Risk, vulnerability and Zimbabwean migrants' post-arrival adaptation in Johannesburg: Reflections on relational aspects of informal social protection.

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Abstract

The article examined relational mechanisms and underlying processes of informal social protection in a migration context. It examined the role of migrants' agency in constructing, mobilizing and activating different kinds of social support from egocentric networks, as part of their ongoing response to a hostile post-migration context in South Africa. It draws on the narratives of three migrants who participated in a study on Zimbabwean economic migrants in Johannesburg. Fieldwork for the study entailed observations at two congregations of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa, known as Forward in Faith Mission outside Zimbabwe. Additionally interviews were conducted with purposively selected migrants in 2009-2010 and 2016. The findings highlight that informal social protection evolves out of the interplay of moralities of care, protection and reciprocity with the individual and collective agency of migrants. Therefore, while its adequacy remains in question, informal social protection is complex, yet sufficiently flexible to respond to personalised needs of individual migrants.

Key words: Informal social protection, risk, migration, vulnerability, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

Countries in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) perceive a key role for social protection in the area of international migration. The "Code on Social Security in the SADC" emphasises the social protection rights of migrants including irregular movers, recommends member countries to provide a basic minimum level of protection to irregular migrants, and urges that migrants should be covered in accordance with the laws of the receiving country(SADC, 2007,). Implicit in the Code are rights-based frameworks and notions of social justice. For example, in concert with other social policy writings, the Code underscores that social protection is broader than social security, which is contributory, and should benefit those migrants who are not in a position to contribute according to the laws of the host country.

Indeed social protection is a broad concept. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2003), social protection refers to "the set of public measures that a society provides for its members to protect them against economic and social distress that would be caused by the absence or a substantial reduction of income from work as a result of various contingencies (sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age, and death of the breadwinner); the provision of health care; and, the provision of benefits for families with children". Whereas some ILO writings purport that social protection has been at the core of ILO's mandate since its inception, some critics contend that ILO has championed social security, which limits the conceptualization of risks to pre-defined contingencies (Kaseke, 2010). Holmes and Lwanga-Ntale (2012) observed that social protection is one of the core pillars of development in Africa: it protects the vulnerable against livelihood risks, and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised, while promoting secure livelihoods.

Despite the acknowledgement of the critical role of social protection for migrants, developing a minimum standard of social protection in SADC member countries remains an insurmountable challenge since countries in southern Africa have diverse economic and political characteristics and fragmented social protection systems (Southern Africa Trust, 2008). For example, currencies are different from country to country. Furthermore, apart from a few bilateral agreements that target formal sector workers, coordination of social protection that can benefit mobile populations in the region is nearly absent (Southern Africa Trust, 2008). Consequently, institutional and legislative arrangements that enable export of accumulated entitlements or benefits in the process of accrual from country of origin to country of employment, for example, are nearly non-existent (Olivier, 2009).

It is only in recent years that state discourses and practices as well as scholarly writings around social protection have included concerns of international migrants (Sabates-Wheeler and Koettl, 2010). Concerning international migrants, literature has shown that social protection systems in southern African countries have maintained a citizenship stance, which excludes temporary migrants from benefits (Becker and Olivier, 2008; Fultz and Pieris, 1997). Furthermore, in the southern African region, social protection systems are largely insurance-based, focusing almost exclusively to those employed in the formal sector, where both employer and employee can contribute premiums (Olivier, 2009; Kaseke, 2008).

Consequently, those without a legally-binding contract, and those who eke out a living in the informal sector do not qualify for social insurance, and remain uncovered (Kaseke, 2008; Olivier, 2009).Yet, because migration is a productive experience for just a small portion of international migrants (Dupper, 2008) – the highly educated and skilled elite many migrants realise that risk and vulnerability are recreated after arrival (Julca, 2011). In

migration contexts, various forms of informal social protection have arisen to fill this gap (see for example, Ebaugh and Curry, 2000). However, few works critically document and analyse these arrangements in the context of South-South migration in the SADC. Studies that have demonstrated that relatedness among migrants and non-migrants in southern Africa tends to lower costs of migration in many ways (Gelderblom and Adams, 2006) provide a notable exception.

Unlike statutory-based social protection systems that provide standardised benefits across a region or a population or a target group, informal social protection is contextual. It varies between social groups, and between geographical limits. Precisely for this reason, Gardner and Ahmed (2009:145) argue that the "practices and meanings of 'informal social protection' need to be carefully contextualised". Eligibility to informal systems depends on less defined criteria. Deumert, Inder and Maitra (2005: 304, emphasis added) observe that informal social protection is "based on *membership* in *social* communities (families, kinship, neighbourhood, etc.)". According to Gardner and Ahmed (2009), informal social protection connotes the protection against shocks and disasters that people gain from social relationships rather than economic opportunities.

Informal social protection has been examined under the guise of social support a concept that captures supportive behaviours and helping practices which is exchanged between persons who share a relationship. Social support can be categorised in terms of *instrumental* support, *expressive* support, *received support* and *perceived support* are terms social scientists use to conceptualise social support. Whereas an instance of expressive support is an end in itself, instrumental support is given or received as a means to solve or gain something practical (Meadows, 2009). Borrowing money to defray rental costs is an example of instrumental support. According to Haber, Cohen, Lucas and Baltes (2007:

133), “recipients' perceptions concerning the general availability of support and/or global satisfaction with support” are proxies for received support. Supportive behaviour or helping behavours of all sorts generate coping assistance that can address different insecurities. It suffices to emphasise that informal social protection is help generated from ties. According to Knoke and Yang (2008), tie is a specific contact, connection or relationship between two actors.

The article proceeds as follows: a brief discussion of the methodical issues precedes the main section of the paper, which examines the narratives of participants. The last section discusses salient aspects from the analysis of narratives and reflects on their implications for informal social protection.

Methods

The methodology for the study, which informs this article incorporated fieldwork observations and in-depth key informant interviews. This methodology has been discussed in detail elsewhere (Chereni, 2014). Here a brief discussion is given. The data sources for this article are narratives of three of the eight interview participants who participated in in-depth interviews in 2009, 2010 and 2016. The participants were selected after a prolonged period of observation at two congregations of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) a transnational Pentecostal formation with Zimbabwean roots popularly known as Forward in Faith Mission International (FIFMI). Therefore, participant observation augmented the in-depth interviews. Part of the criteria for selection was that migrants had lived in South Africa for at least two years and that they had represented various family types. Data were analysed by use of egocentric network analysis, that is, analysis of the structure and function of networks ties around an individual and content analysis of interviewer narratives (Finfgeld-Connett, 2013).

Findings

The narratives of the three migrants included in this section are largely representative of the two modes of self-insertion, that is, the manner in which migrants deliberately embedded themselves in webs of social relation, pursued by individual participants. The modes of self-insertion are (i) sustaining close ties with co-nationals or in-group members, and (ii) connecting with non-Zimbabweans and non-congregants (outsiders).

Sustaining close ties with co-nationals and congregants

The story of Jane (37), a widow and mother of a 14-year old son, relocated to Johannesburg in 2008, on a six months tourist visa was representative of the self-emplacement strategies pursued by five other migrants included in the study.These men connected and maintained ties with compatriots and congregants. Consider how Jane sought to discover a community that potentially provided some sort of familiarity (Fortier, 2001). Jane's membership of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) a vibrant transnational Pentecostal formation, which emerged in Harare's western townships during the colonial era (Maxwell, 2006) is key to understanding her notion of familiarity and community after arrival. Jane informed me that during her time in Harare, she had become one of the prominent members of ZAOGA, at least among single women in the Ministry.

Upon arrival in Johannesburg, Jane took up a domestic service job with a Christian couple, to mind their two-year old son. Since Jane had revealed her Pentecostal affiliation to her employers, they invited her to worship with them at Rhema Bible Church in Randburg. During the interview, I thought this arrangement was, for all intents and purposes,the best for Jane because Jane could make new Christian friends with whom to fellowship. I prompted her to seek confirmation and her response surprised me: “I attended Rhema service for six months [and] then one day I said [to myself] I

am not going to Rhema today. I have got to find my church." So she actually resented the very idea of worshipping at Rhema. Yet Rhema is a popular Pentecostal church in South Africa that strikingly resembles ZAOGA, especially in terms of "general Pentecostal practice such as an emphasis on gifts of the Spirit" (Maxwell, 2006: 178). Why was Jane prepared to cast a blind eye to all parallels, opting to search for ZAOGA? "What do you mean when you say "my church," I prompted Jane. She rather started by expressing her gratitude to the Most High:

> I thank God [for ZAOGA's existence] because some of these Pentecostal Churches do not have this ministry [Single Ladies Ministry] …when my husband passed on, I got assistance from other single ladies [in the Single Ladies Ministry]. They encouraged me. They advised me to depend on the Lord.

Thus, prior experiences of getting along with fellow congregants in while in Zimbabwe particularly influenced Jane's appraisal of the religious movement she referred to as "my Church". Perceptions of sameness, as in sharing a social location that is, having common relational markers, principally marital status and gender (Mthetwa-Sommers, 2014) and familiarity seems to underpin Jane representation of ZAOGA-FIFMI as "my Church". Equally important, Jane's experiences of receiving and giving instrumentaland emotional support from fellow single women in Harare underlie her positive evaluation of ZAOGA-FIFMI. Desired social support in all its forms instrumental, expressive, emotional and perceived social support appears to be the driving force behind Jane's relational (and identity) work. Jane's description of her egocentric network further illustrates this interpretation:

> My friends are all single ladies […] If anyone's son was dismissed from school because of outstanding

> fees, we [single women] make contributions [to get him back to school]. Those among us who got paid will definitely help […] even if none [of us] got paid [at work] we still contribute, even Rand 10 each.

Evidently, Jane had embedded herself in webs of close ties in which supportive behaviours and helping practices of members ensured some form of risk sharing, comparable to formal social security arrangements based on resource pooling (Kaseke, 2009). Additionally, the quote implies that perceived support based on her connectedness rather than monthly premiums explain Jane's expectations of receiving supportive behaviours to address future contingencies. From Jane's narrative, I learnt that helping practices transcended network members' financial needs. Read how Jane spoke of the strengths of her tie with Julia: “I can even send her to do things [on my behalf]; to buy this and that using her own money. Then I will settle the score later […] I talk just about anything with her”. Like her single women friends at ZAOGA-FIFMI who typically worked in the domestic service sector, Jane worked long hours without adequate money and time compensation in the form of leave days (Olivier, 2009). Therefore, having someone prepared to run errands for her when she could not get leave of absence from work, or better still, having a friend who could pay her expenses with own money so that she settles the debt at a later date, was indispensable support for Jane. Thus, exchanges supportive behaviours helped to cultivate norms of sharing risk, mutual solidarity, reciprocity, trust, concern for the welfare of the other, and shouldering one's burden. Shaw's (2008) study of motivations of helping behaviours similarly found a range of helping practices among various groups, all based on reciprocity and concern for the other. This speaks to the idea that informal social protection comprises of mundane, everyday practices, which flexibly cover the personalized needs of network members.

Jane's narratives indicate that, there was in her networks,

significant transformative potential, that is, through these relationships, single women could help each other climb out of poverty. Consider how Jane qualified her relationships with each one of her 'inner circle' friends namely Prisca, Sharon, Julia, Tiki and Chiedza: “With Sister Prisca, when we are not doing [and speaking] things of The Spirit, we usually talk about business. Sister Prisca is a businesswoman. So I would ask her, for example, what is selling these days [...]” Indeed, in Jane's networks, interests, aspirations and motivations of migrants to set up business could potentially become a reality. Some day. During the interview, Jane characterised her relationships with Sharon, Tiki and Chiedza in more or less the same way she had described her ties with Prisca and Julia – as sources of material and emotional support in times of need.

During fieldwork, I explored interviewees' perceptions of the general availability and reliability of supportive behaviours in their egocentric social networks, which is, perceived support (Haber et al., 2007). All interviewees positively appraised their close ties as sources of social support to address future shocks. Jane's description of persons she would approach in the event that she failed to pay her monthly rental is illustrative:

> Some things are sensitive. Like rental. I will start with my relatives, my cousin sisters Raiza and Ashley. I would start with Ashley because she is single […] [Then] I would approach Julia, then Tiki, Sister Lucia or the Umbrellas […] Mr and Mrs Takunda.

The quote suggests that Jane perceived failure to pay her rent as a stigmatizing experience that she would rather keep within the extended family in South Africa (Ashley and Raiza). Ashley was the more approachable of the two cousins since she was a single mother, and did not have to consult with anyone about whether or not to help Jane. Furthermore, being a single mother, Ashley was more disposed to understand Jane's plight than Raiza did.

However, non-response in the extended family networks will prompt Jane to approach her best friends in the Single Women Ministry at FIFMI Berea and City Christian Centre Assembly. Likewise, in the event that Jane failed to mobilize sufficient support from her friends in the single Ladies Ministry, she will approach the Mr Takunda, the “Umbrella” a designated married man who, together with his wife, acts as the protector of single women, just as the umbrella shields one from the elements. Jane elaborated the role of the “Umbrella” as follows:

> We can tell them [the Umbrella and his wife] our problems. If they can, they will solve them. Problems such as […] Blessed, my son, will be a teenager soon. He may become rebellious, taking advantage of [the absence of a] father figure. So, we ask the Umbrella to advise [...] Maybe, if he hears a male voice, he may listen.

Jane's narrative not only reveals a remarkably visible imbrication of the liturgical and secular spheres in her lifeworld, but it also indicates that these two spheres, that is, the sacred, liturgical sphere and the secular realm (Kong, 2001), acted in mutually reinforcing ways to nurture supportive behaviours among congregants. This was evident in Jane's characterization of her relationship with Prisca. When the two were not speaking things of the Spiritual realm, they talked business. In Jane's narrative, the Church is represented in complex ways as the discursive context in which utterances during worship and fellowship produced specific kinds of migrant *subjectivities*, particularly in terms of the gospel of prosperity (Maxwell, 2006), that were disposed to giving and receiving support. Therefore, ZAOGA-FIFMI was the ideological backdrop on which helping practices figured. This interpretation speaks to Chalari's (2017) observation that intra-action comprising of inner thoughts, aspirations, hopes, needs, plans, intentions and so on is necessary, even indispensable, for the sort

of interaction exchanges between individuals, that give rise to informal social protection.

The practice of the "Umbrella" is a collective recognition of single women's shared social location, as single women without husbands due to death, divorce and marginal involvement of the fathers of the children. In practice, however, chances that the "umbrella" might not be able to meet the needs of single women using his personalised resources are high. Consequently, in most cases, the "Umbrella" acts as a point person, broker and linker who connects those single women facing problems to potential sources of social support within the congregation. The analysis of Jane's narrative generate the structure, composition and function of her egocentric network. Table 1 below illustrates the analysis

Table 1: Analysis of Jane's close ties

Alter	Exchanges		Classification of Jane's Ties						
	Instrumental	Expressive	Pre-Migration Ties	Post-Migration Ties	Extended Family Tie	Friendship Tie	Church-based Tie	Post-Migration Occupation-based Tie	Non-Zimbabwean Tie
Jane's alters during fieldwork									
Prisca	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Sharon	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Julia	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Tiki	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Chiedza	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Persons from whom Jane could borrow (in order of preference)									
Raiza	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Ashley	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Julia	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Tiki	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Lucia	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Umbrella	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0

Table 1 shows the incidence of different kinds of ties in Jane's egocentric networks. It illustrates that Jane's alters were Zimbabweans who were either extended family members or congregants. From these relationships, Jane mobilized various kinds of social support.

Connecting with non-Zimbabweans and non-congregants (outsiders)

This section examines narratives that illustrate the second pattern of self-insertion. The stories Rose (32), a single mother of a year old son and Siwela a 37-year old father who lived apart from his wife and four children, shed more light on this pattern of self-insertion.

Unlike Jane who entered South Africa on a six-months tourist visa and became irregular six months later, Rose relocated on a study permit (see also Chereni, 2014). Upon arrival in Pretoria, Rose immediately reconnected with Shamiso and Angela. The two were childhood friends. In fact, Rose and her two friends were schoolmates from primary education through secondary schooling. Shamiso and Angela helped Rose to settle in, helping her to navigate the cityscape. They took Rose to restaurants, shopping malls and recreational places in Pretoria. Furthermore, Rose informed me that the two friends lend her money whenever she experienced delays in transmitting money from Zimbabwe to South Africa.

At ZAOGA, Rose closely related with Patricia, Edith, Rudo, Shelter and Mary. Rose's description of her friendship with Patricia remarkably illustrate the nature of expressive support she received from friends and how she valued it: “We talk the same language […] She is somebody I can confide in. And she is one person who really stand up to me and say in my face, 'this is wrong, this is not right'”. In the same way Jane could openly speak to Julia

just about anything, Rose could pour her out to Patricia whenever she was downhearted. Literally, Rose's point that she speaks the same language as Patricia might simply indicate that the two shared a first language (Shona). More profoundly, however, it could signify that Rose occupied the same "standing in the socially constructed hierarchies of gender, race, social class, sexuality, ability, nationality, first language" and other markers of socially constructed positions (Mtetwa-Sommers, 2014: 45) as Patricia and other alters. In other terms, Rose and her alters shared various relational markers including their interests, tendencies, gender, marital status, among others.

Rose also spoke highly of her relationship with Viola – a non-Zimbabwean workmate and friend. Rose revealed that their friendship included borrowing and lending each other money during times of need. Viola's tie was important not only for received support but also for perceived social support. Viola was the first person Rose would approach to borrow money in the event that she fails to pay her monthly rental, as shown below:

> The first person from whom I would borrow money [for rental] is Viola, at work. I didn't mention another friend. My friend, Shelter [...] She is a not a member of ZAOGA but she goes to another church […] we were classmates […] I would even put her as the first one in terms of borrowing. Then there is another one. We also grew up together. Her name is Mary. I did not mention her. I can also go to Angela. I can also go to Sekai [but] I wouldn't ask for [money from] her now because she is not working […]

Unlike Jane, Rose relied more on non-church-based close ties for material social support. With the exception of Sekai, Rose's ties with Shelter, Marry, Angela and Violet were not church members.

Although Rose immediately reinvigorated her pre-migration ties

with childhood friends, for example Shamiso and Angela who were childhood friends, she successfully created and sustained close ties with non-Zimbabweans. Before Rose met Viola at her first job after graduation, she had made friends with Marriane and Yolanda - two South African White Afrikaners who were mentors at Rose's college. Rose informed me that these two bought provisions for her son at birth, including cloths and a buggy. Other non-Zimbabweans with whom Rose closely related were Christina and Gontse, two South African women with whom Rose had connected at work. Again, while these friendships emerged at the workplace, they had become more personal in nature, as illustrated in the following extract of Rose's account:

> The other [friend of mine] works at [name of a newspaper]. She is doing media liaison there […] Christina. At some point she even helped me to find a job […] we do business together. But she has become more of a friend because she is more helpful to me […] There was a time she was in hospital. I went to see her there.

Christina was a White Afrikaner single woman in her early thirties. As shown in Table 2, the exchanges between Rose and Christina were instrumental and expressive in nature. For example, when Rose was job-hunting, she got useful information and leads from Christina. Rose paid Christina a visit when the later was in hospital.

Rose, work-based ties and friendship ties were more important as sources of perceived instrumental social support than were church-based ties. Unlike Jane and Mashumba, Rose successfully created, sustained and benefited from close ties with non-Zimbabweans. During the interview, I sought her view regarding whether or not fitting in within communities of non-Zimbabweans was doable. She replied that,

> It's natural […] when you get into an environment

> where people are doing their own thing […] you feel like you are left out. But it's also a challenge that you [the outsider] find a way of fitting in. *Mina* [Me] that's what I normally do. I find that they [locals] are speaking whatever language they are speaking and I understand a few words [in vernacular] I repeat the words they have used and then they would say, 'ah, so you can say that word […]' And then I will ask them what it [the word] means, so that I would make myself fit in there.

Mina is a Zulu word that means "I" or "me" in English. Rose's description of her own ways of getting along with members of non-Zimbabwean groups notwithstanding linguistic and cultural differences (Fortier, 2001) signifies deliberate kin-work (Di Leonardo, 1987) or as Baldassar, Ferrero and Portis (2017: 524) put it, "becoming kin-like […] or kinning". The quote indicates that Rose adroitly negotiated the boundaries of membership in groups of non-Zimbabweans through linguistic and cultural mastery. Table 2 presents an analysis of Rose's relationships and exchanges based on her account.

Table 2: An analysis of Rose's close ties

Alter	Exchanges		Classification of Jane's Ties						
	Instrumental	Expressive	Pre-Migration Ties	Post-Migration Ties	Extended Family Tie	Friendship Tie	Church-based Tie	Post-Migration Occupation-based Tie	Non-Zimbabwean Tie
Rose's alters during the first six months after arrival									
Shamiso	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Angela	1	1	1	0		1	0	0	0
Marriane	0	1	0	1		1	0	1	1
Yolanda	0	1	0	1		1	0	1	1
Rose's alters during fieldwork									
Christina	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Gontse	1	1	0	1		1	0	1	1
Viola	1	1	0	1		1	0	1	1
Patricia	1	1	0	1		1	1	0	0
Edith	1	1	0	1		1	1	0	0
Rudo	1	1	0	1		1	1	0	0
Persons from whom Rose could borrow (in order of preference)									
Viola	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Shelter	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Mary	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Angela	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Sekai	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0

Rose relied more upon co-nationals for perceived support than non-Zimbabweans. However, in terms of received social support her ties with non-nationals and compatriots were equally important.In much the same way, Siwela relied more on his ties with non-Zimbabweans and non-congregants than with his relationships with fellow compatriots, for material social support, during the first six months or so after his arrival. Siwela maintained these relationships to time of fieldwork in 2010. Then, he closely related with Tebogo Magwaza, Pindile Zamani, Saviour Majuru and Gloria Mbatha. Among these persons, only Saviour Majuru was a member of the FIFMI. Siwela's relationship with

Gloria Mbatha was perhaps the closest. When responding to the question about his perceptions of fitting in among South African communities, Siwela revealed:

> I strongly believe that the people [South Africans] with whom I have interacted here [South Africa] have been warm to me. I have got [someone] I now call "mother". She stays in Germiston. Mummy Gloria Mbatha [...] with her I feel at home. I certainly feel that I am at home.

This quote strikingly illustrate the importance of received expressive support for Siwela's sense of belonging, represented by narratives of *being at homeaway from home* (Fortier, 2001; Mand, 2010). Through kin-work (Di Leornado, 1987), Siwela had constructed his notion of home as a *something* that is not necessarily physical, but one that is rooted in a sense of community (Fortier, 2001). However, Siwela's quote suggests that he had become part of something that was more intimate and *family-like* commonly referred to as *fictive kinship*, *voluntary kin* and *families of choice*, among many guises (Shaw, 2008; Nelson, 2014). Fictive kin arrangements provide the premises for family formation and functioning in which non-kin members that is, those members whose connections do not draw on blood and marriage (Nelson, 2014) are accorded the obligations, responsibilities and rights ordinarily found in kinship ties (Shaw, 2008). As a social location, "mother" suggests that Gloria was neither Siwela's biological mother nor mother-in-law even as she fulfilled the role of a *mother figure*. For example, when demonstrating the strengths of his relationship with Gloria, Siwela declared that, "the other time I did not have money to go home [Zimbabwe]. She got me a [bus] ticket to go home [...] When I asked her to [deposit] money into my account sometime] when I was stuck in Venda, she did so". Venda is located in the South Africa's Limpopo Province to the North of Pretoria. Clearly, for Siwela, becoming kin-like (Baldassar, et al., 201) has significant emotional and material benefits, including a sense of security, safety, belonging, affection, and financial help.

Earlier studies have also reached similar conclusions, emphasising that fictive kinship is critical for the ways in which migrants manage risk and vulnerability after arrival.

A key point to emphasize is that, if anything, processes of becoming kin-like reflect migrants' agency that they invested as they actively responded to the obligations and responsibilities extended to them by non-Zimbabwean families and individuals. As with Rose, Siwela sought to achieve mastery of language and culture as a way to cultivate cross-national group ties. This motif is prominent in the manner in which Siwela spoke of Pindile, a colleague at a Motor Spares wholesale who was South African by birth. Siwela recounted that during their time at work, Pindile taught him a few life skills: "I learnt to speak Zulu quite well. Then he went on to teach me how to drive a car. I can drive a car!" Clearly, helping behaviours is manifested in multifarious instances, reflecting the flexibility of informal social protection (Gardner and Ahmed, 2007).

Just as Rose relied upon her close ties with friends outside her national group for coping assistance in the event of future shocks, Siwela's connections with non-nationals influenced his perceived support. When describing the cast of those friends from who he could borrow in the event that he failed to pay his own rental fees, Siwela observed, "I would start with *Mhamha* Gloria Mbatha. Then I will get hold of Pindile Zamani. Next, I will go to ask Mark Dembo. I looked after him. He is in Durban now. [Then I would approach], *Baba* Takunda". Siwela would first approach his non-Zimbabwean friends, Gloria and Pindile, for help. A non-response would force Siwela to get in touch with Mark, a Zimbabwean whom he helped with accommodation and living when he had nowhere to go. Like Jane, Siwela would request help from the Umbrella, Elder Takunda as a matter of last resort. Table 3 represents various aspects of Siwela's ties.

Table 3: Analysis of Siwela's close ties

Alter	Exchanges		Classification of Siwela's Ties						
	Instrumental	Expressive	Pre-Migration Ties	Post-Migration Ties	Extended Family Tie	Friendship Tie	Church-based Tie	Post-Migration Occupation-based Tie	Non-Zimbabwean Tie
Siwela's alters during fieldwork									
Gloria	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Pindile	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Tebogo	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Majuru	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
Persons from whom Siwela could borrow to pay for his monthly rental (in order of preference)									
Gloria	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1
Pindile	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Mark	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
Baba Takunda	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0

Discussion and conclusion

The article set out to shed light on the relational mechanisms and underlying processes of informal social protection in a migration context. It examined the role of migrants' agency in constructing, mobilizing and activating different kinds of social support from egocentric networks, as part of their responding to a hostile post-migration context in South Africa.

Informal social protection is outcome of ongoing social interactions and relationships. After arrival, migrants engaged in goal-oriented self-insertion in different webs of relationships and social groups that enabled them to mobilize and activate different forms of social support. This is particularly prominent in Jane's interview but was common to all four migrants. Self-insertion entailed negotiating the boundaries of belonging in social groups and networks in quotidian interactions. Social groups, networks

and family-like formations of co-nationals within which migrants embedded themselves provided a sense of community, familiarity and sameness (Fortier, 2001).

Nonetheless, migrants also negotiated memberships of groups based on consensus and getting along in spite of difference. The narratives of Rose and Siwela the two migrants who sustained proximal relationships with non-Zimbabweans and non-congregants cogently illustrate this insight because they successfully embedded themselves in fictive kinship networks of non-congregants and non-Zimbabweans. For Rose and Siwela, fictive kinship was equally important for received and perceived support. They could each count on fictive kinship network for emotional and material support if need arises in future. Resultantly, membership in fictive kinship ties generated material resources and a sense of community, both of which gave rise to feelings of safety, security, and belonging (Korac, 2009). Therefore, the stories of the migrants studied here underscore the importance of fictive kinship in the ways in which "immigrants deal with social problems that arise in the process of settlement and incorporation" (Ebaugh and Curry, 2000: 190). Various scholars have observed that fictive kinship, also known as subjective kin and flexible kin, holds huge benefits for individuals involved because it is based on consensus even as it replicates the same obligations, responsibilities, even rights, found in kinship groups, and can create a sense of psychological safety, identity and material benefits (Shaw, 2008; Nelson,2014).

The observation that migrants' self-insertion was of migrants was goal-oriented, almost tactical in nature, speaks to the idea that the individual and collective agency of migrants that is, their ability to influence the circumstances of their individual and collective existence (is the driving force of informal social protection. Scholars represent such agency in various terms such as "kin-work" (Di Leonardo, 1987) and "kinning" or becoming "kin-like" (Baldassar et al. 2017). At the heart of these characterizations of

agency is the notion that there is some work or personal investment of sorts. It was clear from the narratives that establishing membership in *families of choice* required the migrant's investment in mastering linguistic and cultural competency, which were perceivably necessary for identification (de Federico de la Rúa, 2007).

Another important insight implied in the narratives of migrants is that informal social protection is evolves from context-dependent interactions and relationships of individuals who are responding to the common conditions of exclusion. Informal social protection is, therefore, situational in nature. A common thread running through the three narratives is that ZAOGA-FIFMI provides a context in which moral discourses of self-improvement, entrepreneurship, self-care and support, cultivate the enabling factors of supportive behaviours, such as reciprocity, trust and collective aspirations. An innovative example that can be gleaned from the narratives of migrants is the practice of "Umbrella", by which the Church designates one of the elders to play the role of a first-port-of-call, point person and linker for single women who need support. Interestingly, some male congregants such as Siwela perceived him as a possible source of help in future. From the above, the salience of voluntary kinship and ZAOGA-FIFMI as the backdrop of supportive behaviours speaks, to the idea that "relations of informal social protection are tied to particular moralities of care and support" (Gardner and Ahmed, 2007: 145).

From the foregoing, it is clear that migrants activated and mobilized different kinds of social support from their close relationships. I have labelled these ties, pre- and post-migration ties, church-based ties, workplace-based ties, extended family ties and non-Zimbabweans, and so on. This conceptual vocabulary helps us to see in a more resolute way, the dominant modes of self-insertion that each of the migrant pursued (see Chereni, 2014). The incidence of non-Zimbabwean ties as opposed to one's ties with compatriots, for instance, might reflect a much higher degree of fixity, rootedness and integration into local receiving communities

(Chereni, 2014). An analysis of close ties, egocentric networks and quotidian social exchanges, therefore, sheds light on the situated micro-practices of migrants that do not necessarily conform to dominant explanations of migrant integration. For example, the patterns of self-insertion that Rose and Siwela pursued contradict Landau and Freemantle's argument that, as a counterpoint to violence, anti-migrant sentiments and discrimination, “many foreigners have developed a rhetoric of self-exclusion that fetishes their position as the permanent outsider or wanderer” (Landau and Freemantle, 2010: 382).

The three narratives of migrants considered in this article generated a diverse and loaded catalogue of instances of helping practices. As argued by Gardner and Ahmed (2007), scholars need to understand informal social protection as a continuum. On the one end aret minor charitable activities exchanged in the name of sociability (Shaw, 2008), for example, showing a newly arrived migrant the lie of the land in the city, helping them to design a marketable resume and running errands on someone else's behalf. On the other extreme end, however, lie financially significant helping practices that include lending a job-hunting compatriot some money or taking them in until they land a job. The same can be said for emotional support that, as has been demonstrated, runs through the same ties by which material help is exchanged. Informal social protection, then, is sufficiently flexible to respond to the personalized needs of network members, depending on the attributes of the network such as the predominant discourses of sharing each other's burden. Yet its manifestation is complex, requiring the interplay of moralities of care, protection and reciprocity with the individual and collective agency of migrants, at the very least.

Perhaps it is vital to end the article by reflecting on the significance of informal social protection for migrants and their families. Many authors have argued, rightly so, that regular flows of benefits may not be possible in non-statutory social protection systems. For

example, where families suffer from community-wide risks, flows of informal social protection are negatively reduced or halted (Carter and Maluccio, 2003). It is true that informal social protection cannot and should not substitute formal social protection in policy discourse. Point taken. However, this article has shown that, in the migrant destination context where exclusion of migrants from formal protection is often legally justifiable, informal social protection can help migrants resist the exclusive and violent practices of the state and settle in the new city. At the same time, migrants can boost their individual and collective capabilities for navigating a very hostile terrain.

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