back to Zimbabwe and apply for passports and legalize their stay, the church concentrates on praying for the same members so that God protects them from the police. Maphosa (2011) made similar observations when he studied members of the Zion church. He noted how church members never really opposed an undocumented migrant's journey, preferring to pray for protection of the member instead. This stance becomes problematic when the same church does not offer any kind of legal services and facilitation of application for regularization of stay to its members. This means that the undocumented migrants remain like that as there is no deliberate strategy to encourage them to be legal. They may remain in their precarious position in so far as the law is concerned. This provides empirical confirmation that while bonding social ties bind, they sometimes 'blind' network members.

### 3.3. *Family/ethnic networks and the creation of migration desire*

The desire for migration is created by stories that potential migrants receive about Johannesburg. These stories are brought by visiting migrants on their annual visits to Zimbabwe. The returning migrants usually come back with new cars (largely borrowed) and look good enough to create a

positive image of where they are coming from. They then go on to talk at length about how easy life is and how one can move from one job to the other to the extent of convincing non-migrants to make a decision to leave. However, these migrants tend to sometimes misinform their kin or downplay the realities of difficulties in a foreign country (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Sometimes, the zeal to migrate among potential migrants is too much that any negative information is ignored and those who pass this information risk being viewed as jealous and trying to discourage others from being successful through migrating.

In some cases, stories of good living are seen through television. This is especially true for most Zimbabweans in Matabeleland and Midlands who tend to watch free SABC channels via satellite. As they watch television programmes, they create perceptions of how life in South Africa is and they desire that life (Maphosa 2010, Hungwe 2012a). The television creates an imaginary but desirable world (Mai 2005). Levitt (2006, 50) argues that 'non migrants hear enough stories, look at enough photographs and watch enough videos ... to begin imagining their lives elsewhere'. The migrants themselves create and perpetuate migration through their stories to non-migrants, while the mass media also plays a role in creating the desire to migrate. The perception of Johannesburg that is created is always an exaggerated one such that the reality is a rude awakening for most migrants. This situation is the same as what was observed by King and Mai (2004) and Mai (2005) concerning Albanian migrants in Italy who not only perceived that life was easy, but also that Italian women were loose. The reality was rather shocking.

### 3.4. *Networks and migrant settlement*

Migrants tended to have a family history of migration. They also tended to have somebody they knew first before coming to South Africa. This person was either a relative or a friend. For most individuals, it was the presence of relatives that gave them confidence to travel to South Africa. No one was completely clueless when they came. Ninety-one per cent of the migrants agreed that they had family members in Johannesburg. These were relatives such as parents, siblings, cousins, uncles and aunts. Migrants also made use of extended family ties including distant relatives. Only five had no relatives. However, these had friends already. Some migrants had both family members and friends in Johannesburg so they had a wide choice in selecting whom to stay with. For example, Godfrey says:

I first stayed with my friend in Tembisa. My mom was also here but I didn't want to stay with her. I had many options. My friend had been here for a long time. I stayed two months with my friend and then moved out to stay on my own.

Felix also had part of his family in Johannesburg. When he came he stayed with his mother and siblings in the two rooms that they rented in Tembisa.

Family relations seem to help more during the initial stages of arrival and settling in however, as soon as an individual finds his/her way, the church becomes more important, sometimes because of strained relations with family members. Respondents' allegations about family members tend to be related to perceived jealousy and resistance to another migrant's success or generally neglect. As Daniel explains:

Relationships are strained by jealousies and hard times. If you don't have money you won't want visitors and if you have money you will not want any disturbances from family members.

As the individual is more and more enmeshed into the web of relations in South Africa, especially after acquiring the necessary legal documentation, there is a tendency to free himself or herself from the family connections (or even family relations) thus moving towards the wider networks.



This may sometimes even mean moving a bit away from the residential area of the family members who helped with settling in. Although migrants may not necessarily move away from Tembisa or Kempton Park (which is their first place of stay), they tend to drift from one geographical location to the other. This drifting is a sign of independence of the individual who must be managed properly, lest one may be labelled defiant. There is insistence on deference and gratitude to the family members and employers (if they are Zimbabwean) and lack of this may have economic costs in the long run.

Insistence on deference and expression of gratitude can lead to creation of patron–client relationships. Family and ethnic networks may be characterized by never-ending feelings of indebtedness (Krissman 2005). This is especially true in situations where one feels obliged to do free printing and typing services (Paradzayi) for an uncle (Bernard) running his own company or where one must not demand a commission that she/he rightfully deserves.

### 3.5. *The dark side of family networks*

Exploitation and abuse of family/ethnic members seem to be popular among Zimbabwean migrants. For example, male self-employed migrants use their wives as secretaries and receptionists for their businesses although these are not necessarily paid as employees. In other cases, family members are paid very minimal wages, usually very late (sometimes first week of the next month). There is an expectation that family members ‘understand’ the harsh economic situation. In most cases, because of obligations of having had transport money paid for by family members, perceptions of obligation never end.

The other downside of family networks is that they may lead to the social exclusion of certain family members through their rejection of new migrants. This rejection is, however, involuntary as these networks, especially the family, experience a lot of pressure from in-migration and their own hardships on the labour market. The main problem revolves around the provision of food and accommodation to unemployed migrants. The following three quotations highlight how some migrants feel about this issue.

Life in South Africa is expensive ... they will love you for the first few months. As time goes on if you don't get employed they get frustrated. Both of you have the burden of looking after relatives in Zimbabwe. Low wages affect relationships. You become an extra expense. Love drops and drops until he tells you point blank (to) look for a job. Don't just sit. They start ill-treating you. You will, either, go back home (Zimbabwe) or move out and live your own life. It's rare for such people to come back together (reconcile) again. (Pastor Lloyd)

To get somebody coming and staying with you and the person does not take responsibility for everything that needs to be taken care of ... that really strains relationships especially concerning food. I stayed with two of my brothers and the experience was not nice ... I have stayed with people I ended up throwing out because I couldn't handle it anymore. They didn't have money for rent, food and were unemployed. I couldn't carry on forever. They had become a burden. They couldn't find jobs and had no permits. It's a foreign land, it can get hectic. (Vongai)

It was terrible. I stayed with them (uncle and aunt) for one month. In the first days they would leave eggs and bread for me. Around the third week they started ignoring me, not talking to me. Later the husband started beating up the wife (who is my relative) until the neighbours told me to move out. Sometimes they would shout at each other for small things like sugar and bath soap ... Maybe they were angry that I just came without informing them. (Hillary)

Rejection by family members and friends is a major theme of this research. The kin network is now repelling people. This is related to the structure of opportunity in the destination country

(Menjivar 1995, 1997). Worby's (2010) study of Zimbabweans in central Johannesburg pursued the same theme of rejection by family members. Menjivar (1995, 220) argues that:

the structure of opportunity in the receiving country affects how one is received and their ability to help others. These include the state's reception of migrants, local labour market opportunities, the receiving community, which includes the history of particular migrations flows and the internal dynamics of the migrant groups.

Migrants deal with rejection through staying in open spaces such as parks or sometimes living with friends in less habitable places such as shacks. Some move away to other townships where they can identify sympathizers. In other cases, migrants manage by themselves limiting visits to those that would have rejected them, even when their fortunes change for the better. Relationships may be severed forever.

### **3.6. Bridging ties helping people get ahead**

The argument on bridging social capital is that an individual gets connected to individuals who belong to other ethnic, cultural and status groups to the extent that the tie is able to close a 'structural hole' (Burt 2004; Lancee 2012b). A structural hole is a gap in information flow existing between different networks that give individuals the opportunity to broker or create connections in networks that are not connected. Such individuals stand a greater chance to benefit from this 'structural hole'. Ties with employers and colleagues helped migrants move ahead and sometimes change jobs. Migrants who have moved up the social hierarchy did not necessarily rely on their family members. For example, Miriam got her current job of accountant through an acquaintance she used to board a taxi with while Bongani got his estate agency job through his former students in Zimbabwe who now became his supervisors.

Sympathetic and understanding employers helped migrants to open bank accounts, access permits, find better jobs and do better in life. Self-employed Zimbabwean entrepreneurs were able to get 'good ideas' through their bridging ties with former supervisors and bosses. For example, Maureen the owner of a crèche was able to register her company by getting advice from her Malawian former boss. She also got R1 million from her Ghanaian Church Bishop in order to get a business permit which needed R1.2 million. Another entrepreneur was Bernard who moved from the big security company where he was employed and helped his former supervisor to start a company. It was at this company that he developed an idea to form his own security company. Paradzayi is another entrepreneur who owns internet cafe shops. He uses his identity bridging ties with his Nigerian boss to tap into ideas of Nigerians and gather information on latest computer technologies. He got his recent job (working for his current Nigerian boss) through casual acquaintances with clients at his former work place. Vivienne used her relationships with restaurant customers to move from the restaurant where she worked as a waitress, to a private company where she started as an administrator, eventually getting enough training to start her own export company. Many migrants were able to use former bosses and especially customers, to move from one level to the other. They made use of both identity and status bridging ties (Lancee 2012a). All these migrants were able to move ahead because of tapping into relationships that span their cultural, ethnic and status positions and in the process becoming privy to information that their fellow kinfolk do not access.

As argued earlier, while the first job tended to be facilitated by friends and relatives, migrants' subsequent moves from one job to the other are facilitated by former workmates, employers and customers. Though shallow in emotional involvement, these links usher migrants into new careers and jobs opportunities, thus showing the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973).

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper has defined social capital tracing its various forms and how it manifests itself among Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg. Zimbabwean migrants are in South Africa as a result of the functioning of family/ethnic and religious networks. These networks are very useful in providing information regarding jobs, accommodation among other important issues. However, the form of social capital found in these networks is mainly bonding rather than bridging social capital. This means that Zimbabwean migrants are not really exposed to radically different information and resources from each other because they mix and live within similar worlds or similar networks. This is especially true for the poor, unskilled and undocumented migrants whose options are limited. This paper has discussed the ‘bright’ and ‘dark’ sides of social networks among Zimbabweans in Tembisa and Kempton Park in Johannesburg.

#### Glossary of terms

Vapostori – members of the Independent African Apostolic Church  
 ZAOGA FIF – Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith

#### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

#### Notes on contributor

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